Joanne of Kyle

Jeremy Bull restores an owner's model

This lovely yacht was from a design by George O'Brien Kennedy, being known as a 'Slipway' 5 Tonner and was built by the Lymington Slipway & Engineering Company in 1949 with a steam bent oak frame and larch planking, her overall length being 7.98 metres. **Photo 1** shows her spanking along in fine style, her owner relaxing with a mug of tea and savouring the moment! Eventually he sold her for a more watertight yacht,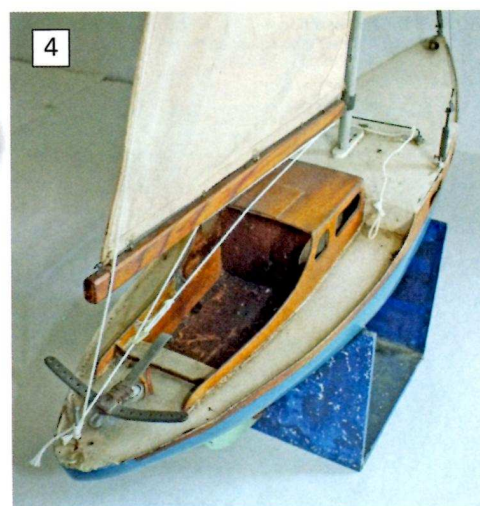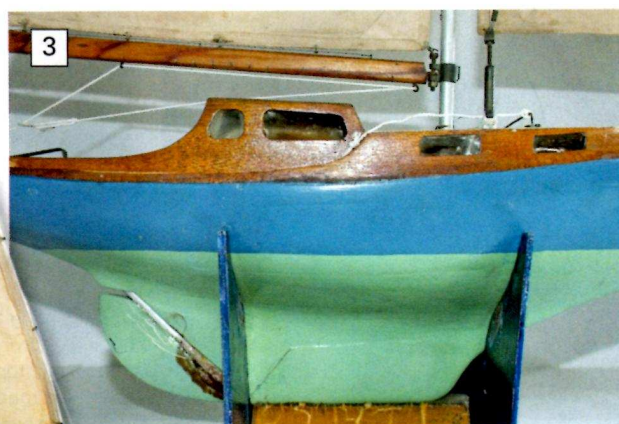 but as a reminder he purchased a model, keeping it for many years. Time, temperature and humidity have not been kind to