

SKERRICK



by Derek Ellard
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The new Skerrick – a versatile 12 foot micro cruiser

Also available as a sail/electric tender, all-electric hire boat, an eco-fishing skiff and the smallest cargo boat in the world. This little ship will be available as a timber/ply kit, a roto-moulded or grp version.

My aim was simple enough, design a new boat that would be better in every way than all other existing options. Optimistic? Certainly, and yet why not strive for excellence?

Every vessel I have ever designed has combined traditional working boat DNA with the best of technology and the Skerrick is no exception. The radically raked mast and lute stern were used on luggers well over a century ago with good reason. For today's mini lugger, the same advantages are built in and include opening up a huge uncluttered cockpit, with room to sleep two or seat four plus a porta-potti and sink. The lute stern protects the rudder and the retractable electric pod drive. It also provides a handy rear deck for fishing or stepping aboard, a place for rolled up camping gear, the detachable rowing seat and lastly, more space to stow odds and ends.

The wide beam and nearly flat centre sections do not compromise sailing performance as the fine entry, skeg keel and centreboard hidden under the sole ensure the little ship sails well on all points. Rowing is easy too, and the oars stow neatly.

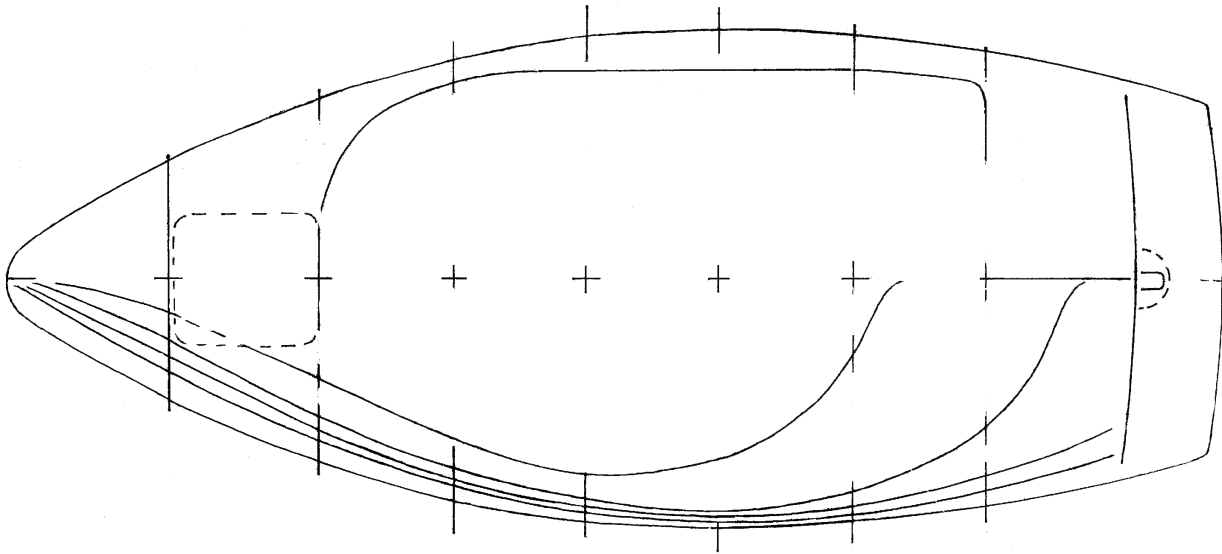
As a tender or micro cargo boat, there's room on that 2-metre long flat floor for a full-sized pallet or stacks of provisions. Safety is not neglected either with multiple watertight compartments and the lugsail has two deep reef points plus a brailing line for instant de-powering. The jib has a mini roller-furler for those gusty moments when sails need to be tamed fast. Time for the instant power of the solar charged electric pod.

Campers, explorers, the elderly, and children are welcomed aboard and kept comfortable with a remarkably stable ride, a generous spray dodger with a courtesy curtain, a voluminous boom tent or solar canopy and space for a portable stove. Wi-Fi? No, sorry.

