

Finding "Taka Maru"

I was fascinated by the story of the airborne liferaft, and felt that the Atalanta design would meet my needs for a sailing boat as I approached retirement:

- Strong, safe and easy to sail
- Big enough for trips with family or friends
- Able to navigate rivers, canals and other shallow waters
- Yet still capable of sailing around the coast
- Made from wood, making maintenance a pleasure

I set about finding one of these boats for sale within my limited budget

My first step was to search the Internet, and I quickly found the [Atalanta Owners Association web site](#) [1], with more information including a list of boats for sale.

I also got in touch with my boating friends, asking them to let me know of any Atalantas in their area that might be for sale. A reply quickly came back from the owner of a boatyard in Devon: there was one for sale in his yard, and we made arrangements to visit.

Titania

Our first inspection of an Atalanta was somewhat disappointing. Although the boat was much as expected from all I had read, the layout was different, and to my mind, rather less practical. As we looked further it was apparent from several soft green blotches that parts of her superstructure were beginning to rot. While we enjoyed meeting our friends again, sadly we had to give this boat a "no".

"Laura Sylvia"

Searching the Internet, I came across "Laura Sylvia" in recently restored condition and sitting on a trailer outside a home near Manchester. The owner very generously sent a CD with pictures and some time later we travelled to Manchester to view the boat.

The owner turned out to be an enthusiastic sailor, whose dream was to take this boat and cruise the Mediterranean, but his partner really wanted a larger boat. This time, my own circumstances got in the way of purchasing, and the last I heard she was being towed away to Orkney in the Hebrides by her new owner.



Laura Sylvia on her trailer

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"Kate"

Living in Hertfordshire, we often visited Winkwell on the Grand Union Canal, where there was a covered boat in the nearby yard: it's stern could only be an Atalanta. After several attempts we got in touch with the owner who agreed to show us around.

In better general condition than the Titania, "Kate" had been stripped out and cleaned inside ready for restoring, and left for a couple of years. It was decided to ask a marine surveyor to come and check her over. Among his conclusions: "...the vessel has not gone too far downhill to recover... there is a lot of work required... One should treat this as a hobby for some time." However we were unable to agree a price for this boat, and she was still at Winkwell on a recent visit.

Another Titania



An Atalanta appeared for sale on eBay, and on a cold, clear winter day we drove to a boatyard on the River Crouch in Essex.

This turned out to be another Titania, with the same hull shape as Atalanta but slightly different internal layout and greater headroom in the cabin. The boat had been lavishly equipped for ocean sailing with large stainless steel handrails, radar mounting, substantial mast, and bulky pieces of timber added to her hull. In short, the boat was grossly overweight, and we felt there was too much work involved in restoring her original clean, simple lines.

"Taka Maru"

For much of this time I had been in touch with the Secretary of the Atalanta Owners Association, and one day he rang to let me know that a boat in Yorkshire was available at a reduced price.

My friend, who restores wooden boats, came with me to meet the owner at the farm where the boat was kept. She had been restored by the owner and his brothers in 1996, and sailed until he took up a job overseas in 2002. We had a good look over her, and although she showed some effects from 5 years' weather, she had her full inventory and was basically as sound as when she last sailed. My friend muttered, "If you don't buy her I will..."

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My offer was accepted, and I finally became the owner of an Atalanta!

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