



Sally shares many of the sailing characteristics and appearance of her bigger sister

Main picture by Den Phillips



Sally II was the second of what became the post-war Vertue class



*Sally* was sold  
in 1936 to make  
way for *Sally II*

# A tale of two Sallys

When Philip Sharp grew out of his L-Class *Sally* in favour of a Laurent Giles 5-tonner, *Sally II*, it should have been the start of a long relationship. Alas, no – as his son *Nigel Sharp* relates

This is the story of two boats of the same name: *Sally*, a Lymington L-Class, and *Sally II*, a forerunner of the Vertue class, both designed by Laurent Giles and built by Elkins of Christchurch for my father in the 1930s.

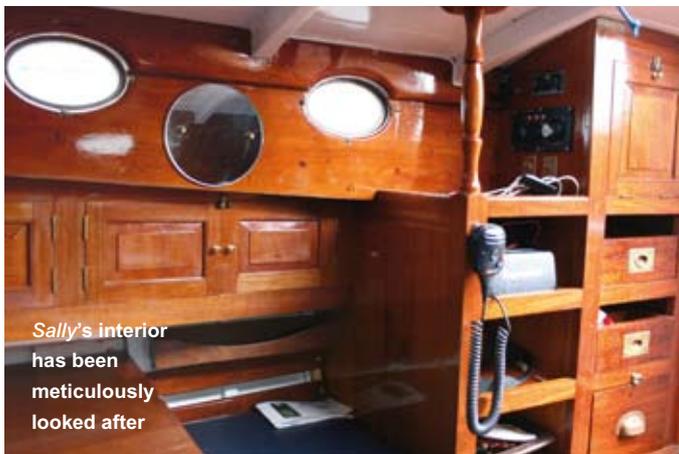
It was during the course of the three seasons that my father Philip Sharp owned the first *Sally* that he met and married my mother Vivien. They enjoyed the boat

greatly and began using her for short cruises – nothing very adventurous, just to Hamble and Lymington from their home in Poole. They felt she was just right in every way apart from her size, and that was the factor which led to the commissioning of the 5-tonner (Thames) *Sally II*.

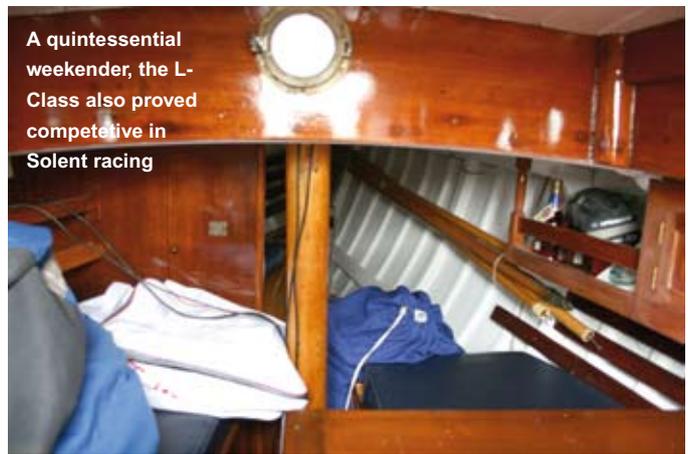
She was a couple of feet longer, at 25ft (7.6m), but she was not the success they expected her to be. My father allowed



Sally's 2005 'reunion' sail out of Tollesbury with, from left, Geoff, Clive and Nigel



Sally's interior has been meticulously looked after



A quintessential weekender, the L-Class also proved competitive in Solent racing

unreasonable prejudices to spoil his enjoyment of her, and following a galley fire, she was sold after just one season.

Sally IP's current owner is the CB columnist Adrian Morgan, and so she is well-known to these pages. Soon after he bought her in the mid-90s, he discovered "during a long day's perusal of Lloyd's Registers" that my parents had moved to St Mawes and, armed with that bit of information, he was able to get in touch with our family.

