

# Boats at Beale



June 2015 & 2016

## 2 *Dolly Dawn* – 14ft Yachting World Dayboat, described by Alan Moulton

In 1949, the same year that Jack Holt designed the GP14, *Yachting World* magazine published details of a 14ft dinghy that George Kennedy O'Brian had been commissioned to design. This was a round bilged general purpose boat, intended to be easily built by an amateur using several possible methods including clinker, carvel and double diagonal construction. It was to be called the *Yachting World Dayboat* and was aimed at family knockabout sailing in open waters, rivers and estuaries.

At a time when enthusiastic amateurs were creating an upsurge of interest in recreational boating by building very capable if somewhat boxy boats out of plywood, the YW Dayboat enjoyed only limited early success. Despite proving to be a capable and sea-kindly craft, its relatively difficult construction meant that many amateurs opted instead to build boats like the plywood GP14 and the smaller, lighter Heron dinghy.

The class grew slowly but its success in areas where sailing was difficult such

as the Bristol Channel meant that the boat was desired by many people who nonetheless felt unable to build one.

Consequently, in 1955, YW magazine relented on its original position of only allowing amateur construction and licensed the design to professional builders. Over 600 boats have subsequently been built, variously in clinker, carvel, cold moulding and GRP. Today, there are various active racing fleets around the country as well as many individual boats used as family daysailers.

*Dolly Dawn* is YW Dayboat Number 254, professionally built in 1961 in mahogany clinker by HH Benson of Caerleon and she was on display at Beale Park this year (2015). The first time I saw *Dolly Dawn* was at the Southampton Boat Show in September 2014. My initial reaction was that I was looking at a beautiful new Dayboat and as so very few clinker examples are built these days I was immediately hooked. She was pristine and gave off that warm amber glow that is characteristic of a skilfully built and lovingly varnished wooden boat.

Only when I eventually noticed

her hull number did I realise with some surprise that I was looking at a simply stunning refurbishment. As I was gazing wistfully at her I was approached by Alan Staley \*, the boat builder responsible for her meticulous restoration and he told me her poignant back story.

In 1963 she was acquired by Major General George Fletcher, GM, MBE, PL, and he and his family owned and sailed *Dolly Dawn* for many years until he passed away in 2009. *Dolly Dawn* remained in the garden of the family home deteriorating slowly until Mrs. Fletcher decided it was time to face letting her go.

In 2013 she invited Alan to take *Dolly Dawn* away and burn her if she was beyond saving. Alan took her back to his yard and after looking her over decided instead to carry out an extensive refurbishment.

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\* Alan Staley is also well-known as the boatbuilder who in recent times housed George Holmes's *Eel* in his yard and eventually carried out her restoration –Ed

This involved fitting a new keel, new hog, new decks, the replacement of some planks and nearly all the steam-bent ribs. The work was largely carried out by his apprentices under Alan's close scrutiny. As it was used as a training exercise and without an owner fretting about his wallet, no shortcuts were taken and no expense spared. The result is simply breathtaking.

Alan invited George Fletcher's family to see the newly refurbished *Dolly Dawn* at the Southampton Boat Show and apparently it was an emotional reunion. It was several days later that I saw her for the first time and was so completely bewitched.

I was very pleased to see *Dolly Dawn* once more at the Beale Park Boat Show this year. Once again she looked resplendent and attracted a great deal of interest but by now Alan was clearly motivated to sell. I talked to him once again and the urge to purchase her was strong. However I couldn't own her, she is just too beautiful, I couldn't bear to be responsible for the inevitable decline she would suffer under my ownership, despite my best efforts. I hope Alan sold her well and that she has gone to a loving home. Maybe I will see her out on the water some day in the future. *AM*



(Right) Beale 2015. First two photographs of *Dolly Dawn* by Alan Moulton; bottom one by Keith Muscott. The price tag of £10,000 (eventually repeated with trailer) was something of a deterrent, even if it was reasonable considering the work involved –Ed

### The 12ft Farthing From Willow Bay Boats, Keith Muscott

That doyen of British wooden boatbuilding, Dick Phillips, was in attendance at Beale 2016 as usual, fronting Willow Bay Boats of Dorset.

He had kindly photocopied for me his famous series of Classic Boat articles from 1991 on building George Holmes's *Ethel I* canoe yawl with students at Falmouth Marine Centre.

