



by **ROBERT AYLIFFE**

The Wemyss Skiff, with one exception has been overlooked in Australia. Change may be coming. In past weekd there has been strong enquiry on the Wemyss Skiffs.

Pronounced, 'weemz,' the Wemyss skiff is about half the size and a bit over a third the weight of a St Ayles Skiff. The Wemyss Skiff design was commissioned by Alec Jordan, the same person who commissioned Iain Oughtred to design the St Ayles Skiff out of a personal love of open ocean community rowing and boat building, especially from kits. Alec tells me that right now in the UK many of the St Ayles community groups are supplementing their fleets with the Wemyss Skiffs to attract smaller groups to open water and community for training, general fitness pure rowing and sailing pleasure. Two people can easily carry them to and from the water. The boat weighs about 90kg, or a bit over 1/3 the weight of

SAILING WEMYSS SKIFF. A truly multi purpose boat, a great addition to your to your St Ayles Skiff Fleet, or really getting into open water rowing and sailing in a boat that will do stylishly and without fuss. Love the balanced lug rig!



her big sister, the St Ayles Skiff. One to two rowers with or without cox or passenger is ideal.

The Wemyss Skiff is very easy to set up and go sailing, or to pack up the sailing rig and if needed, row home.

The buoyancy chambers inspire confidence, and the integral offset centreboard makes for quick conversion to sailing rig.

The rig easily packs up to stow within the length of the boat.

I'm looking forward seeing a new spark of interest in this very competent small rowing and sailing boat.

I have yet to try the boat in choppy water but feel very confident that she will handle it very capably and safely. Experience with the faerings has demonstrated the virtues of a narrow waterline combined with great flare and a strong sheer. These qualities give the boat an impressive tendency to stay on top of it all, wherever the waves are coming from. In this hull the flare is even more exaggerated. And the rounded cutaway forefoot and stern aid manoeuvrability, and help to make the hull a very good surf boat.

Paul Gartside has done a lot of serious coastal cruising in boats of this type. As far as Alaska. His boats are more extreme, being designed for minimal



TOP: Alec Jordan and friend carry Wemyss #1 from the water.

ABOVE: Alec Jordan down under, rowing David Stamp's *Glencoe* in Franklin Tasmania.



resistance and fast passagemaking. Often with an even narrower waterline beam, and more flare and longer waterline.

The Weymss boat is more substantial, with a little more stability, load-carrying capacity, and limited, but useful, potential for sailing. Really a remarkably versatile and easily-handled boat.

The length is variable according to requirements. Shown on the Lines Plan at 17' 1" / 5.21m, it appears on the Construction at 16'5" / 5.01m. By varying the spacing of the frames, it may be reduced to 15'9" / 4.80m, or increased to 16.5' / 5.51m.

The hull is planked up in 6mm plywood. Over six light frames of 12mm. Incorporated in these frames are the supports for the long side benches, which are parallel and allow the thwarts to be shifted fore and aft to trim the boat according to variations in crew weight. This allows the fine-ended hull, sensitive to trim, to be balanced up nicely. (Though maybe you need an observer on the shore to say if you've got it right). Three rowlock positions are suggested, one for single-handed operation. More can be added.

TOP L-R: Making stems for Wemyss Skiff, three generations of Stamps at work here; And ... they fit! ... Wedge clamps holding planks in place without screws.

ABOVE: Hull right way up, off the molds.