As a result of this, Adrian and his fiancée Rona Johnson invited me sailing. The first time, when they were still living in London, for a day in the Solent and subsequently in Scotland for two wonderful week-long

cruises taking us from their new base in Ullapool to the Outer Hebrides and to Skye. This was a hugely contrasting experience from the overcrowded Solent that I had become used to, and I might have put pen to paper then but felt that *Classic Boat* might consider *Sally II* was already adequately exposed to this readership. And there was nothing very strange about the coming together of *Sally II* and myself – new owners looking into history and making contact with the families of former owners must be an almost everyday story.

After we had established contact with Adrian and Rona, my family and I vaguely speculated about the fate of the first *Sally*. My own feeling was that there would be

very little chance of ever discovering anything about her; while the Vertue class is well known and established, the same could not really be said of Lymington L-boats. And how many small boats of any type built in 1934 still exist, and how many still have the same name? However...

In July 2005, I received a forwarded email, with two photo attachments, from a good friend of mine called Geoff Tomkins. The email had been sent to him by his friend Clive Debenham, whom I had never met, although it is possible that Geoff may have mentioned him at some point in conversation. Clive had recently bought a boat and he sent the photos to a friend as many proud new owners would.

**E. F. ELKINS**  
**YACHT, BOAT & LAUNCH BUILDER**  
 The Quay, Christchurch, Hants

P.Sharp Esq.  
 Minsmere,  
 Flaghead Road,  
 Canford Cliffs.

July. 1934.

To building "SALLY" as agreed.	212	0	0
To supplying & fitting coaming leads		13	6
: : water carrier		11	0
: : 12" pin rail		18	0
: extra for track in one length		2	8
Difference on chain	1	5	0
Extra for patent sheaves	1	1	0
Agreed replacement for pitch pine beams		15	0
To fitting lockers in cockpit in Honduras mahogany	4	10	0
To supplying six extra slides		3	0
Difference on mastband with spinnaker socket		7	3
To supplying 2nd jib	2	9	6
Difference on anchor		3	6
To supplying Motrex fire extinguisher	1	1	0
: scribing gold line	1	5	0
: making spinnaker boom & fittings		14	0
Quart Rylard varnish		6	6
Two 1½" varnish brushes		3	9
Scow centre plate handle		2	6
Two scow gaff jaws		7	0
To 4 galls Shell petrol (Payaway)		5	4
To storage of "PAYWAY"	5	0	0
To burning off topsides and repainting one coat of red lead paint	2	15	0
	£ 236	19	6

Sally off Poole  
 on 4 October  
 1936, shortly  
 before her sale to  
 make way for her  
 successor



## The history of the L-Class

The L-Class (CB 218) was designed by Jack (Laurent) Giles as an economical, sheltered waters weekend cruiser, of which the first two, *Isabella* and *Penguin*, were launched from Elkins' Christchurch yard in 1933. She was Giles' eighth design, and spawned a fleet of 18 of which all but one (*Wind Song*, No 4) are thought to have survived. Early boats were built of 3/4in (19mm) Oregon pine on oak frames and steamed rock elm timbers, later ones of pitch pine and the last, *Iduna*, of teak, in 1939.

Elkins built the lion's share of the fleet; Berthons three; while Woodnutts of Bembridge, Dixons of Exmouth and The Sandbanks Yacht Company in Poole

LOA: 23ft 3in (7.1m)  
 LWL: 19ft 6in (6m)  
 Beam: 6ft 10in (1.9m)  
 Draught: 3ft 8in (1.2m)  
 Displacement: 2.7 tons  
 Sail area: 275sqft (25m<sup>2</sup>)

built one each. *Mayflower*, No 10, built by Dixons in 1937, cost £310 7s 8d with a 4hp Stuart Turner. The Lymington-based fleet enjoyed regular class racing in the 30s, under strict rules. These excluded hollow masts; mainsails could only be replaced once every two years and spinnakers were banned.