Derek Ellard 2024

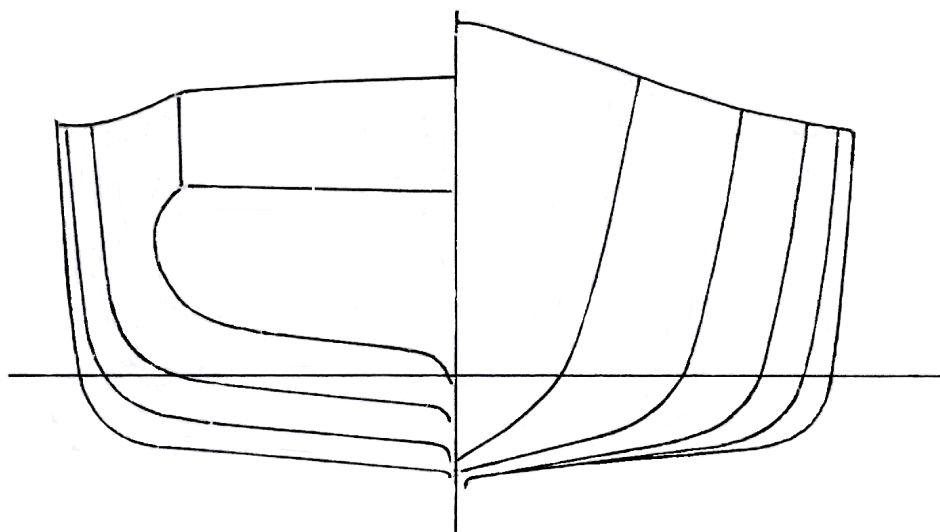
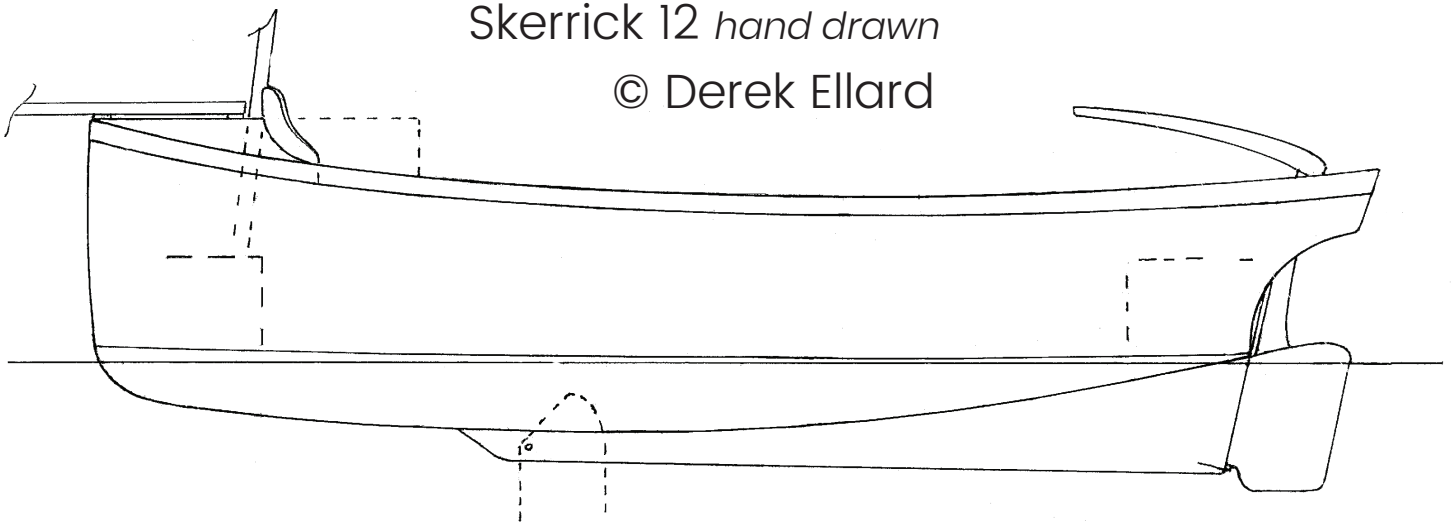
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Skerrick 12 *hand drawn*

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Specifications

LOA 4.6 metres **LOD** 3.65 **Beam** 1.5 **Weight** (est.) hull only 90 kg.

