



EZYBOAT



Stuart Field heads south to find out just how effective the trailer-free EzyBoat can be . . .

As a rule of thumb, boaters tend to be somewhat conservative. Revolutionary designs and building materials are rarely met with instant enthusiasm and widespread acceptance. Yes, RIBs, multi-hulled sailing craft and personal watercraft are still pretty new in concept. But in fairness, reed boats have employed the buoyancy concept of the RIB for centuries, many traditional war canoes are multi-hulls, and fast boats have been around since well before the petrol engine. So perhaps this test will cause a few raised eyebrows among the boating fraternity.

THE JOB OF THE VISIONARY

Some modern boat designers are driven by a desire to produce ever faster boats and, while

this is understandable, it's also pretty illogical, because there remain a huge number of people who simply want to get afloat in a bid to relax, and to escape the rush and stress of today's lifestyle.

Truly visionary designers strive to develop craft that break with convention, but frequently stumble after just a few fences due to lack of funding, dearth of innovative materials, or non-acceptance of their concepts. Very few actually succeed in overcoming funding, design, and material difficulties, plus of course prejudice, to win true acclaim and profitable sales.

Over the decades, we at Boat Mart have tested umpteen innovative craft and yet only a few have met with real market success. These include the Cheetah fishers, Ocke Mannerfelt's remarkable other-worldly Bat Boats, and the incredible amphibious Sealegs RIBs. All were

initially met with ridicule and yet they have prospered through sheer excellence.

I've also covered floating caravans, submersible cars, enclosed personal watercraft, towable narrow boats, inflatable icebergs, round boats with engines in the middle, amphibious Suzuki jeeps, and even indestructible workboats built out of plastic pipes. Not all were great, but what they all share is a designer with vision who brought lateral thinking to the drawing board. While many fail, adventurous designs still come to the surface. Long may they continue to do so!

THE EZYBOAT CONCEPT

A decade or so ago, David Rolfe (a film director) questioned the very logic of having to take a boat off its trailer in order to get it afloat, and then go to all the bother of re-loading it after use. Surely, he thought, it would be far simpler ▶



A 20hp outboard will see her cruising with great composure at a very useable 14mph

THE CLEVER STUFF

In essence, the EzyBoat closely resembles a clamshell. In other words, it's a hull in two halves, hinged at the centre, capable of folding to roughly half its length. But the clever bit is that when folded, the top half (the bow) completely covers the bottom (the stern), together with everything inside the boat, including the engine. So, when folded, the boat and its contents are very secure, but unlike other folding craft, the EzyBoat also doubles as a pretty efficient trailer, well able to carry a whole pile of camping or picnic gear up to a maximum of 200kg.

It gets better too. Built into the bottom half is a trailer chassis. When you want to launch the boat, you simply unhitch it from your car, extend the backbone of the trailer, unlock the boat halves and unfold them (much like a flip-phone). The backbone of the trailer is now used to reinforce the boat by preventing the two halves of the hull from folding. It's effective and disarmingly simple.



just to build the trailer into the boat and then simply launch the whole caboodle. An idea was born, drawings were made, prototypes built, and a whole host of technical difficulties overcome. Boatmart even tested the craft in both power and sail configurations. Then, for various reasons, the project in the UK went into a short period of hibernation.

But such a radical, yet totally practical, concept was simply too good to throw away and in 2003, Kate and Howard Aldridge, a couple of determined Aussies, decided to take up the EzyBoat concept and run with it. They were determined to overcome any shortcomings in the concept and fine tune the design. They improved the craft's overall performance and finish by investing heavily in the project.

Just a year ago, a new, fully funded UK team was established and production facilities sourced in Dorset. Their final pre-production model of the EzyBoat was first seen at the Birmingham Boat Show in 2010



and then at the Beaulieu Boat Jumble and a few other shows, where it caused a huge amount of interest. It will also be at this year's Southampton Boat Show, so we realised that we simply had to get this thing on the water and have a play.

