Section 9

Types and styles of Colvic Watsons

It is surprising that many people including some existing owners do not realize that there a many types and variations of Colvic Watsons.

There are two main wheelhouse designs on Colvic Watsons, one with a conventional sloping '*Motor Sailer style*' wheelhouse design and the other with what is known as a '*Trawler* wheelhouse', some built in a GRP moulding, some in hardwood, sometimes a mixture of both.

Many of the '*Motor Sailer* wheelhouse styles' are 'open backed' while many of the '*Trawler style'* have an 'enclosed back' with folding or sliding rear access doors, where as aft cabin versions have side wheelhouse 'sliding door' access.

We have all seen the description 'heavy layup' but what does that mean?

Heavy Layup was a technique and part of the mould process when constructing a mould in GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) and G L Watson and Colvic were very careful on this point when designing the hulls, as all the hulls had a very heavy layup where the hand layed polyester resin reinforced woven matting used was from 24.5 oz, 20.5 oz, 16.5oz and 10 oz per sq/ft used to form a rigid bonded hull and coach roof.

The hulls were then further constructed and strengthened with side and bottom transverse bearers also bonded into the hulls for extra strength and the moulds were manufactured at the time by Colvic in a special *temperature controlled* moulding building to ensure the correct mould process was carried out making the hulls far in excess of Lloyds specifications for the hull design at the time.

The original gel coat hull colours of all the Colvic Watson range are normally white, dark blue or dark green; however I have seen some red and light blue hulls which may be a high build gloss two pack epoxy paint finish.

CW 28'-6**" Lady Cynthia** Typical classic high bow shape of a Colvic Watson design

Typical canoe stern the CW 31'-6" **Belouga**

My experience of viewing dozens of Colvic Watson hulls has shown no or very little signs of Osmosis, those that did show signs were probably due sadly somewhat to general neglect by their various owners over time to the exterior underwater section of the hull.

Sometimes owners do not realise the unique hull design the Colvic Watson has, the basic 'lifeboat' design was kept throughout the range with a high bow, low amidships and high canoe stern, the canoe stern shows it's pedigree design in a 'following sea'

The Watson hull was designed to take heavy fit out loads without altering the final designed displacement weight, with a lot contributing from the wide beam and long keel and all Colvic Watsons have a high freeboard topped with a bold sheer to the bow area to reduce taking water onto the decks and deflect it back into the sea where it belongs.

CW 25'-6" '**Bora'** showing typical classic high bow shape and canoe stern of the Colvic Watson design

CW 23'-6" '**Radiance**' with a typical trawler wheelhouse

CW 23'-6" '**Nimrod'** with typical sloping wheelhouse

When you see a '**Colvic Watson AC'** this will indicate that it is an 'aft cabin' version. Other differences can be found in the wheelhouse design; in the pictures some have 'side' sliding wood wheelhouse access doors some have 'rear' wheelhouse access doors while others are 'open' back.

In each size of Colvic Watson Motor sailer there are variations in designs of internal layout, most have been either home built or semi professionally built, but a significant number were also professionally built at various boat yards.

CW 31'-6" **'Delta**' (aft open cockpit design with rear doors)

CW 25’-6” AC ‘**Becca’** with sliding wheelhouse door access

CW 28'-6" ‘**Millie’** with an all wood wheelhouse

CW 28’-6” ‘**Aloha III’** rear door design)

CW 23’-6” ‘**Dart Star** ‘(aft open design)

Typical wide Bow Area

Typical wide side deck access

Other standard feature details are shown in all the Watson range with the high freeboard sides to the bulwarks and the wide side access deck and bow area.

Most carry either an electric or manual winch due to the usually large amount of anchor chain and anchor weight, with anchor designs usually decided by where the owner cruises and the likely sea/river bottoms conditions encountered.

The fine looking CW 34'-6" AC **'Jansen & Jansen'**
with an open topped wheelhouse and cockpit

The 1977 Dutch CW 34'-6" Ketch '**Sea Camel'**

Some Colvic Watson's at first appearance 'don't look' like a Colvic Watson as we all know them.

