

Boats of the Plinston Family

Ten Foot Six

After settling in to 34 Esmonde Road, Tony decided that he should buy a boat that could use the Ferrier outboard motor that he had brought from England as part of the family's luggage. He located a 10 foot 6 inch fibreglass dingy that had seating along the sides and a rowing seat at the front that was suitable.



10 foot 6 inch Fibreglass Dinghy on trailer and Gremlin.

A simple trailer was built that was more like a beach trailer but this was towed to Takapuna Beach behind the Morris Traveller. A small canvas tilt gave some protection when the wind blew hard. This was used to go fishing in the Rangitoto channel and later was kept in the dinghy locker at Bayswater as a tender for the boats on the mooring.

It was a good sea boat with a good capacity. One day after Dad and I had been racing and we were back on the Bayswater mooring the wind had got up. Another trimaran on a mooring had taken a few guests and they were being rowed ashore one by one in their tiny dinghy. We motored over and suggested that we could carry a few of them ashore as well as their gear and we carried five of them and their bags, plus the two of us, to the dingy ramp.

Gremlin



Next, a plywood pram dinghy was built from plans designed by Percy Blandford and called a Gremlin. This was often carried or towed by Tatu when we went cruising or racing to a destination. When on board it was too wide for the side desks and had to be carried diagonally over the forward nets between the main hull and a float.

It was fitted with a centreboard, rudder and mast and sail but these were seldom used.

It was lost in a storm when returning from Rakino. It was being towed from the starboard float, it took some water on board and this prevented Tatu tacking so it had to be cut free.

Tatu

Tatu was a Piver Nugget trimaran. It was 24 foot long. The hulls were built in the 24 foot long garage and so an extension was made in the the back wall to take the bow.



Tatu's floats and main hull were built in the garage.

The hulls were assembled to the beams on the front lawn and then the deck and cabin were built onto the hulls.



Constructing the deck and the cabin.

The boat was taken to Takapuna beach very early one morning when it was low tide so that we would have time to raise the mast and rig the boat before the tide came in. The boat then had to be sailed around to Bayswater and put on the mooring.



Launching at Takapuna Beach. Sailing in the Gulf.

We raced this boat with the AMSA for a number of seasons and did win the odd race or two.

Tony had purchased a section on Rakino Island in the mid 60s and had a 'flat pack' batch (more of a shed really) delivered to the section by truck and barge. We sailed to the island in Tatu to erect this and took a frame tent with us to live in while this work was done. We did use the batch on several occasions but one weekend a north-easterly storm blew up and Tatu dragged it anchor in Sandy Bay and went onto some rocks. We patched it up and sailed back to Auckland where it was repaired by the insurance.



Loaded up and sailing away to Rakino to erect the batch.



On the rocks at Rakino and some of the patching



Tatu on the ramp at Bayswater. Note 'Nippon Clippon' cranes in background.

Tony thought that Tatu's stern was too narrow and added a new square transom and plywood topsides to give more buoyancy.

After we sold Tatu the new owner replaced the mast with a lattice that had a folding top section above the forestay so that it could fit under the Panmure bridge and be moored up river from that.

Fireball

I built a Peter Milne design Fireball racing dinghy. Originally it had a varnished deck over a black hull but later the deck was painted yellow. I sailed it to Browns Island, Rangitoto and Motuihe and sailed in the harbour but there were no others to race against.



Sailing Canoe with foil

Tony had a complete collection of the Amateur Yacht Research Society (AYRS) publications and was interested in foil stability. He built a small canoe decked forward and aft and added a single float with a foil set at 45 degrees. A mast and sail was added, I think that it came from a P class.

The experiment was not particularly successful. It was hoped that the foil would keep the boat level on both tacks as leeway set the foil angle of attack but it seems that it was not fast enough to generate sufficient lift or down force.

