

The Boat That (almost) Made Us Our Fortunes

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Written by Michael Storer

In the mid 90s after I had left Duck Flat to kick off as an independent boat designer they asked me to draw up a 13ft (4m) "easy to build" but pretty canoe for a planned expansion into the Japanese market. The Eureka 130.

My friend David Wilson built the first boat to debug the shapes of the panels for stitch-and glue construction and provided many wonderful hand drawn illustrations to go with comprehensive plan text by Robert Ayliffe who was the prime mover for the whole undertaking.

Robert headed off to do the trade shows in a number of Japanese cities carrying a completed boat as "sporting equipment" on a Qantas flight as well as one of the precut kits and some small models of the boat.

New from Japan was very exciting - he met an entrepreneur from Osaka who was talking of an initial shipment of hundreds of boats (for which I was going to get \$30 a piece) but even more exciting was the news that he wanted to distribute kits for the models for children to assemble of school - I was going to get 25 cents per model but the projected sales were in the range of 6 MILLION annually.

Nice work if you can get it.

Two weeks later the Osaka earthquake hit wiping our contact and much of the Japanese economy out of business.

Such things dreams are made of.

Anyway, we continued to sell plans locally and a few boats were built. The general opinion from experienced paddlers was the small boat paddled beautifully but was a little unstable when carrying loads - after all it had been drawn up to carry a couple of Japanese kids

At the same time I drew up a plan for a larger boat two sheets of ply long - the Eureka 155 (4.7m).

The Eureka 155 was developed from the shape of the smaller boat. The larger size allows stability to be improved without creating a too blunt shape, which produces a boat more suitable for long distance travelling or where carrying a load.

Because we had been through the elaborate development to prove out the smaller boat it all seemed so hard at the time to make sure the boat worked out easily as a pure stitch and glue so I sold plans for the boat to built over a strongback.

Several were built this way which is more laborious than stitch and glue but they reported too that it was a wonderful boat to paddle - it travels exceptionally easily without a huge

effort and has good directional stability for when the wind and waves start picking up - it goes where you point it - unlike most fibreglass canoes. Of course the weight is much less than a comparably sized 'glass boat - about 50lbs (22kg) or less particularly if built of the beautiful lightweight gaboon plywood (2/3 the weight of regular ply)

At the end of last year I FINALLY got round to proving out the panel shapes and spent several weeks getting the comprehensive step-by-step plan pack together using David's illustrations from the Eureka 130 episode.

Plans are \$75. And are available from Duck Flat Wooden Boats (8391 3988) see their advertisement in this magazine) or me directly (storerm@ozemail.com.au or c/- Duck Flat 15 Secker Rd Mt Barker SA) . Basic materials for the hull are 2 sheets of ply, 3 litres of epoxy and about 40 metres of 50mm wide fibreglass tape (full material list in plans or available from me or the Ducks) A small amount of extra ply is recommended for the buoyancy tanks and end decks.

So from being a Millionaire to just being ... well ... me in a two week period.

Ah well...

But you get to build and use this wonderful boat. So perhaps this is the best of all possible worlds after all.