



Greg Elliott's 'Flatpack' Boat for the Times

With young people today financially stretched just to get a roof over their heads, the notion of owning a yacht is becoming increasingly remote – unless you think back to the times when youngsters built Pied Pipers or Hartley 16s in their back yards and embarked on Huckleberry Finn adventures.

Greg Elliott made that connection while working on a commission from a client who wanted a small, simple and rugged boat that could be dragged up on the beach in front of his home.

The solution was a 6.6m plywood glue and tape design with a kick-up keel plate and rudder, which is currently under construction near Warkworth.

However, it immediately suggested itself as something that could be produced as a flatpack boat anybody with moderate skills could build and finish at home.

"This E22 concept is to have a easy build day sailor," Elliott explains. "The bulkheads and girders form the building jig to bend the gunwale and chine battens

on, before applying the plywood panels. Deck plywood panels are bonded at the edges and glass taped to form the shape."

The builder can opt to cut the plywood panels himself from dimensioned drawings, or order computer-cut panels in a flat pack. This has the twin virtues of perfect accuracy and less wastage, as the computer nests the patterns to achieve the greatest efficiency.

The bulkheads and bottom panels utilise 9mm ply, while the topsides and deck are 6mm. The hull is then sheathed in fibre glass with an extra layer along the bottom to resist abrasion. Two small winches take care of headsail sheeting and swinging the keel plate up. There is enough weight in the keel to ensure the boat is self-righting.

"This is something a weekend warrior with basic tools and skills could take on to create a boat that would be affordable and fun to sail," says Elliott. Although it is really intended as a day sailor, it could take intrepid young adventurers on a summer cruise.

For Elliott, it brings back memories of a great summer with a mate day-hopping from bay to bay from Auckland to Whangaroa and back in a smaller Elliott 5.9.

The beauty of this size is that there are all kinds of small trailer boats lying unused in backyards with masts and booms and other bits and pieces that could be scavenged to save money. Elliott estimates that with a bit of scrounging and ingenuity, one of these boats could be put on the water for not much more than \$10,000 – about the price of a laser these days.

"This is a fun, knock-about boat that will sail well and can be put together at home at an affordable price," says Elliott. "That's how it used to be and, in today's world, unless you design something that is easy and affordable, people just aren't going to be able to do it."

He intends to do a smaller 6m E20 version as well, if there is interest.

By Ivor Wilkins