

My Perfect Boat, by Doug Heslop

CAN WE HAVE A PERFECT BOAT? We have been taught that we can't have everything, that's why sewage farms don't have farm shops.

We all have our own ideas of the perfect cruising boat. I decided to make a list of the qualities that I would like to have in my ideal boat, then design it and make a scale model, to get it out of my system.

My List, and some of the solutions:

1. A proper cabin with sitting headroom. Apologies to purists, but I am getting a bit long in the stoop
2. A large cockpit, minimum length six feet.
3. Lots of lockers. I don't like sailing in what sometimes looks like a car boot sale.
4. A proper galley with elbow room, no more frying Spam in a cluttered cockpit full of wet ropes and watched over by nosey gulls
5. Two full length berths with plenty of width. I am through with sliding into a cramped sleeping area like a tramp in a skip.
6. The boat must be self-righting with about 200lbs of lead fixed to the hog with stainless steel bolts.
7. The foredeck to be as big as a dining table. Recessed, to stop odds and ends falling off, and it should be self-draining.
8. Comfortable access from cockpit to foredeck. My days of springing cat-like from tiller to foredeck stopped when I could no longer eat toast and fasten my shoe laces at the same time.
9. A cockpit locker within easy reach, to hold a flask, sandwiches, pilot book, glasses, etc.
10. The luxury of a water-tight locker on the foredeck giving access to ground tackle, a change from fumbling with galvanised odds and ends in a cluttered boat.
11. A place to mount the outboard motor inside the cockpit, where it can be worked on in comfort and not mounted on the transom where it can snag on the jetty and annoy people (mostly me) and so that I am not hanging over the stern, looking at my angry reflection in the bobbing water, struggling with the pantograph device before I drift into the shallows. All the while balanced on painful knees. The motor would be the type with a hub exhaust.
12. Large lockers for neatly storing clothes, dinner jacket, dancing pumps, club tie, collars, all the usual clobber, and a place to put wet weather gear. There is nothing more depressing than upending a kitbag and rummaging through the contents because you can't remember where you put your bedsocks and nightcap.
13. Clear cabin floor not cluttered with the centreboard case. With room to stretch my legs. The centreboard case to be offset, built into the front of the Starboard bunk and shaped to allow the centreboard

to fit neatly into the boat when raised.

14. An easily raised and lowered centreboard that would not require the pulling power of an Olympic athlete capable of lifting twice his own weight. I decided that a plywood board with about twenty pounds of lead cast in place, reinforced with carbon fibre, held down with a heavy gauge shock chord, raised with a single line and clam cleat would work. It is no fun heaving on a block and tackle with both hands whilst being advised by a passing launch that you are about to run onto an unmarked sandbank.

15. The ability to quickly drop most of the sail area and still make headway – so it has to be a Gunter main.

16. It would be nice to easily weathercock the boat, so I chose a yawl rig.

17. Lots of fixed buoyancy. Well out of the way in places that won't affect accommodation.

18. A permanent means of access from the water back on board and, while the boat is on its trailer, a way of clambering into the cockpit, in the form of 'old geezer' stout wooden rungs bolted to the boat's sides and transom. The side rungs would also serve as jetty clouters.

19. Self-draining cockpit. The novelty of paddling about in a wet cockpit in my socks in the middle of the night has worn off.

20. Interior shelves to take charts, books, radio, first aid, etc.

21. Chart table, to take at least a half folded chart.

22. Easily towed by a family car.

23. Stowage under the cockpit for a small inflatable.

24. Stowage under the cockpit for a bucket and chuck it type toilet.

25. Easily constructed. Probably with epoxy glued joints, sheathed in woven fibreglass.

26. Recycled sails. The sails shown are Mirror sails – jib straight off a Mirror. Mizzen, a cut-down Mirror Mainsail. The Mainsail is a Mirror Main with an additional metre of cloth at the foot.

All this in a hull length of fourteen feet. Yes, you might say, 'IN YOUR DREAMS.'

I made lots of little sketches of boats that I thought would fit the bill, but after lots of attempts I was getting nowhere. The problem was that the typical boat has a pointed end (technical term) and therefore has little volume where it is most needed to accommodate the storage that I wanted.

I then took a radical view; I drew all the features I was looking for into a rough boat shape. I finished up with a sort of mad vessel that could have come from the pen of Baron Frankenstein! I dropped the monster into the waste basket.

I have always been a fan of the Mirror dinghy, having raced and cruised in three of them. For a small boat it can carry a hefty load without upsetting its performance. It is fast. When sailed off the wind it can plane and turn on a sixpence. So I thought why not a big Mirror?

More sketches this time with a lot more success. I produced a drawing that I modified several times until I arrived at the final design, from which I made a model, using mostly .8 mm birch plywood. I used a lot of masking tape to keep the panels of plywood together while applying super glue. A word about super glue, if you ever get it on your fingers be careful what you touch, or you will either become part of

whatever you are building or you will for a time have the dexterity of a shore crab. The model boat I constructed can be seen in the photographs (*next page*). All of my wish list was incorporated into the model. Although not a classic design, it has I think, a certain charm. I chose the name BOBBY 14 after Bobby the bulldog that once was the companion of my son. Bobby was not a sleek hound, but was amazingly tough, friendly, protective and loyal.

I shall be taking the model to the NW winter meeting, where, if they wish, members can give me their considered opinions or gently explain why I should take up some other hobby. *DH*

Bobby 14

Hull Length	14feet / 4.27mtrs
LWL	12feet / 3.66mtrs
Beam	6ft 6ins / 1.98mtrs
Displacement	700lbs / 318.18 kilos
Ballast	200lbs / 90.90 kilos
Headroom	3ft 5ins / 1.042mtrs
Draught	16/48ins – 40.05cms/1.22mtrs
Construction (Hull)	9mm / 3/8in plywood



