





Story and pictures by Ivor Wilkins



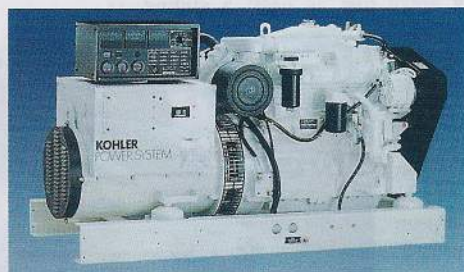
# Offshore thoroughbred







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**G**reg Elliott's boats have always been in a hurry to get places. Through a long line of racing designs, his philosophy has been dictated less by rating formulae – although sometimes he has ventured into this arena – than by getting from here to there as fast as possible.

And, preferably "from here to there" should involve a decent ocean passage, not a quick romp around the cans and back to the bar. Given those preferences, it is not surprising that in shifting his attention more into the cruising arena, Elliott has taken with him a penchant for speed.

"Boats that really sail – that's what's important to me," he says. "And I mean, *really* sail. They must be able to go to windward properly and get there quickly and safely."

With a new line of pilothouse cruisers, he has hit on a formula that gives true performance with all the cruising amenities. The latest of these is *Kotick*, a handsome 50-footer designed for James and Gris McGougan, who launched her in June and have recently returned to New Zealand after a successful shakedown cruise to Vanuatu.

The McGougans are a very experienced British couple who arrived in New Zealand in a Moody 419 they had seriously outgrown. "I have always mucked about in boats," says James. "We finally left the world of business behind in 1990 and cruised extensively in our Moody, *Tabatha*. She was an excellent boat in many ways, but I really wanted to go faster. We are not



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racers," he says, adding with a wry smile, "well, not unless there is another boat in sight. But, seriously, I strongly believe a fast boat is more seamanlike.

"The other problem was that we looked a bit like Steptoe's yard when we went to sea with all sorts of bits and pieces lashed on everywhere. I rebelled against that. I wanted everything clean and tidy and in its place."

In addition, James and Gris, who live aboard their boat virtually year round, wanted something more connected with the sea, with better access to the water. "I wanted to be able to sit in the saloon and watch the world go by," says James. "And, I also wanted to be able to just walk out the back and get into the water, without having to fuss about with ladders and things."

*Kotick* certainly provides that with a marvellous through-flow from the cockpit straight into the raised saloon. To safeguard against a sea finding entry just as easy, a sliding door, about waist high, is drawn across to seal the entrance whenever the boat is on passage. In addition, a zip-on clear plastic blind acts as a splash curtain. At anchorages in the tropics, the blind is replaced with mosquito netting.

The saloon is spacious and bright with the galley to port and a dining/lounging area to starboard. A navigation station, with a comfortable swing chair, is forward of the galley. This is an excellent watch seat at sea, providing good views of the sails up through the overhead hatches and visibility all round. Even so, James and Gris observe the habits of a lifetime and always make a trip out into the cockpit for a good look-around every 20 minutes.

At anchor, just as James and Gris wanted, the views are panoramic. You sit and watch the world go by. The sense of space is enhanced by the flow-through effect into the cockpit.

The roofline of the pilothouse extends like a verandah over the forward part of the cockpit and a sturdy bimini cover pushes the enclosed area even further out creating an expansive area for relaxing, or enjoying alfresco meals at the table forward of the

steering station. Side panels can be attached to the bimini to enclose the cockpit entirely. The transition from indoors to outdoors is hardly noticeable. "The movement and flow of this area is a great joy," says Gris.

Inevitably, in their years of liveaboard cruising, James and Gris had developed firm ideas about their ideal boat and all of



**Top:** The nav station, opposite the saloon, makes an excellent watch seat at sea. The engine and generator are under the saloon floor

**Middle:** The main cabin is comfortable and practical, with a watertight door in the forward bulkhead

**Bottom:** The light, spacious saloon is almost the same level as the cockpit, giving easy indoor-outdoor living

them were put into a comprehensive brief for Elliott to translate into a new design. Stowage was a major priority and plenty of it. They seldom have staying guests, so a mass of accommodation was not for them. One guest cabin was all they needed. Freed from the need to create multiple sleeping arrangements, Elliott has produced a boat that has an easy, open feel about it, lots of space and light. And simply masses of

*"It's rather like riding a nice horse. It tells you very quickly if you are doing it badly"*

locker space. Every nook and cranny has been turned into a locker of some sort or another. This boat need never look like a junkyard.