Engineless boats were handicapped by 112lb (51kg) extra ballast. This quintessential Solent cruiser-racer was described as "handling admirably" by *Yachting Monthly* in 1933, "conspicuously dry and well-mannered" and "repeatedly out sailing her rivals". A 23ft 5in (7.14m) Revised L-Class was designed in 1955 with doghouse and extra headroom.

Extraordinarily, the only reason that Geoff forwarded it to me was that he knew I liked photos of pretty old boats.

One of the photos showed a part of the transom, on which it was easy to see the letters "...lly" and the other showed the whole boat, which looked strikingly similar to a photo in my mother's dining room – enough to make me inquisitive.

Of course there could be any number of boat names that might end in "...lly" but I felt I was taking no great chance just to email Geoff and Clive asking "Is this a Lymington L-boat designed by Laurent Giles and built by Elkins of Christchurch in 1934?" The answer came back very quickly – "yes, yes, yes and yes" – it was Sally!

And so a series of emails between myself, Clive and Geoff began. At a very early stage, Clive invited Geoff and myself for a sail although our busy lives meant that it was to be some time before we were able to finalise a date and keep to it. In the meantime I was very happy to send some memorabilia to Clive.

My father kept meticulous diary records of every sail he had in any boat between the years 1934 and 1981. These records included reports of the 103 sails he had in *Sally* between Sunday 20 May 1934: "Sally launched about 7pm", and Saturday 10 October 1936: "Sally sold and taken to Christchurch by Elkins". These diary entries would be of little interest to anyone

but members of my family and current owners of his boats as they merely told of day sails, almost entirely starting and finishing in Poole Harbour, with details such as the weather, where he "brought up for tea" and how many mackerel he caught – in fact there are 32 separate references to the day's catch, including one of a staggering 66 fish on 5 July 1936 when, incidentally, he apparently "brought up in Studland Bay for tea"!

I was also able to send Clive a copy of the original bill – the basic price was £212, although the total bill came to £236 19s 6d due to the addition of a number of extras such as a second jib, gold line, cockpit lockers in Honduras mahogany and a fire

### Vertue or L-Class?

This is the L-class,

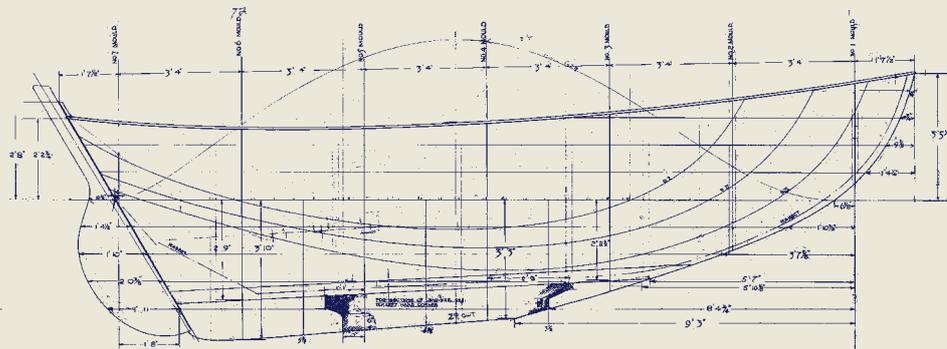
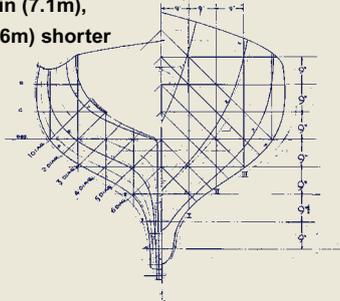
2.7 tons displacement against the

