

MY BOAT - *GUSTO*

By Tim Edkins



Gusto gets a second wind

GUSTO has had many false starts in her life.

Elle McPherson bought a Volvo 60 boat, *Heineken*, and had it sailed out to Australia to use as a training boat for a girls' team to compete in the 1997/98 Volvo race. At the same time, she commissioned Bruce Farr and McConaghy boats to build her a new race boat. The hull and bulkheads of the new boat were built and then Elle pulled out of the race.

About 1998, John Biddlecombe bought the hull and proceeded to convert it to an Open 60, the plan being to compete in the 2000 Vendée Globe non-stop solo around the world race. John, along with Dario Valenza, significantly changed the original concept, gearing it towards solo sailing. They added over 1 metre extra beam, lowered the top sides, moved the keel and rig aft, and changed to water ballast and a swept-back rig.

The boat was then called *Liberty*, and, once completed, was trialled against Kanga Birtles' Open 60. However, once again the money was not there to make the start line in France.

In about 2006, *Liberty* was purchased by Brian Pattison and Pat Guidice and re-named *Gusto 1*. *Gusto* competed in the 2007 Melbourne to Osaka race, Brian doing the majority of the race solo after Pat was forced to get off in Honiara. She was then raced from Sandringham Yacht Club for a couple of seasons.

In 2008, I bought *Gusto* in a rundown state with the carbon rig lying on the wharf in two bits. Peter Drew and I re-stood half the mast

and motor/sailed back to RSAYS, with the other bits lashed to the deck. Work got in the way and *Gusto* sat again.

My interest in the French Open 60 designs developed when I was a delivery skipper and boat manager for Don McIntyre's 1990/91 BOC race. I loved the 'froggies' attitude towards sailing and innovation, and felt the French inspiration is fundamental to the creation of these designs.

I got to know many of the skippers and shore crews as we maintained the boats in each port and had some great times while the boats were at sea, including travelling in Africa via steam train and flying para sails in the French Alps. It was during this time that I decided the basic concept of these Open boats was ideal for fun cruising, the main problem being the 4.5m draught.

For me, a good cruising boat needs to be responsive and fun to sail; acceptable to sail solo so not limited by crew; have lots of deck space for when in anchorages and space below for all the cruising bits, e.g. dinghy, outboards push bikes. I have found that things lashed on deck often 'disappear'.

Good visibility from below, not only at sea, but also in anchorages, is important. In Alaska, with my previous boat, *Iniquity*, I found one missed a lot of the action on shore. One certainly did not feel like sitting up in the cold waiting for the arrival of a bear. Being able to keep a good eye up the rig when it is rough without getting soaked is also an advantage and also means that you do check more often.

Like all things to do with sailing, you don't benefit from something without compromising something else. The weight and speed of the boat will make for a much more lively ride in rough conditions. However with 2 tonnes of water ballast available each side, I believe I can settle that to some extent. The upside of the speed is that one can sail out of the way and miss the worst part of bad weather.

I have addressed the draught by building a hydraulic-lifting fin keel. Instead of a 3 tonne bulb at 4.5 metres, we now have 4 tonnes at 4.1 metres, retractable to 2.6 metres. A compromise in simplicity but necessary to



Tim Edkins



Heading for the sail past on Opening Day

achieve an anchorage that isn't 'off shore'. Simon Flitcroft did the design work on the lifting keel and structure, and this was checked by Peter Lowe Naval Architects. The centre-case is 20 mm thick epoxy glass with tapers front and rear. The fin structure is a box made from bisaloy 80 steel encased with epoxy glass and glass trailing/leading edges.

We repaired the old carbon rig but I was not happy with the result so Simon Flitcroft designed a new, simpler, larger-section two-spreader carbon rig. The top of the old rig is now the boom. Peter Kula built the designed tube and I built all of the carbon accessories; spreaders, crane, goose neck and exit boxes, to Simon's designs.

The rigging is dynex dux. This has the same strength as stainless steel wire, diameter for diameter, but floats. It was developed for the North Sea fishing industry where they found it lasts longer than cables dragging on the sea floor and is somewhat easier to roll up. It has

very low stretch so recoil is not a problem like steel but it does creep if kept under constant load. To achieve the same creep as stainless steel, you need to go from 50% of break load to 20% of break load which increases the diameter. I have had a cover spliced over the outside for chafe and UV protection. Research I have done suggests it will outlast stainless steel wire. In a refit, no fittings are required. I am quite sure one would have seen the same distrust when rigging went from rope to wire! Only time will tell if this will become the norm on cruisers/racers that currently run stainless steel wire. If anyone is interested, Colligo Marine in the USA have been working with this product for some time and have lots of information. They plan to have a dynex dux-rigged Open 60 in the next BOC race.

After standing the new rig, we did some sailing to get to know the boat and then pulled her out of the water at Port River Marine for a one-year rework. Four years later she went back in the water.

We ended up stripping off the outside skin to the foam. With Richard Fidock and Peter Strangways plus friends we re-laid the 100 square metres of glass epoxy skin in two weeks to specifications by Andrew Dovell. I also cut the cabin off and made it longer, wider and higher. The fairing of the hull was not a high point---James from Nuplex will

now have to find another customer who buys epoxy resin by the 44 gallon drum.

Somewhere during the build I managed to do a 'skydive' and fractured my neck and both jaws. I now have 7 titanium plates and 35 screws inserted in my face. This slowed progress some.

With the speed that *Gusto* will cruise at, I was concerned about a collision with the ever-increasing number of whales and possibly flotsam. The keel has a kick-back feature which will hopefully prevent damage or at least reduce it. The design numbers indicate that decelerating from 13 knots to 0 in 1.5 seconds should result in no structural damage. Hope I don't test that!

All the major work is done; we now have a few months of details. We have yet to install latches and covers, fit the deck gear, connect the hydraulics, re-install the rig, and finish the electrics.

Gusto is moored at the old sugar wharf (Newport Quays). Once she is finished, the real experiment begins; heading off with my very capable and supportive wife, Tash, and a seven-year-old daughter, Lila, who does not know what to expect. I don't think it will be possible for the six chickens, one cockatiel, one cat, fish and two guinea pigs to come with us. Is there someone willing to tell Lila?



Hydraulic-lifting fin keel



At Port River Marine



Moored at Newport Quays