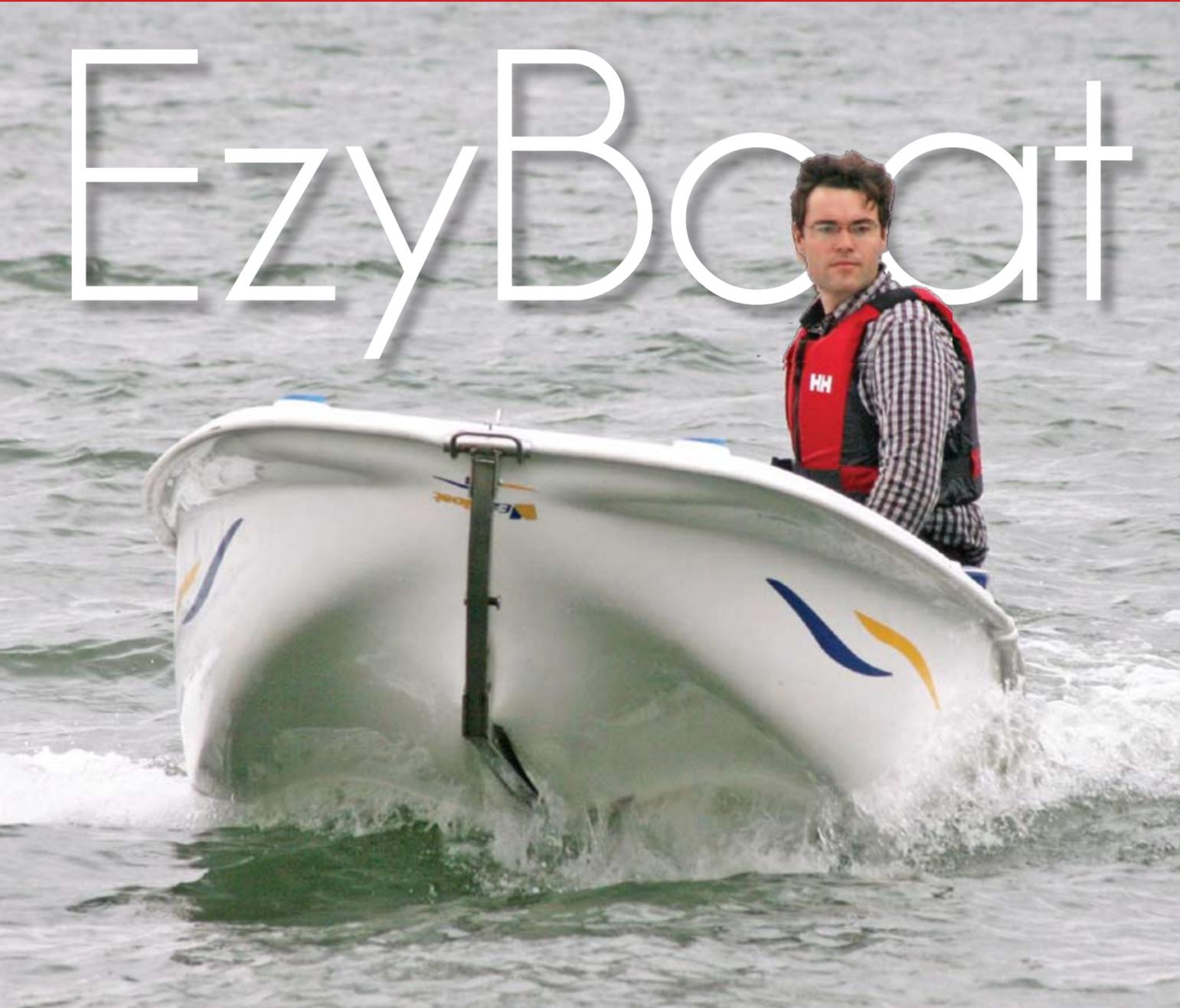


EzyBoat



Words and pictures by Peter Poland

Not everyone wants a big boat. There are legions of leisure boaters who enjoy going out for a day's fishing (on lake, estuary or sea); or who want to be able to potter on the inland waterways; or who like to go for a spin across the harbour on a weekend away – or who just want to have a boat on hand when they go away on holiday.

