

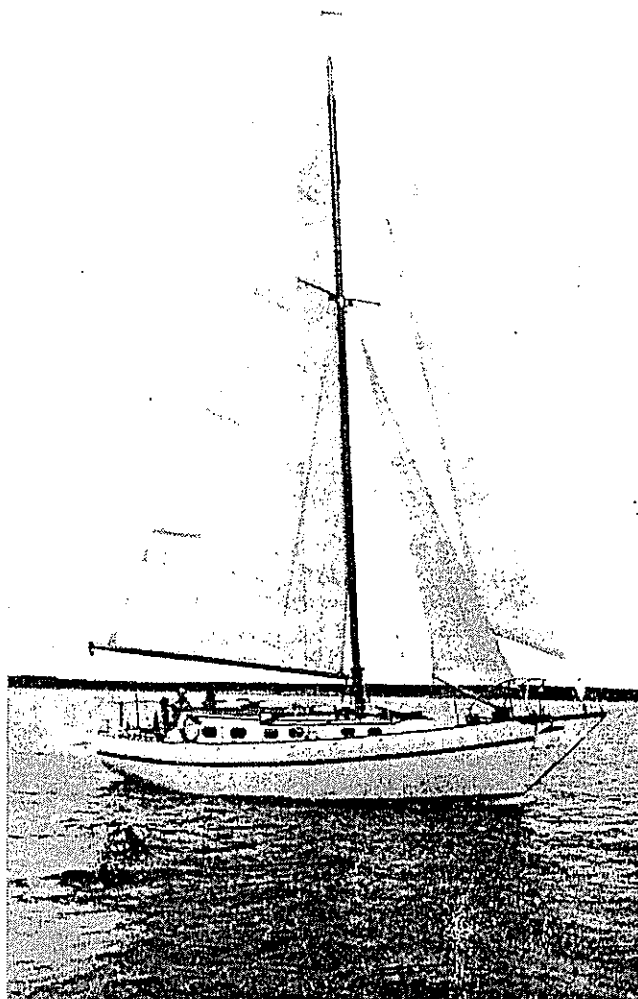
Idle Duck

Maurice Griffiths
designs a 34-footer
based on the lines
of an old boat

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DATA

LOA	34.0ft	(10.36m)
LWL	31.25ft	(9.53m)
Beam	11.0ft	(3.35m)
Draught	3.50ft	(1.07m)
(CB down)	6.33ft	(1.93m)
Displacement	20,800 lb	(9,600kg)
Lead keel	5,240 lb	(2,460kg)
TM	14 tons	
Sail areas:		
Working	595sq ft	(55.3m ²)
With genoa	820sq ft	(76.2m ²)
Engine	Perkins 4,107 diesel,	33bhp
Builders	Jas N Miller & Sons Ltd,	St Monance
Owners	Brian and Zella Kelley	



AT a time when battleships were painted with black hulls, white upper works and buff coloured funnels, and the year when HMS *Camperdown* rammed and sank *Victoria* during Fleet exercises in the Mediterranean, J T Howard at Maldon, Essex, built a sturdy yacht for a customer who wanted her specially designed for wildfowling. *Scoter*, as she was called, was a very beamy 14-tonner with shallow draught, almost knee-high bulwarks, a transom stern, and no outside keel but a heavy iron centreboard about ten feet in length.

When launched in 1894 she carried a bawley's rig with a long gaff on a boomless mainsail, a tall fidded topmast, and the long pole bowsprit of the period. It is said that her eccentric owner mounted tow great fowling pieces, one each side on the foredeck, and in misty weather when he was inclined to sight duck in every direction the *Scoter* became the terror of all the other wildfowling in the Essex creeks.

I knew her first about 1920 when she was based at Ipswich on the Orwell. She appealed to me then as such an admirable type of boat for the East Coast rivers that years later, in 1938, when I designed my first *Lone Gull* and had her built at Leigh, she also was a transom sterned centreboarder, and people who knew her said she looked exactly like a smaller *Scoter*.

