

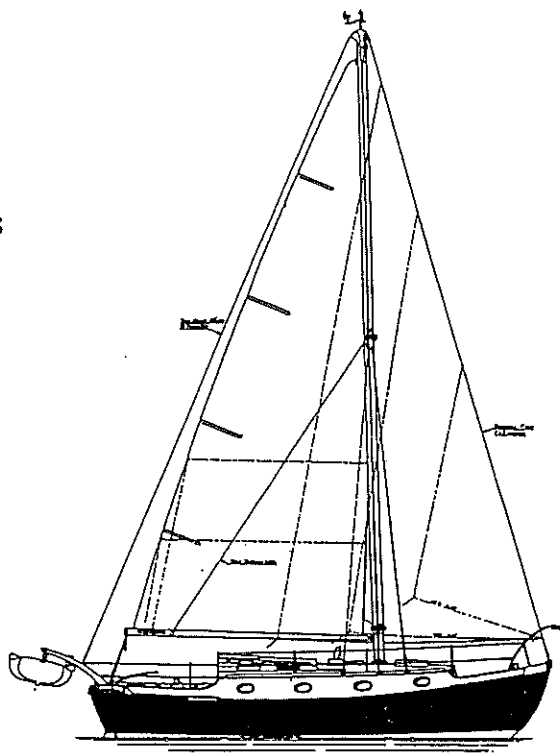
LONE GULL II, 8 Tons

By MAURICE GRIFFITHS

TWENTY-FIVE years have passed since I first planned *Lone Gull I*, a centreboard cutter of 10 tons T M, 28.5ft oa and 10ft beam. *Lone Gull I*, as described in YACHTING MONTHLY, October 1938, was a type of boat that has long appealed to me for the sort of cruising that I like, in and out of rivers and harbours that dry out, and into places where the deep-keeled yachts never go: the plain, economical, shallow-draught boat with transom stern and simple and strong rudder mountings, a simple rig, good beam and no nonsense about her.

Lone Gull II is purely a development of her predecessor, but a little smaller with 9ft beam, and in place of the earlier boat's wooden centreboard she was designed with shaped oak bilge keels. She was built for me strongly and well by Harry Feltham Ltd, Portsmouth, and launched last June. On the all-too-few cruises we have had in her before laying up the bilge keels have shown over and over what a blessing they can be when Solent anchorages are crammed with yachts and the only quiet spaces are likely to dry out. *Lone Gull II* has sat firmly upright in Bembridge, Wootton Creek, below the bridge at Wareham, and elsewhere.

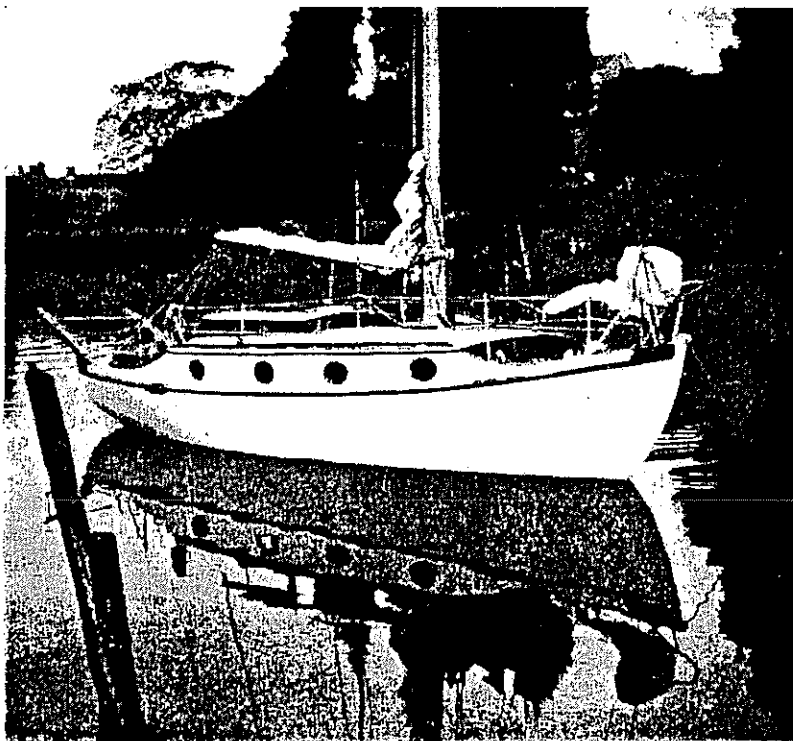
In one of the Solent creeks *Lone Gull II* visited the harbour-master remarked: 'I wish all yachts that come



