



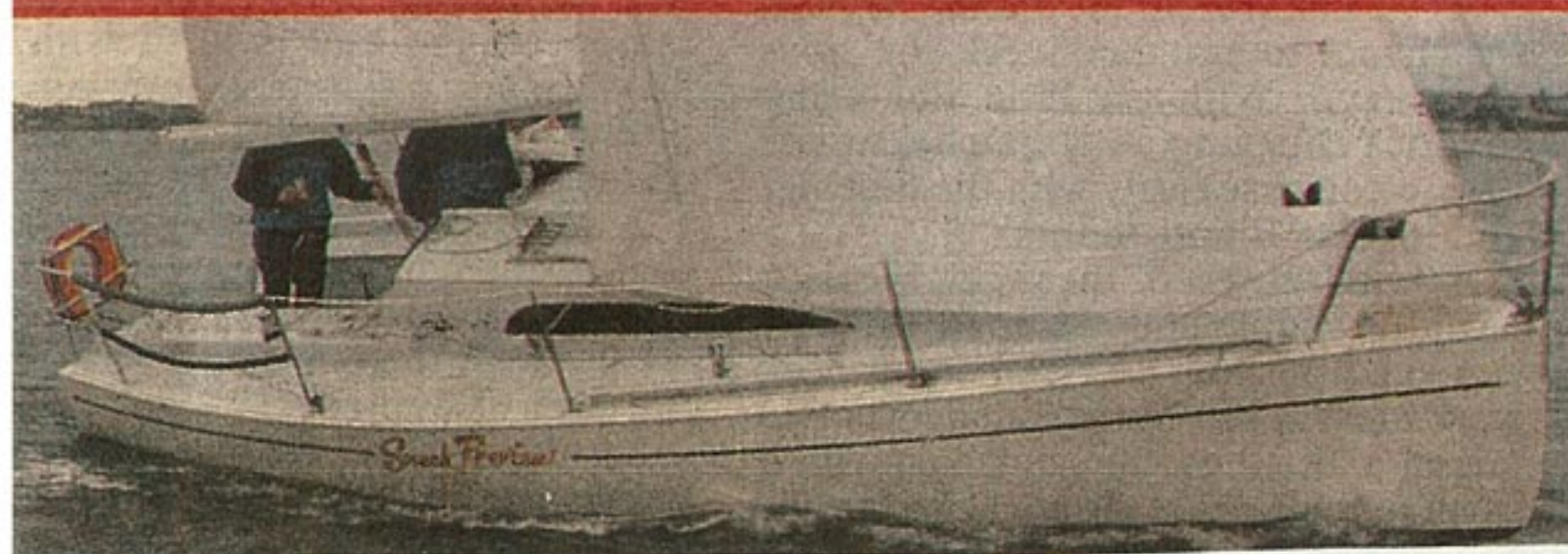
# Elliott 7.9 — taking a Sneek Preview

**T**alk Elliott yachts and people immediately think "speed" — such has been the success of Greg Elliott's designs on the race track in recent years.

*ABOVE: More wind required. RIGHT: Finger-tip control on all points.*

*BELOW: Sneek Preview proved a powerful windward performer.*

*BOTTOM: The gusts produced heel but no threat of a roundup.*







Summary

On the question of Elliott's assurance that his yachts are safe and predictable — as easily managed by a cruising family as a racing crew — we have no argument.

Sneek Preview is not a radical looking yacht, and she is not radical to sail. The 7.9 despite the Elliott reputation to "speed" is not a cranky race boat but rather a good, honest sailboat with few vices.

We found the 7.9 to have no sensational strengths and no outstanding weaknesses — she's simply a great all-rounder.

In having her abilities so evenly-spread, the 7.9 obviously has an armoury to prevail in a range of race and cruising conditions.

Sneek Preview is well constructed, tidily-finished and well thought out. We had some doubts about the for'ard hatch's ability to withstand green water but the owner reckons a fire hose and "down the mine" dive at sea have failed to breach its integrity.

Sliding easily downharbour. Who wants to go home?

We love the ease of handling and light helm on this extremely sure-footed little keeler. As already mentioned, the Elliott 7.9 is the most manoeuvrable yacht of her size we have sailed — either under sail or motor.