Vertue's

4.25 tons, and at

23ft 3in (7.1m),

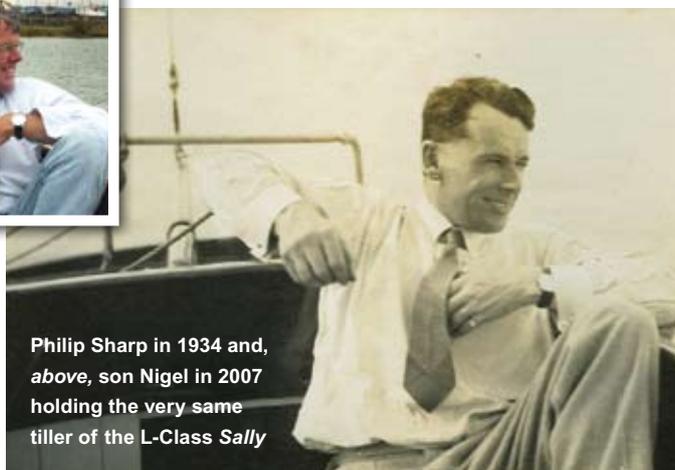
2ft (0.6m) shorter



*Sally II* in build at Elkins in the winter of 1936/7



Philip Sharp in 1934 and, above, son Nigel in 2007 holding the very same tiller of the L-Class *Sally*



extinguisher, as well as a few extras for a scow and a small motor launch that my father also owned at the time.

One Thursday evening in September 2007, Geoff and I drove up from the South Coast to Clive's home in Suffolk. On the Friday morning, after an evening when we were wonderfully looked after by Clive and his wife Penny, we drove to Tollesbury Marina for our long-awaited sail.

The weather forecast leading up to the great day had been absolutely awful – and it didn't let us down. It was blowing very hard (Force 6 to 7, I should think) and during the best bits the rain was just a fine drizzle; most of the time it was torrential. But happily Clive, Geoff and I were all of the same mind: it had to happen, and we all put on full oilskins as soon as we arrived in the car park. We then made our way down to the pontoons where I saw *Sally* and stepped aboard her for the first time. It was a very special moment.

*Sally* was built with no engine – my father was fiercely proud of the fact that he never owned a sailing boat which had one. So we would have met with his immediate disapproval when we motored off the berth, but it must be said that a swinging

mooring in Poole Harbour in the 1930s would have been very different to deal with compared to a crowded marina in the 21st century. However, I'd like to think that we would have got straight back in his good books when we put the sails up at the very earliest opportunity, with several rolls in the mainsail, and started to enjoy sailing this wonderful boat. Clive generously allowed me to take the helm for almost all of the time we were out, as indeed Adrian had done on several occasions in *Sally II*.

Even though my experiences of the two boats were in the wrong chronological order, it was very obvious as soon as I had stepped on board *Sally* that she was the predecessor of *Sally II*. If, when my father commissioned the second boat, his brief to Giles and Elkins was simply "I want a bigger version of the first one", then he got exactly what he wanted.

In some ways this was obvious from the moment I saw her – the hull shape, the majestic sheer, the short, low coachroof, the bumkin, the 'slutter' rig – but it was even clearer now that we were sailing. It was the feel of the boat – that good solid 'this boat could go anywhere in any weather' feel.

During the early stages of the trip – when we arrived at the marina, as we were casting off and hoisting the sails – I didn't imagine it would be an enjoyable sail in those conditions. However, I could not have been more wrong – every precious second of it was wonderful as we sailed up and down between West Mersea and Bradwell.

I wondered how our sail compared to the one my father had in June 1935 when his diary entry read "Went out in *Sally* at 3 o'clock with Digby and Moy. Wind SW gale. Nearly 6 rolls in mainsail and small jib. *Sally* handled perfectly but we did not stay out long."

Nor did we stay out too long either. The weather, tide and an appointment with Den Phillips, the photographer, all determined that we needed to get back. Den had been taking photos of us under way and I wondered at the contrast they might make with those taken by my mother in more peaceful conditions during my father's last sail on *Sally* on Sunday 4 October 1936: "Went out in *Sally* at 12.30 for 3 hours. Wind E mod to fresh. Vivien took 16 photographs from the dinghy on our moorings. Went out to Pilots Pier & then up to Lake. Lovely day." 