The canoe was narrow enough to fit on Tatu's side deck and so this was carried as a simple tender. In very calm water it could carry three but with any small waves there was not enough freeboard. After a race to Te Koumba with Tony, Carol and I onboard, we sailed around to Coromandel Harbour the next day and went to the pub. While there a storm arose. When we were going back to the boat we decided we could all go in the canoe but it sank halfway and we were rescued by a launch. We sailed Tatu to a beach on the west side and tied it to the bank. I got a lift back to Auckland from a bach owner there so that I could collect a car and drive back to pick up the other two. The boat was collected a week later.

Scamp dingy

Another Peter Milne design that we built was the Scamp 8 foot sailing dingy. It used the 'stitch and fibreglass' method. The chine curve on the bottom and side panels was the same so that the topsides were placed on the bottom panel and the chine was stitched together with copper wire. The panels were then pulled apart and the frames inserted to get the shape of the boat. The chines were fibreglass taped inside and the copper wire was cut off outside and more fibreglass tape used to seal the joints.

The boat was light enough to carry on my back and load onto the roof rack of my car by myself. It was sailed a few times on the lake and rowed around the lake with my family on board when they were quite little.

I still have this boat and it is kept safe under my house. It is occasionally used at Onepoto to maintain the buoys or help clearing the weed.



Using the Scamp at Onepoto.



Other Boats

Tony bought an old Idle Along on a trailer. This was only sailed a few times and then sold on. Here it is at the lake with Kirsty and Andrew.

Tony also bought a 16 foot runabout which I can't recall was ever used. I think that it had rot in it.

Piver Stiletto (uncompleted)

Plans for a Piver Stiletto 33 foot racing trimaran were purchased. We had helped Richard and Lynn Stevens build their Stiletto and planned to have this design built with foam and fibreglass hulls. The formers were built and the mold made in a factory at New Lynn where Richard Fauchon was to layup the hulls. One night the factory caught fire and that ended the project.

Tiare Moana

With Tatu sold and the Stiletto lost Tony bought a Piver Lodestar 35 foot ketch named Tiare Moana. This had been built and launched but had not been sailed much as the owner's wife had run off or died or something and so he sold it. Originally this had been built with a dog house and extra bunks but these were removed. Under the cockpit had been sealed as a large water tank. A hatch was put in the cockpit floor, and a 10 H.P. air cooled industrial wankel engine was installed with a folding propeller. An engineering shop made the bronze shaft and threaded it and the propeller. but when the engine was started there was no drive. Inspection showed that the wrong thread hand had been cut and the propeller. had spun off. The engineers replaced the propeller. and recut the shaft at no cost as it was their mistake



Tiare Moana at Bayswater towing the red dingy. Sailing with no wind.

Vents had to be cut in the front and rear of this space and the rear hatch opened when running the engine.

The boat had twin bunks in the bow, a double in the stern cabin and bunks in the main cabin wings. Bench seats each side of the hull in the main cabin could also be used as bunks. Originally there were seat backs that raised to convert the wing bunks to doubles so the maximum capacity was 10. No one wanted to cater for that many, the seat backs were removed.

A new 9 foot red fibreglass dingy was bought to replace the big one and a 2 H.P. outboard replaced the Ferrier.

The boat was slow but we had a good handicap and did manage to win a race or two.

One notable race was to Ponui North Harbour going north of Waiheke. With a north-easterly the fleet rushed ahead. In order to tack and lay through to Thumb Point they went as far as Rakino. As we came up the Motuihe channel the wind veered allowing us to turn more and more to starboard as it went to the south-east until we were sailing due east along the Waiheke north coast. The fleet were now all directly downwind of us giving us the lead. We were passed going down the Pakatoa channel but won on handicap.

Cyclops

After reading Jim Brown's books on cruising trimarans Tony bought a set of plans for his Searunner 31. Over the next four years he and I built Cyclops as an open-winged version.

Planning permission was obtained to extend the 24 foot garage by eight foot at the front to give sufficient length to build the floats. There was also an additional permission to add a temporary plastic covered frame to the side of the garage to build the main hull under shelter.