Draft 0.3 (0.85 with centreboard down).

Sail Area 8.85 square metres. **Rig** semi-boom standing lugsail with an unstayed mast, 2 deep reef points, brailing line and roller-furler on the jib.

Camping/load size 1.21 x 2 square metres. **Max. crew** 4, **sleep** 2.

Maximum cargo (sheltered water, calm conditions) 500 kg.

Auxiliary retractable transom-mounted EMP 2hp electric

Hull construction kit version: marine ply with strip planked bilges on a laminated timber keel/stem/stern with multiple watertight compartments and generous under cover stowage.

Standard features sailing version: watertight compartments, micro fore-deck, removeable rowing and side seats, ballasted centreboard under sole, lifting rudder, lifting tiller, brailing line to main, roller-furler on jib,* full width mainsheet horse, access ports, all spars, various custom fittings, sails, lines cleats etc. All spars fit within the boat's length. *Available without the jib and bowsprit.

Optional extras: Water ballast, sink, portable toilet, canvas spray dodger/cuddy, courtesy screen, boom tent/boat cover, custom cushions, oars and rowlocks, retractable electric pod, batteries, solar panel, charger socket, nav lights, anchor, rope gunwale fender, keel banding, beaching legs, safety gear, genoa, road trailer.

Electric version: electric version with skeg keel has a full width removeable canopy with solar panels, pod or outboard motor, Battery array, lighting, seating for 4, some optional extras as above are available.

Commercial versions: tender or micro fishing boat with longer foredeck, lifting points, extra glass reinforcing, some options as above.

Custom design service available.



Some more details

– *warning: may contain archaic sailing terminology*

The lute stern was originally developed to help prevent swamping from incoming waves as small beach-launched open fishing boats returned laden with their haul. The clever concave stern sections acted like mini sea walls and literally turned the water back. Handy in a following sea too. They weren't difficult to build either and mizzens were sheeted more effectively. Damaged rudders were less frequent and they became the 19th century fisherman's friend.

The new Skerrick does all that and more, and considering that the development of the boat was influenced by commercial needs for safety and efficiency, the lute stern has earned its place on the little ship. Besides, there may well come a time when those attributes will be welcomed at the local launching ramp. Consider too that many of the buyers of my boats were professional seafarers and some occasionally ventured out into the open ocean – around Kangaroo Island for example – in a Skerrick-sized Shimmy.

The brailing line in its many forms has a long history on working craft, used on square riggers, Thames barges and Mediterranean lateeners, and proves beyond doubt that centuries of use cannot be disregarded. It is simplicity itself, utterly reliable and lacking brakes, the sailing boat often needs the foot quickly off the accelerator. On the Skerrick a light line is taken from mid yard out to the roach, through an eyelet, back to a micro block lower on the yard, and down to cleat. Uncleat the mainsheet, pull the line and the sail is rapidly gathered up, spilling the wind. It takes seconds – squalls? – no problem.

The hidden centreboard, combined with an abbreviated $\frac{3}{4}$ length keel, has one huge advantage and a few lesser ones. Tucked away under the sole, it does not intrude into that remarkably spacious cockpit, so no more centreboard stumbles. Sleeping, dining, horizontal folk dancing or even sailing can continue unencumbered.

The centreboard is smaller than others and much easier to raise or lower, also it's only needed to windward, so no more half up half down guesses. As to that keel, it protects the bottom when grounding – we've all done it and if by miracle you haven't, you will eventually.

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The semi-boom was an idea that needed to wait for battens to evolve and they have. Basically, it is a full-length sail batten near the foot which helps keep the sail's shape while allowing for some welcome curvature offwind, without folding up and losing power. Previously, we recommended a temporary boom – a whisker pole for the main – but they were always cumbersome for the single handed. The big advantage of the boomless mainsail is safety of course, and I once witnessed a serious head injury courtesy of an errant boom. The softer, more flexible batten is a good compromise.

On a personal note, in the 1950s I learnt to sail on a similar sized boat, the UK National 12, a development class racing dinghy. They were lively and lovely – their varnished mahogany glowed. While the Skerrick is completely different in nearly every way, I went back to where I started and the new boat could actually plane in the right conditions, now there's a thought.

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