



Cornwall's ROSE

After years of building commercial fishing boats by eye and fitting out superyachts, Cornish boatbuilder Peter Moor decided to build his first sailing yacht. She won her category at our 2014 awards and she's a real "piece of furniture"

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS **NIGEL SHARP**





Clockwise from top left: bowsprit traveller and bronze furler; mainsheet block with its own cleat; gooseneck pin rails made by Peter; tiller aperture in the transom bulwark

The winner of Classic Boat's 2014 Traditional New Build award was Peter Moor's *White Rose of Mevagissey*, a boat which was almost twenty years in the making. Peter began his boatbuilding apprenticeship with his father John in 1978, which led to a partnership building and repairing commercial fishing boats at their Mevagissey yard. From time to time when orders have been thin on the ground, Peter has also worked at Falmouth's Pendennis Shipyard.

In the mid-1990s, having never built a boat for himself or a sailing boat for anyone, Peter found that he had "an itch to scratch". He was particularly drawn to a picture he had seen of *Wanderer II*, the gaff cutter designed by Jack Laurent Giles for Eric and Susan Hiscock in 1935. "That was where we got our inspiration," he told me. "The rig and everything on that boat appealed to me."

So he decided to design and build a new boat. His starting point was to make a 1:16-scale half model and take its lines, a technique he and John had used for many years for fishing boats. "The great thing about making a model," said Peter, "is that you can hold it up and see what you've got. You can even touch it and feel any imperfections in the shape."

Peter has never seen a lines plan of *Wanderer II* so it is only possible to compare the dimensions of the two designs: Peter's is 6in (15cm) longer (on deck and on the waterline), 7in (17.5cm) wider and 1in (2.5cm) deeper but she displaces a tonne more and has a substantially greater sail area. Whereas *Wanderer II* had a pole mast and a loose-luffed topsail, Peter's mast is shorter and his topsail has a luff pole: "for less windage, Cornish style".

This leads us to a neat designer and geographical connection. In 1936 Jack Laurent Giles's staff included a draughtsman called John Tew (who, it is thought, may have produced the lines for the *Vertue* on Giles's behalf) and who designed a gaff cutter, slightly larger than *Wanderer II*, for himself and his fiancée Helen. The boat was built by Percy Mitchell in Port Mellon less than a mile from Peter's yard and christened *Mary Helen*, and over sixty years later Helen Tew famously sailed her across the Atlantic with her son.

It wasn't until 2000 that Peter found the time, the money and the space in his shed to start assembling his new boat's centreline structure: the wood keel, sternpost and deadwood in English oak, bolted together with bronze bolts; and the stem and its apron in laminated iroko, glued together with epoxy and bolted to the keel



as one unit. The choice of material here came from reservations that Peter has, in common with many other boatbuilders, about gluing oak. "It can be very good but sometimes it will spring apart even with these so-called wonder epoxies," he said. Fore-and aft ribbands were laid over athwartships moulds, 7/8 x 1¼in (22x32mm) English oak frames were steamed inside them, and then 7/8in (22mm)-thick Scottish larch planks were fitted, copper clenched to the frames and with their ends fastened into the stem and sternpost with bronze screws.

The stringers, beamshelf and most of the deck structure are larch but the deck beams for the coachroof are grown oak. "I got hold of a lovely board perfectly shaped for the camber," said Peter, "and you can't get any better than that." There is a ½in (12mm) Anchor plywood sub-deck – Lloyds approved with a 20-year guarantee – and on top of that a ½in-thick Burmese teak laid deck. Peter decided that this would not be fully swept, partly because of the difficulty of bending parallel planks on such a short boat, particularly the inboard ones forward, "and because it would make the boat look too short". So the deck is semi-swept, with the side deck planks running parallel to the coamings and joggled into both the covering boards and king plank.



Above: Nav area, engine box, companionway step and galley area. **Left:** Reaching along the Cornish coast



Top: Peter takes the helm. He says he got her up to 8 knots with full main and both headsails in a Force 3 last summer
Above: Sea trials