the model and as its condition deteriorated so it was relegated to the attic. It was during a chance conversation with the owner, when he discovered that I restored models, that I encouraged him to recover it from the attic and he handed her over to me with the words, 'See what you can do with her'. The model was received as in **Photos 2, 3 and 4**. Dimensions of it, and it is actually quite small, are length 52cm, beam 15.5cm and the total height from bottom of keel to the top of the mast is 86cm.
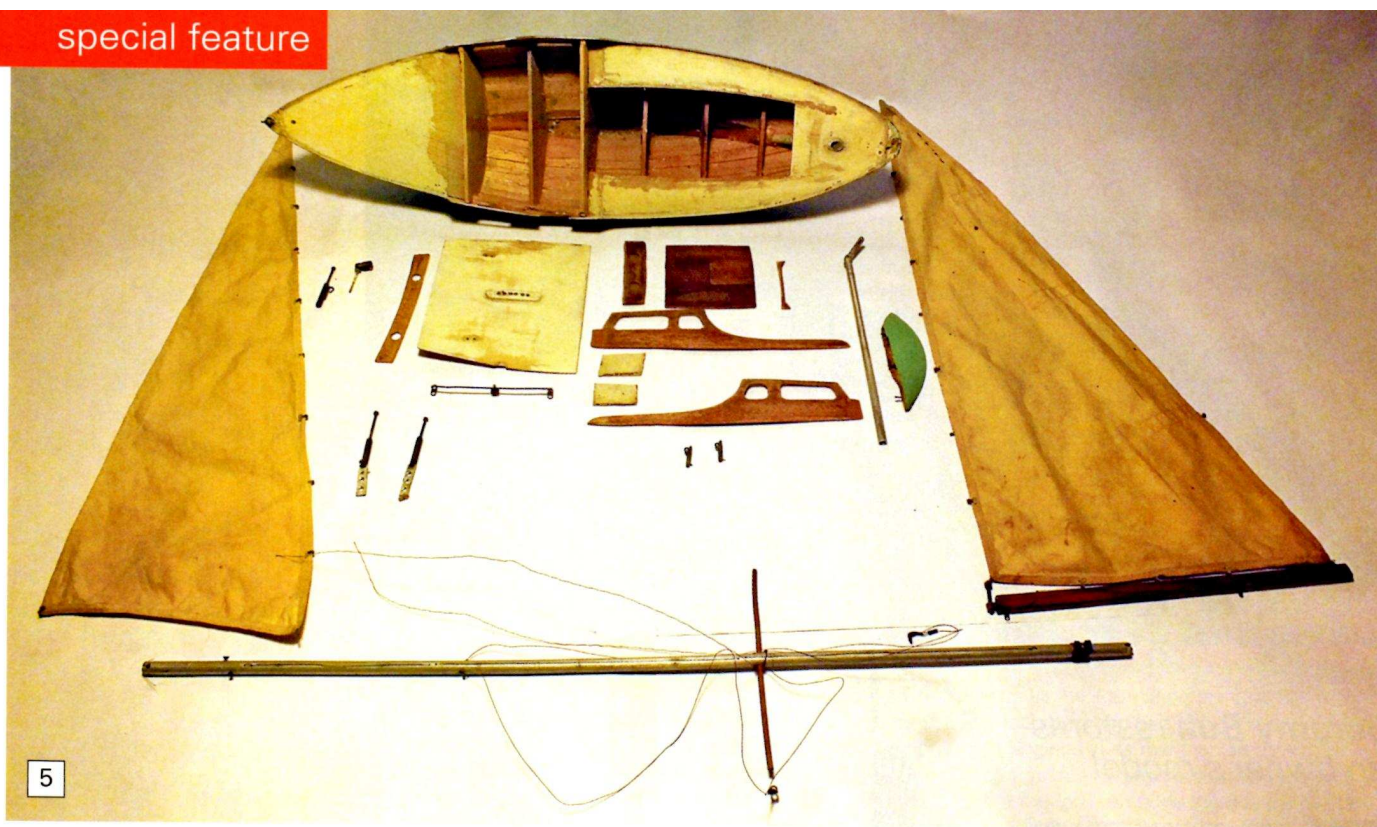
PHOTO 1. Joanne of Kyle sailing along in the classic way!
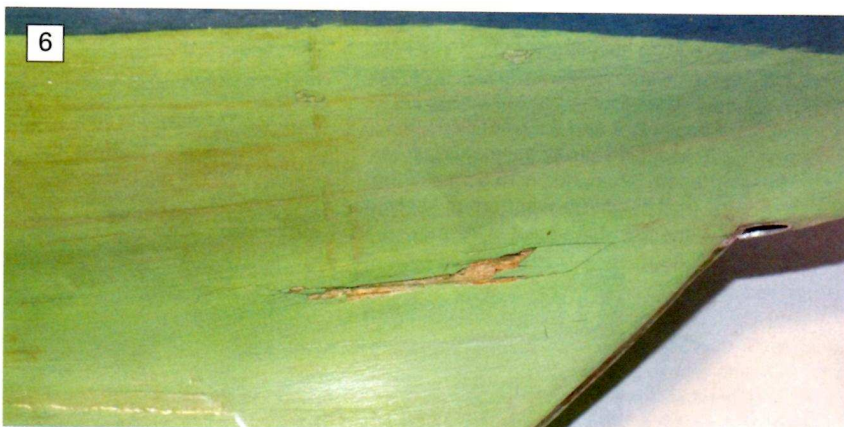
PHOTO 2. The model as received.