Here we see above some Dutch Colvic Watsons without or with a canvas wheelhouse looking more like a yacht with ketch and sloop rigging.

The 1981 Dutch CW 28'-6" AC '**Fremar'** 'with 'open' centre cockpit

Other Colvic Watson hull moulds are used in the fishing industry for their well known ‘sea keeping dependability’, the 28’-6” Prawn Trawler **‘Montana’** interestingly has a 70 hp diesel engine fitted and the 23’-6” fishing boat (Tenacity) has a 56hp Ford engine fitted.

1989 CW 28’-6” Prawn Trawler ‘**Montana’**

1980 CW 23’-6” Fishing boat
‘Tenacity’

1991 CW 28’-6” shellfish trawler
‘Lorraine’

1989 CW 31’-6” Gairloch Cruise boat
‘**Starquest** ‘

1978 CW 25’-6” **‘First Time’**
with unusual built up foredeck

Although they were not designed for one some owners love customising their boats typically like a bow and stern thrusters, however this has become popular and usually you now see them fitted to some CW 28'-6" and above.

This bow thruster shown below is correctly fitted as they should have a bulge before the propeller tunnel to deflect water flow away from the tunnel otherwise the effect would be of reducing the boats speed.

Typical bow thruster on a CW 28'-6"

Typical stern thruster on a CW 28'-6"

Again not in the original design some owners have even fitted twin engines!

The Twin engine CW 28'-6" 'Skaggerak'

Section 10 The Colvic Watson 19'-6"

Design number **881** the **Colvic Watson 19'-6"** was not surprisingly designed by G W Watson until 1975 , initially as a motor fishing boat and then quickly re designed into a motor sailer by Colvic Craft and is the smallest of the CW motor sailor family.

For such a compact sloop rigged motor sailer they are still a credit to her bigger sisters and with full headroom offers a starting point into the CW family, they sail up to 6 knots under engine power and similar knots under their surprising 182sq.ft sail area.

Engines range usually from 15hp to 20hp upwards with 15hp being most popular, for a small boat she still has a displacement weight of 2 1/2 tons and has a surprising draft of 3ft, most with encapsulated ballast of 0 .75 to 1 ton.

Almost all were sold direct by Colvic Craft Ltd and were semi professional or home built.

In their design criteria Colvic and Watson designed the hull mould so that whatever the builder did in the layout and adding additional weight it would not affect the stability or performance of the hull and all home build Colvic Watsons' were supplied with detailed constructional drawings and recommendation to parts suppliers together with fitting instructions by Colvic Craft.

CW 19'-6" Sloop rigged '**Oddity**'

I found under ‘sailing only’ the tacking manners of the CW 19’-6” are somewhat only slightly better than the CW 23’-6” and more responsive probably due to their lighter displacement weight, but later when winds pick up to gusting 20 mph the immediate difference shows itself in their not as good sea keeping manners as the larger CW 23’-6”.

CW 19’-6” ‘**Sophie B’**

Typical CW 19’-6”

CW 19’-6” ‘**Bingil Bay ‘**

I had the opportunity to sail in one during a visit and I have to say I was impressed, all are sloop rigged and this is no DIY job but a great fun packed motor sailer in the true sense and in a wind of 12 mph still comfortably sailed along at 4.5 knots while we all felt 100% safe in the deep cockpit.

The CW 19'-6" is surprisingly quite roomy inside and makes an ideal 'day sailer' or for weekends aboard

Galley area

Aft cockpit

Not many were built as a motor sailer as they competed at that time also with the Colvic 23 motor sailer and not long after the plans for a bigger more offshore version was planned which became the CW 23'-6"

Helm position

Forepeak

Section 11 The Colvic Watson 23'-6"

The old saying of '*Its bullet proof*' might have started with someone referring to a **Colvic Watson 23'-6**".

