

A retirement project

Building a modified version of Ian Oughtred's 6m Ness Yawl

David Beckly



Inspiration came from a Shetland 16ft double ender that we owned. A very pretty boat of traditional clinker construction. Fairly tender but fast, she had no drop keel relying on 10 inches of vertical hull profile along her length.

Ian Oughtred, a boat builder on the island of Skye, sells plans based on the traditional Shetland and Orkney designs but adapted for building using marine ply to replace larch to make up the strakes. This has the considerable advantage of neither shrinking nor

expanding with the weather and means that the strakes can be epoxied together rather than the traditional riveting. This results in a very strong light monocoque hull, and is easier for the amateur builder.

The first question to be answered was 'Do I have the necessary skill to manage this?' I have reasonable joinery skills but had never built a boat and had not done any boat building courses. So it was with not a little trepidation that I decided I would give it a go.

I was fortunate to have a suitable shed with good lighting, enough room and a door wide enough to get the completed boat out. I already had a band saw and table saw together with normal joinery tools, chisels, planes etc. I added a power planer which was invaluable for making the long scarfes needed when creating the strakes from 8ft x 4ft ply sheets.



Inspiration came from our Shetland 16ft double ender



A block plane with wood spacer bolted to it being used to plane the bevel

on the band saw and then planed to the correct profile. The garboard strakes were made first and epoxied in place against the keel. Each layer of planking was then added in turn. Each strake had to be bevelled so that the next one would sit on a flat 'land' where they overlapped. This bevel was challenging as the angle varies along the length of the hull. A good method for achieving the required bevel angle is to bolt a suitable piece of wood to the side of a block plane and temporarily fasten a batten made from off cut ply where the next strake will be. Before each strake was glued in place a final check of the profile was made by eye. I was fascinated to find that the eye could detect an error of less than 2mm. Wooden clamps, in large numbers, were used to hold each strake in place while gluing.

With the planking complete, primer and undercoat were applied and keel band put in place.

Next the hull must be turned over. I was anxious that simply rolling might put undue stress on the unsupported planking (the strakes are, of course, not fixed to the athwartship formers on the building frame) so I made a rectangular framework to support the hull during turning.

The first task was to make up the building frame upon which the upside down hull would be constructed. This needed to be made of good quality timber and carefully constructed to be true in all directions.

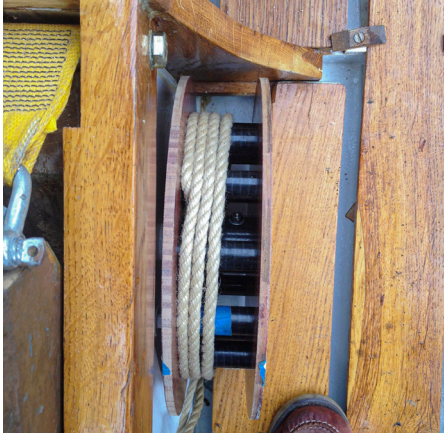
Next a series of athwartship formers were drawn from the plan and fixed in place on the building frame and the stem, sternpost and keel added. Planking could now begin.

Each strake was made up of several lengths of ply scarfed together after being cut to the approximate width



The completed hull

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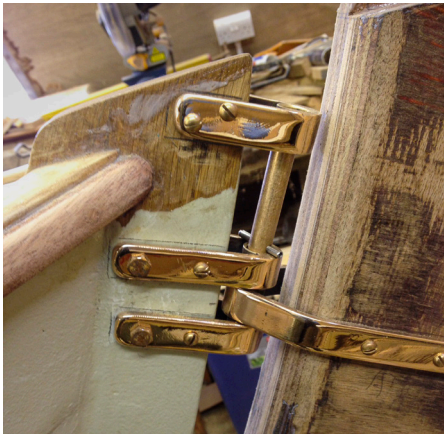
The completed drum winch

Once turned over the inner and outer gunwales were made and fitted and the centreboard casing installed. Bulkheads were made together with deck beams and outboard well. A winch drum was made and a gantry constructed so that the heavy galvanised steel drop keel could be lifted in place with a chain hoist. Floors were put in place and thwarts made. Next king planks and decking were installed. The bowsprit, not in the plans, was copied from the Shetland 16ft double ender. Made of two planks

Bowsprit, copied from the Shetland boat



Rudder hanging copied from the Shetland double ender



joined with blocks it fits over the stem head and engages with the samson post at its aft end. This makes it easy to fit and detach if the boat needs to go on a trailer. The rudder was made, again with some departures from the plan. The rudder hangings were copied from the Shetland 16ft boat as we had found these to work well. Instead of gudgeon and pintle top and bottom, always a pain to engage with the boat in the water, there is a gudgeon and pintle at the bottom with two gudgeons and a captive sliding pintle at the top.

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Steps were fitted on the rudder to aid boarding in the event of capsizing. Bottom boards were fitted and, with another departure from the plan twin, manual bilge pumps were installed crossed over so that the pump on the starboard side drew water from the port side and vice versa. When balancing the boat you are nearly always on the



Two manual bilge pumps installed crossed over



Le Tonkinois varnish

Out of the shed at last Mediterranean and I am sold on it. It never peels or flakes in the sun. After about three years it loses its gloss. All that is then required is a light rub over with fine sandpaper and the application of another coat of gloss.

The boat was now ready to come out of the shed into the garden.

high side! Good quality watertight hatches were fitted to the forward and aft bulkheads meaning that the boat had ample contained buoyancy both forward and aft.

For varnishing I used Le Tonkinois a French oil based varnish rather than spirit based. I had used this on our boat in the



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In a further rather radical departure from the plan it was decided to turn the sloop rig into a cutter with roller furling jib and genoa. We also added 2ft to the mast and included spreaders. The mast itself was the only part of the boat apart from the galvanised steel drop keel that I did not make myself. The hollow mast was made by a Bristol firm using the 'bird's mouth' technique and was keel stepped.

Launched from a trailer to my great relief not only was she watertight but she sails beautifully and well beyond my expectations.

Overall the project was great fun and took just over two years. A professional boat builder friend commented that most people can build a boat but the trick is to do it in the time that a client can afford.

To anyone contemplating a similar project I would say 'go for it'. What you don't know at the outset you will certainly know by the end! More importantly you will have great fun and the satisfaction of creating your own boat



Happy boat builder, Irene May sails beautifully

