

holes in the transom that would serve as a ladder. A hole cut in the rudder could also serve as a step. A third safety feature would be measures to assure prompt recovery after a capsized. These might include a mainsail easily pulled down while in the water, and righting lines.

It would be ideal to find a set of criteria for environmental sustainability and meet them. Short of that, one could use sustainably-harvested wood and environmentally safe finishes, such as a non-toxic bottom paint. It would then be necessary for the boat to be easily turned on its side to scrub the bottom. Finally, maximizing propulsion under oars and sail would make the boat less reliant on a motor. This would entail effective oars or yuloh, large sail area, and an anchor and line set up to be quickly dropped if needed.

Comfort is a type of safety feature, allowing the crew to remain more alert. A dodger for heavy weather might be useful.

The design could be handsome, with a focal point and a sweeping sheerline. DW

*(This appeal for comments comes from an American member who wrote originally to Mary Brown (see letter, page 10). Suggestions may be forwarded to the Editor or directly to : Duncan Wright, 32 Melbourne Street, Portland, Maine, 04101, USA; email: [cdwright95@maine.rr.com](mailto:cdwright95@maine.rr.com) - Ed.)*

## A Suffolk Beach Punt

Paul Harrison

*An evaluation of this 16' wooden traditional Selway-Fisher-built craft by the co-owner of Peregrine*

**It's ten years since Ian Page and myself bought our Suffolk Beach Punt *Peregrine*. It's seen us safely through many trips from the West Coast of Scotland, to the Outer Hebrides, The Lakes, The Farne Islands, Anglesey, The Humber, The Norfolk Broads, Falmouth, The Solent and even our local sailing pond Pugneys in Wakefield.**

It has suffered a broken bumpkin, a broken mast and a hole in the hull in that time, but it has kept us safe even when these events occurred. So has it been a good boat to buy? Ten years ago Ian and myself had done a few cruises in a borrowed Drascombe Longboat on the West Coast of Scotland and thoroughly enjoyed it, and from this we decided to buy our own boat. We didn't buy a Longboat because there was no secure place to store gear and generally we found it cluttered the boat, making it awkward to move around while sailing, so a major criteria was to have storage areas, preferably dry. We also decided we wanted low maintenance and therefore a GRP boat would be good, and we also wanted a tried and tested boat.

Well, you start with good intentions and end up doing completely the opposite. We had tried a couple of GRP boats that looked to suit our requirements, but found limited storage capabilities, or we couldn't sleep on them (we are two large blokes for those who have not met us), or had issues like rudders falling off. We nearly came close to buying a Whammel but the boat builder had just died and therefore we felt it was unsafe to commission the building of a Whammel at that time. However, through this builder, we met Kevin Halcrow of Lakeland Wooden Boats who showed us his wooden Oyster, which was an impressive boat, but was not what we were looking for, but he talked to us about the virtues of a marine ply stitch and tape wooden boat against a GRP boat. So we left Kevin undecided in what we wanted. We told him our budget and he said he would send some ideas to us later.

So through the post came a pile of sketch designs from Paul Fisher and soon we were attracted to the Suffolk Beach Punt. Why? It seemed to us to have nice lines, it was a Gaff Yawl, I like Gaff-rigged boats, and Ian liked Yawls for their usefulness in cruising, especially when reefing in holding the boat head to wind. It was 16 feet long and 6 foot 6 inches wide, so for two large blokes that gave us room to sleep on. It had a minimum draft of 11 inches and a maximum draft of 3 foot 6 inches with the metal centreboard lowered. It has 153 square feet of sail and weighs 600 pounds but is recommended to have additional 200 pounds of ballast as well. It had a covered foredeck, giving us secure storage forward of the mast, there was a rear storage tank also in the design and finally the side benches/tanks could also be used for storage, leaving plenty of space for sailing and so could easily carry 6 adults. Two designs were available, the Kane and the Able. The Able suited us better being one plank higher, but the interior of the Kane suited us, so a combination of the two was commissioned in the Spring of 1996.

From a historical point of view, the original Suffolk Beach Punt was a lot larger boat and had a lugsail rather than being a gaff yawl, so only the hull maintains the basic shape of the original Suffolk Beach punt.

We had broken all our rules and bought a wooden boat which was untested, and at the time a completed

version was unknown. Being the first the builder had built, there were a few hiccups along the way and one or two design changes as well. We didn't get delivery until November 1996 and so its first sail was on the local sailing pond at Pugneys. Turning up, we were told that we couldn't launch our boat until a capsize drill had been done, so we prepared to do this, until the manager saw the boat and promptly said, 'the mast will break before that capsizes'. Well, he was correct as we found out later. So, relieved that no capsize was required, we had our first sail and enjoyed it thoroughly.

