

It soon became apparent that either too few nail-holes had been plugged, or the match-sticks had come out, because the old skiff was leaking fast, and my wife was sitting with her feet on the thwart to keep them out of the water. We turned towards the distant shore, with the rowing club members casually speculating whether we would make it in time or whether we would have to swim for it. My wife mildly observed that she could only swim four lengths at the best of times, and being clothed and pregnant wouldn't help!

None of us had lifejackets; they were not worn by rowing people, nor had the ability to swim been discussed before we set out.

We headed for the remains of Shorne Mead Fort, one of the old Thames defences against the French, which was one of the very few places around with a firm landing, and made it just in time, landing on steeply sloping shingle. Of the fort only the low brick

facade now remained, the rest had been blown up by the army as training exercises. Two of the chaps energetically bailed the waterlogged boat before the receding tide left its planks unsupported, and a driftwood fire was lit to boil water for tea. After tea the boat was re-launched and the four rowing club members set to the hard task of rowing it back against the continuing strong ebb, keeping as close inshore in the slacker water as possible. To lighten the boat my wife and I were left to walk home on the seawall. So ended our member Ed Wingfield's first sail, although he won't remember it, being only a tiny foetus at the time!

By today's standards it may all seem reckless and foolhardy, but we were young then, and the recent war had acclimatised us to danger. We were more self-reliant. Now we have Health and Safety legislation and bored young people take drugs and crash stolen cars for their kicks. LW

## The Evolution of SCAMP, by John Welsford

**S**mall Craft Advisor Magazine is based in the lovely little town of Port Townsend at the entrance to Puget Sound on North America's Pacific coast. It's a fishing port that has found a new life as a home to the traditional wooden and sailing boat skills for the area, and has everything you can imagine, from a bronze foundry through boatbuilders and riggers to painters and sailmakers.

There are several groups of islands nearby, and the coastline is ideal for small boat cruising. Just across the way is Vancouver Island which is the beginning of the famous 'inside passage' that runs from Vancouver BC to Alaska.

This is a small boat paradise but one in which the weather can be less than co-operative at times so a boat designed for use in this area needs to be unusually capable.

Magazine co-editor Josh Colvin and I have corresponded for a long time, and it was both a pleasant surprise and a compliment to me when he asked me to design the smallest practical cruiser which would become the 'Small Craft Advisor Magazine Project'. Otherwise known as SCAMP.

The brief was for a boat as close to 3.048m (10 ft) long as possible, to sleep one on board, to sail two or three for a few hours, to carry a weekend's stores and equipment, and to be within the capabilities of a first-time boatbuilder with only basic tool skills.

We agreed that very shallow draft would be an advantage, that water ballast would be useful in increasing stability, that a self-draining cockpit floor would help and that the boat should row as well as

possible, considering that she would be principally a sailing boat.

Plywood was the most practical material, and I drew a 3.2m (10ft 6in) long proposal based on the shape and construction of my little 'Sherpa' dinghy, a wide, stable high capacity pram dinghy with a cute sheer and lapstrake sides. I'd drawn a big raised locker forward and disguised it by styling it as a little 'cabin', using it to carry the mast step and to provide buoyancy high up to improve its righting moment in an emergency. The boat has a big cockpit which will easily seat up to four, and it has high freeboard and coamings that will make for dry and comfortable sailing in less than clement weather.

The space under the 'roof' of the 'cabin' where it extends aft had sitting space under it so I stopped the side seats short, which provides a space where a crew or sailor can sit, completely sheltered from the elements, and where a camp stove can be set up or equipment stowed. It's a very useful space and one not common on boats of this size.

The boat is intended as a cruiser as well as an all-weather daysailer, so providing a sleeping space was a challenge, the centrecase being the first issue. I've found in the past that boats like this are remarkably tolerant of asymmetry in the keel area so the 'centreboard' became an 'off-centreboard' mounted in the front of the starboard side seat. There is a slight theoretical disadvantage on one tack, but the balance lugsail rig, chosen for its simplicity and gentle handling characteristics also has a 'disadvantage' tack so by setting it to its best side on the off-centreboard's disadvantage side the two cancel each other out.

That balance lugsail with its unstayed mast is

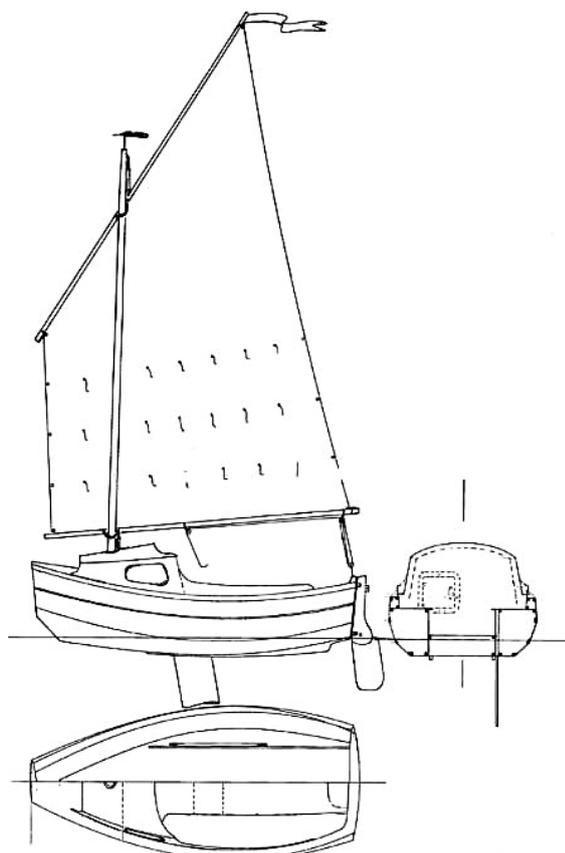
very quick to set up, perhaps 10 minutes or even less with practice, and without a jib it can be put far enough forward to completely clear the 'sleeping' area.

Being intended for kit-setting, the boat is designed to be assembled egg-crate style with bulkheads and frames slotted over the seat fronts and spine. This is super strong but simple stuff to assemble, and the only difference between building from plans or the kit is that the plans builder has to make the kit-set first before clipping it together, and the plans are detailed for that.

There is massive enclosed buoyancy built into this boat. This is capable of keeping the weight of three adults completely clear of the water when the boat is fully swamped. She has twin skegs and a rubrail designed to make her able to be righted by one person from a capsized state. Note that the water ballast makes this extremely unlikely.



*SCAMP reefed down and making to windward through a chop. ©Small Craft Advisor*



When Editor Josh took the plans to Kees Prins at the Northwest Maritime Center to discuss the building of a prototype, Kees put forward the thought that the boat might be even better if scaled up to 12ft (3.6m). I redid the arithmetic to check the 'numbers' and agreed that the boat would work better at that size, and watched as Kees and crew, with his input into some of the detail, went ahead and built her.

Sailing trials have been very positive. She's faster than expected, amazingly stable and very comfortable.

I'm pleased, very pleased.

**John Welsford, Designer.**

With input from Kees Prins, of the **Northwest Maritime Center**

---

SCAMP's page on Small Craft Advisor website:

<http://smallcraftadvisor.com/component/content/article/361>

**Statistics as built:**

LOA 11ft 11ins • Beam 5ft 4ins • Draft (brd up) 7ins  
Water ballast 173 lb • Approx weight, including rig, 420 lbs/191kilos •

---