

The Beetle Sheet

New England Beetle Cat
Boat Association

Summer 2008

Kathleen Crane Smith, Editor thebeetlesheet@yahoo.com www.beetlecat.org

Beetle Inc. Boat Shop Report

From The Helm

"ON DECK AND ALOFT"

All hands make ready to set sail for the 2008 Leo J. Telesmanick Championship Regatta on August 10th and 11th at Weekapaug Yacht Club in Westerly, Rhode Island. All ages, all skill levels welcome! We'll be sailing the protected waters of Quonochontaug Pond. Morning munchies and lunches provided. Saturday evening festivities include dinner and a brief business meeting. Prizes awarded for participation and top three finishers in six categories including Men, Women, Junior, Old Salts, Ancient Mariners, and Overall.

Entries and information at:
weekapaugyachtclub.com
[also beetlecat.org and beetlecat.com.] or
call NEBCBA Secretary Michelle Buoniconto. See you there!

Charlie York
NEBCBA Chairman

We survived another New England winter and can finally enjoy some great sailing weather once again! We had another wonderful turnout for our December Open House with plenty for people to see, including: new Beetle Cats underway, a refurbished "Beetle Senior," the new Beetle 14, and the start of a new 26' Herreshoff Alerion sloop.

In the news front, Stan Grayson (author of Cape Cod Catboats) took a sail on the new Beetle 14 in May and has written an article for Woodenboat Magazine's November/December Small Boats Issue. In addition, we were thrilled to find out that the 2009 Calendar of Wooden Boats® by Benjamin Mendlowitz has a Beetle Cat featured in the month of April. For those racers out there, Bill Welch MD published a book this year called "The Competitive Cat – Racing Small Gaff-Rigged Catboats (see review on page four)".

As of this writing, the shop has emptied out and everything that wasn't nailed down and was brought down to Mystic Seaport for the Woodenboat Show. We look forward to this show every year. The venue is great and it allows us to showcase the current projects going on at the shop. This just in... The Beetle 14 got 1st Place at the Woodenboat Show for the best Professionally Built Sailboat!

Our summer plans include bringing several Beetle Cats to the Beetle Cat Championship being held at Weekapaug Yacht Club in Westerly, RI August 9th and 10th. The fleet here has been steadily growing and they are aiming for forty Beetle Cats at the start line for this years Leo. Summer is also the time when shop improvements are made and this year we will be focusing on adding additional Beetle Cat and wood storage space. Plans are underway for overhauling the website, which was light years ahead of its time when Jennifer Kano and Charlie first designed it, but is now cumbersome at best when it comes to making .

Have a great summer and we hope to see you at the Championships!

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Readers: send us your Beetle Sheet articles and photographs:-)

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If you want to build a shop don't drum up people to collect wood and doesn't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.
Antoine de Saint Exupery

N.E.B.C.B.A. meeting to be held November 3rd at Lindsey's Restaurant in East Wareham.

See newsletter color photographs on the website:

www.beetlecat.org/newslet.html



A Beetle Cat Boat Roller

It all started innocently enough: a two-week Fundamentals of Boat Building at Wooden Boat School in Brooklin, ME, and a couple of abandoned Beetle Cats stored by the side of the access road into Bass River Yacht Club. The Fundamentals course was taught by Greg Rossel, a regular fixture at the school and an inspiration to many who love the smell of wood shavings.

Inspired by the course and half looking for a project, I began to notice a pair of Beetle Cats that, by all appearances, had been abandoned by their owners and left to rot in a far corner of Ship Shops boat yard. More out of idle curiosity than anything else, I went to see Alyson Taubert, an owner of Ship Shops to determine the status of the two boats. She informed me that the boats had, indeed, been abandoned at the yard and were being eyed by someone with the intent to take them both to California, glass the hulls and sail them till they fell apart totally. Since one of them had belonged to a close friend and a much loved member of BRYC she was reluctant to send it off and if I agreed to keep it in the river, she would sell it to me for a token fee which I doubt covered storage debt.

Now came the tricky part – getting my father-in-law to agree to yet another boat living at his cottage. Poor fella, went from a wide open back yard to a resting place for a 23' Friendship Sloop, its dinghy, a canoe, kayak and now I come asking for a place to house a derelict Beetle Cat. Fortunately, my wife loves Beetle Cats – and me – so before long it was decided that I could hide it out back behind the shed. Shortly thereafter it showed up on blocks complete with mast, boom, gaff, tiller, standing rigging and at least five years of accumulated detritus inside the hull. The mast, boom and gaff were set aside for clean up and varnish that winter. The interior needed quite a bit of shoveling out; amazing what can find a home in an open cockpit over time. Once I vacuumed the interior and removed the last of the acorns, I looked the boat over. To my unlearned eye it didn't look all that bad. Sure, the canvass was kinda torn up and there were an awful lot of ribs (I was a stranger to "sistering") and there were funny bulges here and there but overall it didn't look all that bad. Right!