There is no reason why this yacht, being well able to stand up for herself without crew ballast being vital to her

well-being, could not leave the harbour race circuit for an ambitious coastal cruise.

We hope by now to have conveyed our impression that in 7.9, Elliott has created a safe good fun boat. We certainly enjoyed our hours aboard Sneek Preview.

The vitals

LOA .....	7.9m (25ft 8ins)
LWL .....	7m (22ft 9ins)
Beam .....	2.8m (9ft 2ins)
Draft .....	1.7m (5ft 5ins)
Ballast .....	590kgs (1300lbs)
Displacement .....	1500kgs (3300lbs)
Sails .....	Lidgard
Winches .....	Maxwell
Spars .....	Masts & Spar Services
Engine .....	Bukh 8hp saildrive
Wind instruments .....	Nil



While the little Elliott 5.9 trailer yacht continues to earn ecstatic reviews on both sides of the Tasman, Elliott has been back at the board expanding his design range.

We have already tested the very capable 12m offshore Elliott and reported extensively the exploits of Party Pro, Elliot's own offbeat 14m flier which was sadly lost in the 1987 Auckland-Suva race.

So this month it's back to a smaller design — the Elliott 7.9, billed as a harbour and coastal racer-cruiser.

We had already seen the 7.9 in action, having raced against Gatecrasher in the newly-reinstated Junior Offshore Group (JOG) series in Auckland. Having studied the 7.9 closely from the deck of a slightly larger yacht it was time to sail a little Elliott we'd found so difficult to shake loose on race day.

It was also an opportunity to test Elliott's claim that his yachts are not cranky race boats. Instead, he argues, they are stiff, easily-handled sailboats which a family can take away cruising with confidence.

Our test yacht is Sneek Preview, built and skippered by professional boat-builder Craig Stirling of Don Senior's yard. Stirling was a regular crew member aboard Party Pro and was on board when the yacht struck Astrolabe Reef while leading the fleet to Suva in May.

Stirling could not, however, be aboard for our boat test. Instead we had Elliott, another Party Pro crew member Terry Sherson and Bill Barry, skipper of Public Image, a Young 8.4, a close class competitor and subject of an earlier **Boating test.**

Sneek Preview is not difficult to recognise when we wander down the prescribed pier at Auckland's Westhaven Marina. The yacht displays the distinctive hull shape and cabin profile of Elliott yachts. But, hang on, this one has a backstay.

"Only to hang on to when having a pee," jokes Elliott.

As we motor from the marina, we take the chance to examine Sneek Preview's deck setup. With the little Bukh 8hp saildrive chugging away quietly, we are able to converse easily with the designer and regular Elliott sailors.

As with the rest of the yacht, the deck layout is simple and clean. At the bow is a small anchor well and small deck work area. A low but adequate wooden toerail is fitted on the gunwhale with a small rubbing strake circumnavigating the topsides.

A wooden for'ard-opening hatch is fitted onto the leading edge of the cabin. This flush hatch, with only a rubber gasket in the war against invading water, may have its work cut out with the onslaught of solid seas should Sneek Preview tackle a wet and bumpy windward passage.

The spars are by Mast and Spar Services, the mast having swept-back spreaders, diamond strut — and backstay, although only secured by bridle to the quarter rails.

All mast controls lead aft — five aside to camcleats and Maxwell 16 winches: A further two, Maxwell 20s, are mounted one aside on the cockpit coamings as primaries.

The cockpit is extremely large for a yacht of only 7.9m — plenty of space for racing, cruising or relaxing at anchor.

With the removeable mainsheet track and transom boards tucked away below decks, Sneek Preview would make an attractive cruiser — there being an unhindered wander directly to the accommodation from the dinghy or morning swim.

Large, self-draining lockers are fitted either side of the transom — gas bottles one side, ropes and cruising gear the other.

Instruments are non-existent apart from the essential compasses — a Silva bulkhead model mounted each side of the companionway. The speed log is by Wake Judgement and the wind gear by Finger Aloft — very inexpensive and generally reliable.

The stainless steel fuel tank, with a capacity of 28 litres (6 gallons) is filled through the cockpit floor while the engine vitals are fitted to the cockpit walls — the Bukh instrument panel to port and throttle/gear shift to starboard.

