Test
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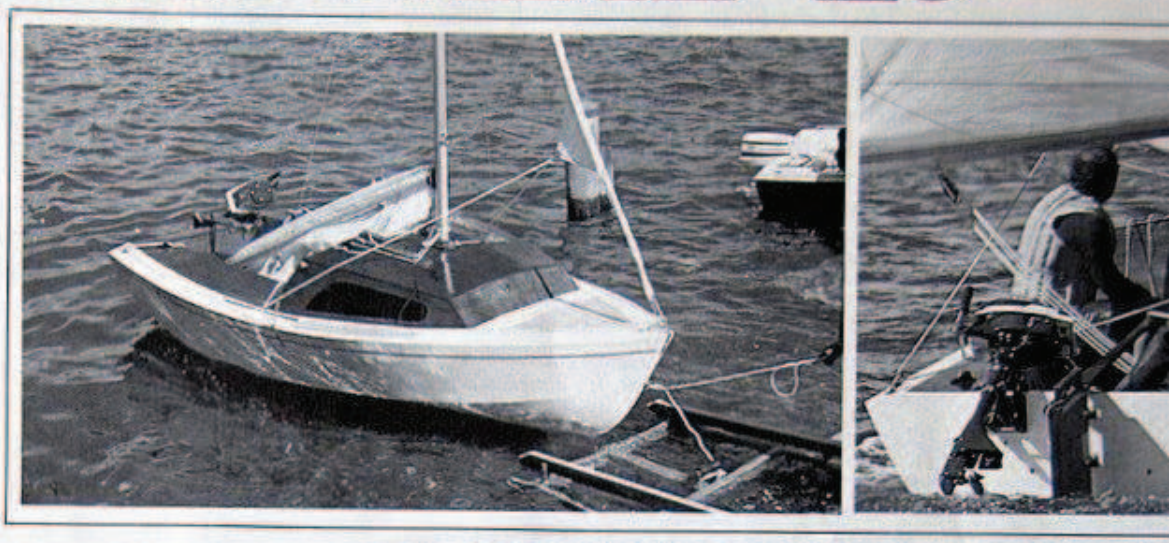
CHERRY 16



Back to TS origins

While new trailer sailers grow bigger and bigger in the seemingly inevitable fibreglass, one newcomer on the scene returns to the simple success formula that began the modern family sailing era. The newcomer not only comes from the country where it all began, it's built in that traditional material – timber. Vanessa Dudley tried it.

A boat that's cheap and simple enough for the most inexperienced amateurs to build, light enough to trail behind the family car, and still big enough to sleep Mum and Dad with possibly one or two kids after a sunny day's sailing — that was the original concept that started the trailer sailer ball rolling.

First came the Hartley TS16, the do-it-yourself class that's still thriving after almost two decades. And then came the trailer sailor boom, with close to one hundred varieties flooding the market. Most of the new breed are fibreglass stock-boats, (even the Hartley can be bought in 'glass these days) and many types could more aptly be called mini-yachts than trailer sailers. It might seem that the original idea for small DIY plywood boats has become outdated.

But that's not so, judging by the response to the Cherry 16, a New Zealand designed trailer sailer now available in kit form in Australia. The class is already 250 strong in New Zealand, and on this side of the Tasman it's generating interest with 36 sail numbers issued in 12 months.

The Cherry itself is a modest day sailer of stitch and glue construction which can be built and fully rigged for as little as $2,100. If you're a really keen DIYer you could start from scratch with a set of plans from designer Frank Pelin. But the kits should make the whole thing a lot simpler without detracting from the joys of home boatbuilding.

The basic kit costs around $1,200. This includes all the plywood panels cut to shape, fibreglass, resin, glue and fastenings. Once you've bought the kit it's a matter of having the time and the inclination rather than building expertise to put it together — the stitch and glue method is no problem for beginners.

If you don't have the time or inclination, the Cherry is available in two further stages of completion. $1,680 buys a constructed shell with the centreboard case and bunks fitted, and $2,100 buys a completed hull, painted and ready to sand.

Then it would be up to you to decide how you rig the Cherry, an advantage as you could have the type of rig you really need. Sails cost $470, fitted spars $182, unpainted centreboard $95, and deck fittings and sheets come to $175. All that adds up to around $900, but the buyer can choose one or all of the "mini-kits".

ABOVE LEFT: The Cherry is light and simple enough to be rigged and launched by two people in twenty minutes.

ABOVE: Downwind sailing is a breeze. Note the dagger blade rudder, strong transom and wide beam.

RIGHT: Narrow bow leaves little room on the foredeck for spinnaker handling. But the Cherry is quick to plane once the kite is up in a breeze.

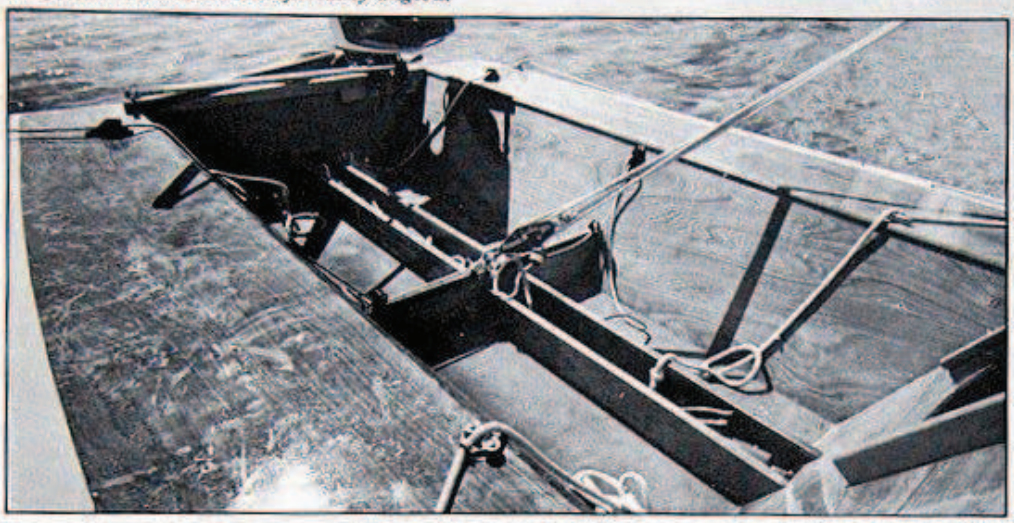
After the vital prices, how does the Cherry actually perform on the water? We tried Harry O'Donnell's testboat on a sunny morning in which his Cherry "Spooky" literally sparkled. O'Donnell is a cabinetmaker by trade and he's done a thoroughly professional job on the boat's finish.

