

Bond's *baby*

With just four months to salvage, redesign and restore a rotten old Troy One-Design called *Solitaire* before the Fowey Royal Regatta, Richard Bond and his team had their work cut out. Find out if they made it...

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS **NIGEL SHARP**

Richard Bond is an habitual owner and restorer of classic boats – he has previously had five 6-Metres, including *Caprice* and *Erica*, and the S&S yawl *Tomahawk* – and having had a house in Fowey for 30-odd years, it was perhaps inevitable that one day he would own a Fowey Troy One-Design.

About five years ago, he asked the Troy Owners' Association for permission to build a new one and this was duly granted. However, it wasn't until early 2013 that he decided to go ahead with it and, in the meantime, the building of a number of other new boats had given the Fowey harbourmaster concerns about mooring availability, crowded start lines and the number of neglected older boats. So the class association changed the rules: before anyone would be allowed to commission a new Troy, they would first have to sail on an existing





Above: given her rotten state, Richard and his team of expert restorers have done a splendid job returning *Solitaire* to a seaworthy condition

boat for three years. Richard then heard that T13 – originally built as *Little Gem* in 1947 and later renamed *Amber* – was for sale. She had been lying ashore neglected in Polruan for about four years, during which time her deck had been crushed and she had broken three planks. Richard bought her and took her to boatbuilder Peter Williams’ yard just up the Fowey River at Bodinnick, initially with the intention of just “tidying her up and getting her afloat”. The reality, however, was to prove very different.

Peter served his apprenticeship some 20 years ago with John Fuge who, by a neat quirk of fate, had helped build T13 when he was serving his own apprenticeship with Archie Watty, the man who had designed the Troy in 1928, specifically to sail in Fowey Harbour, and then produced the first 15 boats. In total, 28 have been built – three by Peter – and all but two survive.

Very soon after T13 arrived at Peter’s yard it became apparent that she was in a bad condition. At the same time, Richard decided that not only should the work be done really thoroughly, but that it must be finished in time for him to race the boat at the Fowey Royal Regatta in August. It was now April and the pressure was definitely on.

DESIGN DRAMAS

Peter had two concerns regarding the shape of the boat, the first being that, according to local folklore, she was too short. However, as soon as he took a tape to her he found that her overall length was “pretty much bang on” but that her wooden keel was too far aft and her sternpost was too raked, resulting in the two pieces of false evidence that had

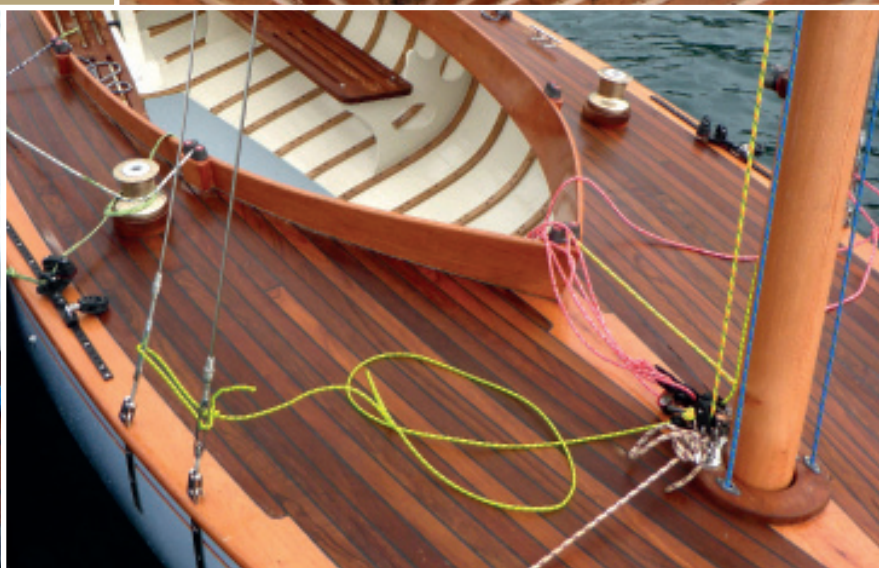
misled people for so many years – a short horn timber and a rudder stock that was tight to the transom. So after removing much of the bottom planking, he moved the existing forefoot forward and fitted a new wooden keel and sternpost in the correct position. The class rules specify that the centreline components have to be grown oak and, while it was easy enough to obtain these straight pieces, it proved much more difficult to get a curved piece for the stem.

This presented an additional problem as the stem provides the datum from which almost everything else is measured, so Peter was understandably keen to fit it as early as possible. After the class association turned down his request to fit a laminated stem, he eventually made a special trip to Dartmoor to get a suitable piece of timber from local supplier Anton Coaker English Timber Ltd.