#### Accommodation

Compared to many other yachts contesting the JOG series, Sneek Preview is finished to an unaccustomed level of luxury. Stirling's boatbuilding skills are evident in the well-finished yet simple interior.

The Elliott 7.9 has surprising below decks space for a yacht so small. Even the lanky (basketballers excluded) will enjoy full headroom in the main cabin area.

Ample space is provided beneath the for'ard hatch for sail stowage — with extra space in a bin beneath the anchor well for small bits and pieces.

An RM69 toilet is fitted, reasonably privately, ahead of the mast bulkhead. A door, perhaps too heavy and certainly too civilised for JOG racers, would make for a very secluded head.

The mast is keel-stepped at the for'ard end of the saloon. Two generously-proportioned settee berths flank the saloon, each with a comfortable backrest. The saloon floor is of the "holly and teak" variety.

Large stowage bins beneath the side decks and behind the backrests are of proportions which could carry unacceptable weight if not watched.

While the focsle area is white painted with varnished cedar trim, from the saloon aft the hull is lined with grey Frontrunner, a synthetic covering. This nicely offsets the grey-flecked squabs in the saloon and quarterberths.

A small galley is fitted to port at the foot of the companionway. Cooking is by gimballed two-burner Mariner Maid — although there is ample space for a full oven if desired.

Stowage is confined to a small locker under the stove and a large locker beneath the bench. A small single sink if fitted in the middle of the bench, being served by a single freshwater handpump.

The navigation station is to starboard, complete with chart stowage, ice box and small liquor locker. The yacht's switchboard is situated in this locker.

Sneek Preview is blessed with very large and comfortable quarterberths. Anyone promoting these as "double berths" will get no argument from us.

Removal of the companionway steps reveals the extremely neat Bukh saildrive diesel — complete with its own cover.

As stated, our first impression of Sneek Preview's speed is under motor, using the Wake Judgement log, we get a reading of around 5-6 knots, an effortless and quiet achievement by the baby Bukh.

Once out on to the Waitemata Harbour we encounter a southwesterly of 8-12 knots. We'd have liked more but there's a chance of stronger gusts in patches.

Our first sail of the Elliott 7.9 is on the wind. Sneek Preview confirms our suspicions that the Elliott is strong upwind. Although we did not encounter brisk winds on test day we were aware from previous experiences that the 7.9 is, in fact, stronger on the wind as the wind gets stronger.

Sneek Preview is very predicatable and delightfully easy on the helm. The yacht tracks accurately and despite a few unexpected gusts, the increased heel is without violence — confirming Elliott's assertion that his are docile sailboats.

We throw a few tacks in our best breeze of the day above the Auckland Harbour Bridge. Going about is a snappy operation, as would be expected from a yacht used for harbour racing. The spade rudder and small headsail mean little time is wasted in "doing a corner" — and little speed is lost as well.

Crew positioning is obviously important on a yacht this size — although not as critical as on many other boats.

Eased sheets, and the 7.9 immediately picks up the pace, the helm loads only slightly — and there is little to suggest that this yacht will be anything of a handful when the wind gets keen.