No aft cabins allows for more stowage, so that the cockpit area offers acres of space – under the floor, in the coamings behind

the seats, under the seats and in very handy top-opening bin lockers situated either side of the companionway. The portside locker houses gas cylinders that look big enough to keep a busy restaurant going for a year

– although, in truth, they last the McGougans, both of whom are "fanatic" cooks, about six months. The starboard locker houses foul weather gear and diving equipment, while the large under-floor lockers are for the two outboard motors, dive compressor and tanks.

This follows a sensible regime of situating all the heavy equipment at or below the waterline and as centrally as possible. James describes the boat as a "30ft load-carrying box with ends attached", which is a reflection of the effort that has gone into concentrating the weight as much into the centre of the boat as possible. The engine and generator – both Yanmar units that sensibly share a number of components such as oil filters – are under the saloon floor and the two water tanks are on both sides of the saloon. It all assists in performance and seaworthiness.

Motoring ability was another item on the wish list. The *Moody* was sluggish under power and the McGougans definitely wanted an improvement. "I am a keen sailor," says James, "but I am not a purist. If need be I will turn the motor on and motorsail." With an automatic self-pitching,



three-blade prop, *Kotick* motors at 8-9 knots in most conditions.

While Elliott and the McGougans shared a desire for performance, there were some keen discussions on how far that should go, with some compromises along the way. Take draft, for example. The McGougans did not want to go any deeper than 6ft, 6in so they could retain a wide access to anchorages. Elliott believes firmly that you can't get real performance to windward without draft. So, a compromise was reached and *Kotick* has 6ft, 6in draft, but a weighted dagger board extends from inside the keel to a depth of 10ft, 6in.

"To go to windward properly, you have to get lift from a fin," says Elliott. "You've got to reduce leeway." The board is unobtrusive as it is housed entirely within the keel structure, with a simple electrical winch to control it.

Forward of the saloon are the accommodation areas. On the port side is a

snug sea-berth, which cleverly converts into an office area, while the double guest cabin is opposite. A head and shower is to port, forward of the office, and the main cabin spans the width of the boat ahead. This is once again served by a multitude of lockers and hanging spaces, while right forward, through a watertight door, is a compact workshop.

The forward wall of the workshop is a collision bulkhead, which separates the living areas from ample gear and anchor lockers in the bow.

The sailing systems comprise a 115 per cent genoa and a staysail, both on furlers, with a large, fully battened mainsail in a 7/8 rig configuration. With light air performance an important consideration, the sail plan is generous, supported on a triple-spreader mast. The main flakes down inside lazy jacks and nestles into permanent scoops along the side of the boom. Conventional slab reefing is used on



*An inlaid nautilus design in the saloon table*

the mainsail, with all the control lines leading aft to a central pod just aft of the steering station.

Frederiksen cars and tracks provide a friction-free hoist for the mainsail, but even so, it is a large expanse of sail and the electric Andersen winch centrally mounted on the control pod in the cockpit is a real asset. Andersen two-speed manual winches on the coamings look after the genoa, staysail and gennaker trim.

Sailing *Kotick* in a perfect 12-16 knot breeze on an early summer morning showed her well able to live up to the performance pedigree so important to both designer and owners. On the wind, with full mainsail and staysail, she tracked along easily at 7.5 to 8 knots, while with sheets eased the speed quickly climbed to 9-9.5 knots. "On passages it is easy to get her set up at anything between nine and eleven knots for hours on end," says James. "It is a fun boat to sail. Having forgotten most of my dinghy sailing, I needed to learn that the best approach is to foot along for speed. The apparent wind comes forward so fast, you can tend to overtrim her. If you foot off, you get better performance, the boat is nicely balanced and you are actually sailing at very respectable angles.

"It's rather like riding a nice horse. It tells you very quickly if you are doing it badly." The description is apt. Reflecting the combined talents of the designer and an experienced cruising couple, *Kotick* is indeed an ocean thoroughbred, powerful enough to reel off significant daily mileages, yet perfectly manageable by a small crew with a big desire to travel in comfort and considerable style.



*A neat set-up for the keyboards in the centre of the cockpit eases sail control and saves on winches*



## Specifications

loa:	15.2m
lwl:	13.8m
beam:	4.5m
draft:	1.9m to 3.0m daggerboard down
disp:	13 tonnes
sail area:	main: 63sqm
	no 1: 60sqm
	staysail: 35sqm