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A BOAT like the Tomahawk will do much to make GRP more aesthetically welcome. She is one of the first boats to use the material in its own right rather than, as has been the trend so far, to make a plastic imitation of a wooden boat. Take a simple feature like the forehatch. Why ever did we bother to try and model the old wooden style of hatch lid with all its encumbrance of leaks and awkwardness when, as Alan Hill, Tomahawk's designer has shown, glass fibre moulded imaginatively makes a beautiful and flush fitting which, set into the deckhouse, cannot possibly snarl the jib sheets and leaves a far cleaner working space.

Anchor stowage is another point. It was practically impossible to stow the anchor in a self-draining locker on a wooden boat, at least not without weakening the deck structure. But with GRP it is perfectly simple and indeed its inclusion makes a stronger deck. It also gets rid of another item of foredeck clutter.

The cockpit too can be increased in size with GRP moulding and again without sacrificing strength. One wonders why we retained the side and transom decks, traditional on wooden boats, long after the switch of materials was made. On wooden boats side decks were part of the construction and necessary but they were never very practical to work on in a small boat. Within the limitations of her use, ie coastal racing and short haul cruising (although when you say this the builder invariably turns round and tells you that only yesterday one of his customers sailed into Barbados), the large and high sided cockpit such as Tomahawk has is more acceptable than a cramped space with side decks.

Admittedly a one-day sail can never truly evaluate these features or highlight the snags but just the same it is good to see GRP getting out of its harness and developing an independent line of design.

The cockpit has a good working layout enhanced by its size. The rudder stock is as far aft as it can be and the tiller is hinged to lift up. The boat is extremely light on the helm and the helmsman will experience no difficulty in holding her even sitting well back as he must. His position leaves the winchmen plenty of room and the small main and bridge deck traveller keep mechanical things clear allowing him to move unencumbered and keep a clear and uninterrupted view of the sails. The cockpit seats have scupperways moulded into them which drain water away no matter what the angle of heel.

The accommodation is very light and well ventilated. It consists of a forward cabin and saloon divided by toilet and washing space which can be screened from the main saloon. There are two berths forward while aft are two quarter berths and a double berth cum dinette arrangement. The galley cooker is fuelled with Camping Gaz which should prove an advantage on Continental cruises where refills are readily available. It is a direct fitting with the bottle beneath the stove to obviate the need for lengthy piping running through the boat and lessen the risk of leaks.

One very welcome feature is the ease of access to the engine which is totally exposed when the one piece cabin step moulding is removed.

To provide maximum space below yet still keep her fairly dry on deck and buoyant the designer has given her a tumble-home and then disguised it. The outward curve of this actually comes in the deck moulding and is returned through the natural flare of the hull sides with a rubbing band separating

the two. (This will prove useful when drying out alongside a wall should she settle heeling inwards when the guardrails are normally most vulnerable. It also gives a clue as to where to hang the fenders.) The rubbing band too provides the paint separation and having a darker colour above makes the freeboard appear lower.

Even though she carries that cautious adjective 'family' racer there is no doubt that in competition she will prove to be a fast boat. I sailed her on two occasions, once in very light airs when there was hardly wind to fill the sails and another time when the wind scale was up to Force 5. I was impressed with her ghosting qualities, her speed, clean wake and ease of handling.

On the windy day we sailed around the trots on the Hamble and although the river had been swollen and was ebbing strongly she never once gave us an anxious moment or failed to do what was asked. She is a very responsive boat and the kind that is fun to experiment with and do the kind of manoeuvres that would be difficult with a slower, more cumbersome craft. We brought her into the marina berth under sail as easily as we might under engine; she was that well behaved. And a slalom run between the vacant buoys was just as simple. Once or twice we stopped her and she would lay quite motionless (hove to) with the genoa backed and the tiller down. It was a manoeuvre that you could carry out in this boat in an instant should trouble threaten. Just go about, hold on to the genoa sheet with the tiller down and she lays there without any fuss or gilling about.

I should have liked to have gone out into the Solent to see how she behaved in rough water but as it was we had had to wait for the evening breeze to get any good wind at all and time was pressing. It was 7 o'clock, snowing and nearly dark when we returned to the marina but we were still reluctant to stop sailing. Tomahawk, I think, is one of 'those kind of boats'. BB

## DATA

Loa	25ft 4in (7.7m)
Lwl	20ft 0in (6.1m)
Beam	8ft 6in (2.6m)
Draught	4ft 6in (1.37m) fin keel
Draught	3ft 0in (1.00m) twin keels
Ballast	2200 lb (1000 kg) iron fin
Displacement	5066 lb (2300 kg)
Mainsail	137 sq ft (12.7m <sup>2</sup> )
Working jib	150 sq ft (13.9m <sup>2</sup> )
No 1 genoa	230 sq ft (21.4m <sup>2</sup> )
No 2 genoa	180 sq ft (16.7m <sup>2</sup> )
No 2 jib	75 sq ft (7m <sup>2</sup> )
Designer	Alan F Hill
Builder	Marine Construction (UK) Ltd, Whites Shipyard, Hazel Road, Woolston (Southampton 44737)

Price ex works

£2850

YM Index for a cruising boat to include the following inventory (asterisks indicate items not included on the manufacturer's standard inventory): engine, mattresses, spars, galley with cooker, rigging, all lights, winches, pumps, guardrails, pulpits, warps and fenders\*, tanks, bilge pump, anchor and cable, mainsail, jib, storm jib\*, genoa\*, spinnaker and gear\*, echo sounder\*, compass\*, log\*, registration\*.

YM Index figure

£3227





Beken

