



Roger is just the sort of person from whom you would want to buy a boat. He's an enthusiast and builds boats for the love of it. He even has a proper job as a loads engineer at Manchester Airport. Each boat he builds – and there have been 27 Kittiwakes produced over the last ten years – is a work of art. He's always on the look out for new challenges. As we sail along he eyes up a beautiful 1920s style punt which is moored in the centre of Rudyard Lake and is slowly sinking through neglect. "What a waste," he mutters "I'd really like to get my hands on that..."

### **A Lovely Boat To Sail**

Meanwhile I am enjoying getting my hands on the Kittiwake which, despite the almost total lack of wind, is a lovely boat to sail. This version, the Kittiwake Classic, really looks the part in the amazing surroundings at Rudyard Lake, which has recently celebrated its 200th anniversary. Built as a

reservoir in the Victorian era, Rudyard was at that time on the main railway line from Manchester and attracted vast numbers of holiday-makers. Their legacy is some beautiful Victorian houses built around the water's edge – and later,

when the railway was closed, many of the carriages were plundered and set up as mini, less luxurious holiday homes.

The Kittiwake is built in GRP but it's hard to tell – there is more mahogany on her than in your Granny's dining room. The gunwales, thwarts, side benches and even the knees are all solid mahogany. The foredeck is laid iroko, with a matching foredeck hatch cover with, of course, mahogany edging. Bronze hinges on the deck hatch and fittings complete the traditional look. Beneath the hatch, there's plenty of room to store things in the fully waterproof compartment.

Kittiwake's sole is neatly laid out with oiled iroko bottom boards which lift out in four sections. Typically, Roger has designed a neat way of storing the oars inboard.

*What I would call a really 'adult' boat.*



The floor boards are cut so that the oars lay flat into the flooring, close to the centreboard casing with springs to keep them in place – very neat and clever. This leaves the floor clear for sleeping on, and saves me tripping up as I move around the boat. One of the oars has a notch cut into the end of the blade. I query this, and Roger just winks and tells me he'll show me that later – now I'm really intrigued!

## A Fiddler's Dream

As we set sail it's obvious that despite the lack of wind that the Kittiwake is a good sailing boat. Roger tells me that she has won the Fowey Classics for the last couple of years and I'm not surprised. With her 135 sq ft (12.5 s.m.) of sail area, I would imagine that in a light to moderate breeze she would be hard to beat. You can see that she's a boat designed for racing. The mainsail has a cleat which is easily accessible at the aft end of the centreboard case, and the jib

tacks well without the sheets catching. Even the mizzen sail can be cleated off and is fed back to within reach of the helm for quick adjustment.

However, no brisk racing wind is there for us and we slide gently over the ripples made by the little camera boat in search of a breeze. Looking about inside the Kittiwake, she's really a fiddler's dream. There are plenty of bits of rope to play with.

The mainsail is tied off by the mast step on to brass pins. This enables us to easily adjust the throat to raise or lower the boom according to the conditions and the crew – with the possibility of sailing with inexperienced crew or children, I like the ability to raise the boom at will. The jib has a Wykeham Martin traditional style furling drum and swivel, so jib size can be reduced quickly and easily. There are even brass piston hanks attaching the jib to the forestay. The mizzen mast, has what Roger tells me is called a 'leg-o-mutton' sail held out on a bumpkin at the stern. It does help push the boat through the tacks and adds a little extra sail power downwind.

The sails are made by Mouse Sails from 5 oz polyester – available in the usual tan or cream. On the boom, there are some really fancy little shaped blocks, and I ask Roger what they're for. He explains that they are for reefing, and this really demonstrates what I mean by it being a very 'adult' boat – it's all these little touches that add to the Kittiwake's style and elegance.

Finally I get to find out what the shaped oar is for. As we sail downwind, Roger rustles around and produces a lightweight striped spinnaker. This boat obviously has aspirations of being an International 14 with an asymmetric! He furls up the jib and runs the spinnaker tack out on the front of the bowsprit. He hauls up the sail and then uses the oar as a spinnaker pole – the notched edge of the oar sitting in the shroud and the handle through the clew. I'd love to see the looks on the faces of people racing against the Kittiwake when this sail goes up!

Mind you, it was Roger's face that was a picture as, when he was pulling up the spinnaker, I leaned forward to give him a hand. As I moved forward, still holding the tiller, I pulled it out of the rudder stock – so we practised sailing

without steerage for a few moments as I tried to put it back in. Of course, a simple retaining pin would sort that out. I'm sure other people

wouldn't find it a problem but I do seem to have a thing about rudders and tillers!

## *More mahogany than your Granny's dining room.*

## The Cruising Version

Despite the real lack of wind, it's easy to get a feel for how the Kittiwake sails – and it's beautifully. I like the fact that you can obviously race her and do well in handicap events. She's comfortable, as demonstrated by the way Roger is lounging on the floor, leaning back against the centre thwart. And for out and out cruising, there's a Tourer version where the centre thwart is removable, giving plenty



of room for sleeping with more locker space. Both versions can have outboards fitted and Roger recommends using a 3 or 4 hp longshaft.

The Kittiwake is designed to be beached easily and the hull is protected with brass runners on the keel and bilges. The rudder has a lifting blade of laminated plywood and the centreboard is a standard 10mm galvanised steel plate, but true to Roger's form, the GRP centreboard case is clad in timber.

Designed to be easily towed by the family car, the Kittiwake is quick to get ready for the road. The mast and spars are made from Columbian pine, with leathered iroko used for the boom and gaff jaws. The main mast lies neatly along the length of the boat resting on the samson post and the transom. This provides a good ridgepole for the cover, allowing water to drain off the boat if she's left outside and there's a length of stretch elastic running around the boat under the gunwale to which the cover is tied down.

Back on shore, I take a look at the Tourer version. Despite having the same hull mould, the Tourer looks totally different. There's much less wood, with more buoyancy and locker space built in. There's even a small locker at the transom with the hatch lid offset to starboard for easy access. The Tourer comes as a gaff yawl with a cutter's headsails of jib and staysail which, according to Roger, lends itself for all sorts of rig combinations. For singlehanded sailing, he suggests leaving out the bowsprit and mizzen and sailing the

Tourer as a sloop. Alternatively, the boat will even sail using both headsails and the mizzen, without the mainsail – ideal when the family is on board and more space is needed in the boat.

Despite the lack of wind, I really like the Kittiwake. She's a beautiful boat and one that you would be very proud to own. She looks like a proper boat and I particularly like the fact that she can be raced competitively. Roger suggests I contact his South West agent for a sail when there's more wind – that's definitely an offer I'm going to take up.

#### SPECIFICATION

Length over spars: 21' (6.4m)

LWL: 14' (4.3m)

Beam: 5' (1.5m)

Draught – centreplate raised: 9" (230mm)  
centreplate lowered: 3' (0.9m)

Sail area: 135 sq ft (12.5 s.m.)

Weight: 705 lbs (320 kg)

Prices – Kittiwake Classic: £6950 inc VAT  
Kittiwake Tourer: £6350 inc VAT.

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