in here could sit upright. I could find plenty of room for them. As it is, look how we have to pack in that lot—they all draw about 5ft.' He indicated a solid jam of yachts of from 6 to 20 tons or so in the only spot where they would lie afloat at low water. On the last of the evening breeze we drifted farther up to a vacant spot in the creek where an hour or two later we sat silently upright on the mud and listened to the cries of the seabirds.

I enjoy so much the peace of uncrowded little creeks and anchorages where the mud uncovers at low tide and the waders leave their dainty footprints all round the boat.

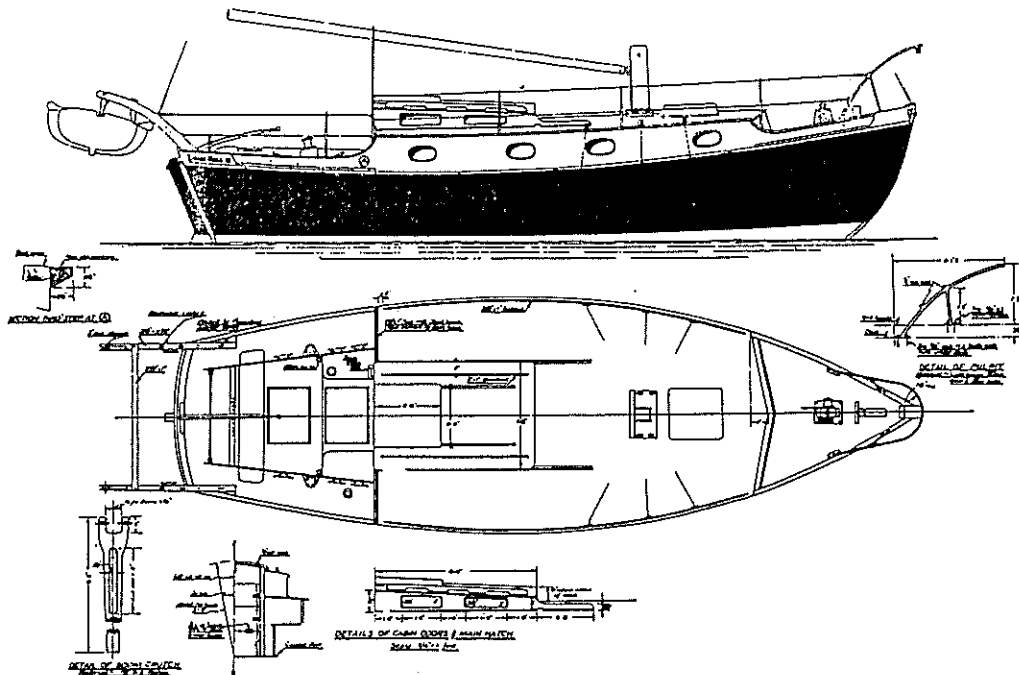
There is so much fierce competition in one's daily work that I look to my little ship as a means to enjoy peace and relaxation, not as an instrument for further competition. For this reason I have no burning ambition to keep



In the fresh water at Wareham
Lone Gull II floats deeper

DATA

LOA	28.0ft
LWL	24.0ft
Beam moulded	9.0ft
Draught	3.3ft
Iron keel	4,200lb
Displacement	11,500lb
T M	8 tons
Sail area, mainsail	248 sq ft
No 1 jib	150 sq ft
Power	Lister 8½hp diesel
Builders	Harry Feltham Ltd
Designer	Maurice Griffiths, A.R.I.N.A.
Home port	Portsmouth Harbour



up with the best of the ocean racing fleet, nor can I say that I ever enjoy a prolonged thresh to windward against strong winds and seas, finding it uncomfortable and exhausting. So long as my boat is no sluggard, handles well in crowded harbours, and sails to windward as well as most cruising yachts of her length, I am well content.