PHOTO 3. The amidships area, which didn't stand up to close scrutiny,

PHOTO 4. As you can see, it was originally intended to be a free-sailing model with a basic form of sail/steering control.

PHOTO 5. In bits!

PHOTO 6. The hull was generally rotten.

PHOTO 7. The hull was flooded internally with thinned glue to penetrate the wood. Strengtheners were also added to the frames.

on bulkheads for the hull; thin mahogany strips for the cabins and bulwarks, all topped off with thin ply for all decks and roofs and all glued with a cellulose based adhesive.

The first step was to dismantle it as far as possible, removing the sails, rigging and deck fittings, **Photo 5**. The good news was the sails were in good condition apart from some staining and age discolouration. They were so nicely made that I decided to keep them, but the bad news was that the hull and cabins were rotten. A combination of water damage, poor storage and the cellulose based glue, had caused the balsa to crumble, the plywood to de-laminate and the glued joints to fail. Not looking good(!) and this became even more apparent when my fingernail went through the hull just above the keel, **Photo 6**.

Getting started

An external examination revealed that all the glazing strips needed replacing; the rudder needed repair; the hull filled before painting to return it to that sleek look; the rigging restrung; various curious fittings such as the nail on top of the mast(!) replaced with something more appropriate and a decent tiller constructed to replace the 'crossbow' fitting. I also decided the ugly stand needed to be modified so that it would show off the fine lines of the hull rather than dominate it all as it did at present. The construction was of balsawood planks

Repairing the hull

All work now stopped whilst I considered the options. Burn it(!), give it back or take a long shot and fill the hull with diluted PVA glue and hope the balsa absorbed it such that when dried it would strengthen it all sufficiently. This last option was definitely worth a go!
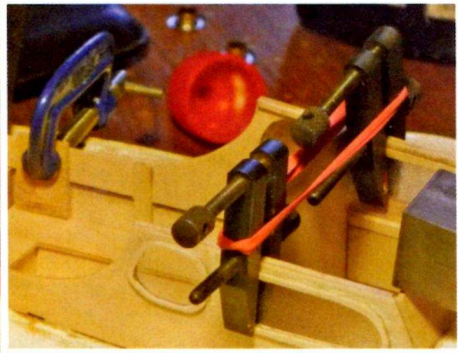
The addition of Wall's Magnum lolly sticks as vertical bracing for the bulkheads completed the stabilisation attempt and **Photo 7** shows the soaked and clamped hull drying. You will have realised by now, since I have written this article about the restoration, then this method must have worked!

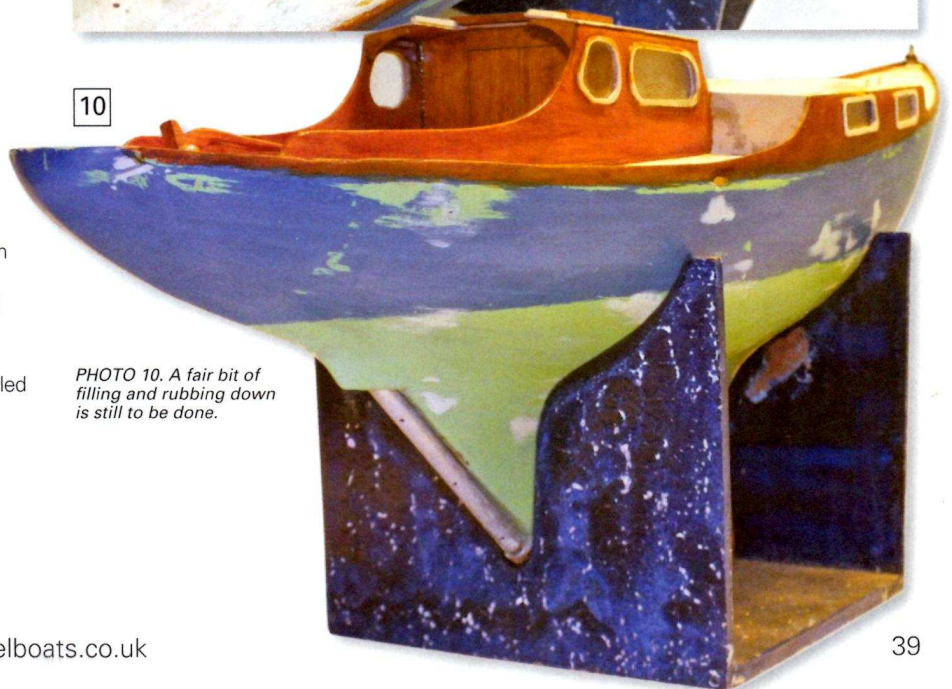PHOTO 8. *The cabin and cockpit are all-new, using the removed parts as templates.*

PHOTO 9. *A view of the enhanced cockpit area.*

Cockpit

Now having a hull that did not crumble when I looked at it, reconstruction of the cockpit and main cabin could proceed and this was done in birch ply, using the originals as templates. These revealed that they were NOT identical port and starboard, so care was taken to make sure they now were, **Photo 8**.

A regular mug of fresh tea was an essential ingredient to this project, helping to reduce the 'cussing' as each new challenge was identified, such as discovering that the builder didn't locate the rudder post centrally at the stern. The opportunity was also taken to add extra detail to the cockpit area such as bench seats, window frames and a sliding hatch, **Photo 9**. Glazing for the cabin came from an old clear plastic A4 wallet and to prevent them from being pushed in again, they were not only glued to the cabin wall but additionally secured on the inside with an overlapping ply frame.