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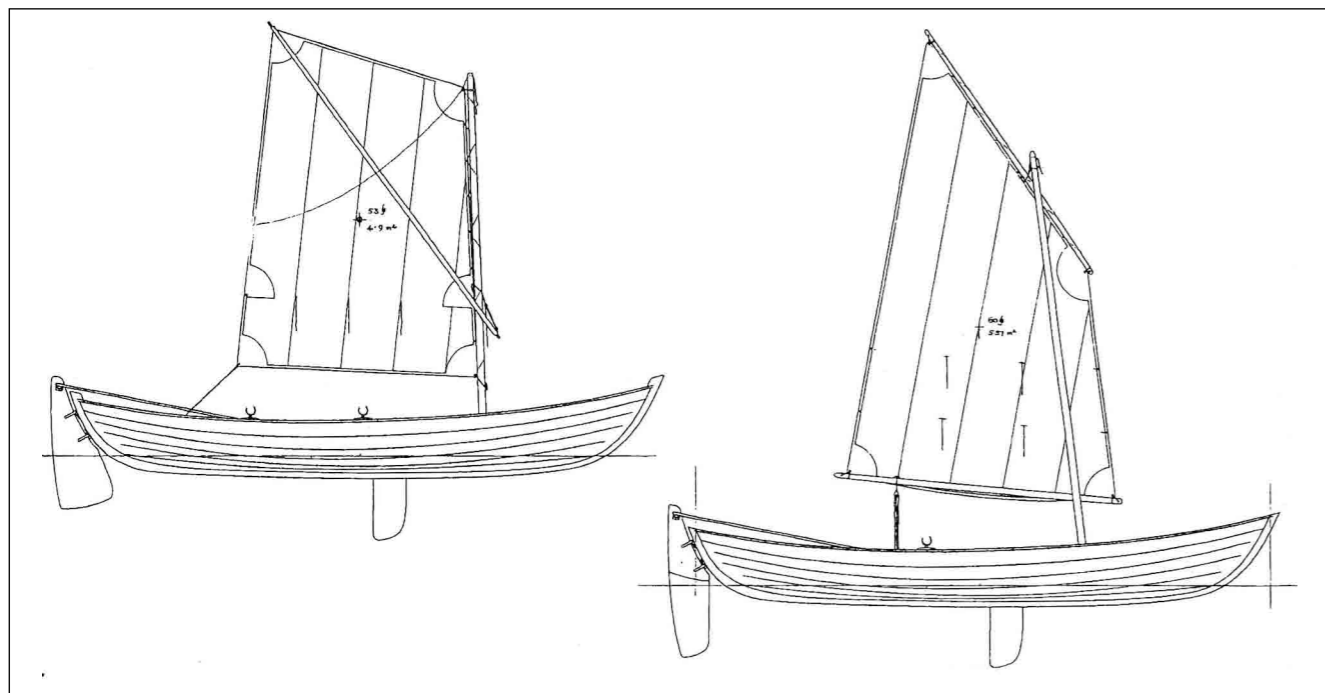
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A considerable amount of buoyancy is thus built in; more can be added with the foredeck and bulkhead, and the aft seat. This will be plenty to enable a crew to bail out a swamped boat.

Like the dories and faerings, this one is inevitably tender under sail, and can quickly dip the rail in a gusty breeze, but respond instantly to just an inch or two easing of the sheet, and need only a small sail area to move them along quite quickly. Two rigs are offered (actually borrowed from the Faerings); the spritsail is the simplest to set up and to handle, and uses the shortest spars for a given sail area. The balanced lug offers just a little more sailing performance, especially downwind. The daggerboard is of moderate size, offset to port alongside the fore-and-aft seat. It restricts the adjustability of the 'midships thwart just a little.

FROM IAIN OUGTRED'S LAPSTRAKE PLYWOOD BOAT DESIGN CATALOGUE ...