CW 23'-6" sloop **'Caer Urfa'**

Surprisingly the CW 23'-6" was one of the last of the Colvic Watsons to be designed, Colvic Craft in the mid 70's asked G L Watson & Co who had already designed by that time the CW 28'-6" (in 1973), CW 25'-6" (in 1975), CW 31'-6" (1975) and the CW 34'-6" (1974), to design them a 23'-6" as they quickly realised that there was a large market gap for a replacement of their then older *John Scott 'designed* ***Colvic 23'*** motor sailer designed much earlier in 1970 when they were the Ardleigh Laminated Plastics Co. Ltd, but the new boats design needed to be a much stronger and heavier boat and for marketing reasons a more offshore capable motor sailer.

In view of this G L Watson designed the CW 23'-6" design number **907** in 1976 for Colvic which proved to be one of their most successful designs of all time as they could draw from the experience of the other CW range that they had already designed and missed no details in construction and design specifications as the 23'-6" would be aimed at the offshore sailing market.

CW 23’-6” ketch ‘**Nimrod’**

CW 23’-6” sloop ‘Radiance’

CW 23’-6” sloop **‘Jodie Girl’**

For the ‘single handed’ sailor the CW 23’-6” is just about perfect for handling and most have rigging lines leading back to the cockpit or can be at little expense.

However like many other boats *under sail only* tacking on the 23’-6” is an experience to learn as they do not like tacking unless they have at least a 2 knot min headway.

Again going astern is another art to learn as due to ‘Prop walk’ like some of their bigger sisters they have an awful habit of going straight astern even when the rudder is hard over, however again experience allows the skipper to give what is known as the ‘Colvic Kick’ (short bursts of ahead) to bring the bow round .

Offshore the CW 23’-6”is in its natural element and gives that secure feeling even in the most unpleasant weather conditions.

Internal layouts are not standard and many are fitted out with very comfortable accommodation and with some additional thought can be ideal for coastal cruising.

The deep well of the wheelhouse/cockpit area also gives you a feeling of security, (there was no aft cabin version of the 23’-6” design).

Typical Galley CW 23'-6"

Typical Saloon CW 23'-6"

CW 23'-6" '**Sea Pigeon'**

The CW 23'-6" was designed as sloop rigged however; some owners have later added a mizzen so some can be found as ketch rigged.

With a sail area 'sloop rigged' and with a good Genoa they can have up to 252sq/ ft of sail and speed up to 7 knots under sail only can be achieved with about 5.5 to 6.5 knots under engine power only and will sail all day long quite happily at 5/6 knots in an F5.

Sail area (sloop rigged):
Main 117sq/ft
General jib: 80sq/ft
Genoa 135 sq/ft

Many are classed as 'home builds' however the finishes of the home builds can easily surpass/match any of the professional yard finishes and in many cases are better built with added touches from their builders owner's past experience.

Visitors going aboard find them like a 'Tardis' and are rather taken back by the 6'-4" headroom and space in the saloon area.

Most usually have separate heads (sometimes with built in shower facilities), full cooker, fridge, dining area, and can comfortably sleeps four.

Access in the engine bay is limited but adequate with engine HP varying from 24hp to 35 hp with the norm and most economical found around 27hp, many having typical 3 and 4 cylinder Thornycroft, Perkins, BMC, Volvo and Beta

Typical 27.5 hp & 30hp engine bay CW 23'-6"

All Colvic Watsons were designed 'without' bilge keels, the argument which is best can be best left to the individule but many have been fitted to the CW 23'-6", CW 25'-6" and CW 28'-6" models.

With Bilge keels fitted the plus side depending on the river bed enables you to take the bottom, on the minus side some are poorly fitted and I find personnaly the boat rolls more in heavy seas and is very slightly slower.

New Buyers should inspect the condition of any bilge keels fitted '*very carefully'* and particularly the through hull bolt connections of the bilge keelsl, both *inside and outside, a*lso 'if' bilge keels are fitted the fitting of a '*keel shoe'* is also recommended and again this should be carefully inspected in any survey.

