



A converted hanging locker provides far more usable storage than previously.

Converting a hanging locker

On the average yacht hanging lockers are a waste of space. Most clothes can be kept wrinkle-free by folding, then rolling carefully. On my NIS31 Talisman I converted the hanging space to shelves by fitting wooden cleats along the sides of the lockers and making shelves to fit. At the bottom of the locker I added a couple of horizontal slats to allow stowage of heavy items like tools.

Telescopic mast crutch

John Easton of Hastings, Victoria, fabricated this mast/boom crutch from an old telescopic vacuum cleaner wand he extended with a bit of plastic tube to get the desired length. It slips into an aluminium tube mounted on the transom and supports the mast on his Farr 750 TS when he lowers it.



PUT TO THE TEST

Aquacote water-based polyurethane

- Water-based
- Non-toxic
- Similar protection to solvent-type polyurethane
- Easy to apply
- Suitable for timber, plywood, fibreglass, metals and other porous or semi-porous surfaces

Pull the other one! These claims by respected epoxy manufacturer BoatCraft Pacific sounded far too good to be true. Being highly sensitive to chemicals I can't use conventional paints, so I decided to trust BoatCraft's integrity and try Aquacote. After all, my yacht and dinghy were both built using their product, so I had reason to hope it was good.

SPECIAL COLOUR

My first projects were the main mast (epoxy/fibreglassed oregon) and the dinghy (epoxy-saturated ply). I wanted to match the existing colour scheme. None of the 18 standard colours suited but BoatCraft was happy to mix a couple of custom colours for me, and many years later were able to reproduce them exactly.

BoatCraft recommends the use of a high-build epoxy primer, which is easily sanded to a smooth finish. As I was happy with the finish of the mast, and the dinghy would inevitably get knocked about, I skipped this step and applied paint directly over the sanded surface.

Mixing entailed stirring a few drops of "cross-linker" catalyst into the paint, without having to worry about the exact quantity of paint needed for the job. The cross-linker becomes de-activated after a few hours, so any excess paint can be returned to the tin and used later.

Just before painting, wipe the sanded surface with a damp cloth to remove surface dust. It's OK to leave the surface very slightly damp.

APPLICATION

Application was easy once I overcame my expectations the product would act like conventional paints. With some experimentation I was able to achieve a

smooth finish using both foam and bristle brush, although BoatCraft advocates using a foam brush, roller or spray for best results. To get the paint to flow in warm weather it needs thinning with water up to 15 percent. I found it best to wait a few minutes for the cross-linker to activate and to paint in the cooler part of the day (in Queensland).

The short drying time means the entire job can be completed in one day. Aquacote can be re-coated when touch-dry, which in my climate is almost straight away. No more time-consuming one coat a day. Just re-coat, at least two coats, then allow about four days for the paint to fully harden.

HOW IT HAS FARED?

Once fully cured it's really tough. After three years' full-time service I repainted the outside of the dinghy, and except for the scrapes and dings of hard usage, that paint remains in excellent condition despite years of tropical sunshine. The inside is still original with a few touch-ups.

The paint on my main mast is now about 10 years old. The mizzen mast was spray-painted with conventional two-pack at around the same time. Both masts became slightly chalky after about three years in the tropics. At this stage the Aquacote on the main mast is standing up better than the two-pack mizzen.

I also used Aquacote on Talisman's transom-hung rudder about eight years ago. Because it is easily accessible and has been regularly polished the finish still looks quite new. Being very low in volatile organic compounds means no respirator is required. Because the paint is non-flammable and low toxicity it can be transported without restriction, even by air. Clean up only requires water, and as noted above, you can drink the thinners.

Highly recommended.

BoatCraft products are available from their multitude of distributors, visit www.boatcraft.com.au The paint I used costs around \$79 a litre.