



When old ways are best

Rodger Witt on why the Winkle Brig is a winner

We've always been wary of progress. It's part of the human condition. That's why, in spite of 'high tech' and hydrodynamics, many still prefer old fashioned practicality.

Eric Bergqvist does. He always has. For him, there's nothing to beat common sense and experience. Hence his love affair with traditional boats. He it was who brought us the Memory, that evocative, gaff-rigged daysailer which arrived on the scene back in 1977 (PBO 133). Since then, he's resurrected the 28ft. Morecambe Bay Prawner and, more recently, developed a saucy little ship called the Winkle Brig.

An amply proportioned 16ft. ditch-crawler with twin centreplates (or bilge-plates) she majors on ease of handling, good looks and a kind of vintage nostalgia. No, she's not 'hewn from the log', she's made of resin and glass. But who cares; it's the concept that counts.

And that's the point. Rather than worrying about trends or statistics, Bergqvist's philosophy is simple. He builds the kind of boats he himself would most like to own. In this case, a



WINKLE BRIG

LOD	16ft.
LOA	20ft.
LWL	15ft.
Beam	6ft. 8in.
Displacement	1680lb.
Ballast (encapsulated punchings)	336lb.
Draft (plates up/down)	1ft. 2in/2ft. 6in.
Sail area (main)	104sq.ft.
(jib)	42sq.ft.
(f'sail)	26sq.ft.
Headroom	4ft.
Auxiliary	4-6hp OB
Builders	Eric Bergqvist
Ferry Boatyard, Fiddlers Ferry Yacht Haven, Penketh, Cheshire. (092572) 7519.	

pocket cruiser with civilised comforts.

His starting point was a beamy hull with flat sections aft for stability, and not too much canvas. He also wanted a snug, low-aspect sail plan with a correspondingly short mast in a tabernacle which would be easy to lower or raise. As he rightly says, unwieldy spars are an unnecessary nuisance on trailer-sailers, so why make things difficult? Lanyards follow almost automatically, since rigging screws, even when pivoted about the same point as the mast, can easily bend, if trapped 'on the way down'.

As for the plates (encapsulated steel) they must contribute something to stiffness under sail but, more importantly, resist leeway and, along with the central keel, provide longitudinal support when the water recedes. And thanks to their relative low weight, you can also use them as sounding boards in the shallows — without fancy tackles or winches. You just tug the lines on the bridgedeck.

Equally important, he felt, was handling under power, particularly when short handed. That's why he

designed a proper outboard-well which not only places the prop ahead of the rudder for optimum efficiency, but makes everything easy to reach.

Another concern was safety — and it's reassuring to know that beneath cockpit and bunks, there's enough polystyrene and polurethane foam to make her unsinkable.

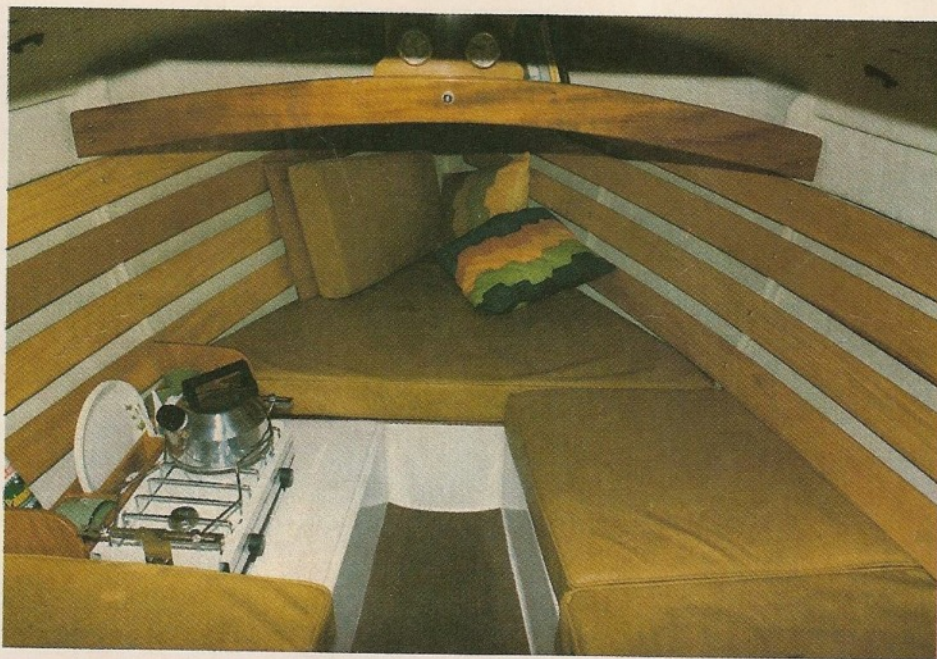
But above all, the boat is well built. With her strong, turtle-backed, Core-mat and grp coachroof and sturdy bronze fittings; her 'biscuit-lid' deck joint and uncomplicated lay-ups (7/10oz. CSM) she's designed to be 'used'. And with that obvious, yet sometimes overlooked function in mind, they've



In profile, only one bilge-plate shows up, but there's another one on the opposite side. Note the decent length of keel and snug, low-aspect rig.

they've fitted detachable bulwarks which, come the ravages of winter, can be stowed safely ashore. How's that for a good idea?

But how does she handle? Or is she a tub? Well, I was amazed. Beautifully balanced, she creams along with unprepossessing ease in a way which provides instant feedback to the helmsman. In other words, her directional stability and grip make her truly simple to sail. Yes, she points well, though accurate measurement would be fruitless. Why? Because while she



can certainly be made to edge fairly close, the price you pay is a marked decrease in speed. All the same, it's important to note that even near the eye of the wind she remains under control. Which takes the sting out of subtle manoeuvres. Indeed, having tried the standard 'circuits and bumps' routine, including sailing round in circles without touching the sheets, or trying to trap her in irons, I found her hard to fault and handed her back to her skipper.

Desperate for something to criticise, I decided to pick on the 4hp Johnson which might lack sufficient punch in high winds and strong tides. But I was clutching at straws.

I went below. Even here, harsh words seemed unjustified. What with her cunningly concealed toilet (under the steps), removable cooker (for optional brew-ups in the cockpit) — her snazzy twin sinks and spacious quarter berths (plus 1½-person-Vee berth up front) she provides more facilities than we have a right to expect — given her modest dimensions.

Back in the cockpit, I discovered two deep lockers for fenders and warps, while up on deck, such things as her



Pretty practicality — with choice, says Eric Bergqvist. For example should you find the mahogany coamings too 'Arthur Negus', oiled teak can be substituted at no extra cost.

giant mooring cleat and chunky grab rails underline her basic good sense.

On reflection, some may feel the idea of gaff rig is more pretty than practical, but, as intimated earlier, in spite of her extra 'string', alternative modern sail plans are more of a problem, particularly on dry land. Sure, the four-foot bowsprit might be deemed a nuisance in harbour but in practice it's something you quickly adapt to. Actually, when coming alongside, I found it quite handy. Like looking down a gun barrel.

Two versions are offered: a sailaway model which comes minus cooker, cushions, toilet, sink bowls, barometer, clock, bilge pump, topsail, duckboards, mooring and anchoring gear (and deck paint, boot top and varnish) for £3631.31 ex. VAT, or a complete boat with a very full inventory for £4295.66 ex. VAT. A combination 'piggy back' trolley and trailer costs around £400 extra. Also available is an all-over cover and a separate cockpit tent.

When you do the sums and study the competition, it's hard to predict anything other than unqualified success for this sensible ship. We rate her a 'hit'.

PRACTICAL BOAT OWNER