In seeking him out to receive the articles I soon found myself fully engaged in inspecting the 11ft 7ins



LOD Farthing and her bigger sister the 13ft 8ins Ha'penny, and talking to Dick about them. His superior workmanship goes without question, but I was struck by these boats' ability to swap rigs while afloat, as described on Willow's website:

"The Rig has been developed to be used in two forms:

1. The Standing Lug, with the mast raked aft, both Main and Jib are set. A traditional boom, with jaws, can be set along the foot of the sail. Alternatively a Sprit Boom may be used, this is set above the tack, clearing the heads of both crew and helm, whilst still controlling the tension along the sail foot.

2. The Balance Lug, the mast is adjusted to rake less severely aft (by means of a wedge at the mast foot), and the main only is set. The combination of altering the mast rake and allowing the boom to travel forward beyond the mast moves the Centre of Effort of the sail forward, to compensate for losing the jib. The rig and the hull, in this way, remain in balance.

All boats are able to be rigged in both these manners.

Alternative rigs are available."

### The Farthing

#### SPECIFICATIONS

LOD: 11' 07" (3.50m)

LOA: 13' 08" (4.17m)

Beam: 5' 00" (1.50m)

Draught: board up 07" (0.18m)

board down 2' 07" (0.79m)

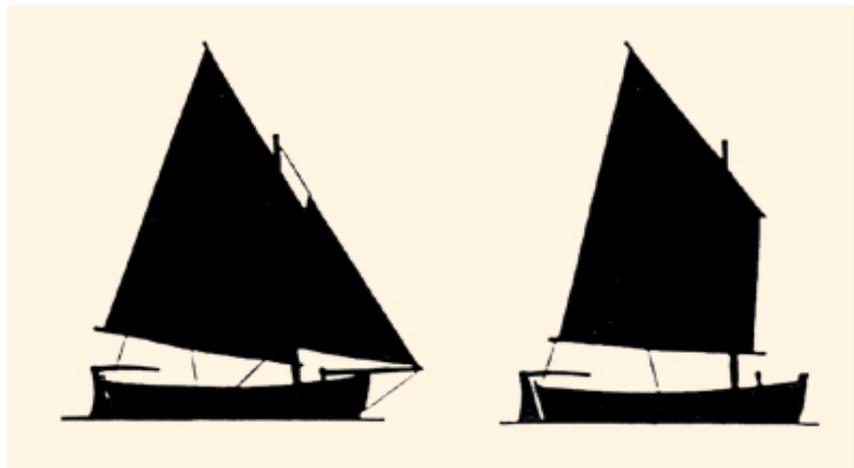
Sail Area:

87 sq ft (7.2sq. m.)

Trailing weight:

approx. 250 lbs (approx.) (113.64 Kgs.)

The silhouettes (top right) show the same boat with her two rigs that can be swapped, even while afloat. My photograph underneath the silhouettes shows the sturdy mast step which allows these changes. When the wedge is inserted behind the mast heel the spar is raked aft and is perfectly balanced carrying main with the jib on the bowsprit. When the jib is dropped and the wedge inserted in front of the mast heel, the small movement there becomes a larger arc aloft, following the principle of the lever with the bronze



collar in the mast thwart acting as the fulcrum, thus moving the CE forward and allowing the boat to be perfectly balanced when una-rigged. As you can see from the silhouettes, the mast is freestanding with running rigging only, which facilitates this manoeuvre. (A move from a sprit boom set-up to the balance lug would probably be effected onshore, not afloat.)

I love simple and effective tricks like this, and as the Farthing was fully rigged with jib and main and there was a breeze blowing, I satisfied myself that it could be done easily. Thinking that it was an innovation developed by Dick, I enthused about it on one of our forums only to be knocked back by someone with the comment that it could never be done at sea with a weight of wind in the sails.

Then I returned and saw there was nothing new under the Sun, and that Coble fishermen – and a lot of others – had been doing much the same thing in their boats, finely tuning the mast movement at the foot to suit a number of sail combinations. Which just goes to show that you can't afford to be

adamant until you get hands-on, climb in, and maybe shove off from the shore.

The fittings on the Willow boat were of the best quality, including the Henderson watertight hatch (below).



I bought two of these recently and at around £30 each you have to swallow hard and blink back the tears. They are installed on the sail and oar lifeboat the *Charles Henry Ashley* too, and our Bosun tells me they are the second lot as the first perished under Anglesey's ultraviolet rays in the protected harbour. Must be the black finish. Most of our boats don't spend the season on moorings, though. *KM*

More BOATS AT BEALE next time, including small and distinctive BOUNTY