

HORSES OR CAMELS FOR COURSES

By Barry Colson

People who are in the market for a new boat have quite a wide range of stock designs as well as the option of getting a custom design drawn up.

The plan cost as a percentage of the overall cost of the complete boat is quite small and with a custom design you get something that really suits your requirements.

Before approaching a designer for a custom design you should first have made some basic decisions. If not, then you will not get what you think you want.

Basic decisions begin with the following:

- 1) How much do we have to spend?
(Total boat budget)
- 2) Where is the boat most likely to operate? i.e. on a river, lake, sheltered bays or open ocean?
- 3) Is the boat to be trailered or not?
- 4) Are you going to build or get it built? What is your skill level?
- 5) How long? (See No.1)
- 6) Number of berths?

The list goes on but without such a design brief you are likely to get a camel (said to be a horse designed by committee!).

Nothing beats being able to look over a range of similar sized yachts (preferably from the board of your chosen designer) and being able to make notes of your likes/dislikes and proposed alterations. Ask the designer if they have copies of any boat tests done on similar size boats.

Always bear in mind one day you will sell the boat and one eye should be kept on what the market is like for the style of design you are proposing – gaff rigged, heavy displacement, turn-of-the-century yachts may well be pretty to some but very few people want to own one.

When making the decision to build my current project, I would dearly have loved to have given it 500mm more beam as I know it would have been a better boat from both a performance and accommodation perspective.

Even though I have no intention of trailing her the reality is that the market in Australia is far greater for trailer sailers than small keelboats (even with lifting keels). So my decision to build to the trailing maximum beam was made solely with an eye to the potential resale value.

If you are fortunate enough to be pondering a 60-footer this analogy won't work for you but even so the market for replicas of the *Bounty* wouldn't be too great either and I assume you didn't come by your wealth by making bad financial decisions, so don't make one with your boat!

A realistic analysis of your design's primary use is also important. For some unfathomable reason people always ask "How many will she sleep?" Why people insist on filling up a boat with berths I don't know.

The truth of the matter is that on the few times the boat is stacked to the gunnels with guests it is for day trips not round-the-world cruises, so the priorities should be head/shower, galley and stowage space (for the “refreshments”, snorkels etc.).

When accessing the attributes of various designs another point to consider is whether a design is available as a kit-set or hull and deck. This allows the owner to customise the interior to suit while retaining a “true and fair” hull. I know of boats that are several inches longer on one side than the other!

I have written in previous articles of the advances made in design and equipment and these elements should not be ignored. Not only do they make the boat easier to sail, they also make for an easier SALE.

For example, does the rig plan have an equal distribution of sail area between mainsail and headsail? No point in opting for a design that requires gorillas to sail. If a cruising yacht, perhaps a cutter rig with roller furling is a better set-up.

Like many things, yachts are often a compromise. However, they must be viewed in the entirety.

I believe yachts are a reflection of their owners’ personalities and as such should be individualistic. Just make sure yours doesn’t end up like the proverbial camel.

BQ