

Adrian Morgan



Diamonds are a boat's best friend

Adrian gets to grips with *Sally's* jealousy – not to mention her booze habit

Somewhere this summer the little boat that has owned me for 10 years leapt in value, and it was in no way connected with my efforts to improve her, or my constant writing about her (a cunning attempt to inflate the value of all Vertues, say the cynics). No, this time she has done it all by herself. In her 70th year the old tart has appropriated a diamond. Without wishing to offend her, 'nicked' would be the better word.

Sally, as my regular reader will know – hello Ken, how's Maureen? Off the bottle? Good. And that scallywag Jack? Still on probation? To continue, *Sally's* a Vertue, second in the class (before it was a class – a long story, see CB218) and she turns 70 next year. That's a prodigious age for both man and boat, deserving of a party or celebration of some kind. *Sally* must have felt that a present was also called for, so last month, rather prematurely, somewhere between Lochinver and Ullapool, she had one of the diamonds off

Rona's engagement ring. It's probably winking in the bilge.

Sally is a remarkably tight collection of timber and metal, held together with rivets and bolts. She can have no feelings. I have my doubts. After three score years and ten she has as much character as any septuagenarian – and just as many foibles. She has always been partial to a drink, for example. Leave a glass unattended and she'll take a lurch to leeward and... that's another dram of malt in her bilge. So we tend to give her a sip from the first of every bottle, just to keep the old dipsomaniac quiet and encourage her not to take ours.

But her new trick, purloining diamonds, is worrying and potentially very expensive. It was one of five set in a platinum band, and she's doubtless got her eye on the full set, I'll be bound. So Rona will be leaving the ring safely ashore from now on.

I put it down to jealousy. Despite the money and attention I've lavished on her – new sails, shiny bilge pump, sparkly Yanmar diesel – she clearly feels left out. It's been a while since she's had any trinkets; a new GPS, for example – the old one's held together with black tape. Hence, somewhere among the frames and floors and seams one day some lucky shipwright



CHARLOTTE WATERS

"A lucky shipwright will see a flash of light, and prise out a diamond"

will see a flash of light, and prise out a diamond. One thing's sure: we've little chance of finding it. She'd not give it back.

If Ken, Maureen or Jack (do they get *Classic Boat* in young offenders' institutes?) or anyone reading this while waiting for the dentist, has any clever ideas about how to find a lost diamond in an – I was going to say oily, but *Sally's* bilges are pristine – then perhaps they'd drop me a line. Meantime, I'll try to ignore her, shame her into giving it up. Make pointed remarks. Then, one day, when least expecting it, perhaps I'll catch a flash of brilliance. Alternatively I could buy her that new GPS, maybe even a chart plotter. I risk then throwing good money after expensive gems.

Or maybe I'll let her keep it, with good grace. She's carried us safely many miles through high winds and shoal waters, and never let us down. So, I guess she deserves a reward. Not a GPS, but something more befitting a lady. *Sally*, the diamond's yours. Why? In the words of the L'Oréal ads, "You're worth it". (Yuck... she'll hate that line. Serves her right).

Note: If anyone's wondering why there's a drawing of a message in a bottle, the artist, Charlotte Waters, was circumnavigating Iceland en route to Greenland.