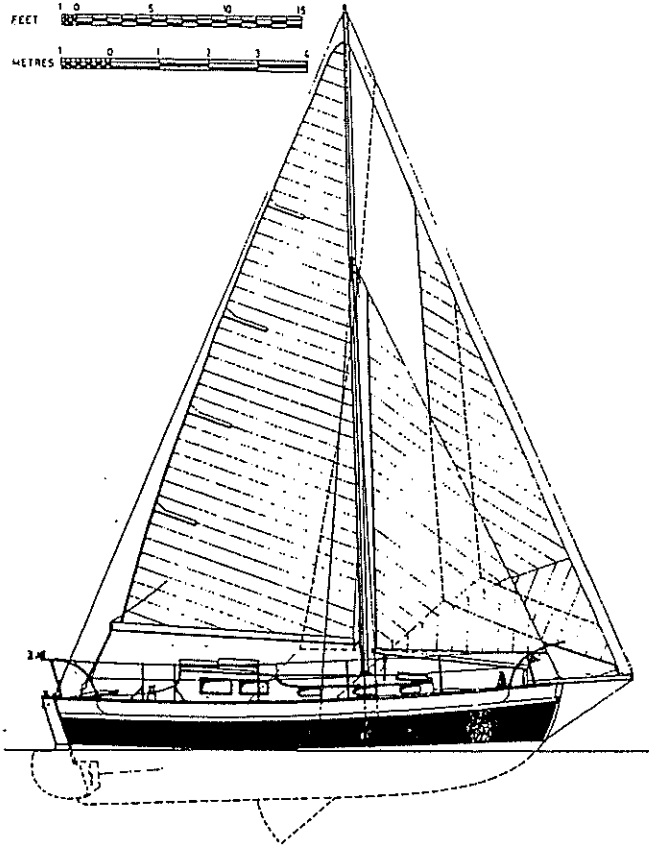
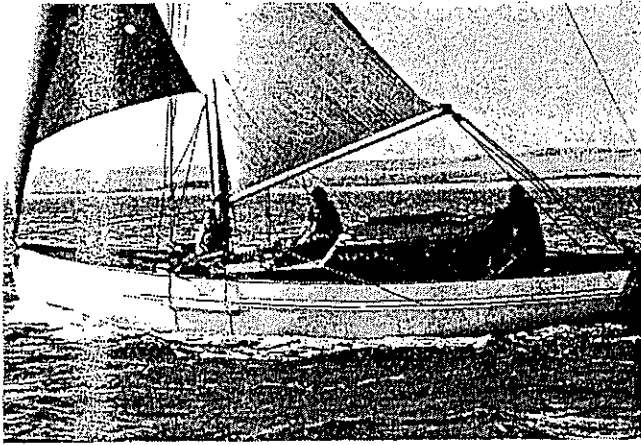
Under the ownership of commercial artist Colin Grierson since long before the war, *Scoter* has had her mooring in the half tide harbour at Tayport, Fife. Her old-fashioned topsail rig has passed through experimental stages of a sliding gunter to her present neat Bermudan sloop sail plan, and she also at last acquired auxiliary power in the shape of a single-cylinder Lister diesel.

Brian and Zella Kelley also kept their forty year old Baltic sloop in the same harbour, and had long envied the comfortable way their friend Colin's *Scoter* settled on the mud as the tide went out. Their own boat was 40 feet from tip to tip, as slender as a pencil and deep in the keel, and often while they sailed in company with *Scoter* they noticed how purposeful and seakindly she appeared, heeling only a few degrees in a breeze while their own racer leant over on her ear and scooped up the seas like a child gobbling rice crispies.

One day she found new owners and the Kelleys asked me to design them a new boat that would have all the best traditional characteristics of *Scoter* plus any modern improvements we could incorporate. But they wanted essentially a yacht that would lie comfortably on the harbour mud, and still give them both complete confidence during their annual cruises across to the Norwegian fjords with a draught limit of 3ft 6in.

Happily Colin had taken off the lines of his beloved old centreboarder some years before, and generously gave me a copy to study. And a remarkably fine hull old man Howard had produced back in '94 for the purpose of her owner. From a rounded stem to her transom stern she was 32.5ft with 11.0ft beam and a draught with the plate up of only three feet. With no outside ballast the false keel was but two inches beneath the garboard planks, but the boiler plate centreboard weighed 580 lb, and lead pigs were fitted into spaces each side of the case to a total weight of 1½ tons.

Without slavishly copying the old *Scoter's* lines I drew the lines of *Idle Duck* with more freeboard and considerably greater displacement, incorporating an outside ballast keel