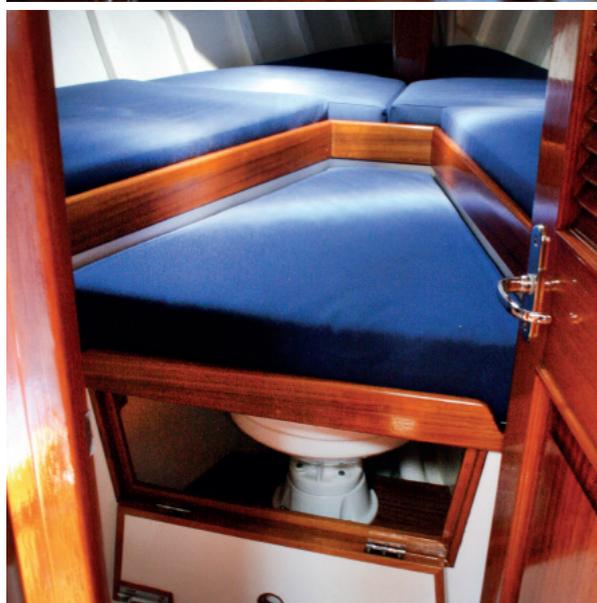
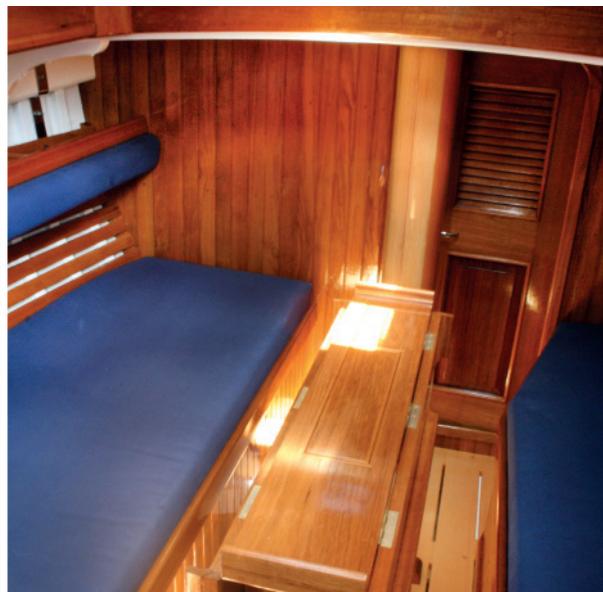
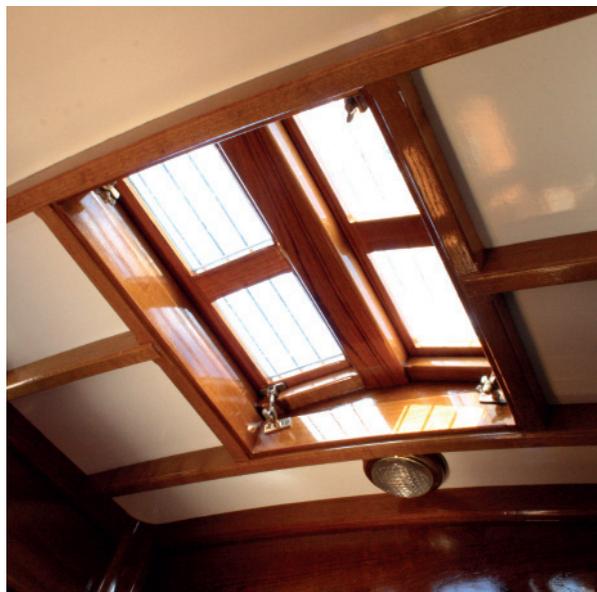
For more photographs of *White Rose* visit - www.classicboat.co.uk

Peter made the pattern for the 2-tonne iron ballast keel and sent it to Irons Brothers for casting, but not until the boat was about two thirds complete. "I preferred to keep the money in my pocket as long as I could," he said.

When Peter started building the boat, his plan was to cruise her with wife Maryse – whose father was a Breton fisherman – and their daughters, Dominique and Tamsin, then 13 and 10. However, the boat took much longer to build than he ever imagined and she wasn't launched until May 2013, by which time his children had grown up and left home. "This was because I had to do it all in between building other boats or working at Pendennis, and as the budget would allow," he told me. "When I started, all I could afford to buy was a pile of wood."

Peter's new boat was named *White Rose of Mevagissey* for several reasons: 'White Rose' is a traditional Cornish folk song he used to sing when he was gig rowing, Rose is his mother's name and Tamsin's middle name, and he has punts called *Rosen* (Cornish for Rose) and *June Rose*.

I met Peter and *White Rose* in Mevagissey on a sunny blustery day in July. He had only just got her ready for the new season – once again he had been prioritising his paying work – and had not yet moved her to her summer mooring in the Fowey River. When we got on board he



introduced me to his French friend Alain who would be sailing with us and who very quickly referred to Peter as “a perfectionist”. But I was already able to see that for myself: the standard of finish throughout the boat, both in terms of the quality of construction and the surface coatings, is outstanding.

ON BOARD

The most striking feature about *White Rose*, inside and out, is the amount of varnished teak: below decks the joinery is mostly constructed from 3/8in (9mm) plywood with 1/4in (6mm) teak on top of it – tongue and groove on the main cabin bulkhead and furniture fronts – with solid teak locker doors; while on deck the bulwarks and capping, coamings, forehatch, companionway hatch, traditional skylight and the handrails are all solid teak. “I like teak,” said Peter, with considerable understatement. “In fact there are only five types of wood in life: larch, oak, teak, iroko and firewood!”

Perhaps the single thing which best illustrates Peter’s “perfectionist” tag are the varnished oak mast wedges, about 3in (75mm) of which are visible beneath the deckhead. They are notoriously difficult to fit: their outside shape meets an octagonal hole, their concave

inside faces sit tight to the mast, and their bevelled edges but up against their neighbours. “Mast wedges are funny things. They are either falling out or they are too tight and damaging everything around them,” said Peter. “Hopefully we have got those about right,” he added with typical modesty.