A few weeks later, EzyBoat's CEO in the UK, the charismatic Sascha Giest, loaded his car with all sorts of clobber and a couple of Yamaha outboards, put an EzyBoat in tow, and headed a couple of hundred miles up country to the wilds of Shropshire. And so on the upper Severn, we spent a whole day going through every detail of the boat, folding and unfolding it, fitting different engines, and testing it for hours, kindly aided and abetted by our old friends at Shrewsbury Marine.

WHO WOULD BUY ONE?

The EzyBoat is not designed for outright speed, nor is it designed to give you an adrenaline rush by leaping waves. But as a means of exploring the odd harbour, river, or

even inland lake, the EzyBoat certainly ticks a lot of boxes. Those who want to experience relaxed boating with the minimum of fuss, and want a very easily launched and stowed craft, will find the EzyBoat concept particularly appealing.

The EzyBoat can easily be towed by a small hatchback or two-seater. You don't need a 4x4, as you might with many larger craft. And the boat is also very difficult to steal because unclipping the ball hitch (let alone retracting the wheels) renders it difficult to move. It is therefore ideal to leave on a campsite or even in your own garden, quite safely. Despite being more than 14 feet in length, the folded boat is much shorter and can easily be hidden inside a regular garage.

HOW DOES SHE PERFORM?

The craft is designed to take outboards up to 25hp but it seems illogical to spend more cash than you actually need to, because the joy of this boat consists in easy leisure, rather than ▶



COUNTDOWN TO LAUNCH

Once you've loaded your kit, all that remains is to launch the boat. You do this just like any other boat, except with this craft you can wheel the whole thing down a shallow beach and then take your trailer with you.

With the boat afloat, you unclip the ball hitch from the chassis and stow it. But instead of pulling the trailer back up the slipway, you put a lever into a slot and lift the wheels up into the hull. Now you're ready to go, either with an outboard astern, with a sail rig, or even with oars.

When you've finished boating, you just reverse the process. Clip on the ball hitch, drop the wheels, and the EzyBoat is ready to be pulled out – either by hand or with a tow vehicle. Once ashore, it is easily re-folded and made ready for use on the road. It actually takes less time to fold and unfold the boat than it has taken you to read this paragraph.

To be able to go boating, independent of your car and trailer, is a wonderful freedom



hard-edged thrills. She will plane and cruise at around 14mph with 20 horses on the transom and two people aboard. But with fewer horses (and less cost) the EzyBoat will give hours of pleasure at regular inland waterways speed limits - and I'm sure that this is an aspect most prospective owners will appreciate.

Others, especially first time boaters and motor home owners, will appreciate the convenience of the EzyBoat. With smaller engines the EzyBoat handles equally well and, with a 9.9hp engine, will happily cope with four people. Its low-wash hull will avoid upsetting rowers and ducks and you could even just fit a little 2.5hp engine and use the saving to buy a sail kit. How's that for versatile budget boating?

FACT FILE

VERDICT

The unique advantage of an EzyBoat is that you always have your trailer with you. That means you can explore a river or lake and then pull your boat out of the water wherever you end up. To be independent of your car and trailer is a wonderful luxury. To be honest, we loved the idea of the EzyBoat when we first tested it a decade ago and happily, the boat is now even better, with enhanced features and build quality, and the backing of an enthusiastic team. There may be sceptics who dismiss it out of hand but we believe the EzyBoat is going to win over a whole host of new enthusiastic boaters. In fact, since our tests, Yamaha has chosen EzyBoat as

an official partner. If that doesn't give you a clue to the calibre of these craft, nothing will.

SPECS

- LOA4.4m
- Length folded2.5m
- Beam 1.7m
- Weight (minus engine) 130kg
- Price (minus engine) £7,950
- Optional sail kit £1,590

MORE INFO

- EzyBoat
- 08456 53095
- www.ezyboat.com

A TRIO OF PERFORMANCE TESTS

Engine	25% throttle	50% throttle	full throttle	Notes
Yamaha F20	6mph	11mph	23.2mph	Opt cruising speed: 14mph
Mercury 9.9	4mph	6.5mph	9.1mph	
Yamaha F2.5	4mph	5mph	5.8mph	Speed at tickover: 1.5mph