Perched on her trailer the TS looked rather like a shiny new toy with her chunky silhouette, wide beam and flat-bottomed stern sections.

Every inch of her skiff-style bow is utilised for the cabin leaving room for a long cockpit.

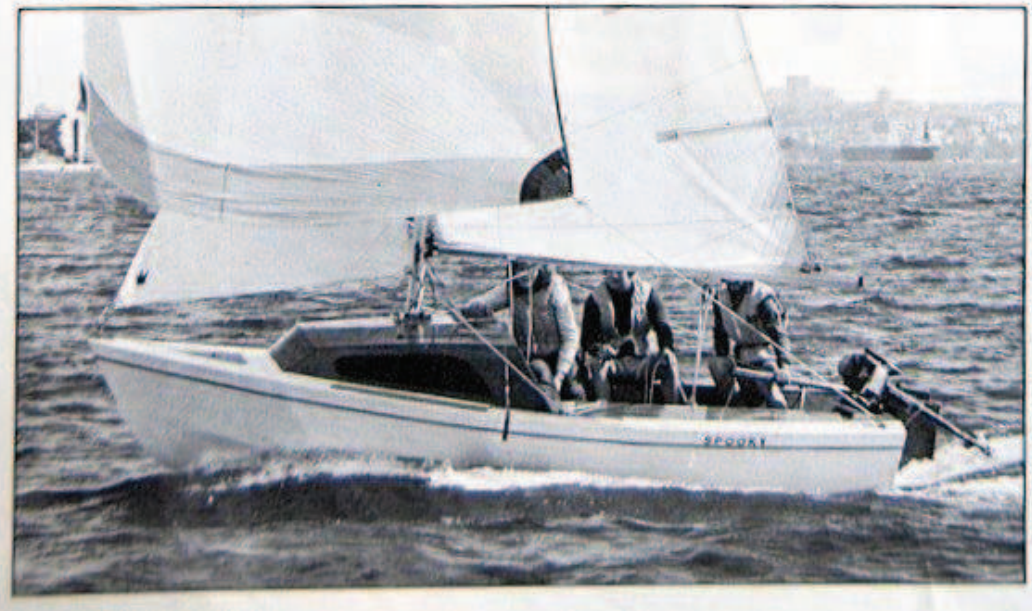
Rigging didn't take long and the boat was easy to launch owing to her light weight of 220 kilos (500 lbs.).

BELOW: Centreboard case runs the length of the cockpit and the traveller system is kept simple. Sidedecks are comfortably angled.



ABOVE: Our testboat had internal halyards and well planned sail controls. Owners can design their own rig layout.

BELOW: Large roomy cockpit allows crew to sit forward and sail her like a dinghy. She handles well under a shy kite.



We sailed her in a breeze ranging from zero to fifteen knots and she was always nippy and handled like a dinghy with her light weight and skiff-shaped hull. Of course with her small working sail area of 11.4 sq. metres (123 sq. ft) she hardly had the skittish tendencies of skiffs.

As far as rigging went our testboat wasn't really a standard Cherry. Harry fitted the boat out to his own requirements through Elvstrom Sails with a more sophisticated rig than other owners would necessarily choose. As it was, the rig was easy to trim and we could get the most out of the modest sail area to drive to windward.

Downwind we tried the 7.8 sq. metre spinnaker (84 sq. feet) and skated along with the centreboard up. Setting the kite involved nifty footwork on the small foredeck and would take some getting used to — we certainly recommend non-skid surfaces.

The three of us had plenty of room in the cockpit with room for another adult. The wide sidedecks were comfortable and would suit many a lazy picnic day.

Cabin space was limited by the Cherry's size and would not be a place for the claustrophobic. But there was enough headroom to seat tall adults with reasonable comfort with two full-length bunks for overnight ventures.

My one reservation about small trailer sailers like the Cherry is that the cabin and sleeping space might cause new owners to believe their boat will handle rough weather like a deep-keeler, while in fact the boat has only a small amount of ballast and is not immune to capsizes. I suppose it's a matter of respecting the boat's capabilities and limits — with her small rig and 41 kilo (90 lb.) centreboard the Cherry should be difficult to capsize but it would by no means be impossible.

In the event of a swim the Cherry has plenty of inbuilt buoyancy in the cabin bunks, and being so light she would float high on her sidedecks reducing the risk of swamping. All in all she seemed a safe little boat and she certainly was a lot of fun to sail.

Specifications

LOA	4.87 m (16 ft)
Beam	2.16 m (7 ft 1 in)
Weight	220 kg (500 lbs)
Ballast	41 kg (90 lbs)
Sail area main and jib	11.4 sq m (123 sq ft)
Sail area spinnaker	7.8 sq m (84 sq ft)
Prices: DIY hull	$1,200 (Sept 1980)
Rigging	approx $900