Photo 10 is a stern view of progress thus far and you can see how horrible the original stand was, at it tended to 'dominate' the model. This last picture shows the completed superstructure and the hull filled and rubbed-down ready for the painting process.
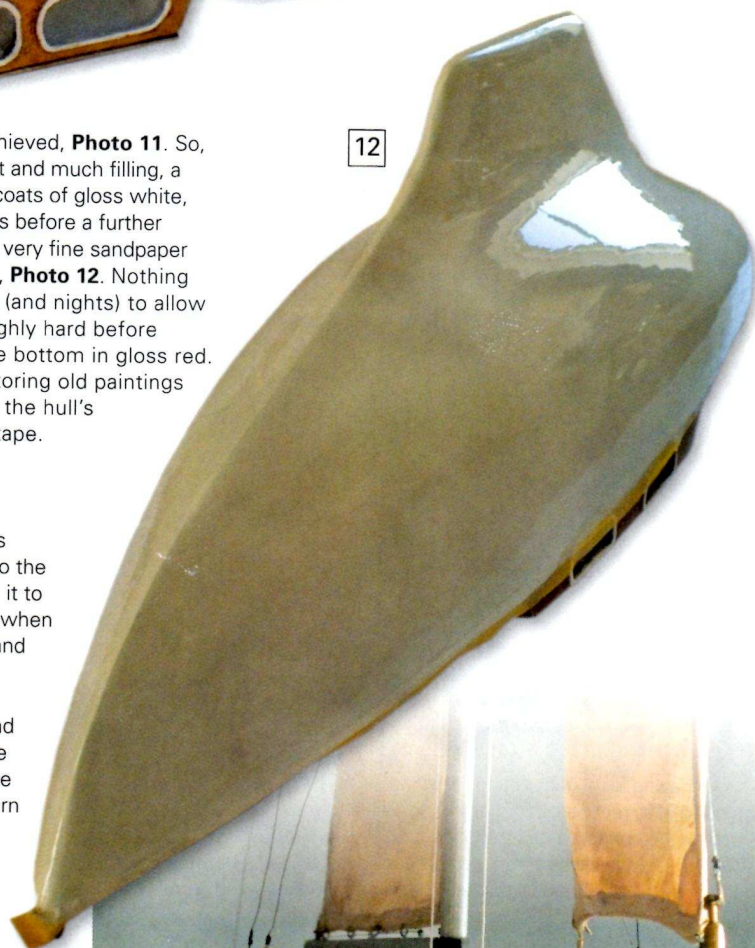
Painting

There is no quick way to obtaining a good finish on this type of model other than filling, rubbing down, undercoating and filling again and so on,

PHOTO 10. *A fair bit of filling and rubbing down is still to be done.*

PHOTO 11. Nearly there!

PHOTO 12. Gloss white is the principal colour above the waterline.