Knowing that I lacked the skills to: A. determine what needed fixing and B. how and in what order to affect those repairs, I signed up for a two week course in wooden boat repairs at Wooden Boat School. The next summer I trailered the Cat to the school and when class started the project almost ended. Several people in the class had brought boats that needed help and Walt Ansel's first task as instructor was to determine what repairs were needed for each boat and whether the boat was worth the effort. Now, Walt being a kind soul as well as Master Shipwright at Mystic Seaport, was truly grieved to tell me that my patient should be taken off the respirator. I could easily find another used Cat that I could fix up and sail off with far less effort. I countered with the indisputable fact that no matter what repair procedure he wanted the class to experience, my boat could supply the raw material. Walt relented and over the following two weeks the boat received a new mahogany transom, laminated mahogany stem several new frames and a list of what needed to be done once I got the thing back home. When I got the list and compared it to the boat, I realized that with the exception of some deck beams, ceilings, sheer clamp, and some planking, everything had to be replaced. Not all that bad, my arse.

Once the wreckage was safely returned to the cottage and up on blocks, I got ready to tackle the first in a long series of repairs; replacing all of the ribs – sisters included. This was done by removing and replacing every third rib on both sides starting at the transom and repeating the process. This helped to keep the hull reasonably fair. Of great help was the donation of several large planks of green quarter sawn white oak by Pete Broderick, a fellow member of BRYC and hardwood dealer. Even in such a good



cause, reducing those beautiful boards to $\frac{3}{4}$ " matchsticks like to broke my heart. Also assisting in the effort was a bending jig designed by Walt at WB school. Shaped something like an airfoil, it allowed a rib to be pre-bent to approximate the required form.

Complicating matters was the use of galvanized iron fasteners when the boat was built. Not only had the nails and screws been reduced by corrosion to mere ghosts of their former selves, the wood through which those fasteners had passed had been severely rust poisoned. Before the ribs could be installed, each screw hole – often with the remnants of the old screw in place – had to be drilled out using a screw extracting device that looked like a $\frac{3}{8}$ " piece of stainless steel tubing with teeth on the end chucked into a drill set on reverse. This would remove all of the metal and most of the rust leaving a hole that, after wire brushing would be filled with an epoxy – microballoon mix. The new silicone bronze screw was sent through the plugged spot.

In order to facilitate the replacement of the ribs, the remnants of the canvas decking were removed revealing decking that also had to go. And here is where I made a long lasting mistake. I failed to adequately document in situ everything I removed. Had I done so, there would have been much less confusion later on.

With the decking off and cross bracing installed to maintain hull shape, I'm ready to finish the job of replacing the ribs – almost. You see, the hull is upright and that is fine for inserting the pre-bent ribs, bracing them in place and fastening them up near the sheer. Problem is, I really don't enjoy working on my back in the dirt under a boat driving screws or worse yet daubing epoxy that gravity wants to return to sender. Turning the boat over was not a viable option as I was far more likely to run out of friends before I ran out of occasions requiring help.

I had seen in one of my WB or Maritime mags a picture of a boat roller, albeit on a much larger scale and thought what the heck, I can make one of those. So I did. For about \$100.00. The roller consists of two 7' double thick plywood circles connected to each other by $\frac{3}{4}$ " iron pipe with floor flanges and rests on four keel rollers supported on frames of 2 X 10" boards. The circles are made of $\frac{5}{8}$ " plywood (if making another, I would use $\frac{3}{4}$ ") and are double thickness for strength and to allow for disassembly into two half circles. When not in use the entire thing, when taken apart, lives in a small space in the shed where the boat is being worked on. It can be put together or taken apart by one person in well under an hour. When in use, the boat is held in place by four tie down ratcheting straps. Each end of a strap is hooked onto a pipe near the flange and passes over or under the boat. When all straps are snugged up, the boat can be rolled over completely or to whatever position required. Side bracing is a good idea if the boat is to be held with the deck vertical.

Jim Carter *Please see Betsy Kamborian's photos of this process on page 4.*

The beautiful photo insert was created by:

Emily L. Ferguson

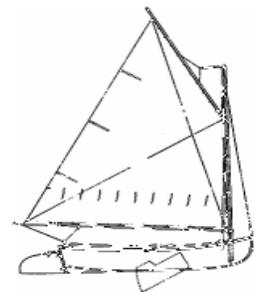
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“The Leo”

Annual Beetle Cat Regatta

August 9 and 10, 2008

Weekapaug Yacht Club