CW 23'-6" ashore with no bilge keels

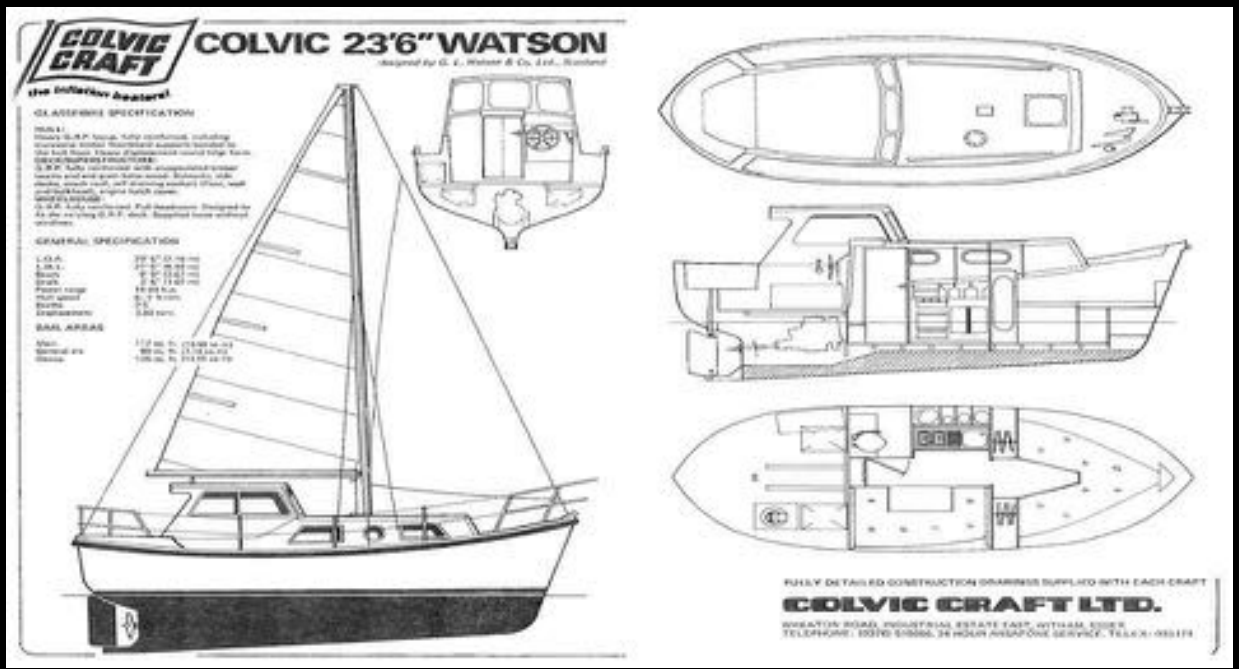
CW 23'-6" ashore with typical bilge keels

Built with a *very heavy GRP layup* the construction is an understatement when parts of the hull can be found up to 25mm thick and like all her bigger sisters the mouldings were far in excess of Lloyd's specification.

Many of the boats have dual steering positions and are 'Tiller steered' when under sail offering that all round vision but with the benefit of that enclosed wheelhouse 'wheel steering' for poor weather protection.

Final displacement weight can vary depending on final layout and engine fitted. the basic design displacement weight was 3.8 tons but many are much heavier, my own for example is 4.9 tons mainly due to the all solid teak woodwork, together with engine weight and additional ballast.

Many of the CW 23'-6" have duel wheel & tiller steering positions



General layout brochure

Section 12 The Colvic Watson 25'-6"

Design number **860** and again amongst the most popular in the CW range is the **CW 25'- 6",** first designed in 1974 by G L Watson for Ardleigh Laminated Plastics Ltd, however during my research I found out that there is also a later modified version design the **CW 25'-6" Mk II** from 1978.

The CW 25'-6" are a roomy boat and the differences to the CW 23'-6" to the trained eye can mainly be seen in the extended wheelhouse and saloon area.

Many were both professionally built by such builders as *Paragon Yachts* when they were in Swanmore Southampton, some were built as sloop rigged and some as ketch rigged with a Bermudan Main and some others with a Gaff main, but in general all had a sail area of approximately 290 sq/ft, with some of the Bermudan rig usually having 'in mast' reefing and the gaff rigged fully battened together with slab reefing and some with lazy jacks, which sails best is always questionable and is best left to each owner to say, but they are all a fine sailer.