As with any new boat design flaws do exist, and our first problem was found on our next sail, which was with the DCA in Anglesey in early 1997. This trip became rather infamous as it involved the RNLI rescuing us. I'm sure this story has grown over the years, but we had no engine and only sails or oars for propulsion, and on sailing back to the trailer, we snapped our bumpkin in the seas off Lynas Point and as it was blowing Force Six/Seven and we were unsure of the capabilities of our boat I decided not to risk the main and therefore had to call the Lifeboat out to rescue us. Not a happy moment for me, but a lesson learned well. Why had the bumpkin snapped? Instead of being angled upwards it went straight out the back, and when we tried to go about this went into a wave which simply snapped it off. We had also had difficulty in getting decent luff tension in the jib which was down to having rope standing rigging rather than wire. Also when being towed by the RNLI our bow fairleads, made of wood, disintegrated. So the bumpkin was angled, the standing rigging replaced and bronze fairleads added.

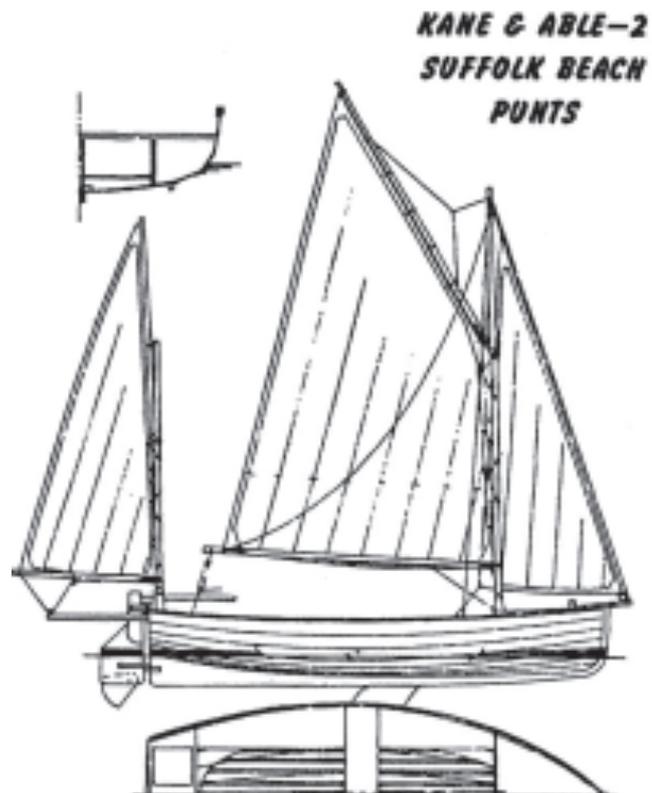
On the first trip at Anglesey we had no boom tent, and had to sleep under the boat cover, and as we wanted to do more camping trips, we asked a friend (CanvasMan) to make us a boom tent, which starts at the mast and goes to the stern of the boat, enclosing completely the cockpit and rear tank, just leaving the foredeck exposed and all halyards outside of the tent.

After the first year we changed our ballast from sand to shingle, as sand seems to get everywhere when the bag splits! This ballast sits under the floor boards in the bilge around the centreboard. This makes the boat very stable, making it possible to stand on the gunwale and the boat hardly tilts. This year we've tried sailing it without the ballast with interesting results; it seems to sail better, it does heel more than it used to, but it doesn't hold its way as well in light winds. I've still not come to conclusions over this, other than I prefer, if I'm sea sailing, to have the ballast in than not.

So after a two or three years sailing *Peregrine* our next design flaw raised its head. We were sailing on Ullswater with friends, and it was blowing about a Six, and we were sailing comfortably with a double reef in, when the jib luff seemed to start sagging. As Ian went to investigate the whole lot went over the side. The mast had snapped. Why? The mast originally was made with holes in it, for the halyards, the mast had snapped where the throat halyard had come through the mast. So a new mast was ordered. However it was made up with scarfed timbers, it was thicker (i.e. didn't taper as much), and blocks were fitted to take all halyards so no holes were in the mast. We also took the opportunity to add a fife rail to space out the halyards and to remove the awkward cleats from the mast; this has made it easier to manage the halyards than before.

That was our last major design change. We have had the experience of holing our boat, and we sailed it for a week without realising this until we pulled the boat out at the end. The boat was holed on a rock in the dark, but the ballast bags had provided enough pressure on the damaged planks to prevent major water ingress, which showed us the strength of construction the stitch and tape method is. It was not long after this we decided to do a buoyancy test, which was an article in a previous DCA Bulletin (175 p.45 - Ed.). The results of which were that we had filled her up with water and couldn't capsize her and still she floated, even after an hour after being filled with water.

