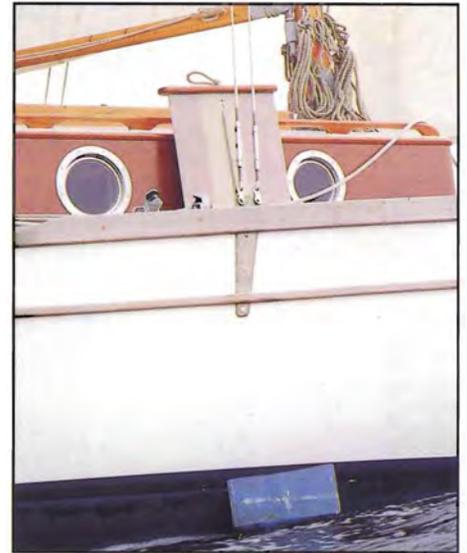




Photographs courtesy of Waterkampioen magazine



Above: the hull's pierced both sides by dagger boards, or 'swords' as they are called in Belgium. Left: leeboard down and beating into the wind.

Bilge Boards from Belgium

Denny Desoutter looks at a new version of an old idea

There's nothing new about bilge-boards. Some slab-sided barge yachts - smaller versions of Thames barges - had internal lee-boards, instead of the outside varieties which were so widely used by trading barges and Dutch fishing fleets, in the Nineteenth century. What's more about 90 years ago, twin bilge-boards became common among racing scows, those slinky skimming dishes about thirty feet on the waterline, with their huge gaff mainsails. Sailed on Canadian and American lakes, they eventually had twin rudders as well as twin boards, and attracted contestants from England right up 'till the Twenties. For all I know they may be racing still.

Some readers may remember another type of twin-board boat, the cruising sloop Nienke, of Dutch design, which was reported in this magazine in issue Number 27 - a long time ago...

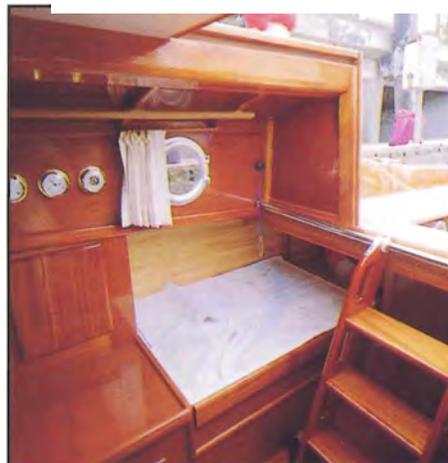
So here in *Puck*, we see an old idea revived, this time boards are of aerofoil section (NACA 64), so that the lowered board on the leeward side can work to best effect. Each board, port and starboard, slides in a trunk just inside the skin of the hull, concealed from internal view by cabin furniture. Tackles running along the side decks to the cockpit are used to raise or lower these 'dagger-boards' - to use the English term: in Belgium and Holland they are called 'swords'.

Two rigs are offered by the designer, Stephen Cardyn. Each has a short bowsprit, but while one is a straightforward Bermudan sloop, the other has a

sliding gunter mainsail. The gunter has a great deal in its favour, in my opinion. It can be aerodynamically efficient (See No 275, p 51 *et seq*) under sail, and under power too. By which cryptic remark I mean that air drag can be significantly reduced when motoring to weather. Finally, a mast which is only twenty feet long can easily be lowered and stowed by one man, either to negotiate bridges or for road towing.

The Bermudan rig shows a total area, main and reaching jib, of some 340 square feet, divided almost equally between the two sails. The boom, as you will see, is relatively long by comparison with the

Hidden behind the chart table is a small quarter berth with an opening scuttle into the cockpit well to provide a breath of air to the occupant.



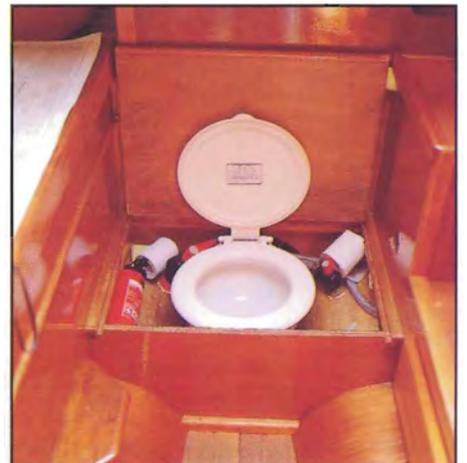
fashionable boats of today. That, plus the bowsprit allows *Puck* to set a worthwhile spread of sail. Though the gunter version has a smaller jib, her total area amounts to 270 square feet, and her sail area/displacement ratio works out at 16.1. (If, by the way, you are not familiar with the way this ratio is calculated, it is briefly explained on page 27 of last October's issue).

This is the place to mention that other standard comparator, the displacement/length ratio. *Puck's* figure turns out to be almost exactly 300, so she is what I would describe as a medium weight boat - neither a lightweight nor a heavyweight. It remains only to add that her ballast amounts to some 650 kg, or about 1450 lb, which is almost exactly one-third of her designed cruising displacement.

Puck is a good name for this Belgian design with her rather impish looks. Indeed, she has a sturdy independence from fashion. The pictures show a chunky, deep-chested little boat, with plenty of freeboard, and square-ended little coachroof. With that broad transom stern, you could call her 'tubby' without any offensive intent, and 'old-fashioned' too, especially if among those who prefer traditional boats.