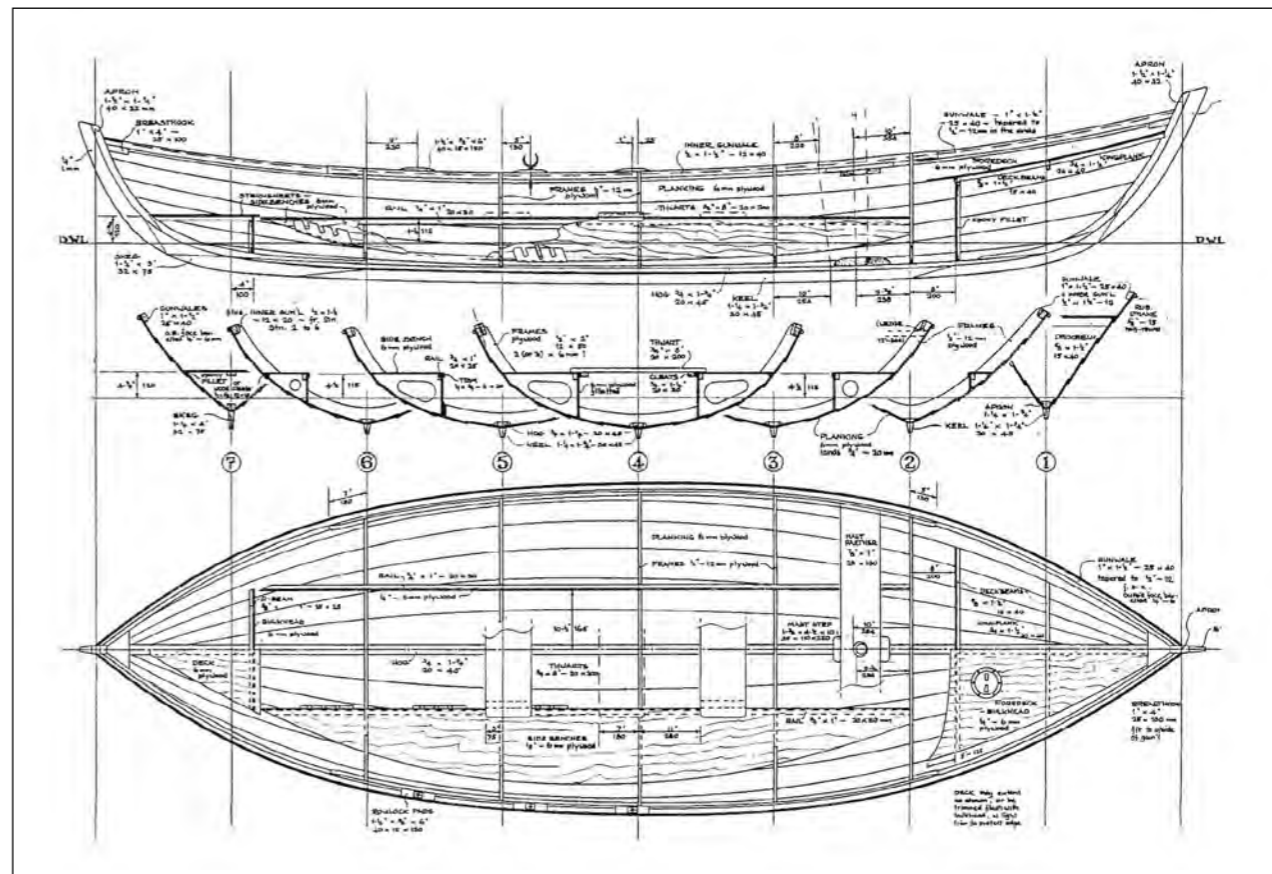


ABOVE LEFT: Wemyss Skiff with interior nicely cleaned up. Notice the side seats and buoyancy tank framing.

These bits all come with the kit, precut.

ABOVE RIGHT: Wemyss Skiff with new Aquacote paint.

WEMYSS SKIFF



TYPE: Fast rowing skiff
CAPACITY: 1, 2, 3
OPTIONAL RIG: Sprit, Blanced Lug

LOA 16'5" / 5.01m
BEAM 4'10" / 1.47m
DEPTH 19" / 480mm
WEIGHT 200 lbs / 90kg

CONSTRUCTION: Glued-lap clinker plywood
OPTIONS: Cold-moulded, strip-plank, trad plank
BUILDING TIME: (pro) 240 hours
PLANS: Six sheets

Alec Jordan perceived a need for a light fast pulling boat, initially as an alternative for the St Ayles Skiff crews, who may want a little practice, without needing to launch a 22' boat. Two is the ideal crew for this one, but a cox or passenger is easily accommodated. And the boat was to be quite manageable for a single-hander.

Many others of course will find a versatile fast rowing boat a delight to work with, especially if able to comfortably handle a little rough water, to carry a friend or two, and even to set a small sail occasionally. When Alec brought the prototype up for a trial in the harbour of Portree, I was surprised to find how well she performed, and said that with such a boat even I could get a wee bit interested in rowing. And the crew of two can easily carry her to the water and back again, and the boat is light enough for car-topping.