With over 1,100 built since 1978 and still going strong, the Cornish Shrimper 19 must be a hard act to follow. Nigel Sharp sailed the...

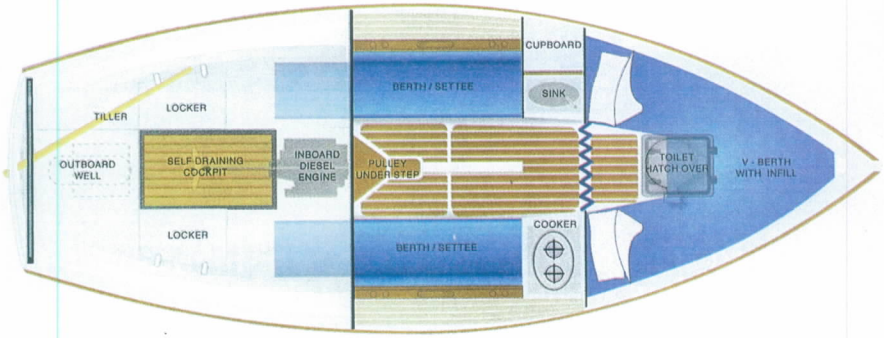
SHRIMPER'S NEW BIG SISTER

When I met Cornish Crabbers' MD Peter Thomas at the company's factory in Rock, North Cornwall, to sail the Shrimper 21 on the nearby Camel estuary, I was initially intrigued to know why there was a need for a new boat which is not that much bigger than the phenomenally successful Shrimper 19 and only slightly smaller than their Crabber 22.

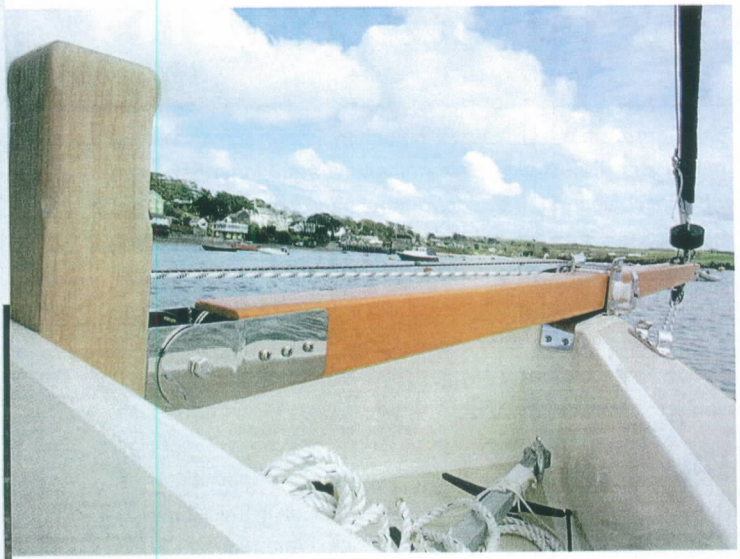
Peter explained that 18 months ago, while thinking of developing a Mark II version of the Crabber 22, he was approached by a Shrimper 19 owner who wanted a bigger boat, preferably with a separate heads compartment. This encouraged Peter to start planning a new deck mould which would provide more headroom throughout the 22. "But soon afterwards, I woke up in the middle of the night thinking 'What am I doing?' The real reason for the new boat was to create a step up from the Shrimper 19 which is fundamentally a trailer-sailer but the Crabber 22 is about twice the weight, which provides additional challenges for trailing."

