

Little Kiwi giant-killer

If you want to beat the big boys without spending the big bucks those wiley Kiwis have the answer in this little 5.9 metre flyer which looks like a fugitive from the world of 18-foot skiffs. VANESSA DUDLEY reports.

Turn up with this little rocket at the yacht club car park, and you're greeted with gawks and stares, a lot of tyre-kicking and comments like: "Whats this, then, an 18-footer with a cabin on it!?"

The purple paint job and pastel pink interior draw attention, but it's when the wrist-thin mast and big-roached, big mainsail go up that the comments really start to flow. Wherever it's raced since its arrival in Sydney in June 1985, the first Elliott 5.9 in Australia has turned heads. The Elliott has also caused plenty of debate about how quick it will or won't go, and led to the denial of many rum and coke bets by owners of much bigger boats, in no hurry to wager that they can beat this unknown quantity which looks odd — and simply fast.

Young Aucklander Greg Elliott designed this cuddly cabin day-racer a couple of years ago, and enough have been launched for class racing with a fleet of 10-15 to get going there. A recent change of builder, along with the appointment of an agent in Sydney, has led to this attempt to infiltrate the Aussie market. New builder of the 5.9, Gary Banks, brought Moroccan Roll to Sydney for the Trailable Yacht Association of NSW's Pittwater Islands Race in June 1985, where it showed a lot of light airs speed, but was hampered by the crew's lack of local knowledge on a day when Pittwater was in its trickiest mood. Banks left the boat with buyer Morris Short, a young wine merchant who, as Australian agent for the Elliott 5.9, is very keen to promote it and get class racing going.

Since we first tested the boat back in 1985 Morris has had the opportunity to race the boat in both a winter series plus a full summer program. In Australia the Elliott has done very well in mixed fleet

racing easily beating a variety of craft up to half-tonner size on a boat-for-boat basis.

The initial plan was to fully import the Elliott, but due to movements in the relative values of the Australian and Kiwi dollar, Morris Short decided to have the boat built here in Australia under licence. This year Morris and his partner, Phil

with sailing characteristics that will appeal to skiff and dinghy sailors, while also providing extra stability and the interior space to sleep, or at least get out of the weather, that off-the-beach boats just don't have.

While the latter consideration hasn't been an afterthought, it certainly has taken second place to sailing



Froud, set up local production for the Elliott with the fibreglass work contracted to a top laminator who does one-design class boats.

Having the boat built locally means that the price can be contained to a competitive level with local boats.

Calling the Elliott 5.9 an 18-footer with a cabin isn't that far from the mark; the designer's intention has plainly been to provide a high performance trailer sailer

performance. The boat is mostly cockpit, with the cuddly cabin looking small and rather odd, but still serving its intended purpose.

The hull lines are fairly extreme, with a fine plumb bow leading out to very beamy flared sections just aft of amidships. With flared topsides the crew weight can have maximum effect keeping the boat on its feet. There is also a flat bottom from the centreboard case aft to promote

planning.

The centreboard has all its ballast in a long bulb, a method of providing self-righting ability also seen on the maxi-Ts Noelex 30. According to Short, the 5.9 self-righted herself immediately in NZ tests with the keel fully raised, bulb up against the hull [she is trailed that way, too].

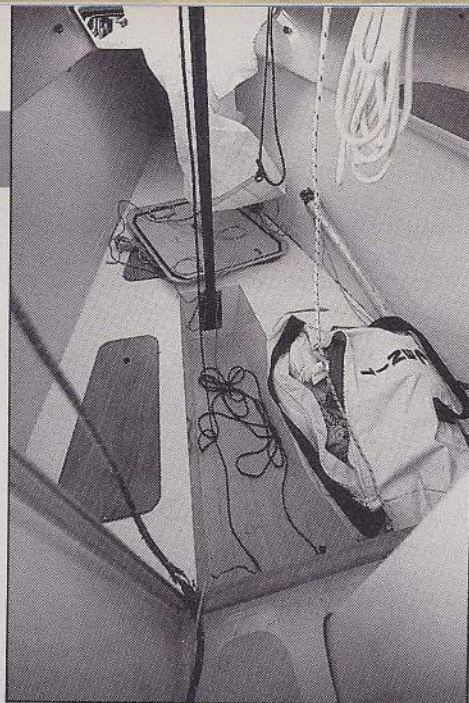
Construction is fibreglass sandwich, using Coremat in the hull and Divynycell in the deck. There'd be no point in building a boat like this if you didn't keep weight down; stated displacement for this production version is 896kg, with 496kg in the centreboard bulb. You could go lighter using exotics in the lay-up but the price would become prohibitive for production hulls.

operated on this boat by a simple worm winch which is very, very heavy duty labour to operate. Short is considering offering a hydraulic system as an alternative and, believe me, it would have to be worth it. The current set-up is a real gut-buster.