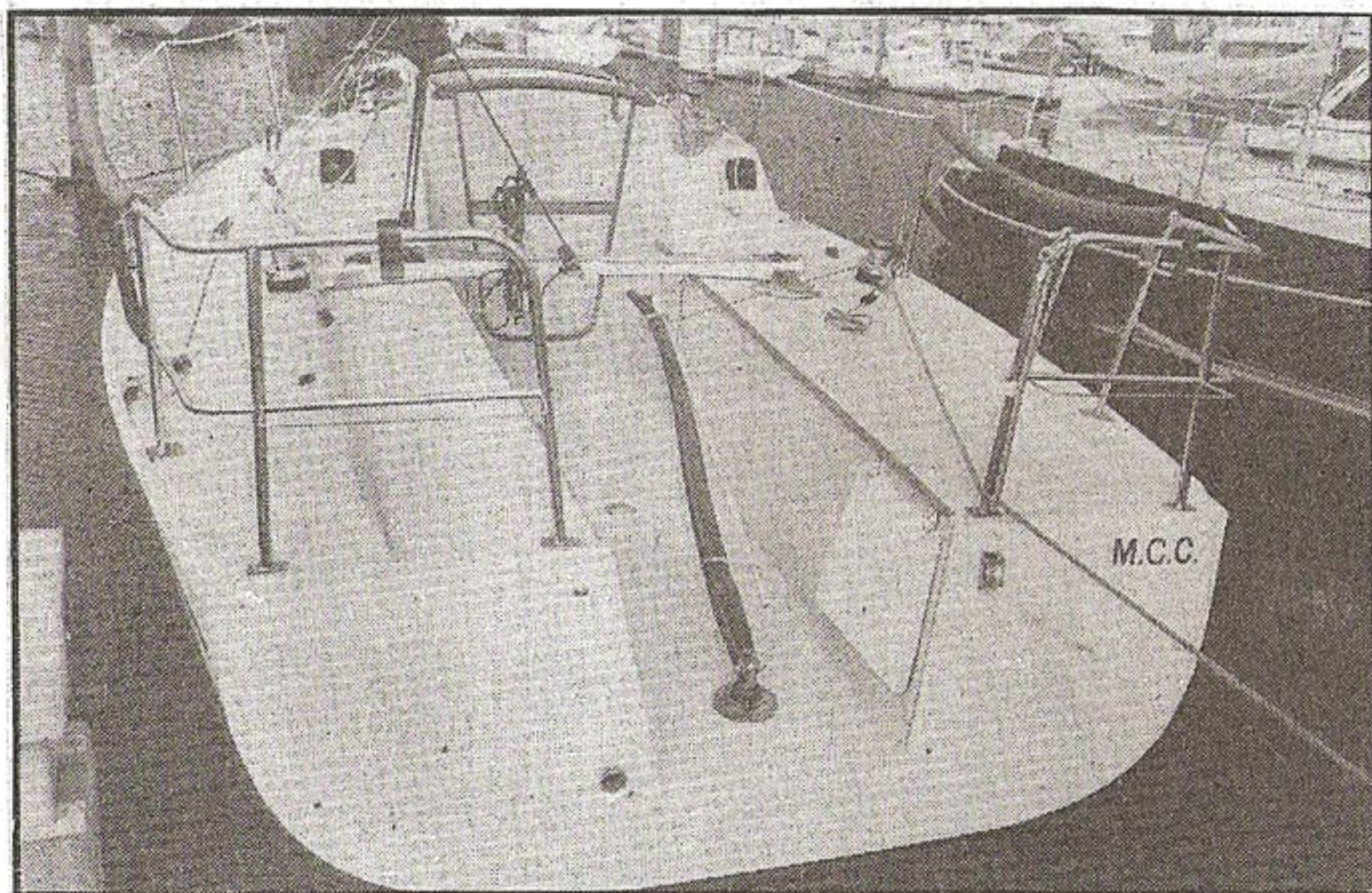


*Hardening up on the wind, the Elliott 7.9 was stiff enough to allow the crew to stray from the windward rail.*