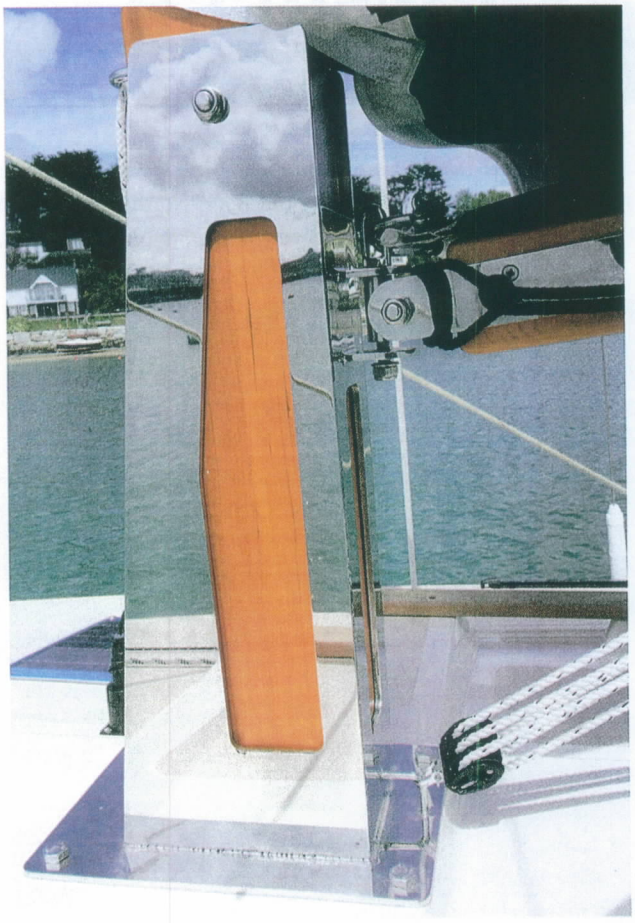
So Peter discussed the idea of a new and bigger Shrimper with Roger Dongray – the designer of the Shrimper 19 –and a short time later he was able to show some preliminary sketches to the 19 owner who had approached him. "He fell in love with it straight away, despite the lack of a separate loo. It would have more space, it would still be trailable and was still going to be called a Shrimper which made him even happier." The design was then developed by Roger in conjunction with David Thomas Yachts Ltd – the company Peter had inherited from his late father – and in mid-summer 2014 tooling began. Any doubts Peter might have had about the likely success of the new boat were soon dispelled when 11 were sold 'off the plans' before the first one, *Demelza*, was launched.

It would be difficult not to make comparisons between the two Shrimpers but since Peter had arranged for a 19 to take us out to *Demelza's* mooring, it was unavoidable. As the two of us stepped simultaneously on to the new boat's side deck, it was immediately obvious just how much more stable she is. Peter



Above & Left: *The new Shrimper 21's accommodation is both more spacious and more comfortable.*
Below left: *The hinged bowsprit acts as a derrick when raising the mast - and saves on marina charges.*
Below right: *With the gooseneck attached to the tabernacle, the boom can remain in place when the mast is lowered for trailing.*





explained that that is partly due to her ballast – iron punchings encapsulated in resin inside the hull and a galvanised steel centreplate, albeit raised at the time – but is more to do with the form stability provided by her proportionally greater beam.

Peter had told me the 21 has significantly more cabin space and I soon saw that he was right. It is divided into two areas by a bulkhead with a curtain in its central doorway. The edges of the doorway are strengthened to form twin mast compression posts – the 19 has one central post – with a beam in the deck moulding spanning the two. Forward of the bulkhead there is

a vee-berth which can be converted to a double and in the space between the berths, a chemical or sea toilet can be installed as an optional extra.

Aft of the bulkhead, there are two more berths although these can, of course, just be used as seating for those wanting to separate their sleeping and living areas. Forward to port there is a sink, to which fresh water is hand-pumped from two 10 litre plastic jerry cans in a cockpit locker; while to starboard there is a 2-burner non-gimballed cooker, the gas bottle for which is stored in another cockpit locker. Part of the vee-berth's infill support can be inserted between these two areas for additional worktop space or seating and it can also be used as a tabletop in conjunction with a pedestal in either the cabin or the cockpit. The interior finishes are a combination of GRP, white painted plywood and varnished teak trim. Peter explained that although it was important not to put too much weight into the new boat, he wanted the interior to be "a little bit more homely than the 19 which is quite basic". That seems to have been successfully accomplished with sensible consideration given to physical comfort as well as practical issues such as storage.