Aft of that is a well for the outboard motor, on this boat a Mariner four hp which was more than adequate for flat water motoring. Given the open transom [keeping weight out of the ends and making boarding very easy] and the desire to keep the significant weight of the outboard centrally positioned, this is a logical solution which is well-executed. When sailing, the outboard hinges up on its bracket and a trapdoor is inserted underneath.

I guess the drawbacks of this system — smoke and fumes from the outboard blowing straight into the helmsman's face when motoring, 4-6 inches of water slopping around in the well when sailing, and some inconvenience for the mainsheet hand who must quickly learn to step around, and not into, the well, are just necessary evils. I can't think of any better way around it.

Immediately behind the outboard well is the mainsheet traveller, which is most easily operated by the skipper while the mainsheet hand works the sheet from



Above, it ain't much, its home-cabin is small, but you can still sleep two or four people.

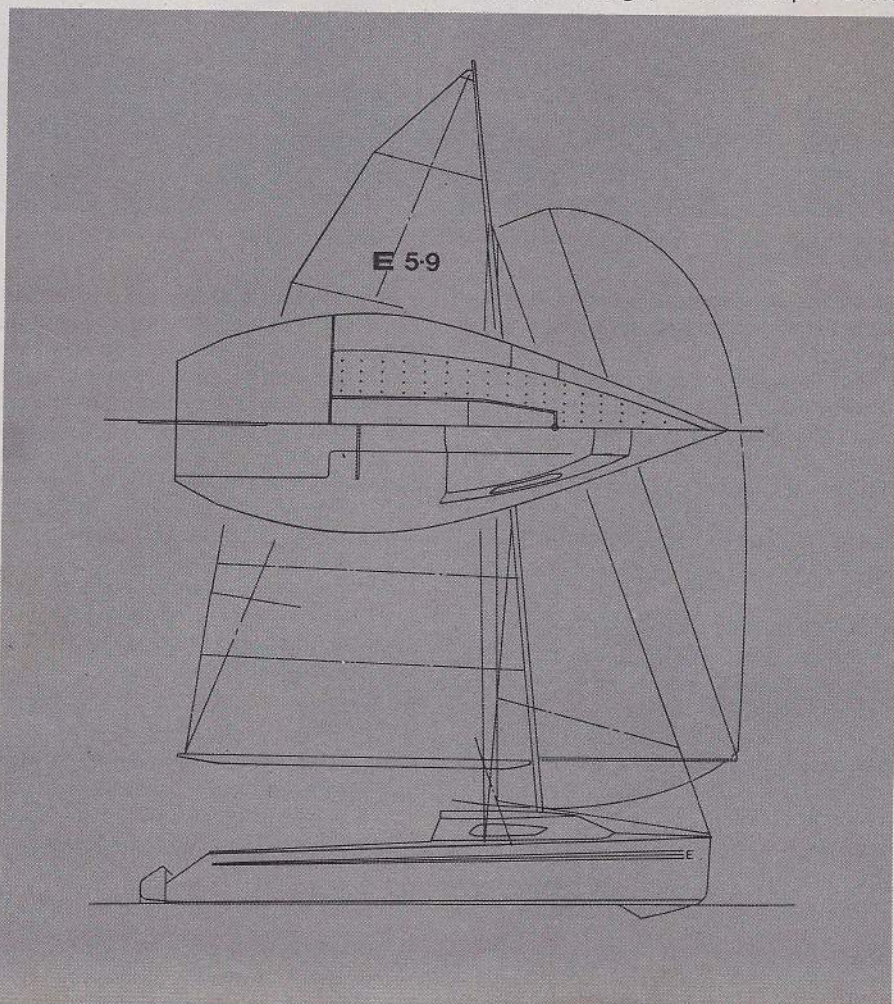
blocks in front of the well. The helmsman also has the spinnaker sheet and brace blocks at his fingertips and in practice he or she tends to work these through gybes. The boat is most easily raced by a crew of three, though two could cope without drama. Squeezing a fourth person aboard would be inconvenient when racing, given the small amount of area to work in forward of the traveller. For social sailing, though, the cockpit could



Layout and Rig

Below decks there's not a lot to describe. Fibreglass bunk mouldings run along each side, enclosing storage and providing the space for up to four adults to sleep, two head-to-feet each side. There's sitting headroom in the cuddy and space to crawl around aft under the cockpit, but not a lot of it.

The centreboard case emerges into the forwardmost section of the cockpit,



accommodate five or even six.