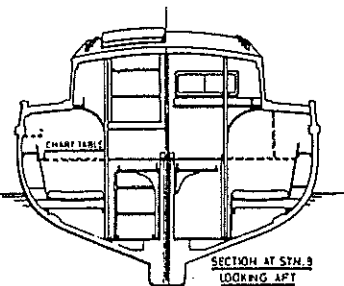
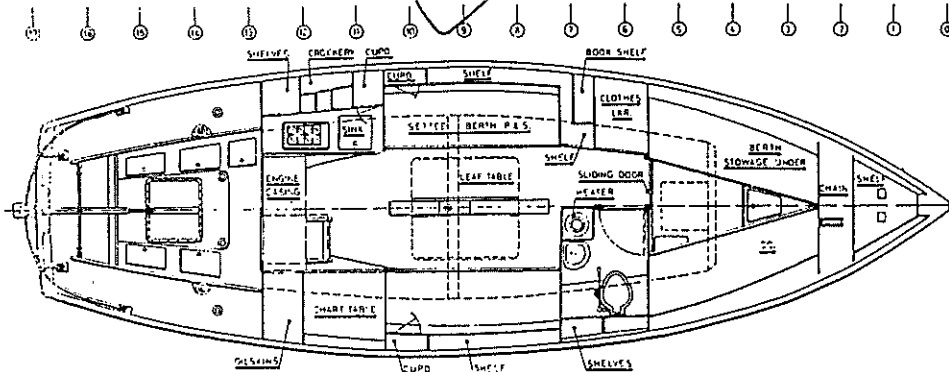
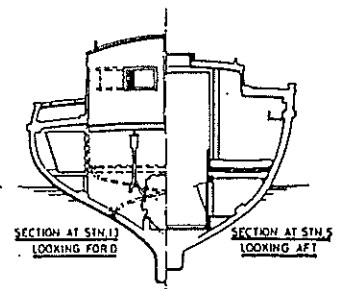
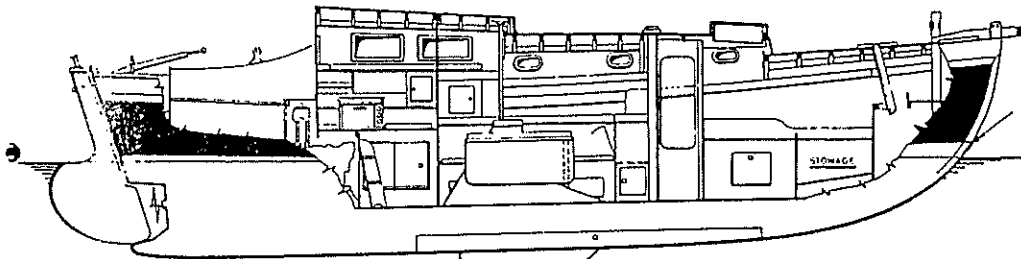
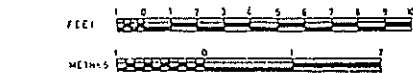
of about 2.35 tons so as to ensure that she would be self-righting if she was ever rolled right down by a breaking sea or a violent squall. To get this weight into the casting and yet keep the yacht's draught to the 3ft 6in limit asked for, iron would have been far too bulky, and lead it had to be.

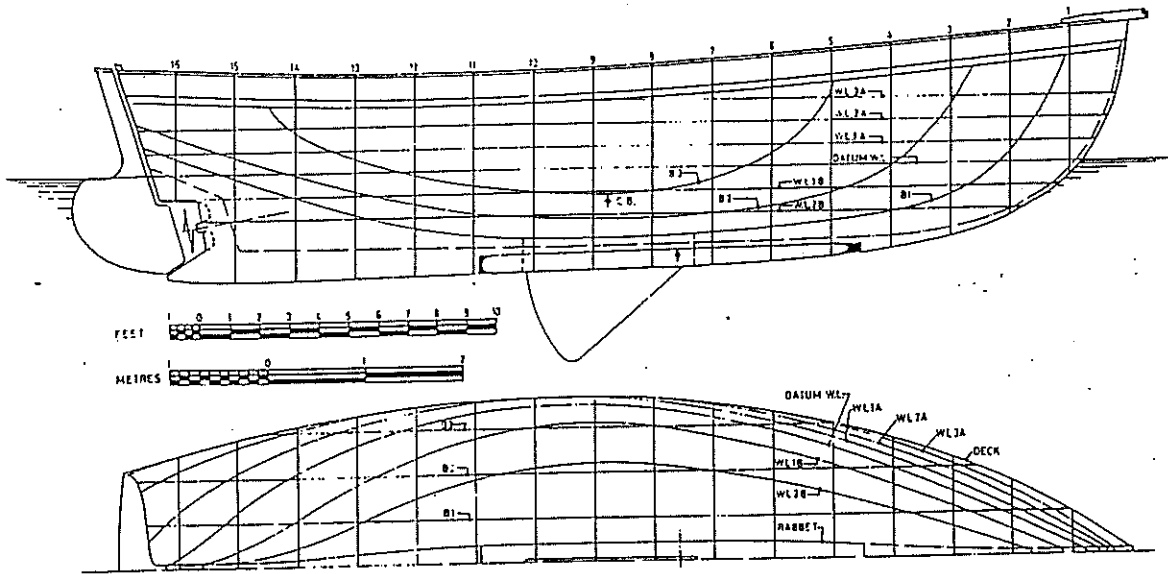
For this size of yacht a centreboard, like any barge's lee-board, is far easier to work if it is built up of wood; but the wooden board must be weighted at the after end so that it will not float. Brian Kelley is skilful with tools, and he not only built this centreboard himself but also made a beautiful shaped hollow mast in spruce. The board is planked with three layers of seasoned pitch pine, $\frac{3}{4}$ in fore-and-aft on the outside and $\frac{3}{4}$ in in vertical planks on the inside. A 60 lb slab of lead is inserted in this inner skin, and the planks are fastened throughout with Tower Manufacturing Co Grip-Fast bronze nails driven flush. The underside and after edge of the board is also protected by a $\frac{3}{4}$ in half-round brass beading, the after edge being carefully chamfered to reduce drag. A projection on the after side comes to rest on the top of the wood keel when the board is fully lowered, so that should the lifting pendant part or a shackle come adrift the board cannot swing right down and be damaged or lost.