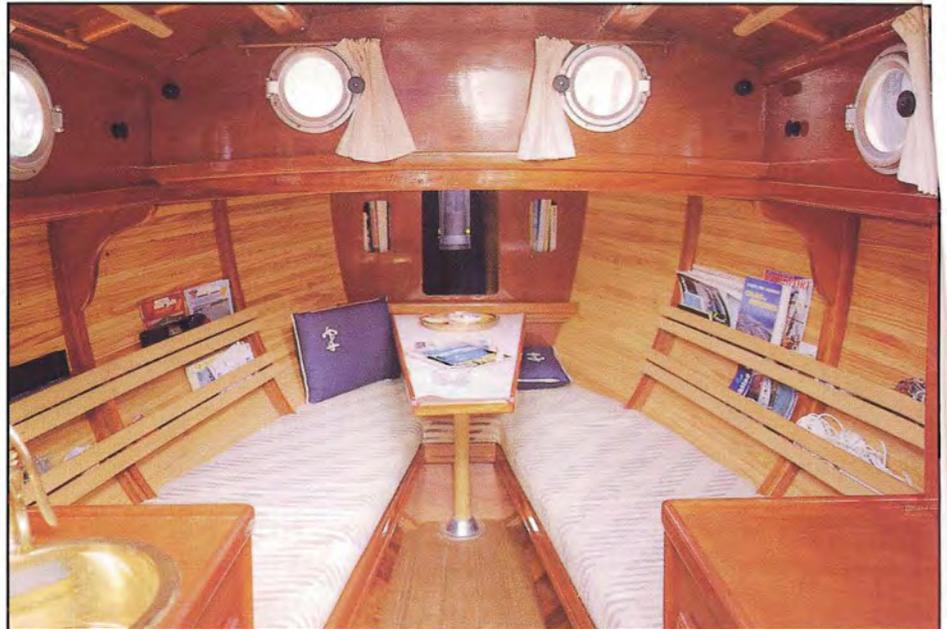
A closer look reveals that *Puck* has a

Puck's toilet is fitted beneath the companion ladder which lifts and slides to give access to the 'throne' while at the same time denying entry to the cabin.





Above: there's a choice of Bermudan or Gunter rigs. Right: finished in mahogany, the cabin sleeps two forward and one in a quarter berth.



good deal of originality in her design, as well as some modern technology in her construction. For example, although only just over 23 feet she offers six feet of headroom under that square little 'house'. An interior shot gives a clue: the laminated and epoxy-bonded keel is broad enough to give standing and walking breadth between the garboards. Of course, if an idea that has been used on small boats before, though perhaps not as often as it should have been. It can make a little boat feel bigger, going a long way to making her a comfortable cruising home.

The keel, as I have mentioned is laminated with epoxide glue. The hull, too is timber: strip-planked in 25mm section mahogany, epoxy-bonded and drawn up with bronze ring-nails. The whole assembly is built over formers, or *moulds* in boatbuilder's language, to which the full-length strip planking is screwed at suitable intervals. When all is done, the screws are removed and the holes plugged. The shell is then removed from the moulds and substantial mahogany frames fitted.

Finally, after sanding and fairing, the outer surface is sheathed with glass fibre and polyester resin to produce a hull which is both strong and totally watertight.

Although compact there's sufficient space in the galley for a small sink and two-burner stove. Note how the furniture hides the dagger-board trunking.



Auxiliary power can take the form of an inboard, or an outboard shipped in a trunk concealed in the after end of the starboard cockpit locker, where it is out of sight, secure from theft, and need create no drag when sailing. An inboard engine can be fitted if that is preferred.

The accommodation is simple, but effective, with principal berths to port and starboard, and a quarter berth extending under the cockpit locker on the starboard side, abaft the chart table. This berth has an opening scuttle into the cockpit well to provide a breath of air to the occupant. In fact, ventilation is one of *Puck's* strong points, since apart from the main and fore hatches, each of the six large scuttles in the coachroof can be opened.

A compact galley to port of the companion ladder complements the chart table on the other side of the boat. Each of these essential workpoints is nicely built in timber, as indeed is the whole of the accommodation. The effect is tasteful, cosy and homely.

A less pleasing feature, at least to my mind, is the location of the Lavac water closet under the companion ladder. The ladder itself lifts and slides laterally, giving access to the throne, while simultaneously denying access to the cabin. If she were my boat, I think I should

Each dagger-board, port and starboard, slides in a trunk just inside the skin of the hull. Tackles from the cockpit raise and lower the 'swords'.



make a serious effort to fit a w.c. in the forward end of the cabin, under the fore-hatch. That apart, *Puck* should make an excellent cruising home for an English couple or, (dare I say it?) a French foursome...

But she's not a cheap, despite her modest size. One yard quotes about £31,725 inc VAT for a well-fitted boat, but there are other possibilities. Her designer, Stephan Cardyn, does not think she is suited to amateur construction: on the other hand, he would sell plans to a British boatyard who could do the major structural work, allowing the owner to complete the fitting out himself. Anyone, professional or amateur, who finds her interesting can contact the designer at Cardyn Brouns & Associates, Nelemeersstraat 7, B 9830 Sint Martens Latem, Belgium. Tel: 010 32 91822110.



LOA	23ft 4in (7.1m)
LWL	18ft 10in (5.75m)
Beam	7ft 5in (2.25m)
Disp	4400lb (2000kg)
Draft	2ft 2in (0.65m)
Sail Area Bmu	340ft ² (31.5m ²)
Gunter	270ft ² (25m ²)