In windward sailing these bilge keels have shown a degree of efficiency in preventing leeway which has surprised sceptical crews. In moderate to fresh winds they appear to be better than a centreboard. It is only in light airs and baffling head winds that shoal-draught boats of this type make much leeway, when in fact the ratio of leeway increases as forward way through the water grows less. Then the skipper can either exercise his patience at the helm, set his biggest genoa, or run the engine at quarter speed.

The bilge keels undoubtedly act as roll-damping fins. Although *Lone Gull I* never rolled violently because of her midship section and disposal of weights, *Lone Gull II* seems even less inclined to roll. On a run down wind or with wind and sea on her quarter she may give two rolls as a sea passes her, but almost immediately settles back on course as if she were a railcar running on a track. There is none of that ghastly rhythmic rolling of the deep-draught yacht with boom alternately skywards and sea-dipping, and queasy crews (aren't we all at some time or another?) tell me her motion is one of the easiest.

Experiments with a number of other boats built to previous designs with bilge keels has led to the conclusion that there is no worth-while gain in toeing-in the bilge keels. Whilst a deep narrow leeboard, such as the Dutch botter's or hoogaart's, is more effective with two or three degrees toe-in, with bilge keels that are more than twice as long as their depth the effect becomes excessive and may create unwanted drag on every point of sailing. *Lone Gull II*'s are accordingly exactly parallel to the centreline.

Snags with bilge keels? I can think of three: (a) when scrubbing the bottom and antifouling, it is none too easy to reach behind the bilge keels and needs a long brush; (b) when the ship is sailing hard and well heeled with the weather keel breaking surface, one has to get used to the hearty *k'flumps* that occur underneath the bilge keel. These thuds are harmless and are in any case no worse than those which occur under the flat of a V-bottom boat when the weather chine breaks surface. (c) Underwater ledges or sloping causeways must be watched if you are settling alongside on the ebb.

With her sizeable main hatch and built-up topsides amidships the space in the cabin makes visitors who are accustomed to the normal 8- or 9-tonner's accommodation gasp. Headroom under the mainhatch beams is 6ft 5in and forward in the toilet lobby 5ft 5in. The cabin settees—made in my usual style with battens fore and aft, leaving air spaces between, and with a 1½in hollow athwartships which makes for a much more comfortable berth—extend about 15in under the sink to port and under a clothes locker to starboard. Both form useful places to stow the bedding by day. The fo'c's'le has a 6ft 4in bunk with a pipe-cot opposite and plenty of lockers. The chain box forms a step for getting through the hatch. It is fed from the combined chain and warp drum windlass on the mast.

There is no bridge deck. The cockpit floor slopes some 6in down aft to scupper drains in the transom. This puts the forward end high enough to cover the Lister diesel.

I have had second thoughts about self-draining cockpits where the cockpit is well aft, as in boats of this type. It seems that those who have never had their cockpit full of water always dread the experience and plump for drains; and those few seadogs who *have* had their boats dragged down aft by a sea in the cockpit say it would have been safer for the ship and easier to get rid of the water through the bilge pump if the cockpit had emptied rapidly into the bilge. The two schools of thought do not convince one another.

What surprises most helmsmen who have sailed her is *Lone Gull*'s lightness on the helm. A balance of hull and centre of effort has somehow been struck which enables one to steer her generally with two fingers on the tiller. In winds of Force 5 and above, a firm hand, or the tiller under the crook of the arm, is all that is needed. The partially balanced rudder probably takes much of the weight off the tiller, but when sailing fast the rudder is usually at less than 10 degrees angle, and under engine alone she has only the slightest torque to starboard.

The mast is stepped in a tabernacle to make for easier maintenance, and is fitted with independent warping drum and chain gypsy. The roller reefing gear was made up for me by a friend from a car steering box and has a very sweet action.