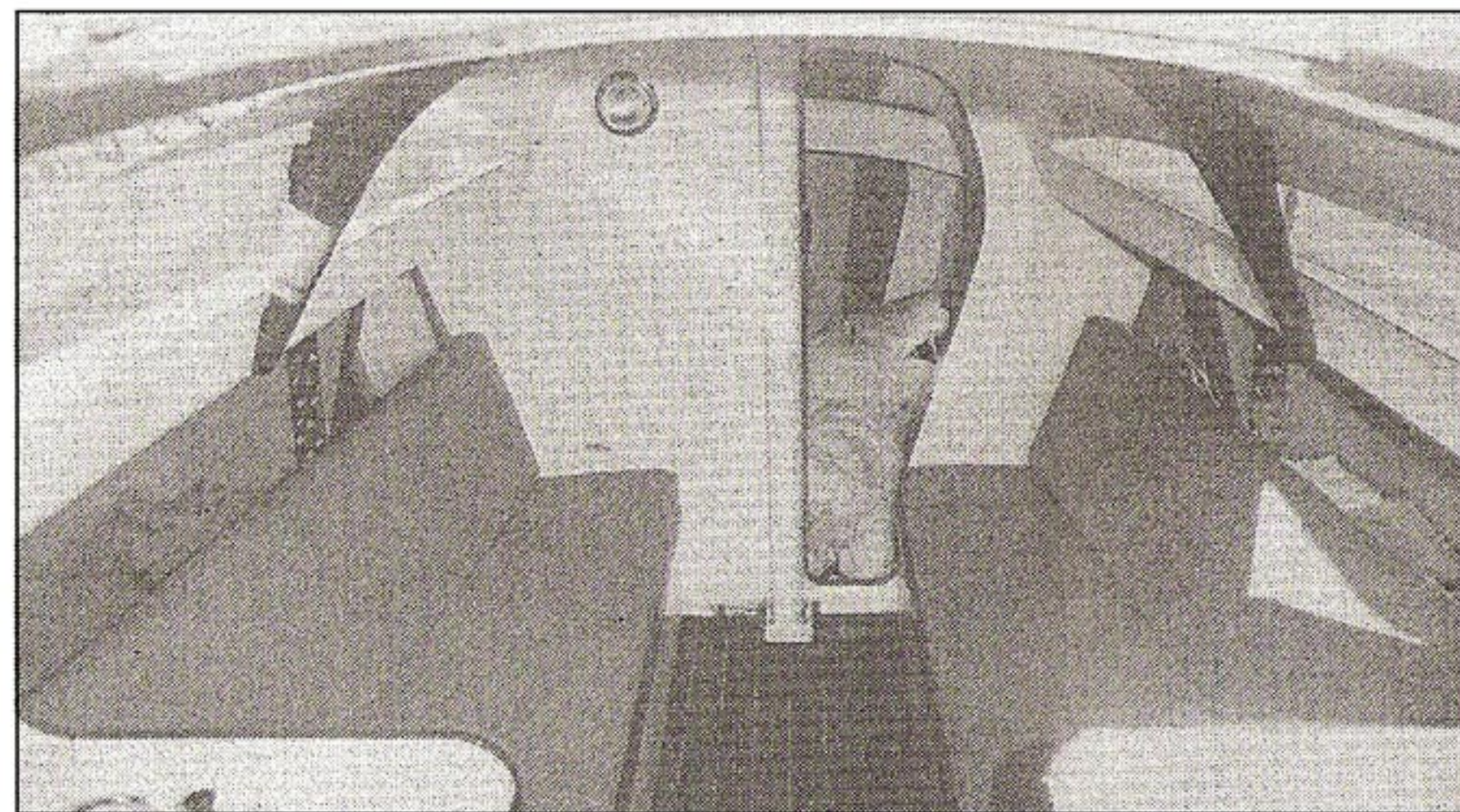




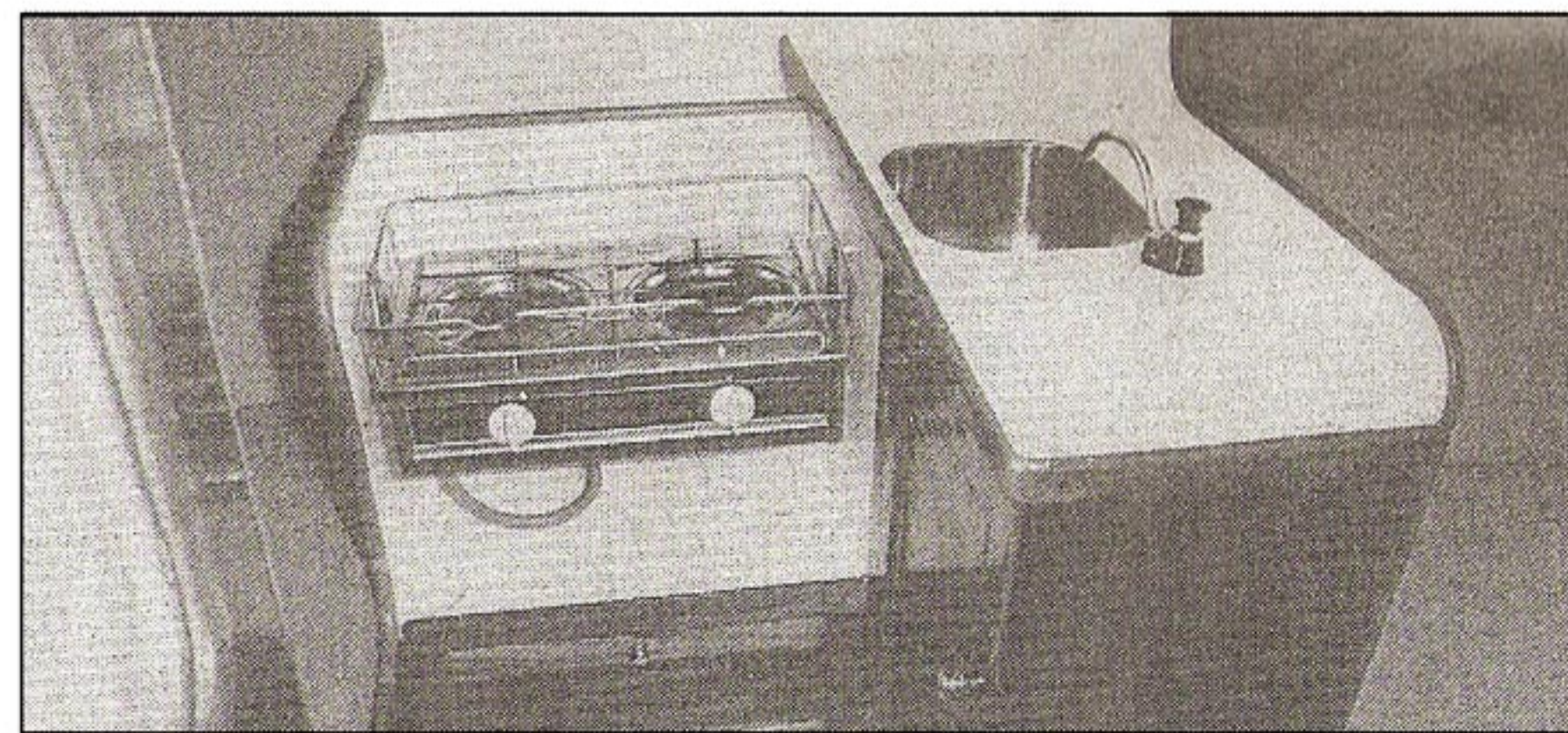
*Even in the gusts the little Elliott keeler remained light on the helm and easily controlled.*



*The huge cockpit gives heaps of room for cruising or racing. The mainsheet track can be removed for easy access.*



*Sneek Preview's saloon — full headroom for all but basketballers.*



*While a two-burner stove was fitted, the 7.9 has ample space for those wanting a full oven.*

Course adjustment is very sensitive with Elliott's helm-rudder setup. Sneek Preview must rank as the most manoeuvrable yacht we've sailed. To reinforce this, Elliott hurls the yacht into a 360 which, apart from startling the odd crew member and passing tourists aboard charter boats, is reasonably drama free.

