

# Sailing The Paradox

Alistair Law

## *The owner's experiences of sailing Little Jim*

I have been sailing my Paradox, *Little Jim*, now for three seasons and I am still delighted with it. My history is with motor boats and this is the first real sailboat that I have owned. I spent some time looking for my ideal single-handed sailboat, and it wasn't until the end of my first season sailing that I realised that what I had been looking for was a sailing boat with the comfort of my motor boat. *Little Jim* comes pretty close.

The following is a list, in no particular order, of the good and the bad as I see it. I have tried to be completely impartial and I hope this may be of help to anyone considering building one of these remarkable boats.

### Advantages

It is comfortable. I will say that again, it is comfortable. The crew can get out of wind, rain and spray without interfering with the sailing. It is possible to brew a mug of coffee while on the move. Wet weather gear is rarely necessary (except for walking to the pub). All sailing controls are inside so all sailing functions (except anchoring) can be performed from inside with the hatch shut.

There is no centreboard/leeboard/daggerboard or other excrescences on the bottom. The rudder is the only thing that sticks down and it swings up on contact and is very sturdy, so grounding on a beach is simply a matter of pointing at the shore until you stop.

There is a boarding step on the rudder. (For swimming, as it would be difficult to fall overboard even in a capsized.)

It is simple to rig. There is no standing rigging and the sail is left fixed to the spars. About one hour from car to boat.

Quick transition from boat to bed. Four minutes from dropping the anchor to getting your head on the pillow. Ten minutes from bed to sailing (assuming you don't want any food).

The sculling oar is low energy. It is possible to scull for miles at 2 kt without getting tired, though trying to go faster is quickly exhausting.

It is docile in a gybe, even in strong winds.

Very sturdy construction. The side is 12mm ply. The bottom is 18mm ply with 4mm of epoxy/glass, so no worries when drying out on a rocky bottom.

Due to the bottom being completely flat across the width, with rocker fore and aft, it dries out flat for a comfortable night.

The cabin sole is 6ft x 3ft 6", flat, with no obstructions.

The boat tracks well. Sailing in open water is a matter of getting it going in the right direction and locking off the sheet and rudder. Then admire the scenery or read a book.

There is masses of storage space (most of it dry) and, if required, masses of drinking water (70 litres water ballast).

Due to the lack of a centreboard, with the rudder raised to the horizontal it will sail on all points in less than 1 ft of water.

It is claimed to be self-righting from 160 degrees. I have not tested this, but can confirm that from a 90 degree knockdown it pops up again in a matter of seconds without the crew having to do anything.

The boom is well clear of the helmsman's head. This, combined with the docile jibing, means it doesn't matter when I concentrate more on the scenery than on the sailing.

Excellent sail control due to the roller-reefing. It is possible to increase or decrease sail easily in any wind. Very useful for going slowly into an unknown anchorage or to come alongside.

### Disadvantages

Access to the bows, over the deck, is virtually impossible while sailing.

The displacement weight is 640kg (1400 lb). When loaded on the trailer (crew and ballast water out) it still weighs over 450kg (1000 lbs). This requires a car and a braked trailer\* to handle and launch easily. This also means a launch site that a car can get to.

I have found the sculling oar not to be good into a strong wind. The bow blows off and it is not easy to get back on course. This only really matters where sailing is impractical.

On one occasion I had problems sailing off from a light anchor with an awkward wind. As the anchor is hauled from the steering position the boat lies stern to the wind. This means the sail can't be raised till the anchor is on board.

It is relatively slow going through a tack and accelerates slowly on the new course. This makes it

unsuitable for tacking up a narrow channel. In Poole Harbour I have no problem beating up the Wareham Channel, but it is impossible to continue sailing up the river.

A sculling oar has no reverse and no brake. Fortunately the stem post on a Paradox is 100mm (4") thick so no damage is done (to the Paradox) when you hit something.

There is really only room for one on board. Two can day-sail, but even then one has to stay below decks so it is not very satisfactory. Some builders have modified their boats to widen the sleeping area, but even then I think you would have to be very friendly.

Fitting an outboard is problematic. The lead of the sheet means, I feel, that it would inevitably get tangled with a motor left on the transom. Some builders have fitted motors and claim it is not a problem.

If you have a motor, fuel storage becomes an issue. You can have it inside with you (and the cooker) or keep it on deck. One builder straps a can to the foredeck. With some of the seas I have been in I could not guarantee it would stay there.

It is slow into wind compared with an equivalent-sized dinghy. When I have sailed in company on a windward course I am usually the last to arrive (but when I do I am usually on my second or third mug of coffee).

A possible disadvantage is that you spend a lot of time sitting in the same position with none of the acrobatics of a conventional dinghy. This used to leave me stiff and sore until I assembled a collection of cushions to vary the pressure points. **AL**

(Sail plan & dimensions below included here for reference - from <http://home.triad.rr.com/lcruise/plans1.htm>;  
 \* legal limit for an unbraked trailer is least of 750kg or 50% of the tow vehicle - see Mike Knott's letter p.12 - Ed.)