The engine is a Lister 8½hp twin-cylinder air-cooled diesel which turns a 17½in diameter propeller through a 2:1 reduction at 650rpm to give a comfortable cruising speed of 5½ knots, and a maximum of 6½ knots. The

economy in running a small diesel was shown when during our shake-down cruise when we had days of calms and light airs and logged a total of 21½ hours' engine running time, the fuel consumption was 5½ gallons, costing 1s 6d a gallon or roughly 5d an hour.

The cooling air is drawn through louvres under the seat covering the 30-gallon fresh water tank to starboard, and ejected through similar louvres in the locker on the port side of the cockpit. When the engine is running this locker makes a capital airing cupboard for wet clothes. A duct with flap valve to lead this hot air into the cabin lockers in cold weather is one of the things to be added in due course.

The engine is totally covered in by the cockpit floor and removable cabin steps, and when running gives no more noise or vibration than a heavy two-cylinder petrol engine of equivalent shaft horsepower. The fuel tank holds 10 gallons and two 5-gallon Robbicans stow under the helmsman's seat. This appears to be sufficient fuel to run for the whole season without the old drudgery of going ashore for cans of fuel.

People not familiar with a diesel ask if it does not make the whole boat smell. Light diesel oil in itself has no more smell than lubricating oil. If you are normally careful and avoid spillage which will be soaked up by the ship's planking, there is very little odour of oil. Bilgex or any of the household detergents will soon clear any smell. By adding a little Redex DD deodorant and upper cylinder lubricant to the fuel before it is run into the tank, almost all trace of characteristic diesel smell seems to be removed, notably from the exhaust. Personally diesel oil does not worry me and I enjoy the aroma of a motorship's engine-room, but I cannot abide the nauseating stink of modern petrol. Others are affected differently. I cannot think why diesel engine manufacturers do not make such points clear in their advertisements when trying to sell to yachtsmen, instead of assuming that everybody knows about diesel engines and their own in particular.

My engine starts easily by hand, unaffected by sea water or damp air, and there are no batteries, no electrics, for electrical gadgets seldom work for me when urgently needed. Apart from dry battery lights for occasional use in the galley, over the chart table, in the heads and the fo'c's'le, the cabin is lit by a handsome double-burner oil lamp in gimbals. Crews used to observing economy in the use of electric light and charging routine aboard other boats are captivated by the soft light which permits them to read a book in any corner of the cabin. The heat is largely taken out by a teak and copper box-trap ventilator I made to fit on deck over it.

I have long thought there was something wrong when a yacht is forced to carry her dinghy stowed bottom up high on the cabin top, effectively blocking the helmsman's view forward. This summer I saw the nearest shave from a collision with another boat in Cowes anchorage from this very cause. Some better way, I thought, ought to be tried, and I turned to the way the small traders in the Baltic always carried their boats—on stout wood davits athwart their sterns (see *Y M*, December 1960). Thus have boats been carried since the days of the early Tudor ships, the old whalers, Colonial American trading schooners and the Baltic cutters and ketches. It is an old enough method, although passers-by have been heard to exclaim: 'Oh I say, what a novel way of carrying the dinghy!' It has not been fashionable for yachts to have broad enough sterns to carry their boats like this. But given a buoyant transom stern like *Lone Gull's* we have found this an excellent way of carrying the boat while leaving full visibility forward for the helmsman. It takes

about 90 seconds for one man to haul the dinghy up and gripe it hard against the davits ready for sea, using the falls of one of the hoisting tackles for the gripes. To lower away the boat is a matter of a few seconds only, and I consider this one of the essentials to be aimed at when stowing a dinghy on board.

Does the weight of the dinghy and its davits drag her down by the stern? one is asked. It is allowed for in the design, and difference of trim aft when the pram is hoisted is only ¼in, equivalent, say, to a 10-stone man sitting on the taffrail, or the addition of an old-fashioned counter, hardly a danger to the yacht. Does not the sea ever strike the dinghy? With a buoyant stern like this there seems no reason for alarm. So far seas have come nowhere near the boat; but a friend who sails one of my 10-tonners, a similar design to *Lone Gull II* but a size larger, took her through the tail end of a race in bad weather to test the theory (a brave man) and found that only once did a very steep crest come up and give his dinghy a slap underneath. If a dinghy cannot take that, it had better be returned to the makers.