If you don't have a permanent mooring (and few want to incur the expense of parking a 14ft boat out in the open) then you either need to take your boat to the water on a road trailer or hoist it on to a roof rack. But if you want a boat big enough to carry up to four people, it is going to be around 14 ft long; which means it's probably too heavy or cumbersome to get up onto the roof of your car.

So you'll need a road trailer – which means more expenditure. And then you have to sort out the hassle of where to leave the trailer once you have gone afloat. Most boat yards charge for this. And if you leave a trailer unattended in a car park, you run the risk of theft. It can all turn a simple expedition with a boat into a logistical nightmare.

But now there's a third possibility; and it's called the EzyBoat.

The idea of a boat with a retractable undercarriage came on the scene a while back, and was developed and prototyped in Australia. But it is only now that the EzyBoat team has expanded and brought its brainchild to the UK. CEO Sascha Giest explained to me "we are now based in the UK because it is an excellent manufacturing base and gives us good access to the European market. The EzyBoat's axle is made in the Midlands, stainless steel fabrications in Dorest and the GRP mouldings and overall assembly of the boat are handled by Norco GRP here in Poole."

I was parked in Poole awaiting the arrival of the EzyBoat



Above: The trailer wheels and suspension arms lift up into recesses



Inset: The trailer wheels are retracted with a simple lever

when a small Peugeot estate car turned up, towing what looked at first sight like one of those camping boxes (the things that erect upwards into a caravan). But on closer inspection – once Sascha had removed the protective towing cover – I realised that it was a boat, with the front half hinged back, upside down of course, over the back half. What's more its wheels were obviously part of the boat; not part of a separate trailer.

"No need to help me; just take some photos if you like" said Sascha. It was obvious that preparing the EzyBoat for action is a one man job. So I did what I was told and stood back.

First job was to extend the telescopic trailer 'spine' to its full length. Then the front half of the EzyBoat hull was

swung up and forward on its hinge and lowered down onto the extended trailer 'spine' and locked in position by a stainless steel clamp that is an integral part of the structure. Hey presto; it's now a boat. Simple as that.

The solution to another hassle-factor in towing a boat then became apparent. The engine – in this case a 20 hp Yamaha 4 stroke – was permanently clamped on to the EzyBoat's transom pad.

When the boat is in 'road-mode', the transom pad hinges forward. So the engine stows flat inside the boat. Not only is it secure (you can 'lock' the hinged parts of the boat together with a cycle padlock); you are saved the back straining hassle of lifting the engine on and off the boat and stowing it in the car's boot.



EzyBoat can be towed by a small car and protected on the road



EzyBoat's optional bimini was removed for the day



Launching is a one-man job



The helmsman sits aft while there are centre and bow seats

With the trailer light board removed from its neat transom brackets, the jockey wheel was lowered and Sascha proceeded to wheel the boat down the slip and into the sea. Then – once it was afloat – he removed the tow hitch bar from the front of the ‘trailer spine’ (held in place by a single stainless steel pin) and stowed it inside. Or it could have been left in the car boot. It was as simple as that. And we were ready to go.

At this point another EzyBoat advantage became clear. It remained extremely stable as we climbed over the side and on board. The boat’s beam of 1.7m is moderate, but the hull’s clever cathedral shape underwater (not dissimilar to a modern GRP ‘dory’) makes it steady. A ‘V’ shaped hull would have been far more ‘rocky.’

With the engine lowered into its running position, Sascha then manoeuvred the EzyBoat into slightly deeper water and raised the wheels. These retract into neatly faired arches that are an integral part of the hull. And the raising process could not be simpler. A steel tube attaches to a stub that projects from what looks like a centreplate case in the floor of the boat. Release a catch and push the lever forward, and the wheels lift. Then – when you want to take the boat out of the water again – you reverse the process. Pull the lever back and the wheels lower. It’s also worth mentioning that the wheel bearings are packed with grease. So it’s a simple maintenance job to remove the caps and repack with fresh grease.

