

The four-berther that's ideal for the fun-loving family

THERE she was, glowing orange and cream against a grey sea and blustery sky, and if ever a boat lifted your heart this trim little sloop certainly did.

She tickled that little devil which lurks deep within us all. You just laughed at the sheer fun of her! It was magic, that compact shape. "Come on," she chuckled, "Let's go places!"

And go places you can. For the Skipper 17 comes complete with road trailer ready to travel overland to any waters you may choose. This two or four-berth weekender just invites you to explore the coastline, lakes and estuaries or rivers of anywhere you care to tow her—and launching is no more difficult than getting afloat with a dinghy.

Built by Skipper Boats Ltd, she is marketed in our northern counties from their office at Unit 3, Bishop Court, Winwick Quay at Warrington in Cheshire.

Designed by Peter Milne she has evolved into her present form across nearly a decade of hard sailing and practical owner experience. At an "all-in" price of £5,645, including the road trailer and VAT, the result is worth looking at and even more worth sailing.

Her uncomplicated appearance is deceiving. In fact she embodies a sophisticated package of sailing know-how and will appeal strongly to a sailing family of Mum, Dad and one or two youngsters.

Moulded entirely of glass-fibre any maintenance is literally reduced to an hour or so of revarnishing a few bits of gear back home in the winter months.

Her mast and boom are of black corrosion-proofed alloy while the rigging is of skinless-steel and rotproof ropes and the two sails are hard-wearing Terylene. She comes complete with roller reefing on the foresail—a quick and easy method of reducing its area in strong winds by simply hauling on a cord.

USEFUL

All sail hoisting and trimming is done from her very spacious self-draining cockpit. In addition she is equipped with a robust stainless steel pulpit at bow and stern, plus stanchions and guardrails down both sides of the boat.

Her wooden tiller connects to a lifting rudderblade which is hung over the stern just as in a dinghy. The cockpit is over eight feet in length and incorporates useful lockers under the aft ends of the side-seats, with a nonslip surface moulded in.

Waterproof, upholstered foam cushions make really comfortable seating and may be used as additional berths if needed, because for £165 including VAT you may buy a large waterproof tent which slings over the boom to convert her enormous cockpit into a splendidly roomy "foul weather" space for when at a mooring or snug on a beach.

Two removable wooden washboards under a sliding glassfibre hatch give access to the cabin. Twin full-length berths, one at either side, tuck back partway under both

cockpit side-seats and there is full sitting headroom.

Both berths have fitted foam mattresses similarly upholstered in waterproof material and there is good locker space under them for personal gear and provisions.

There is no built-in galley—you take your own camping gear aboard and a Jerrycan of drinking water and they stow away under the cockpit floor at the aft end of the cabin when not in use.

The mast of Skipper 17 is stepped on the cabin top and can easily be lowered single-handed. A stout metal support strut in the cabin braces the deckhead against the downward thrust from the spar, and this strut which is tubular, also forms a very handy grab post down below.

It has also been cleverly used to support a neat wooden table which locks into position between the two berths

when in use, but when not wanted simply slides up flat against the deckhead out of the way.

At the fore end of the cabin and on a higher level than the adult berths is a children's double-berth. This would accommodate two small kiddies overnight and it required a portable chemical toilet is available which sits under this raised fore-berth.

SLIDING

Immediately over the children's berth is a large opening hatch. This together with one large non-opening port at either side of the cabin and the sliding companionway hatch make it a light and airy space in daylight.

But a trailer-sailer like this must incorporate one more essential quality: she must

be easy and quick to get on and off her road trailer.

Skipper 17's brilliant hull design makes sure of this for she has two drop-keels one at either side of the hull, and each of them when fully hoisted virtually disappears from view.

In fact each keel lifts snugly into a waterproof casing on the inside face of a cabin berth. There is no unsightly intrusion into the living space.

The keel-lifting mechanism is simplicity itself. Two Terylene cords one at either side of the cabin hatch pass over pulleys built into the cabin moulding. Haul on either of these and one of the 75lb galvanised plates pivots up.

So, when both were lowered there is 150lb of metal down there aided by another 100lb of ballast built into a centre sub-keel. It makes her a stable boat, and in fact because of buoyancy built into her hull she is unsinkable.

Under tests she has proved buoyant enough when completely swamped to ball astern and get sailing again, and even when pulled over until her mast top is in the water.



The Skipper 17... looks simple, but packed with sailing know-how

Take a voyage to excitement with a trusty Skipper

by **KENNETH DUXBURY**

FACTS AND FIGURES

LENGTH OVERALL: 17 feet.
LENGTH WATERLINE: 15 feet.
BEAM: 7 feet.
DRAUGHT: Plates up: 15 inches. Down: 4 feet.
DISPLACEMENT: 1,000lb; approx.
SAIL AREAS: Main 85 sq ft. Foresail 50 sq ft. There is a choice of hull colours.

the ballast ensures that she is self-righting.

The boat takes any four-horsepower standard outboard motor on a bracket provided at her stern. Such an engine may be expected to cost around £240 including VAT and gives her a useful turn of speed in calm waters.

With both keels and the rudderblade lifted she can float safely in a mere 18 inches, which means she can be hoisted far up those normally inaccessible creeks. When left to dry out on a beach, or put on her road trailer, she remains sturdily upright to make living aboard much happier.

Nippy, stable and very responsive she is a delight to handle and any dinghy sailor will feel immediately at home aboard her.

COASTAL

For the technically minded she has slab-reefing on the main internal battens swept on a acrofoil section spreaders, and slides on the mainsail luff for tidy sail handling.

The price, quoted also includes an anchor and warps housed in a neat flush-deck locker at her bow, two mooring warps, two fenders and, of course, that road trailer.

In fact she is ready to sail away and though she is not intended for ocean passages or deep water sailing she is suitable for short coastal hops and will prove a splendid weekend cruiser for many a small sailing family.