Originally marketed suitable for a crew of five many owners say they are much more comfortable with four crew with appropriate accommodation and similar to the CW 23'-6" they have full headroom below decks throughout the boat, however with the **CW 25'-6" Mk II** there is an optional aft cabin version available.

CW 25'-6" sloop ' **Moriarty'**

CW 25'-6" **'Gypsy'** with aft open cockpit and trawler wheelhouse

CW 25'-6" sloop **'Nimrod'**

The CW 25'-6" Mk II has one or two differences to the first CW 25'-6" Mk 1, The differences can be seen inside, firstly with the saloon cabin, by extending the companionway bulkhead further aft an additional 54 cubic feet of living area has been created.

Secondly by spreading the deep sided cockpit coamings out towards the gunwales, there is a substantial improvement in the volume of the cockpit space.

As in other Colvic Watsons many also have 'Bilge keels' fitted and even some with bow thrusters.

Engine size is typically 35 to 45 HP with most having 35hp and many still fitted with their ever reliable original BMC / Thorneycroft engines.

CW 25'-6" **'Silver Lady'** with No bilge keels

CW 25'-6" 'Mk 1 **Serenity'** with bilge keel fitted and bow thruster

CW 25'-6" Mk **1 sloop 'Mikello'**

However the CW 25'-6" also became popular as both a river and offshore motor cruiser some with really large engines

CW 25'-6" AC motor boat 'Alan **John'**

CW 25'-6" sloop '**Pelican'**

Some other late CW 25'-6" were built by Blue Water Catalacs Dorset as the 'Watson 26' most recognised by their light blue hulls

CW 25'-6" **'Jane E'** built by Blue Water Catalacs

Like the CW 23'-6" internal accommodation space is generous with that bit more additional length, most have a shower in the heads and the galley area is 'user friendly'.

They sleep four in comfort but even more if there is the additional aft cabin

Salon and Galley aboard the CW 25'-6" '**Pelican'**

Galley area 'Nimrod'

Helm 'Nimrod'

Sailing the CW 25'-6" I have found is very similar to that of the CW 23'-6" and with that added sail area make an nice offshore boat and again there sea keeping manners are second to none.

Section 13 The Colvic Watson 28’-6”

The most popular Colvic Watson built is the CW 28’-6”, the Mark I was first designed in 1973 design number **839** for Ardleigh Laminated Plastics Ltd with the **Mark II** coming out much later in 1978 with some deck and interior moulding changes.

The 28’-6” hull mouldings were sold to many boat builders for their own version of the boat, about 50% were so called *home built and it is thought that the hull mouldings were manufactured up to 1986.*.

Many of the 28’-6” boats have dual steering positions and are ‘Tiller steered’ when under sail offering that all round vision but with the benefit of the enclosed wheelhouse for poor weather protection and wheel steering position.

The **Mk I** Colvic Watson could be called a ‘classic’ motor sailer, some have mainly wood bulwark topsides and decks, with usually a teak coachroof and wheelhouse and many with the aft cockpit version.

The **Mk 1** is as solid as they come with mainly teak woodwork everywhere, most still with their ever reliable original Thorneycroft/BMC engines, the boats appear to lie slightly lower in the water due to their heavy displacement weight compared to the Mk 2 due mainly to their big engines.

Foredeck of the M1 CW28’-6” showing the wooden bulwarks

Being one of the first designed Colvic Watsons they saw the early introduction of the so called ‘Trawler style’ wheelhouse introduced on any motor sailer which was adopted from trawlers because it give better visibility to the deck area when standing up close, plus some additional space internally in the wheelhouse, this design can also be seen on some of the larger lifeboats of today and on many modern ships.

However some question the Trawler wheelhouse design for a yacht because it *leans forward* as opposed to the conventional Motor sailer *back sloping* design as some say it causes wind resistance slowing the boat down when under sail, however, we must remember none of us bought our Colvic Watsons as a racing yacht and both wheelhouse designs remain popular.

