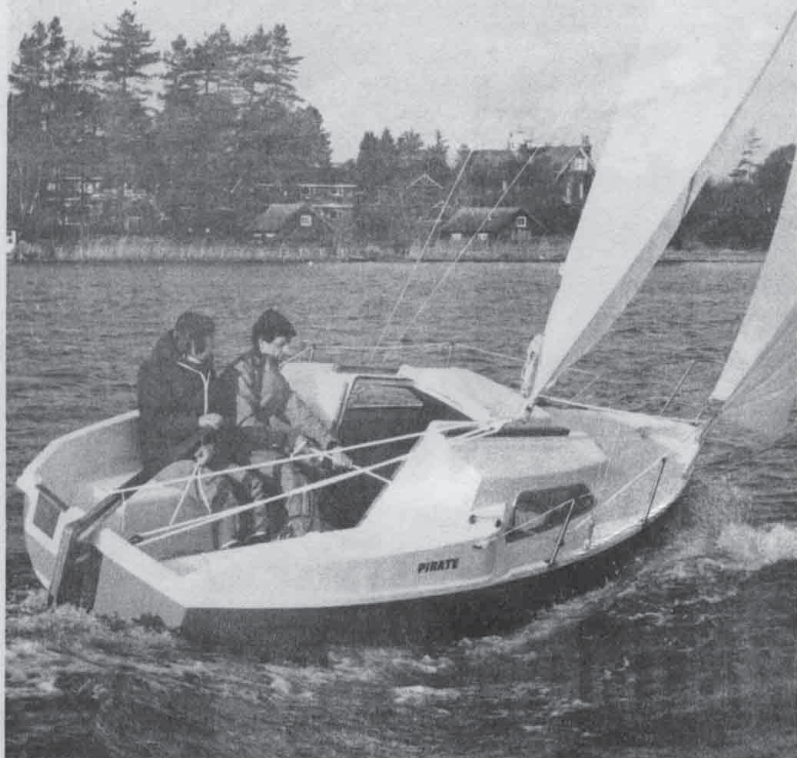


A YACHTING MONTHLY TEST REPORT ON PIRATE

a sparkling little cruiser



LOA	17ft 3in	(5.26m)
Beam	6ft 9½in	(2.07m)
Draught:		
Fin	3ft 9in	(1.14m)
Dropkeel	2ft/4ft 9in	(0.61/1.45m)
Mainsail	90sq ft	(8.36m ²)
Working jib	54.25sq ft	(5.04m ²)
Genoa	77.20sq ft	(7.17m ²)
Storm jib	33.91sq ft	(3.15m ²)
Spinnaker	140sq ft	(13.56m ²)
Berths	3 adult	
Engine	Outboard	
Displacement	1,250 lb (approx)	
Material	GRP to SBBNF standards	
Designer	Ian Proctor	
Builder	Rydgeyway Marine Ltd, Church Road, Kessingland, near Lowestoft, Suffolk. Tel: Kessingland 292	

YM Index price to include the following items. Those marked with an asterisk are *not* included in the builder's standard inventory. Engine*, spars, rigging, deck fittings, lights*, winches*, guardrails*, pulpit, anchor & cable*, bilge pump*, fenders*, warps*, mainsail, jib, genoa*, storm jib*, all running gear, water tank*, WC*, mattresses, galley with cooker*, compass*, log*.

THERE is a continuing swing towards the centreboard and the drop keel design in small cruisers. Perhaps this is because the old bogey of losing windward performance in twin keel types persists—often scarcely valid and usually far more a matter of excess coachroof windage. In the case of the 17ft 3in (5.26m) 3 berth Pirate the profile has been kept low to moderate and performance has had a high priority. The choice is between a rather extreme fin and rudder of almost Flying Fifteen character and a far more practical drop keel and lifting rudder design which accounts for 50 per cent of all sales. This report concerns the latter.

The day of our sailing report was a dull and drizzly sou'westerly which varied in strength from 12 to 20 knots, which it attained latterly, or Force 3-4 and 5 at times. The place was the mouth of the Thames estuary, which is virtually open sea.

