

## **How the “Polly” came to be built – the Creation of a Modern Replica**

The “Polly” is a close copy of a yacht tender called the “Charlotte” which (at the time of writing) can be seen at the National Motor Boat Museum in Wat Tyler Country Park, near Basildon, Essex. The origin of the “Charlotte” is slightly hazy but the following history was related by Colin Fair when I met him at the Greenwich Wooden Boat Show in the summer of 1990.....

.....designed and built at the yard of Morgan Giles, the boat was spotted “on the slip(way)” by Colin Fair who bought her for his own family's yacht as a tender, and naturally installed his own design of engine and stern gear. That was around 1930 so the impression is that the “Charlotte” was already a few years old by then. In the mid/late 1930's Colin Fair designed and installed the Watermota K1 3hp engine that can be seen today, along with the variable pitch propeller.....

John Williams of The National Motor Boat Museum came to exhibit at the Greenwich Boat Show of 1989 and brought the “Charlotte” as one of their exhibits. Here, Michael Handcock of Blackheath, London, on the lookout for a boat to grace his new waterside apartment, lost his heart to the “Charlotte” and ordered a replica from Fabian Bush who also happened to be exhibiting there that year. “Polly” was launched in the summer of 1990.

### **Construction**

The “Charlotte” is built of quarter-inch (7mm) mahogany carvel planking over light steamed frames spaced on two inch (50mm) centres, fastened with clenched (turned-over) copper nails. Colin Fair commented on the fact that as a “dry” boat, launched intermittently as a tender, “Charlotte” had not been very successful/useful because she was so leaky! - in my opinion that is one reason explaining why she has survived to this day – lack of use!

To build the “Polly” it was decided to have two layers of longitudinal planking with an intermediate layer of glass cloth and epoxy glueing the whole lot together – this preserves the appearance of traditional carvel planking whilst creating a stable, strong, and leak-proof hull. Steamed oak frames are space on three inch (75mm) centres and fastened with copper nails and roves. The rest of the boat was copied as closely as possible, and traditional finishes were used.

### **Engine**

John Williams restored an original Watermota K1 engine to fit the boat; the stern gear with variable pitch propeller was still available new (60 yrs later!) from Watermota. The Watermota engine had a reduced size flywheel to fit in the boat (as on “Charlotte”) and proved to be unreliable, partly because of this. Later, a Stuart Turner 1-1/2 hp engine with gearbox was fully restored by Fairways Marine of Maldon (no longer in business) and fitted, which entailed building a new engine box unlike the original and a bit bigger and more cumbersome – new stern gear was fitted too. There is no electric start. This sort of boat would perhaps be better powered by an electric motor, nowadays, especially for river use. The weight of the batteries would be compensated for by the loss of the petrol engine.

### **Performance**

“Polly” is an absolute “jewel” . She has good freeboard and can carry quite a load even though she is heavy to start off with. But she IS a very small boat. In practical terms she is rather cramped and, for instance, she is difficult to row because the engine gets in the way of a good rowing posture. Her short length means that she creates a big wash – a longer boat could use the same power plant but get enhanced performance.

### **Plans**

The project involved taking the lines of the “Charlotte” and producing a detailed plan. The plan consists of an AO sheet with lines, offsets, and construction drawings, though the hull planking is not specified. The scale is metric, 1:5. Plan price (photocopy) £20 incl postage in the UK.

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