Float frames in the garage. Main hull frames in the shelter.



Plywood being applied. Cabin being built.

The boat has soft rounded chines. Stringers are each side of the chine position and the plywood was butted together at the chine. When all the plywood was attached the hull was put on one side and fibreglass mat and cloth was put in the gap between the chine stringers. The hull was turned and the other side done. Then the plywood around the chines was rounded off. The hulls were fibreglassed overall.



Building the decks, cabin and cockpit.

When the cabin, cockpit and decks had been mostly built up the temporary shelter could be removed and covers used to keep the rain off. When the hull was complete it was moved to a clear area where the floats could be attached.



The aft cabin and forward changing room.

Going aft there was a chart table on the left made with a chart of the Hauraki Gulf laminated into Formica, a galley on the right with a two burner stove and a small sink. Forward of this and under the cockpit was a ventilated 'engine room' to the port side of the centreboard case and storage to starboard. Right aft was a large bunk that converted to a dinette with a sliding table from under the rear anchor locker and seats that folded down from the sides. The floor dropped a few inches for more leg room.

Going forward from the cockpit the cabin was over the front of the centreboard case and there was sitting headroom on the two side bunks that went back under the cockpit seats. Forward of that there was full standing headroom in the 'changing room' fitted with a small sink to port and a seat to starboard. Sail lockers were in the wings, the leading edge of these formed a dorade ventilators. Forward of that room was a chemical toilet with limited headroom. A sail locker was right in the bow under the forward anchor locker.

The float arms and hyfield levers were ordered from an American company who made parts for Jim Brown boats. The winches came from UK. The pulpit, pushpit and stanchions had been made for another boat and part paid but not collected so we got them cheaply and they fitted perfectly.



On the ramp and down in the water.

The launching of Cyclops was done with an early morning truck ride to Bayswater ramp. With a rising south-westerly blowing onto the ramp there was some doubt about the launch. However, a rope was rowed out to an empty mooring so that once clear of the pilings we could winch the boat to that mooring and then row the rope further to our own mooring.

While the boat was on the ramp Sue Todd sheltered in the aft cabin with her new baby. It was Mike Todd that was assigned the job of rowing against the south-westerly.

A day or two later Jeff and Pam used their runabout to tow us to Westhaven to use the mast crane. After waiting an hour or so for a yacht to get its mast in place and rigged we spent about five minutes to raise the mast and secure it with just the lowest shrouds and forestay and then moved along the wharf to attach the rest, allowing the queue that had formed access to the crane.

Initially, there was no provision for an auxiliary motor but we added a sliding outboard motor mount on the transom. We didn't have a motor yet and after the Kawau night race there was no wind to return on the Sunday. We put the 2 HP dinghy outboard on the mount and after about half an hour we got up to 3 knots. Fortunately, a light breeze did come and we were home by night fall. We bought a barge model Seagull with clutch and an inertia starter but this was marginal in strong winds so it was replaced by a 9 HP Volvo Penta outboard.

The building of Cyclops took four years of working on weekends and evenings for a total of about 4,000 man hours and cost about \$7,000. After several years racing and cruising we put a price on the boat of \$25,000. An American came down to this part of the world looking for a Searunner. He had been to Sydney and saw a couple there but when he saw ours he agreed to pay the price asked. He equipped the boat with self-steering and appropriate navigation and radio gear and sailed off the Hawaii. While in New Zealand he had an island girl friend so he sold the boat and flew back to marry her.



On the mooring. Hauled up at Bayswater for maintenance.



Sabot dinghy

One afternoon after sailing we saw that there was a dinghy complete with oars on the beach under the cliff at the end of Bayswater Road. We collected it and informed the police. After a few months the police said that there were no claims to it so we kept it inverted on the port side wing of Cyclops for use as a tender when away from the mooring. On the starboard side rear beam we had installed a roller that made it easy to launch and recover the red dinghy which we could also store inverted over the nets if we wanted to have two tenders, otherwise it would be left on the mooring.