The interior layout is simple but practical: the forepeak has a vee-berth with an infill, below which is a Blakes Lavac heads; in the saloon there are two settee berths with a folding leaf table between them and shelves with 4½in (114mm)-deep fiddles outboard; aft of that there is a galley to port with a sink and two-burner Origo meths cooker; and to starboard there is a nav area that includes instruments and a switch panel mounted in opening doors which allow easy access to the wiring. The engine box over the Beta 20hp diesel provides a useful seat for the galley or for the navigation area. Some white-painted areas provide a welcome contrast to the dark teak, as does the lighter coloured cabin sole which is Alaskan yellow cedar, a timber that Peter particularly likes, despite not making his “five types of wood” list.

Many of the deck fittings are bronze including the sheet tracks, fairleads and portholes from Davey and Co, and four self-tailing winches from LVJ in Holland. The

Above, clockwise from top left: Traditional skylight and grown oak deck beams over the saloon; teak, teak and more teak – the port side of the saloon; locker door showing vent hole detail; forward cabin showing heads below the infill



JACK WOOD



FRANK NOON, CB ARCHIVES

Above left: Painting depicts *Wanderer II* under the solo command of Eric Hiscock in 1937
Above right: Mark Horton of BBC's 'Coast' series presenting Peter with CB's 'Best trad new build under 40ft' award in March in London

stainless steel mainsheet horse was made from a piece of rod rigging rescued from a boat being refitted with carbon fibre rigging at Pendennis. That and the other stainless steel deck and spar fittings were mostly fabricated by Peter himself: he cut out the parts and tack-welded them together and, after a sub-contractor had fully welded them, he polished them, a partial throwback to the days when pretty much everything that went into a new boat would be produced by its builders. Peter also made the spars, all in Douglas fir and glued with West epoxy. The bowsprit is solid and has some downward pre-bend in it – “I’ve seen the Falmouth Working Boats do that so it must be right” – and the boom was made in two halves, hollowed out traditionally. But having made them, Peter thought he would try a more modern technique for the mast and gaff, which were made up from eight staves in a bird’s mouth construction and vacuum bagged. The sails were made by SKB Sails in Falmouth using Richard Hayward’s Sunwing Classic cream cloth.

SAILING

There was a blustery offshore Force 5 blowing when *White Rose* left Mevagissey. Peter initially chose to sail with just a double-reefed mainsail and staysail with the jib left furled, an entirely sensible decision that gave us a nicely balanced sail plan. *White Rose* has a lively turn

of speed and on a close reach we managed a constant 6.5 knots and a burst of 7.2, and Peter told me that he got her up to 8 knots with full main and both headsails in a Force 3 last summer. She is relatively unhindered by the drag of her stern gear as she has a self-feathering Max-Prop. Peter told me that this was “probably three or four times the price of a fixed-blade prop” but that it was “money well spent”, and he is also very pleased with the way she handles under power. Later in our sail Peter unfurled the jib for a short time when broad reaching.

Peter didn’t get to use *White Rose* much in her first season, although one memorable voyage was cruising in company with the Falmouth Working Boats on their annual passage race to Fowey, at the end of which he was pleased that he was still quite close behind them. At some point he and Maryse hope to sail to south Brittany where they have a house. “The dream has always been to moor *White Rose* in front of the house,” said Peter. However, although he has every confidence in the boat, he sensibly recognises that Maryse is not an experienced sailor and that there is “no point in getting her on board and scaring her half to death”. For now, he is as aware as anyone of the delightful harbours along the Devon and Cornwall coasts each side of Fowey.

In the meantime *White Rose* needs a bit more work including some trimming ballast up forward. His initial thought that she might need as much as 250kg (550lb) has been allayed somewhat by the 200ft (61m) of anchor chain right forward. He still needs to get a topsail made and also plans to fit a manual windlass.

When I asked Peter how many hours he took to build *White Rose* he was only able to say “a lot”. Although he built her very much for himself she is, perhaps as much as many boats are, for sale. “If someone were to come along with a nice cheque I think they could have her and I’d build another,” he told me. “But this time I’d have the money to do it full-time and much quicker.”

Peter attended the CB awards ceremony with his daughter Dominique. While he is clearly more at home in a Cornish boatyard than in a Mayfair watch showroom, he greatly enjoyed the experience and is clearly thrilled with the award. “It’s great that people took the trouble to vote,” he told me, “and it’s nice to be recognised for something that took so long. We never see anyone on the quay when we are working through the winter and it’s good to feel appreciated.”

Below: The half-model that was scaled up to build *White Rose*



WHITE ROSE OF MEVAGISSEY

LOA	DRAUGHT
24ft 6in (7.5m)	5ft (1.5m)
LWL	SAIL AREA
21ft (6.4m)	600sqft (56m²)
BEAM	DISPLACEMENT
7ft 8in (2.3m)	5 tonnes

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