until a good base finish is achieved, **Photo 11**. So, after three coats of undercoat and much filling, a final light rub-down and two coats of gloss white, it was then left for seven days before a further final very light rub down with very fine sandpaper and a last coat of gloss white, **Photo 12**. Nothing then happened for ten days (and nights) to allow the paint to become thoroughly hard before masking-off and painting the bottom in gloss red. So, now you know why restoring old paintings can take years. Incidentally, the hull's trimlines are of proprietary tape.
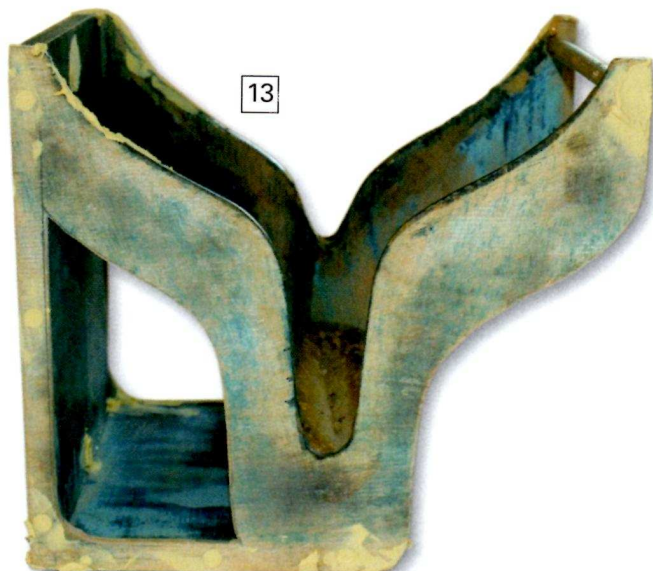
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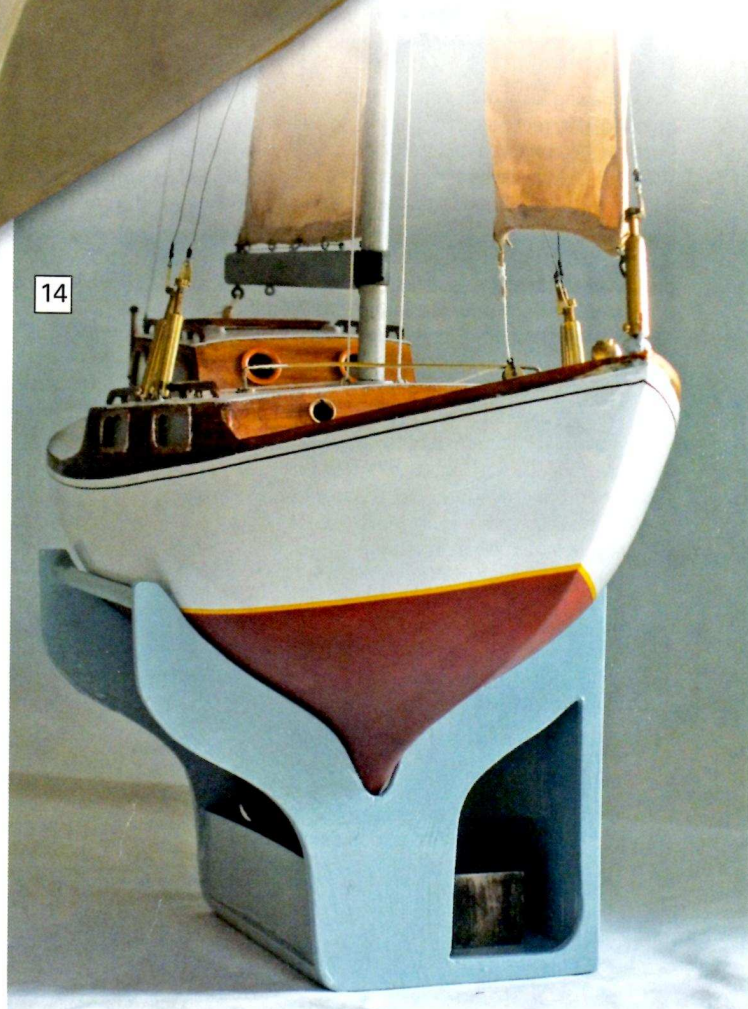
The stand

As mentioned earlier, this was somewhat out of proportion to the model as a whole so I tackled it to try and reduce its dominance when viewing the model. As the stand is intended for wall mounting, I decided to open-out its perspective by shaping the end plates, **Photo 13**, to mirror the curves of the hull below where it sits in the cradle which in turn shortens the horizontal base. This gives it a more delicate look, resulting in your eye going to the hull and finishing the stand in a light blue paint means it complements the hull nicely, **Photo 14**.

PHOTO 13. The stand was reshaped to make if more pleasing to the eye.

PHOTO 14. The stand now compliments the model rather than detracting from it.

Lymington 'Slipway' 5 Tonner
'Joanne of Kyle'

Finishing-off

Nearly there, **Photo 15**! The model is for static display only, so no need to worry about rudder linkages and sail control. The erection of the masts and re-rigging was very straightforward and a token amount of extra rigging was added to give it a reasonable look, but the original builder's over scale tensioners were re-used. I also decided not to add any guard rails to the bow area and around the sides of the model. **Photo 16** is an amidships view and **Photo 17** is of it complete, together with me!

Conclusion

Now that the project is completed I feel it is once again a good representation of the original full-size boat and suitable for display for many years to come. Restoring models of all types can be very rewarding and as Dr. Marcus Rooks said in April 2013 MB in his tug restoration project, one can if one looks around find something for next to no £'s and have as much enjoyment and pleasure out of such a project as when buying and building the most expensive kit from the retail market.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that the full-size *Joanne of Kyle* is still extant on a trailer in Auchterhouse near Dundee and has recently been advertised for sale. I also understand she has a sister also still extant named *Cactopus*, but I can find no photographs of her.

Enjoy your hobby ●

PHOTO 15. The completed and painted hull.

PHOTO 16. Starboard side - aft.

PHOTO 17. Jeremy and the completely restored model.

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The author's completed restoration project.

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