

25-POINT winter laying-up checklist

Afloat or ashore, a methodical approach to laying up will protect your boat over the winter and give you peace of mind, says Ben Sutcliffe-Davies

Once again, it's time to face a list of jobs to ensure your yacht comes through winter in good shape. I've had one of the hardest laying ups I've ever done this year; having left my yacht ashore in Corfu for the first time ever, I won't

see her until the spring, unlike the last few years where she's been local and it's been easy to pop down weekly to check all is well. It certainly helps focus the mind on doing a thorough job of laying up.

Whether your boat is coming out for the winter or remaining afloat, there are plenty of

valuable jobs that are worth doing to reduce the likelihood of causing damage to the craft when unattended. It is important to know the position of your insurance cover as many companies don't cover vessels on swinging moorings through the winter. If in doubt call them and check exactly what is covered.



ON DECK

MOORING LINES

If afloat ensure your mooring lines are not going to chafe to protect your boat and others. Use some old chamois leathers with cable ties to protect lines through fairleads.

COCKPIT DRAINS

Before the yard crew leave your boat, make sure it is correctly set down so deck drains will free water. If the boat isn't level and upright, water can pool and cause problems. On a centre cockpit yacht this is one of the most important things that go wrong with laying up. Protect drains from leaves.

SAILS Remove all sails from spars and furlers. A sail unfurled in a gale can pull a boat off its mooring, or blow it over ashore, as well as flogging the sail to



Mouse and then remove your halyards

death. Take this chance to take them to the sailmaker for a wash and a service.

DECK GEAR

Flush out headsail furler swivels, clutches and cam cleats with fresh water.

HATCHES With heavy rain over winter, apply a good smear of a thick silicone grease to hatch seals and then put some heavy covers over the deck hatch areas as well.

LOCKS

Oil and grease padlocks and locks to stop them seizing

CABLE SEALS Make sure all seals, plugs and deck glands are water tight. Clean wiring sockets and spray with silicone grease before reconnecting.

RUNNING RIGGING Remove all running rigging where possible to extend the life of your ropes. Use a mousing cord. Once off, rinse, dry and store.

BELOW DECKS

SOFT ITEMS Where possible, remove as many items as practical, particularly soft items like sails, cushions, curtains, clothes and bedding. If you are on a swinging mooring, come alongside for an



Lift up the cushions for ventilation and remove if possible

hour to cut down on tender trips. If you can't remove cushions, store them on edge for ventilation, and store smaller items and bedding in vacuum bags.

VENTILATION Ensure bilges are dry, then leave lockers, bin lids and sole panels open for ventilation. This is essential to keep the boat free from damp and mildew. If you don't have all-weather vents on hatches or dorade deck vents, fitting them will make all the difference. Keeping the boat watertight but with some airflow is key.

FOOD Remove all food, even if it has a long shelf life, and empty and disinfect the fridge and leave open.

SYSTEMS

TOILET Pump dry after flushing with fresh water. Deodorise and clean the holding tank if you have one, then leave it empty and dry.

WATER TANKS Empty the tanks and calorifier if you one and run the pipes and pumps empty.

GAS Disconnect the gas bottle and ensure the location of the bottle drain is clear, as there's nothing worse than water freezing in a locker.

BATTERIES If you need power on board to run an automatic bilge pump or similar it is well worth fitting a good solar panel to keep the batteries topped up. Batteries like to be worked, however, and as yet I've not found a real solution other than turning on the lights for an hour or

so. Clean the battery terminals and use some copper grease.

INSTRUMENTS Where external instruments can be removed, store them below, or take them home for security.

FUEL Top off your fuel tanks to avoid condensation forming and prevent diesel bug. Add diesel bug killer into the tank.



Disconnect gas and clear the locker drain

ENGINE

WATER COOLING.

To protect all raw water systems, running the engine briefly with a mixture of non-toxic propylene glycol antifreeze can help protect the systems. Once done, drain down the system where possible and remove the water

pump impeller or impellers. If you have an indirect system, check the strength of the coolant antifreeze, but it's essential not to mix colours! Don't forget to change the internal engine anode if fitted.

OIL Most engineers favour an oil change before winter. Run the engine to warm through, then drain down the oil. This helps suspend and remove any contaminants. Sometimes a flush through before refilling with clean oil is a good move. Use a magnet to see what metal fines are developing to give an indication of wear.

AIR Spray an inhibitor into the air intake. If the atmosphere is dry, seal air intakes and breathers to prevent moisture ingress into the engine.



Drain down the water system and remove impellers

A FLOAT WITH SHORE POWER

ELECTRICAL PROTECTION

Ensure the shore power lead has an integral protection breaker and preferably fit a galvanic isolator to protect you from stray earth issues.

A DEHUMIDIFIER

is useful if your boat is particularly damp, but ensure it is appropriate for on board.



Consider a galvanic isolator if you are on shore over winter

A SHORE

SEACOCKS

Service and shut seacocks. Some like to leave them open for added ventilation but don't forget to close them again when you come to relaunch next season.

MAST With strong autumn weather, I like unstepping the mast where possible. If that's not practical, then unstepping every five years for a thorough rig check is essential.

ANCHOR Remove as much weight as possible from the very ends of the boat, furthest



Flake the anchor chain to keep weight out of the bow

from cradle support in order to reduce any possible hull distortion, including flaking the anchor chain onto a pallet.