Many yachts are awkward for the elderly and unagile to get aboard. In *Lone Gull II* alongside the gangway in the rail at the break of the deck the 2in rubbing strake swells out into a flat-topped teak step, 12in by 3in by 3½in, which appears a welcome idea to everyone who comes aboard from a dinghy, and forms a strong fender in emergency.

Lone Gull's hull is stoutly built with close-spaced rock elm frames planked with 1in teak to waterline and some good West African mahogany to the rail.

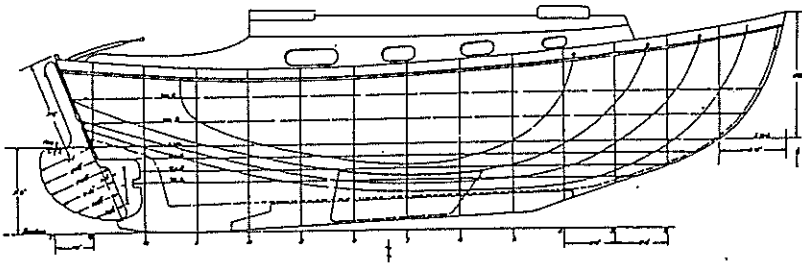
The bilge keels are fitted in a method I have adopted in a number of previous designs. Each is formed of three planks fully streamlined, 4½in wide at the top tapering to a fine trailing edge at the after end. The bottom plank is of greenheart and fastened with socket bolts to the middle plank so as to be easy to replace should it become chafed or damaged after many groundings. The upper two planks of oak are through bolted to heavy bilge stringers 5½in by 1½in with oak partners which cover three adjacent planks beneath the stringers and between the frames. These pads are shaped so as not to hold bilge water, and the whole assembly is as strong to withstand grounding shocks as most fin-keel boats' keels. These bilge keels are not weighted; the ballast of 2 tons is carried on the main keel in the orthodox manner, with some 500lb of ballast for trimming inside.

Decks are marineply covered with International epoxy-resin-bonded glass fibre mat, painted pale blue and lightly sanded. This makes a fine, hard deck which should stand any amount of wear. The International 707 varnish seems to have stood the weather remarkably well, and after four months mainly in the waters around Portsmouth Harbour the Kobe Red on the bottom had hardly a trace of slime when she was hauled out in October. A patch aft, purposely left uncovered with the antifouling composition, was festooned with weed.

