

Sailing the Rebell

(17 foot cruising dinghy designed and built by Eric Coleman)

1) Heavy weather test 17/10/70

R Worthington

The Rebell is an interesting sailing craft because it is unique in many ways. There is no other cruiser on the market which has a cockpit right up to the mast and yet can sleep four people. She is a cruising dinghy and yet a yacht at the same time.

It was a dull grey day when I tried out the Rebell with a force 7 wind. We hoisted the mainsail with two reefs in it and the storm jib. We had the wind behind us as we left Maldon and soon were out in the open where the wind was very strong.

The first point I noticed was the steadiness of the helm when running before this wind. She was a pleasure to steer and never did I have to wrestle with the tiller. Quite definitely this effect is due to the deadwood aft. This deadwood has a negligible effect on the ability to tack quickly.

The second point I noticed was the extreme stability of the boat - I am a dinghy sailor and it is quite natural for me to try to sit out a sailing boat that heels over too much. In the Rebell I never felt this need. This stability is partially provided for by the wooden centreplate which has 123 lbs. of lead on its tip.

The windward ability of the boat is very good and, on returning to Maldon, made good progress against wind and tide. Indeed many features on the Rebell combine to make good windward ability. For example, the high aspect ratio mainsail, the centre cockpit arrangement and the deep centreplate and rudder all combine to this effect.

The centreplate is hoisted by a rope coupled to a sheet winch mounted on top of the centreplate casing. It is not difficult to raise or lower the plate. However it does require two hands; one to turn the winch and the other to keep tension in the rope after it has passed over the winch drum. Presumably this could be improved on future boats by the use of a geared winch of suitable reduction ratio. The plate would then take longer to hoist or lower but it would require less effort. Moreover only one hand would be required and the plate would remain in any position without the need of a locking mechanism.

We found the Rebell very dry going to windward in these conditions and hardly any spray came into the cockpit. No doubt this is due to the high freeboard all around.

As regards personal safety there is never any need to go on deck. All halliards are accessible from the cockpit while the hatch in the cabin top is particularly useful when changing headsails or anchoring. Thus no one ever has to "go forward" on a slippery deck in a plunging sea.

I would describe the Rebell as a fast seaworthy boat with well thought out accommodation details.

2) Light weather test 14/9/70

J W McIntyre

My needs can be summarised as follows: The boat must be foolproof (my sailing experience is relatively limited). There must be 2/4 berths (to cope with 2 adults and 2 children) and a reasonable amount of space without a severe headroom restriction. Finally, it must be relatively cheap and be capable of being towed by a medium sized car. These seemingly impossible requirements have a neat solution in the form of Mr. Coleman's cruising dinghy *Rebell*. The boat has been designed for the amateur builder from the start and I was impressed with the tidy engineering. It is obvious on inspecting the boat that, assuming a reasonable familiarity with woodworking tools, no real problems should arise in its construction.

In the water the boat is very nicely trimmed, a feature resulting from the fact that the crew weight is not confined to a cramped cockpit near the stern.

In order to clear the boatyard where it was tied up, we used oars thus obviating the need to mount and start an outboard. The boat is very easy indeed to handle and, despite the light airs, slipped through the water more like a dinghy than a 4 berth cruiser.

My wife liked the commodious cabin (not to say the commode!) and the large free area behind the cabin. I would like to see a window looking forward in the cabin and I think that some people would prefer the option of a GRP hull (no particular difficulty I am told) from the point of view of maintenance.

In conclusion I would say that *Rebell* has plenty to offer the amateur builder.
