

New Cushions for your boat

I recently modified the front V-berth for Kikao to give us more sleeping room and needed to replace the existing cushions. I re-upholstered the front cushions and made the covers myself using a standard sewing machine.

I am no expert seamstress (wrong sex for a start) but found lots of help on YouTube under "Sailrite" or <http://www.sailrite.com/>. They have dozens of videos giving advice on templates, seam allowances and how to fit zips etc. Look in particular for cushions to fit sloping sides and V-berths. I needed to use the maximum stitch length as my machine is old and quite basic. I couldn't find any patterning material (a throw-away plastic sheet for marking out) but it would be well worth it if you cannot use the existing cushions as templates.

Upholstery material (fire retardant) can be obtained very cheaply from Freelance Fabrics in Kidlington. They are roll ends and discontinued lines on sale at about £5/mtr instead of £25 plus. They can also supply zips and Polyester thread which is rotproof and strong, and a set of heavy-duty darning needles, which you will need if you want to fit buttons.

Make sure you buy more than enough material, if you run out you will NOT be able to get more. I got 7mtr but it was not enough for 2mtr x 2mtr berth. 10 mtr would have probably done it. The videos show a cheaper fabric on the underside but at the above price it was easier to use the same material top and bottom (which is why I ran out!). The zips aren't ideal as

they could do with being a bit more substantial or a size up.

Another tip when fitting zips. Cut the zip about 2 inches longer than needed and fit the runner before sewing into the cushion. Slide the runner onto the excess while sewing then back into place and cut off the excess before closing up the end. It is so much easier to fit the runner when the zip is off the cushion.

The Foam Shop <http://www.thefoamshop.co.uk> can supply new foam cut to approximate shape, although they cannot cope with curves or chamfered edges to fit the sloping sides. You can cut the foam easily with an electric carving knife, lubricated if necessary with WD40. Get some Fabric Adhesive spray from Freelance Fabrics if you need to join bits.

On Kikao I replaced the seat backs using a sheet of hardboard, 2inch foam covered with a layer of wadding (see next para) and wrapped around and attached with a staple gun. The cushions are then held in place by buttons. The whole unit is attached to the boat using very flat cupboard fastenings so I can remove them in autumn.



One on each surface interlock and slide together. The one on the removable back

is upside down and glued or riveted in place.

On Lady Merrin I simply glued carpet offcuts to the boat sides using Spray Carpet adhesive. I did need to attach a small piece of ply to smooth over some internal ribs.

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Good Luck, Fred

Plump up the cushions using Dacron Fibre Wadding (looks a bit like a sheet of cotton-wool) from The Foam Shop. Use more than one layer if needed, particularly if your old cushions have sagged a bit. Sailrite calls it "batting" but then, they are American!

Consider using "Seamstick" double-sided tape to hold the seams prior to sewing instead of pins, so much easier! Get it from Snuggtopz <http://snuggs.me.uk/>. I found the 0.25 inch size to be ample. You can adjust the seams before sewing and you don't risk damaging your machine by sewing over a pin.

Finally, to fit the cushions into the cover, get cheap poly dustsheets (99p Shop). Wrap it round the cushion and suck out the air with a vacuum cleaner. The cushion slips easily into the cover and expands when the air is let back in. You can leave the dustsheet in as waterproofing or pull it out. I took it out as it tends to rustle.

How did I cope with running out of material? I found the same material in a slightly lighter shade. I made the centre cushion out of that plus a couple of scatter cushions and turned a cock-up into a style statement!

Give me a call if you want more info or would like to see my cushions. My number