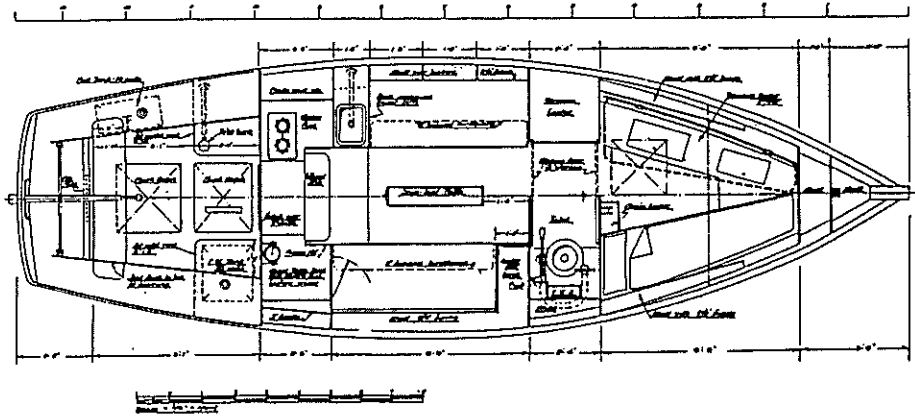
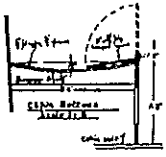
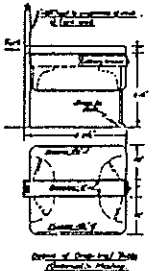
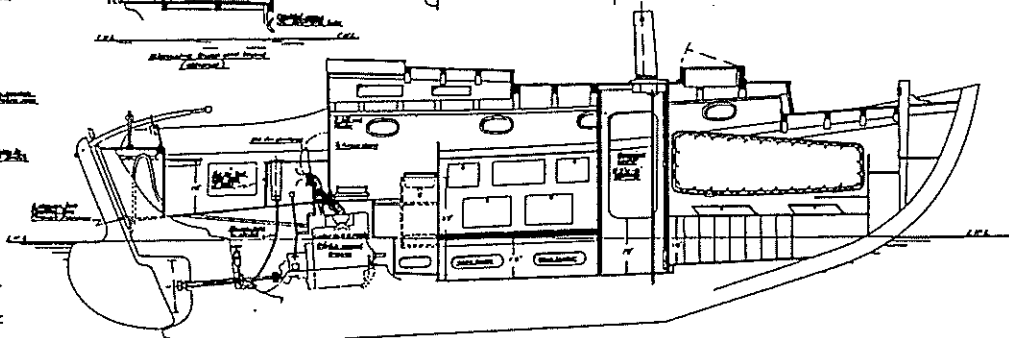
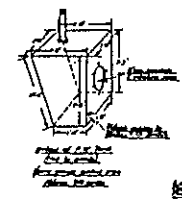
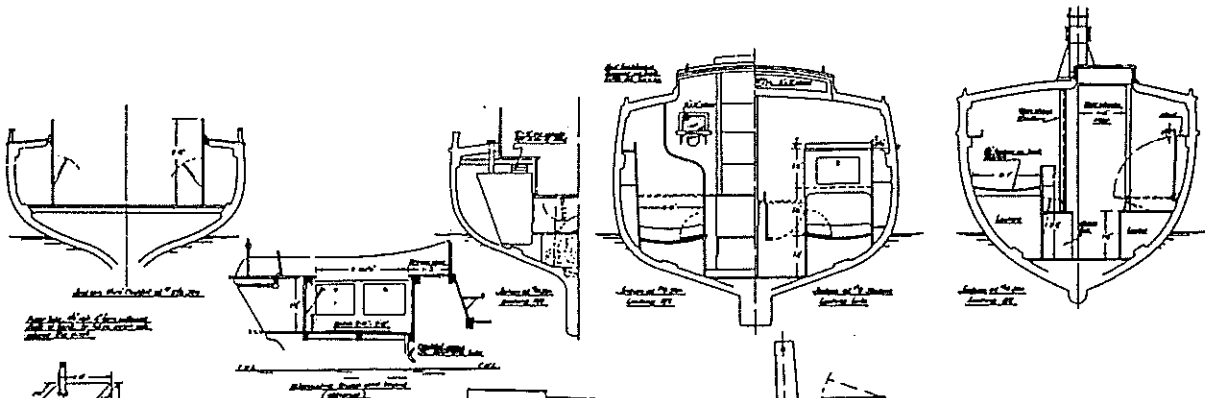
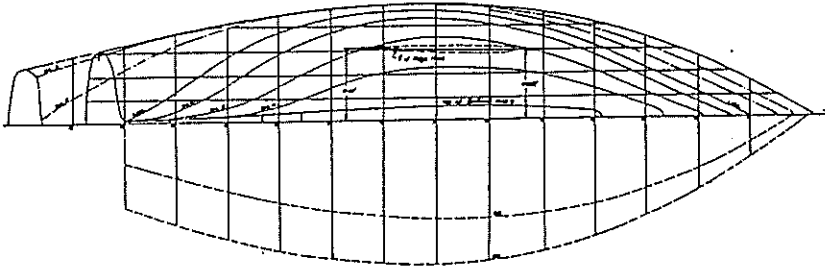
All in all, *Lone Gull II* has proved a very satisfactory little ship that could be repeated for something in the price brackets of £400 or so per ton T.M. She has shown* herself faster than her predecessor and delightfully light on the helm, her decks are dry when beating into a steep sea, and her motion is as easy as one could wish in an 8-tonner. I feel she is a development of a type that can face almost any kind of weather offshore, yet could find her way into any harbour and creek where there is, say, 4ft of water.

What more could one want for anxiety-free cruising?

* 1961 figure



LONE GULL II. The lines show the form and position of the hardwood bilge keels



General arrangement drawing with details of alternative designs of self-draining cockpit, cabin table, and slatted settee berths