

THE HURLEY FELICITY by Mark O'Sullivan.

Sail Emblem: F in a circle.
Designer: Ian Anderson.
Builders: A.G. Hurley (Marine) Ltd, Plymouth.
Length: 20 ft.
Waterline length: 16ft 6in.
Beam: 7ft 1in.
Draught: 1ft 11in.
Mainsail: 100 sq ft.
Working jib: 85 sq ft.
Genoa jib: 140 sq ft.
Storm jib: 50 sq ft.
Spinnaker: 200 sq ft.

For a small yacht the twenty-foot long Hurley Felicity is a superb balance of design and compromise. The result is an excellent all round boat, which, gives reasonable performance and a good level of safety for family sailing. The Felicity is a twin bilge sailing cruiser with a sloop rigged single spruce mast. It has a total sail area of 185 sq ft, which is easy to handle, but too much weight aft can cause problems with weather helm. However, a well-balanced boat produces a feeling that the Felicity is sailing itself and constantly tempts the helmsman to take his hands from the tiller.

In the early 1960's Ian Anderson was approached to design a replacement for the hugely popular two-berth Silhouette. His brief was to produce a cruiser for four with accommodation in one full sized double and two quarter berths. It had to have a compact but practical galley; a roomy protected cockpit; bilge keels designed for maximum sailing performance; be readily adaptable to suit J.O.G rule requirements; have a first rate performance under sail and be very manoeuvrable under inboard or outboard power. This was not an easy task but the result was the Hurley Felicity, a 20-foot marine ply four berth sloop. The Felicity quickly proved ideal for inshore coastal or estuary passages. Many owners made cross channel trips and at least one sailed the Atlantic to America. Although the first models were made in marine ply later the boat was available in fibreglass with one being specially produced with a single fin keel.

The spruce mast was designed by Anderson so that it could stepped on the deck to allow it to be lowered for inland waterway cruises.

Initially the hull was constructed of 9mm marine plywood. Stringers, gun'ls, beams and knees were made from the best Columbian pine and English hardwood. Coamings were made from 12mm marine plywood while the coach roof and decking was made from 6mm laminated mahogany plywood. Brass screws and copper nails were used for fastenings with galvanised mild steel bolts being used for the keels. All deck fittings were made of the best quality brass or gunmetal. Standing rigging was made from 3/8th stainless steel and the running rigging was made from 1-inch quality Italian hemp.

The keels consisted of one 424 lb cast iron centre line stub keel and two 154 lb mild steel plate bilge keels. The Felicity's displacement weight was well under 2,000 lbs and made it possible to tow one easily on a trailer behind the average family car.

A four horsepower outboard motor was more than enough to push the Felicity along and many were sold with a trusty seagull attached to the transom. A large number were also factory fitted with inboard Stuart Turner petrol engines.

Down below the cabin allows reasonable comfort with good sitting headroom although very tall crewmembers may be forced to squat somewhat. There is a sink and cooker station to port, but there is no real provision for a toilet. Most Felicity owners used a 'bucket and chuck it' arrangement when underway. Storage is one of the Felicity's strong design points - there is plenty of it. Two large cupboards were designed into the rear cabin wall, one each side of the main hatch. Further storage exists under the four berths. Two large lockers under the seats in the cockpit and one under the afterdeck complete the storage space. Accommodation on the Felicity is best described as Spartan but more than adequate for extended cruising.

The anchor is carried on the foredeck with the chain being fed to a locker below through a chain-pipe. This is a good arrangement, which works well, especially when sailing single-handed.

Under power the Felicity answers quickly to her helm with a precise and sharp response, however, when going astern performance is vague and unsatisfying with lots of churning taking place before any movement begins.

About 150 Felicity's were eventually built by Hurley Marine. Many were modified by their owners to surpass original design specifications. They were well built by superb craftsmen and gained a reputation for being safe and seaworthy yachts. They had no real vices and their faults were far outweighed by their virtues. Eventually the Felicity was superseded by the equally excellent fibreglass Hurley 20. Anderson then went on to design the Hurley 18 and the popular Hurley 22. All three of these boats carry some of the characteristics of the early Felicity.