CW 28’-6” AC Mk I **ketch ‘Trekkaway’**

The CW 28’-6” was designed as ketch rigged but some owners have gone the other way and converted them to sloop rig. They were sold with all the mod cons, hot water, fridge, full cooker, shower etc, being sold as a six berth boat but more like a very comfortable four berth in reality.

For a 28’-6” motor sailer they can hoist a lot of sail power for a large and heavy boat they are a delight to sail and with a good Genoa they can have well over 400sq/ft of sail area achieving a comfortable 7/8 knots producing a serious cruising boat with excellent sea keeping manners making this a fine middle range to the Colvic Watson family.

Teak deck CW 28’-6” AC Mk1 **‘Dorock’**

CW 28’-6**” sloop ‘Harriett’**

CW 28’-6**” Mk I Ketch ‘Seven Magpie’**

CW 28’-6**” Mk I ketch ‘Elsa’**

The **Mark II** was introduced in the late 70's and was more of a minor improvement to the existing well proven design with substantial extra cabin area being created by re-positioning the saloon/cockpit main bulkhead further aft which give the builders greater flexibility in their preferred individual layout, also the optional aft cabin moulding was introduced adding more accommodation space and individual berths and almost all had GRP coachroof and wheelhouse mouldings.

Engines fitted were typically Thorneycroft 90, Mercedes OM636, Perkin's 4108 etc. but various other makes have been used in replacement and many owners have also fitted a 'bow thruster'.

The **Mark II** also had other minor but well thought out improvements like moulded seat lockers and hatch covers in the wheelhouse providing even more storage space and as will be seen later many were also fitted out professionally both in the Netherlands and in Germany to hulls supplied from the UK.

The wheelhouse on all Colvic Watsons are a separate moulding hence the different designs and are bolted and sealed to the coach roof.

As can be seen below a very skilled craftsman has added a custom built Mahogany wheelhouse which can also give the boat that individual custom built look.

CW 28'-6 Mk II **'Cigale'** with custom built mahogany wheelhouse

cockpit wheel steering position

Typical Bow thruster

Many Colvic Watson 28'-6" have been customised by their owners over time with 'duel steering' positions and I have seen two that have 'twin engines'.

CW 28'-6" Ketch 'Aloha III'

Atlanta Marine who were based down in Fareham Hants made their own versions using the Colvic supplied 28'-6" hull moulds and are easily identified by (usually) a blue or green GRP hull and were marketed as the **Atlanta Mullion 26** and the **Atlanta Mullion 29**, plus there was a also an Atlanta Mullion 32 but this was designed by yacht designer *John Bennett* and therefore not as a Colvic Watson.

Like other models the CW 28’-6” came in various internal layouts and rigging, both open cockpit and aft cockpit versions are available and either in sloop or ketch rig formats.

Many were built by both very experienced semi professional and amateur boat builders who fitted them out with the best quality materials and fittings available at the time.

Like many other Colvic Watsons in the range the build quality and finish of some of the so called *‘Home Builds’* should never be underestimated and surpass many other more expensive motor sailers on the market today.

CW 28’-6” Sloop Mk II **‘Lady Cynthia**

CW 28’-6” **Ketch Bodkin’**

Typical internal layout of a CW 28’-6”


Typical internal layout of a CW 28'-6"

Engines fitted were typically Thorneycroft 90, Mercedes OM636, Perkin's 4108 etc. but various other makes have been used in replacement and many owners have also fitted a 'bow thruster'.


Typical engine bay layouts on CW 28'-6"

Both the CW 28'-6" in ketch or sloop version remains as one of the most popular Colvic Watsons due to them being economical to keep and their accommodation size in either the aft cabin and open cockpit design.

Section 14 The Colvic Watson 31'-6"

CW 31'-6"AC Ketch 'Lily **Anais'**

Jay Jay Marines demonstration
CW 31'-6" AC in 1978

CW 31'-6" ketch '**Nimrod'**

Design number **884** the **31'-6" Colvic Watson** Motor Sailer was designed in 1975 by Watsons for Colvic Craft and almost all were supplied with the trawler type wheelhouse configuration.