Moving around on the tiny deck, for three grown men, was far easier than one might have expected. The side decks are just wide enough to make clambering over the coachroof unnecessary and the boat had good initial stability. There is a slippery slope to the forward edge of the coachroof but one soon learns about that. The mainsail is a luff groove type, which I don't much like because it makes rapid dropping and then hoisting again (if for instance the crew fumbled the mooring) impractical. Presumably one could fit toggle slides though. The rig seemed rather light in terms of wire sizes but there is a feeling of the boat being bigger than she is and one must remember that there are dinghies of almost Pirate's size.

We went away at an immediate fast lick and the representative remarked that Pirate seems to reach her optimum sailing speed quickly in almost all weights of wind, thereafter sticking to it—a remark which makes sense with a short waterline, easily driven hull. That she is easily driven is very

apparent. Moreover, she handles lightly and weather helm, even on a reach, was still finger light. We went through all the points of sailing and it was really dinghy work with the added advantage of having no capsizing worries. We then hove her to in order to see whether this rather perky little boat could be left to herself while a helmsman devoted time to clearing away an anchor or studying charts. With the jib sheeted fairly hard to weather, mainsail checked right out and helm a'lee she lay to a Force 4-5 more or less beam on and made ground at a rate of 2 knots forward and to leeward (wind and drift by anemometer and drift-log).

At singlehanding she was less satisfactory in that it was hard to find a position in which the tiller could be lashed to hold her on a reach or a fetch but, at a pinch, it could be done for short spells. Letting fly sails and lashing helm a'lee would usually be necessary. We tried her with her drop keel raised and found that the leeway was not as great as expected and that, at another pinch, she could have been worked and tacked over the shallows with keel up and drawing only 2ft (0.61m) against 4ft 9in (1.45m) with it down. This is a great asset. The stub ballast keel would not cause her to dry out at more than 15-20 degrees either—in softer mud she would bury it and sit upright. Optional bilge runners to hold her upright can be fitted.

The drop keel is a clever piece of designing. There is no case to clutter up the cabin, the keel being housed in the stub and under the cockpit with a lifting tackle which runs in a trough down the centre of the cockpit sole, under a cover and thus nothing to go wrong or to trap fingers. The cockpit, incidentally, has a good drain aft, in a small well. It is close to the waterline however and any overloading of weight aft results in back-flow. With 3 men in the cockpit we had around



2 inches depth there, which filled the well but did not threaten our feet. Plainly, fore and aft trim will be easy to regulate by stowing heavy gear forward when sailing.

The accommodation is very simple. Chain locker, berths with dry stowage for clothes under, lifting table which makes up the berth widths when down, a quarter berth to port and a cooking area to starboard. This has a food well behind it, a spirit stove and a fresh water pump above a recessed plastic bowl as a sink. To starboard, balancing the quarter berth, is a large cockpit locker with padlock to take the outboard motor auxiliary. Mast compression is taken by a press-moulded 'I' beam thus dispensing with bulkhead or king-post and giving more space below.

Headroom is for comfortable sitting height with lounging and sprawling room in excess. The lockers under the settees are not dry ones unfortunately and as even a pint of water in a flat-floored hull goes everywhere this is a pity—but something any bright owner could look to. We feel that the builder might be persuaded to glass these lockers against the entry of bilge water because with three persons aboard, good accessible stowage will be at a premium. The locker lids, incidentally, are incorporated with the bottoms of the settee cushions—a sensible idea because lifting cushion *and* lid every time is an annoyance in a small boat.

Having regard for her limitations of size, therefore, her shortcomings in terms of heavy windward slogging, at sea, in fresh to strong conditions and the consequent heavy physical demands upon crew, one might describe this little boat as a coast and estuary cruiser with a potential for a longer open-sea passage in the right weather and with a suitably experienced crew. Her suitability for road trailing opens new prospects for cruising and perhaps using her as a caravan en route for new cruising grounds; a trailable boat is also independent of costly and hard-to-find mooring berths.

It isn't easy to fault her for what she is, unless it is her frisky helm which limits her for one-man cruising, but even that is a matter of coming to terms. A good first boat for a young family and a practical one for grandparents too—provided they don't mind bending. JDS



Top Use of a deep girder to support mast thrust dispenses with the need for a bulkhead, thus contributing to space below. Above: picture shows the roomy cockpit locker to starboard and the shaped seat tops for comfort