Jib sheets, halyards and sail control lines lead back to cleats at the aft end of the cuddy cabin. It's only a little jib, with a large proportion of the 24.6m² sail area going into the mainsail. But jib trim can be easily adjusted via simple rope barber haulers, with these provided for the spinnaker as well.

The deck-stepped mast is a NZ Matrix section by Murray Jones, set up with one pair of very long, swept-back spreaders [no backstays], wire rigging and Graham screw fastenings on deck.

Foredeck work is a little perilous, given the lack of area and the non-skid surfacing which could be improved, but the forward hand can stand in the forward hatch for more security. It would be good to see stowage provided for the

though, so I had another go, in a race at Port Hacking run by the PHOSC, and this time there was a breeze of 8-10 knots at times and again flat water.

My impressions are that this boat will provide a helluva lot of fun for grown-up off-the-beach sailors. The helm's light and responsive, there are plenty of sail controls to play with to tweak up the rig, and there's lots of speed out of the blocks on every point of sailing.

Update

At the time of the test [August, 85], Vanessa Dudley felt that the Elliott would be a tricky boat to sail in a breeze and somewhat demanding on a shy reach. Short and Froud felt that she did not have the opportunity to see how well the boat went in strong winds.



Elliott features the modern approach to rear-end design — big, broad, open and no fussy coamings.

spinnaker pole along the boom, dinghy-style to get it out of the way but still easily accessible.

The fibreglass rudder blade bolts into an alloy frame rudder box with a nice long tiller and extension; fastening the bolt tightly holds the blade in place, but it will swing up if it touches bottom. The cheeks were showing a bit of wear around the bolt — perhaps large washers would help, but it's basically a good system.

Performance

Having watched the 5.9 overtake and skim past us with the minimum of fuss in the light Pittwater Islands Race, I had no doubts she would be a good light weather performer. That was confirmed in our first attempt at a boat test, when the breeze peaked at about five knots.

This wasn't what you'd call a real sail,

Various reports conducted on the Elliott since our first test certainly indicate that the boat has no problems handling strong winds and may do even better in these conditions. The bow sections are fine and the flare in the topsides aft might suggest a boat which could be tricky to sail downwind, but the results from Auckland and Sydney races prove otherwise. According to Short the little Elliott is most controllable downwind, able to slide out easily from a broach and very controllable and fast on a reach. Upwind the boat can carry its full spread of sail up to 30 knots without needing to reef.

Summary

The Elliott is definitely a boat aimed at the racing enthusiasts. This will be an ideal boat for the ex-dinghy sailor with a family who now needs a boat which can at times be used for social sailing. Whereas most

trailer sailers lack the excitement of dinghy sailing, the Elliott will be one boat where the sensations will be very much the same. For the speed demon who still wants to blast off downwind under spinnaker this will be the boat to buy.

While the price was a bit up in the air at time of going to press, it looked as if the local-built boat would be going onto the market as an all-up ready-to-hook-up-to-car package for well under \$18,000. In terms of performance return on dollars spent it would seem that the Elliott will be a bargain even if it is not so big on overnight accommodation.

Dudley feels that the Elliott will be a strong competitor with those other hot-racers of the trailer scene, the Rosses, the Blazer 23 and the Status Slipstream. Certainly it will be interesting to see how the little Kiwi flyer goes against these boats in local races.

At only 896kg trailer weight, the Elliott is certainly going to be a good boat for trailing behind small and medium-sized four-cylinder cars. In many ways the Elliott is made to measure for the small front-wheel-drive Japanese compacts which so many of us drive these days. The boat is also simple and easy to rig and so will be ideal for those sailors who want to duck home for an evening sail after work. In summer one can see this being a great candidate for summer twilight races. The little Kiwi skimmer can be launched and sailing in short order so you can race against keel boat fleets while parking it in your driveway.

Short and Froud's company, E Type Yachts, are looking at introducing a larger 7.4-metre version of the Elliott either late in 1986, or early in 1987. Elliotts might follow too since this talented young Auckland designer is doing a number of boats these days including a way out 14-metre keeler with flared topsides, ultra-light displacement and a wing section mast without a backstay. With this larger boat and his two smaller trailable boats, the 29-year-old Greg Elliott has shown he has the credentials to join the big league of New Zealand's yacht designers. We have seen what Farr, Holland, Wright, Young and Ross can do, so be warned — Elliott could well be the next big name in the racing scene.

Specifications

LOA	5.9m
LWL	5.6m
Beam	2.45m
Draft	1.3m
Displacement	896m
Sail area	24.6m
Builder: E Type Yachts, Box 8504, Symonds St, Auckland.	
Australian agent: Elliott Type Yachts, 263 Storey St, Maroubra, NSW, 2035.	