Some were so called 'home builds' but none were poorly finished and were usually fitted out by multi skilled individuals who were very selective in the materials and components used in the fit out resulting many times in a better built boat.

Some of the CW 31'-6" were both kit supplied or totally custom built typically by **Jay Jay Marine Ltd** in Southampton, who also had one of their own demonstration boat.

The hull again boasts an extra-heavy lay-up so any interior alterations will not weaken the finished boat, although the main bulkhead installed for the main mast must be retained for the mast compression loads and with a Genoa fitted usually gives them at least a quoted 432 sq ft* sail area and a speed of up to 7/8 knots under sail is not unusual.

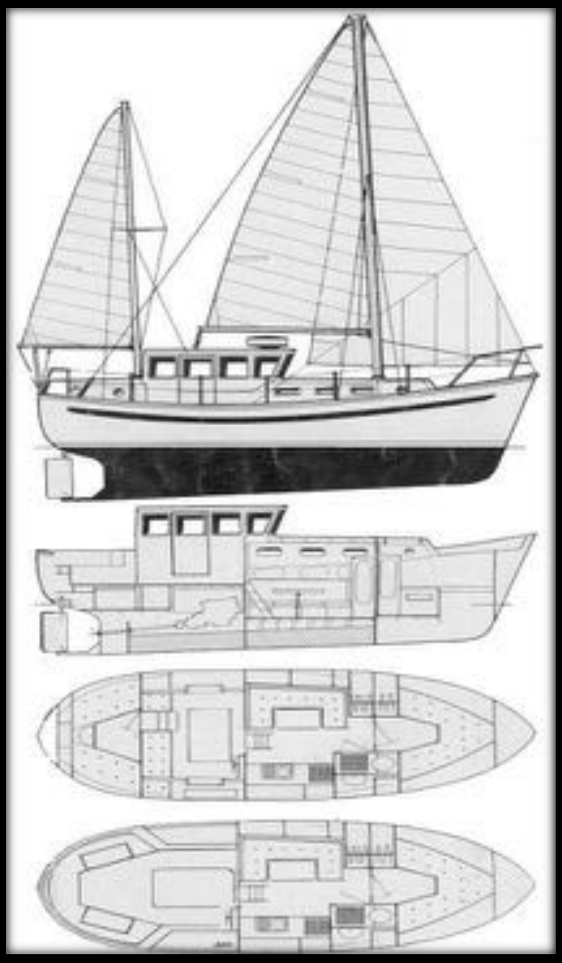
* This data figure I think can be more like 468 sq/ft min on some boats depending on the Genoa size fitted.

Many of the original boats have been modified by their owners over the years but inside as expected they lack for no additional comforts with a spacious galley and 4/5 berths sleeping accommodation, dining area, wardrobes, full chart size desk area, washroom/shower, spacious galley and wardrobes and central heating etc.

The large wheelhouse provides an all weather all round visibility with headroom of 6'-4" and many of the 31'-6" are used for serious long distance cruising and live a boards.
With a beam of 11' her interior size is impressive giving a feeling of space and storage rarely an issue, most owners often complain they have forgotten where they put things as there are that many storage compartments.

CW 31'-6" AC Ketch '**Heather Dawn'** (note the huge bowsprit)

CW 31'-6" Ketch **'Big Ann'**



Outline Drawing of the CW 31’-6” AC

Engines again vary typically from 45hp to 72 hp including the old faithful BMC Thorneycroft and Perkins engines, but over the years some have been replaced with more modern typical Vetus and Yanmar engines.

Typical Vetus VH 65.4 hp engine

CW 31’-6” AC ketch ‘**Henry Watson’**

CW 31’-6” AC Ketch ‘Feels **Good’**

The comfortable saloon of ‘**Feels Good’**

Like her smaller sisters the CW 31’-6” comes with either an open cockpit design or the aft cabin option and most are professionally fitted out, accommodation layout differs from boat to boat and I have not been onboard two with the same layout yet.

The CW 31’-6” has been and remains a popular choice for liveaboards or those who want a comfortable long distance cruising motor sailer.