The other ‘shape’ issue was the beam of the boat, which Peter knew was about 4½in (115mm) too narrow. After removing the deck and the beamshelves, he decided to offer up the moulds he uses to build the new boats – one of only two sets in existence and officially approved by the class association – inside the hull. He had done this previously when restoring T4 and he felt that it was the “only way to be fair about it” and that “no one can then say anything has been tweaked or messed about”. He made some cuts in some ribs and planking and then tried to force the moulds down to splay the planking outwards. However, he was still not able to get them down far enough – in fact, they were about 8in (20cm) above the keel – because, as he had



Clockwise from top left: old rotten stem; new wooden keel; garboard, two conventional planks and glued strips viewed from inside and showing one of the templates; new hull timbers and foredeck; Solitaire has a unique-in-class swept teak deck and cedar king plank and covering boards; bronze winches came all the way from Italy; new stem and hull planking; new garboard and planks topped with glued strip planks





Above, left to right: race start with *Solitaire* positioned 6th from right; owner Richard Bond at the helm of his very own Bond girl

suspected, the boat's bilges were too slack. After making some more cuts, he eventually got the moulds down to the keel and fixed them there. He then fitted new garboards and two conventional planks above them, then a 12in (31cm) width – the maximum permissible – of narrow strip planks, glued and edge-nailed, in the area of the tuck.

"The early boats always used to have trouble there because that's where all the stresses of the keel are working against the boat," Peter explained. The remaining planks were left in place at this stage to use them as ribbands, while new oak timbers were steamed in place throughout the boat. "The association was very keen, and I think quite rightly so, that things were replaced bit by bit rather than by going through the process of building a new boat," Peter told me. He also found it useful to use the old planking as a guide to widths and runs when fitting the new Brazilian cedar planks. There is no class rule regarding timber species for hull planking but there is a minimum weight of 30lb (13.6kg) per cubic foot, and most of the newer boats are planked in cedar, which is light and stable, and preferable to the heavier larch or "cheap softwood that the equivalent of Jewsons would sell in the 1930s", which was generally used in the original boats.

Throughout the project, Peter tried to save weight wherever possible, while keeping within class rules. Nevertheless, Richard was particularly keen that, while three other Troys have straight-laid teak decks, T13 would be the first with a swept teak deck. More than 10 years ago, he had acquired seven tons of teak skirting boards from a disused hospital. Having sold much of it, he then brought some more to Peter's yard for T13. To try to minimise the extra weight, Peter fitted a thinner-than-usual 3/8in (9.5mm) ply sub-deck, and kept the teak at just 5/32in (4mm) thick. However, he found that he was unable to edge-bend the teak planks enough, even by steaming them, so he ended up fitting a semi-swept deck with snapes in the cedar covering boards, as well as in the king plank.

Many aspects of the restoration were much more time consuming than had been

expected, and this theme carried on right through to the later stages when Richard asked Peter to paint the inside of the planking and varnish the timbers. The result, however, beautifully accentuates the Troy's fine lines inside the hull.

While all the work for the new rig was carried out within Fowey Harbour – Peter made the new spars, and the sails and rigging were provided by Alan Harris at Sail Shape – the winches came from much further afield: Harken in Italy and, uniquely among the Troy fleet, they are made of bronze. After burning the candle at both ends, Peter managed to finish T13 in time for Richard to have his first sail at the Fowey Royal Regatta.

THE NAME'S BOND...

For obvious reasons, Richard named a number of his previous boats after characters in the Bond films – he has owned a Wayfarer called *Odd Job* and RIBs called *Pussy Galore* and *Moneypenny* – and he continued this theme (while also respecting the Troy class's tradition to name boats after gemstones) by naming T13 *Solitaire*, after the tarot card-reading temptress in *Live and Let Die*.

I met up with Richard halfway through Fowey Royal Regatta just after he had come ashore from a race in which he finished 8th in a fleet of 20 (he ended up 7th overall at the end of the regatta), and he said: "I'm very pleased, absolutely delighted that I have rescued an old Troy rather than build a new one. At the time I thought it was a bit of a nuisance but it was the best thing to do – the association were absolutely right in their approach to it." He was also full of praise for Peter Williams: "He's done a fantastic job and he did it with consummate style. Full marks, I'm so pleased with what he's done. It's been a treat."

Another of Richard's rituals is to keep pieces of timber that have been replaced during previous restorations, and to use them in some way in subsequent boats. In this case, a piece of *Tomahawk's* old wooden keel has been fitted to the forward end of *Solitaire's* stainless-steel tiller. "Isn't that nice that I can hold that tiller and I know that it's a piece of *Tomahawk*?" he said.

SOLITAIRE

LOS
22ft (6.7m)

LOA
18ft (5.5m)

LWL
17ft 6in (5.4m)

BEAM
5ft 9in (1.8m)

DRAUGHT
3ft 9in (1.2m)

SAIL AREA
297sqft (27.6m²)