Over the ten years we have also changed the trailer, as the original trailer didn't aid launching and recovery



easily and was usually a source for damage. To launch *Peregrine* we had to submerge the trailer completely, which was not good for bearings, especially when we sail a lot on the sea. With this in mind we decided to invest in a break-back trailer. However, even though this has helped with launching and recovery, it still involves two of us to achieve this.

So we have had *Peregrine* for 10 years now: do we still want to improve things? The answer to this is yes. We always want to achieve the ability to launch and recover quickly and to be able to handle it single-handed. This is mainly due to the fact that time is precious and a great deal of time can be wasted dealing with preparing the boat for launching or towing. Ian is also coming up to retirement, and it would be nice for him to be able to go places with her, launch her, sail her, and I would join him when I can. To do this it will involve putting the jib on a roller-reefing mechanism. The mizzen is quite a large sail and requires either a reefing mechanism or having a smaller cut sail that can be hoisted without the gaff (the mizzen is gunter rigged). We have regularly sailed without the mizzen without any issues, so that is also an option.

One of the other discussions we have had to aid single-handing is having the option to change the way the main sail is rigged. Currently its gaff involves using two halyards, making it awkward for one. We believe it would be possible to turn it into a gunter rig by getting a differently cut main, thus needing only one halyard. The other possibility is a standing lug sail. Some friends have lent us a lug sail, and if we fabricate a yard for this sail, we may test this for feasibility. Finally the trailer needs modifications to ensure the boat is recovered centrally on the trailer using rollers to guide the keel; and to aid the winching, an electric winch could be added.

But how do we equip *Peregrine* when we sail her on a cruising trip?

From the bow, in the port side of the bow locker goes Ian's clothing, sleeping mat, sleeping bag, wet weather gear and personal equipment. In the starboard side locker goes my clothing, sleeping mat, sleeping bag, wet weather gear and personal equipment. In front of the bow lockers, the anchor is stored, and a bucket containing the anchor warp and chain. The anchor is a 13 lb Danforth anchor and is stored vertically. Also the sail bag holding the boom tent is usually stored here if it will not fit into the front lockers. Both port and starboard front side lockers contain tins of food, paper towels, cans/bottles of drink. Under the thwart on the port side we store two water containers. Under the thwart on the starboard side we store the propane gas bottle for cooking. To the rear of the thwart next to the centreboard housing on the port side we store a container of tools and first aid kit, plus flasks of hot water; on the starboard side a container of flares is stored. On the rear of the centreboard casing is the ship's compass. On the thwart we usually have our chart displayed in a waterproof case. In the port rear side locker is stored the cooker, cooking equipment, mess tins, cups, baskets of food, snacks and sweets. In the starboard rear side locker is stored the kedge anchor, fenders and two large mooring warps. In the rear tank locker we store a 20 litre fuel tank for the outboard, a 5 litre spare fuel can, paraffin lights and fuel, bailing bucket, depth gauge (old fishing line), two very large ropes (used for running moorings) and the ship's heads (a Comfort bottle). Two 10ft oars are stored along the side of the side tanks. In a dry sack attached to the main sheet horse are a torch, hand bearing compass, VHF radio, mobile phone and GPS.

With the boat stored as above, it is possible to go on a fortnight's trip with everything tidied away, leaving ample room to sail in. Finally when the boom tent is up, we cook on the thwart, and at bed time Ian sleeps on the thwart (only fallen off twice) and I sleep on the starboard side floor boards with my head towards the stern.

So going back to my original question, was *Peregrine* a good buy? The answer has to be yes for the type of sailing we have done. She is an excellent boat to sail in all conditions, can be a bit wet when beating into rough seas, very responsive in that she turns as requested without stalling when going about. She has a very light helm, and once the sails are balanced she will sail in a straight line without having to use the rudder. She may not be the fastest boat, but we have had her doing 7 knots over the ground. She sails about 50 degrees off the wind. She has kept us safe in all sorts of conditions, has taken us on trips covering many miles, has been reasonably comfortable to sleep on and has been an ideal open cruising boat.

If you were looking for a boat to do a lot of sea cruises, you wouldn't go too far wrong with a Suffolk Beach Punt. PH

#### ***(Selway Fisher's Catalogue Description of Kane and Able.***

*Kane and Able are two separate Suffolk Beach punts. Both have the same overall length, beam and arrangement. Kane is built using the clinker ply method, and computer faired mould shapes for this are given on the drawings. Her midships hull depth is 2ft 1". Able differs in that she has been drawn for the stitch and epoxy method and her plank shapes are given on the drawings. The mould shapes for clinker ply construction are also given for Able and in imitation of some Beach Punts, she has had another plank 'rove on' giving her a midships hull depth of almost 2ft 5". Able also*