

Who Needs HASSLES?



On a windless Windermere, Alice Driscoll discovers that Honnor Marine's Devon Scaffie still makes an appealing dayboat for a singlehander or a family.

With photographs by Peter Chesworth

When I test sail a boat, I'm always a little nervous if the owner is there – just in case something goes wrong or there's a minor scuffle with the pontoon or.... You know the sort of thing that can happen. So when I meet Alan Helsby to look at his new Devon Scaffie from Honnor Marine, I am very much more nervous when I realise that not only is his boat brand new but this is, in fact, her very first outing. If I'd known I'd have brought the champagne.

However, all we have is coffee to keep us warm as we watch the shining new boat being launched into the calm waters of Lake Windermere. The Devon Scaffie is just 14'9" (4.5m) long but sets an impressive 100 square feet (9.3m²) in a choice of rig: a single lugsail or sloop. But today is not going to put her through her paces properly under sail; the lake is glassy smooth and there's just an occasional ripple of wind.

Alan is well aware that the winds on the lake are often problematical, too shifty, too light or too strong!

With her hardwood-trimmed, simulated lapstrake GRP hull, the Scaffie is a presentable and practical looking boat and with 30 years of history behind her, a well-established one too.

This one has had a few personal touches added at the request of owner Alan who, I soon discover, is friendly straight-talker. He chose the Scaffie knowing it would be a well-made and practical boat and opted for a classic white hull with cream decks; Honnor Marine offer a choice of colours including Racing Green, Oxford Blue, Red and even Sunshine Yellow! He named her *Ekythump* and as we go through the

boat's features, it's great to see someone who is really looking forward to enjoying his new boat to the full.

As the part owner of his son's Beneteau 34, which is moored just by Ferry Nabb at Windermere, Alan is well aware that the winds on the lake are often problematical, shifty, too light or too strong! To get over this, Alan's asked for a Yamaha

4-stroke outboard, ready to get him out of trouble or back to the mooring when the wind decides not to come out to play. To prevent the engine getting in the way, Alan designed a curved tiller which clears the outboard, so he doesn't have to lift or move the engine when sailing. For the same reason, the main sheet horse is also led over the tiller and engine, making it easy and practical to either sail or motor or – as I'm sure is likely with these fickle winds – do a bit of both.

Inside, the beamy, double-ended hull is nice and clear with an open cockpit area. The Scaffie has twin bilge keels so she can sit upright on drying moorings or when beached, which means there is no centreboard case taking up space, so three adults can easily sit comfortably inside. In fact, the Scaffie's RCD rating is Category C and CE marked for four adults. Expanded foam buoyancy is built in and the mast is Sitka spruce. Alan helps us off the pontoon – it's only fair as it's his brand new boat – and I find myself a comfortable slot tucked down and leaning against the hull.

As a day-sailer, the Devon Scaffie has a small stowage hatch aft, and can easily carry everything you'd need for a day on the lake. Designed as a sail or rowing boat, she has a set of oars stowed inboard and a choice of two rowing positions. Although we don't test out her rowing ability – or ours – I'm told she's light to pull and easy to hold on course.

To keep the boat interior dry, Alan has specified a bilge pump, which fits neatly under the aft thwart. The thwarts can be easily lifted and moved, with bungee cord holding them securely in place.

The sail doesn't look overly big for the size of boat or rig, but I can see it's got plenty of power. However, there are two reefing points, so it can be easily reduced to maintain control, should a squall come up.

As we glide around the lake, Alan lets me into a secret about his age. I'm not going to reveal it but I am surprised; I'd have thought at his age he'd be moving up to a bigger boat. In fact he's bought the Devon Scaffie specially to give himself a manageable day sailer, which he can take out alone or with his friends. As we set out across Windermere, there's a welcoming shout from one of those friends who sails alongside, admiring the new boat. Alan explains that if I wasn't there, the two of them would by now be racing each other to a bay or landing further along the lake.

I can see the attraction of the Alan's new boat. She's incredibly easy to sail and manage but still has the power to make for an exciting sail. And yet, if the wind dies to nothing or you realise you've only got a short time to make it to the pub for lunch, then you can quickly power her up and chug along with the outboard.

It's a shame that there's not enough wind to really put the Scaffie through her paces. However, the 'relax and slow down' atmosphere of the Lakes has started to take us over. With the children now aged 8 and 11, we've taken advantage of the boat test here to do some Swallows and Amazons style camping in our VW van, right on the edge of Windermere.

It really is a magical place, waking up in the early morning to see the glassy waters of the lake, with the only ripples made by the ducks and Canada geese. We've seen the children enjoying messing about in boats, skimming stones from the



shore and throwing sticks for the dog. We tell Alan how much fun we're having and what opportunities having the camper van and the sailing gives to the children. *Ekythump* is the ideal boat for this type of water: easy to care for with her GRP hull and easy to sail; a fun and practical day sailer you can enjoy whatever the weather.

Footnote: Our love of camping obviously influenced Alan. He tells me that after meeting us, he then went out and bought himself a camper van!

CONTACT

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The Scaffie will be exhibited on Stand XXX at the Southampton Boat Show, 11-20 September.

DEVON SCAFFIE SPECIFICATION

LOA: 14'9" (4.5m)

LWL: 12'3" (3.75m)

Beam: 5'9" (1.75m)

Draft: 1'3" (0.37m)

Weight complete: 460lbs (210kg)

Sail area, lug or sloop: 100 sq.ft (9.3m²)