Only a small part of the centreboard case protrudes above

the cabin sole, and this part supports the leaf table. An important detail, which I am sorry to say many builders and even eminent designers tend to ignore, is a small hatch in the top of the case above the waterline which can be opened up while the yacht is afloat, to give access to the lifting tackle or to force the board down to clear the case of mud or stones after lying aground.

By today's standards *Idle Duck* was very strongly, even

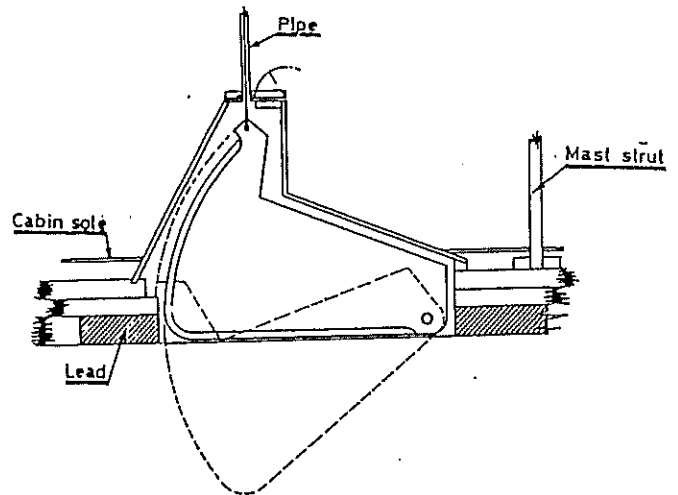




heavily, built by a Scottish yard noted for their high standards in yachts and fishing boats. Scantlings were made traditionally heavy to withstand rough usage at sea or on the notorious Tay banks. The carvel hull is planked with 1½in iroko, copper roove fastened to English oak frames 2in by 1½in closely spaced throughout at 7in centres, with floor-frames of 2½in by ½in bronze at every third frame. An oak hog 4in moulded depth and 24in sided amidships is bolted to the top of the oak keel, which is 5in moulded and 15in wide amidships, so that there is not less than 4in width of landing (or back rabbit) for fastening the garboard strakes. Except for the galvanised coachbolts fastening the cabin risings to the carlines, *Idle Duck's* hull has no other ferrous fastenings throughout its length; if well cared for she *could* be one of the last trad-built yachts to be found in a hundred years' time!

The marine ply decks are covered with teak planking laid to the curve of the covering boards, a traditional finish that looks fine and is rarely to be seen these days. Below decks the accommodation is straightforward with a traditional fine finish and plenty of space for living quarters for four people. With 6ft 10in headroom at the after end of the coachroof and 6ft 1in under the deck beams forward the cabin appears light and airy with ample room for a party round the table in the evening. The Perkins 4.107 diesel can give a fair 7 knots, and carries enough fuel for about 50 hours running at a cruising speed of 6 knots.

Writing of his ship Brian Kelley says: '*Idle Duck* has turned out to be what we wanted. My wife and I are in our sixties and like a little comfort. We find '*Duckers*' dry and kindly at sea whether to windward or running in a North Sea swell. Although we were prepared to accept a rather slow ship, we



find that she is much faster both in smooth water and in the rough stuff than we dared hope for. We had half hoped to be able to do a Slocum and never have to steer, but this is not the case. On the wind when it is steady in strength she will sail herself as long as the wind lasts (and the water, of course); on any other point of sailing she gives time to light the Primus, plot a position, etc. We haven't yet had to face a full gale, but from her behaviour in rough conditions and from experiments in heaving-to in winds of Force 6 and 7, we are confident that, when heaving-to is really necessary, she will be dry and safe.'