team BRITANNIA

global challenge

News from Team Britannia

Boatyard Bulletin

Team Britannia's round the world boat taking shape. Photos: Clive Tully

I've been posting photos of the boat on Facebook and Twitter ever since construction began at the Aluminium Boatbuilding Company, but I've only very recently clapped eyes on her myself for the first time. And despite seeing pictures including people to provide a sense of scale, nothing quite prepares you for the imposing size. Obviously some of that may go when she's right side up and in the water, but of course there isn't a wheelhouse on top of it all yet. You also get a much better sense for the intricate detail in which the different parts are shaped, complete with printed markings and numbers which correspond to what's on the engineering drawings. It's a bit like a giant Airfix kit!

Tremendous strength

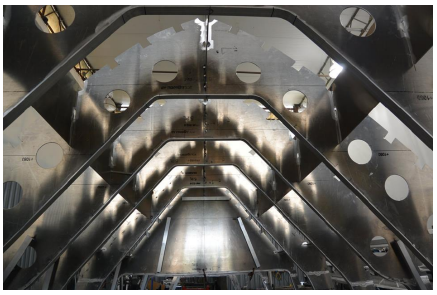
With all the frames in place ready for stringers and hull plates to be added, I'd noticed the spot welds holding things together. "Everything is just tacked together for the moment," explained ABC's Colin Johnson. "When all the metalwork is in place, we run the continuous welding. That's what makes the boat watertight, and also gives it tremendous strength."

The way the continuous welding is performed is also meticulously planned. It generates a lot of heat - enough to cause the aluminium to warp. They know which way any likely movement is going to go, and so they'll work it to weld one section, then follow up in the spot most likely to produce the opposite movement to cancel it out. We're talking small here, by the way, so don't expect to see ripples down the boat! ABC have already said they aim to make this their best boat ever, so for them, nothing short of perfection will do.

Clive Tully

It's a long way to the bow!

Intricate detail in the frames.



Looking along the boat through the frames, it would only take a bit more dramatic lighting to conjure up a scene from "Alien." Monsters will be giving us a wide berth, however.

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ThunderCats weekend is a winner!

Once again, ThunderCats racing at Southsea has been hailed as the best event in the series. Apart from the fact that the racing was close enough to the beach to give spectators a really good view, the crowning glory was everything else that was happening on adjacent Castle Field.

Choppy sea conditions made for sporting thrills. Photo: Clive Tully

Team Britannia's HQ and VIP area - the "mother ship." Photos: Chris Davies

This year's event topped last year's with an even better family festival, including a funfair of childrens' rides, classic cars and arena displays. And there was certainly no doubting it when the Hardup Garage Hot Rod made its noisy entrance!

The Tigers motorcycle display team added some thrills, including fire jumps and a car jump. You would be impressed if you saw the Royal Signals White Helmets doing this, but the Tigers are a parent-run group with the riders' ages ranging from five to 14 years old!

There was plenty of live music, too, and the headline act on the Saturday night was a real treat. The Brighton Beach Boys and Psychedelic Love Orchestra are a 15-piece

ensemble with strings and brass to provide a real orchestral sound. Before their main set covering Beach Boys classics, we wallowed in nostalgia with some ELO, Beatles and Bowie.

If there was anything that could have been better, it was the weather, at least for the exhibitors on Castle Field. On the plus side, the wind adding that extra bit of chop to the water was just what ThunderCats racers absolutely love!

Alan also let slip his plans for next year's ThunderCats event, which promises to be even better. There will definitely be a "wow" factor, but for the moment, my lips are sealed!

BBC South Today reporter Steve Humphreys interviews Alan Priddy on Southsea Beach. Photo: Clive Tully

ONE FROM THE ARCHIVES

Here's a little bit of nostalgia from April 1999. This is the first round the world powerboat - Spirit of Portsmouth as she was then (she later became Spirit of Cardiff) - at her naming ceremony at Portsmouth Guildhall, proving right at the outset what a head-turner she was. Alan Priddy is of course centre stage with the attending dignitaries and captains of industry.

I'm somewhere on the periphery - it was also the day Alan and I met. We'd been introduced by a mutual colleague and already agreed on the phone that it would be a good idea for me to go for a short ride in the boat to do a story. Alan's idea of a short ride was a couple of thousand miles in the first ever powerboat circumnavigation of the British Isles. The rest, as they say, is history...

Clive Tully

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