The 21's self-draining cockpit is not only substantially bigger, it doesn't need a raised section of cockpit sole forward to accommodate an inboard engine in the way that the 19 does. A Yanmar 9hp 1GM inboard engine is an optional extra on both boats;. However, thanks to the shorter keel, installing the outboard will be much more practical on the new boat for several reasons. It will be installed on the centreline forward of the rudder, over which its prop wash will greatly assist steering – the 19's is offset to starboard. It can be tilted out of the water to reduce drag when sailing – the 19's has to be removed from its well and stowed in a cockpit locker. And Peter thinks that it will be possible to steer with the outboard to give even better manoeuvrability.

The decision for the 21 not to have a full-length keel – which allows the rudder to be slightly balanced – was made to improve manoeuvrability under sail as well as power but it will also allow easier production planning: before building a 19 hull, the mould has to be set up according to the engine configuration; with the 21, the hull moulding is the same for inboard or outboard.

When we slipped our mooring under her inboard engine, *Demelza's* manoeuvrability was immediately apparent. She also showed an impressive turn of speed: just touching 6 knots at full revs and around 5 knots at a more comfortable engine speed.

Although the sails were already bent on, Peter told me about the company's new 'clunk click' sailing philosophy which has refined the process of rigging and de-rigging to save owners valuable time and effort when they have trailed their boats to the water and are eager to get sailing. The bowsprit hinges at its heel to assist mast raising and lowering by keeping the forestay at an effective angle throughout the process – not to mention the potential to save on mooring fees. Time-consuming lacing which is traditionally used to attach gaff mainsails to their spars has been replaced with

a head bolt rope which is inserted into a track on the gaff. At the luff there are Velcro-style webbing straps which wrap around the mast. The cleverest development, however, is the mast tabernacle which incorporates the gooseneck so that the boom can remain connected at all times, even when trailing. When the mast is lowered and its pivot bolt has been removed, all three main spars can be supported by the tabernacle and a special crutch aft.

The throat and peak halyards are lead back to clutches at the aft end of the coachroof and I was easily able to hoist the mainsail from the cockpit by pulling them simultaneously and without using their winch. With the jib unfurled and the engine turned off, we began to beat out of the Camel Estuary. Although the fiercely flooding tide limited our progress over the ground, it was clear that *Demelza* was moving though the water very easily. When I took the helm I could immediately tell that she was very nicely balanced with just the right amount of weight on the tiller.

Peter told me that they hadn't had a chance to properly compare the performance of the 19 and 21 but he said that the bigger boat "feels quite a bit quicker and manoeuvres a lot better under power and under sail. It tacks faster and also gets back up to speed quicker." The jib sheets are lead to the aft end of the coachroof to keep the coamings clear and tacking was straightforward: in the breeze we had – a Force 3 or so – it was easy to pull the new sheet through its swivelling eye and camcleat but in more wind it would be a simple matter to lead it to the adjacent winch. The mainsail has two rows of reefs and the reef lines for both the luff and the leach are led to a mid-point on the boom so they are reachable from the cockpit.

During the development of the new 21, Peter decided to rebrand one of the company's existing boats: the Crabber 17 is now the Shrimper 17 and he hopes that this will offer clarity in the marketplace with regard to the three trailer-sailers now available. Using the same hull and deck mouldings, some of the boats in the company's range are offered in different guises: the Adventure Series have Bermudan rigs and aluminium spars, while the Clam Series are rig-less motor launches. Peter told me that two of the boats sold to date are Adventure 21s and the Clam 21 will be available in due course.

In addition to the eleven sales to date, there is a longer list of potential clients who are very interested in the new boat, many of them 19 owners who are looking for something a little larger. So Peter is confident that more sales will come in the near future; whether the 21 can be as successful as its little sister, we'll have to wait until 2046 to find out.

CONTACT

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Cornish Shrimper 21 Specification

Length inc bowsprit: 25' (7.6m)
Length on deck: 21' (6.4m)
Beam: 7'10½" (2.4m)
Draft – plate up: 1'10½" (0.57m)
plate down: 4'5" (1.35m)
Sail area: 254 square feet (23.6m²)
Light displacement: 3086 lbs (1,400 kg)
Approx towing weight: 3968 lbs (1,800kg)