Now we were in full motoring mode and I could relax and assess how the EzyBoat handles. With the 20 hp Yamaha, the claimed maximum speed with two people aboard is around 23 mph. But in Poole harbour, we were restricted by the speed limit. None the less, the EzyBoat went seamlessly onto the plane and made an easy 10 knots on low revs. And of course it potted very happily along at lower speeds. Sascha explained that various engine options were available. Those who only go afloat on inland waterways (and are therefore restricted to around 5 mph) can fit small petrol outboards (2.5 hp upwards) or even electric outboards. And of course the EzyBoat comes with oars, that stow neatly in a locker in the central thwart.

The EzyBoat can take up to four adults, and there are upholstered seats in the bow, amidships and either side right aft. With just two aboard, the boat trims best if the crew sits forward. Handling is simple, using the steering arm and twist throttle on the outboard. And if it’s a sunny day, the optional hinging bimini protects the crew.

The EzyBoat can also be used as a sailing dinghy, although this one did not have the ‘sail kit’ (extra £1,590) so I was not able to try this option. The 4-part mast (which stows inside the boat for towing) sits on a simple mast step fitted to the floor of the front half of the hull. Two shrouds and a forestay attach to simple anchor points and a daggerboard fits into a slightly offset slot. Then a rudder attaches to the transom with

a tiller that clears the stowed outboard. The mainsail and jib (10 sq.m area in total) should give entertaining performance under sail: not as good as a dedicated 14 ft dinghy (like a Wanderer or Enterprise) but better than a sailing inflatable. It would be ideal for teaching a child the basics of sailing or pottering peacefully around a harbour.

It is clear that EzyBoat Ltd has not scrimped on construction. The GRP hull is moulded with woven rovings (as opposed to cheaper but heavier chopped strand mat) in order to achieve a good strength to weight ratio.

The basic EzyBoat (including trailing parts but ex. engine) weighs 250 kg. Buoyancy is achieved thanks to an extensive GRP box girder type structure that is bonded to the inside of the hull and also acts as a rigid support for the deck moulding.

This is preferable to the cheaper option of foam buoyancy, which – when used on boats that motor into and over waves – invariably compresses and crumbles in time as the hull panels flex.

Both ‘ends’ of the hull self drain. The aft section drains via the transom panel and a removable bung gets rid of any water sitting on the sole of the front section. There are also plenty of well-sited handles for crew to grab if the EzyBoat is moving at speed in rougher conditions.

There can be no doubt that a lot of thought and development has gone into the EzyBoat, and it was interesting to see how quickly a crowd of fascinated onlookers gathered round it in the car park.

The concept of a boat that has an integral trailer is not new of course, but the EzyBoat team has taken this to new lengths. Sascha sees a wide market for the boat. It certainly makes life far easier for anyone who likes to tour the country in a camper van, for example, and have a boat ready at all times. And of course it takes up very little space when left in the drive at home. What’s more it can act as a storage trailer when on the move. There’s plenty of space inside the boat in its ‘hinged shut’ mode.

The price of the 4.4m EzyBoat comes out at £7,950 inc VAT. When you compare this to the price of a similar sized dory or RIB with a road trailer, it is in roughly the same ball park. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that EzyBoat Ltd is setting up a dealership network that will include Motorhome and Caravan dealers as well as conventional Marine dealers. The EzyBoat’s versatility should ensure that it has a wide market.

EzyBoat Ltd

Tel: 0845 6532095

Email: info@ezyboat.com

Website: ezyboat.com

Dealers

Adaptacar, South Molton, Devon
01769 572785 sales@adaptacar.co.uk

Chelston Motorhomes, Wellington, Somerset.
01823 662075 info@teamchelston.co.uk

Kernowrat, Padstow, Cornwall
0333 044 8365 info@kernowrat.co.uk

Specifications

Length (when folded)..... 2.5 m
Length (when unfolded)..... 4.4m
Width 1.7m
Draught (ex engine) 0.1m
Weight (ex engine) 250 kg
Axle rating 450 kg
RCD rating Cat C (coastal)
Max load 4 adults

Prices

Price inc trailer ex engine £7,950
Price inc Yamaha 2.5hp £8,599
Price inc Yamaha 6hp £9,199
Price inc Yamaha 8hp £9,999
Price inc Yamaha 15 hp £10,649
Price inc Yamaha 20hp £10,999
Sail Kit..... £1,590
Bimini..... £599
Cover for towing, storage..... £349