Up with the spinnaker and down-harbour we set. Again no drama — far more wind than we are experiencing would be required to cause any upsets to this yacht with the bag up.

We flat run, bit boring, so harden up in a bid to induce some action. Apart from a measure more heel, apparent wind speed and boat speed there's little of significance to enter in the log.

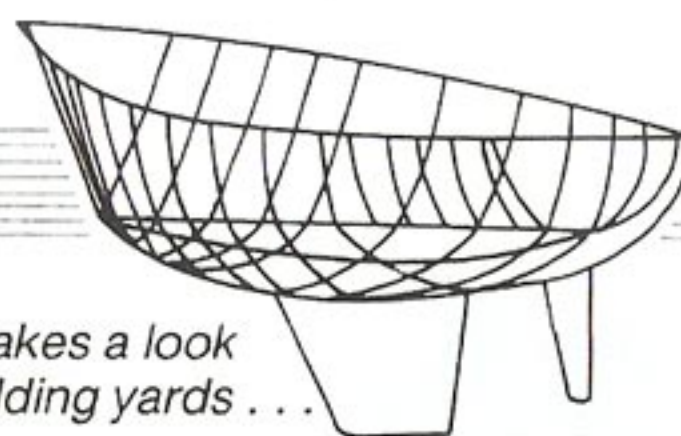
Sailing home in a rapidly-dwindling breeze, we have time to ponder the merits of the Elliott 7.9.



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## WORK IN PROGRESS

GARY BAIGENT takes a look  
round the boatbuilding yards...



This Greg Elliott 26 is the seventh sister to Outsider but has a slightly larger cabin than the original boat. It is owned and built by Craig Sterling in 15mm cedar core at Don Senior's Glenfield yard.

