



Birth of a passion

Richard Hare recalls a boatshed and an inspired mentor

Although I hadn't the slightest interest in wood at the time, I vividly remember Tucker Brown's boatshed in Burnham-on-Crouch. Geoff Badock, my school chum's father, had commissioned a new Stella and we went along to check its progress.

It was midwinter, late afternoon, and amid the gloom but secure in a nest of planks and trestles and lit by a strip light or two, the clinker hull made its impact.

The image of *Moonspinner* – vulnerable, fresh-smelling of khaya and pink as a new born baby – became the embedded memory that triggered an enduring love of wooden boats, clinker masthead yachts particularly. The smell of the boatshed endures too, a heady cornucopia resonant of exotic lands and thrilling promises.

Then there's reflected sunlight dancing across the golden tones of *Moonspinner's* oak transom as we swam around the hull during one hot afternoon in August while anchored just inside the Roach; dry towels, hot tea and Bakewell tart beckoning in the cockpit.

Geoff, an anaesthetist, was a fiercely competitive sportsman, but blessed with great powers of encouragement. Not once did he reprimand us unkindly or lash out an injuring remark – and that's



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“You sail a boat through your backside,” he once told us. It's a sentiment I have oft repeated to those I have encouraged into the sport. As the hull lifts, falls and drives, all the intelligence we need is transmitted through the framework into our bodies – a gentle luff here, a strong tug to weather there, a helm pushed down firmly to leeward to sweep her up into the wind.

High-energy racing had other compensations too – food, and lots of it. Geoff insisted that we ate a lot on board – mop our plates clean, too. Then there were the excellent dinners in the Royal Burnham as the late summer dusk extinguished the hectic bright day. Jacket and tie, of course.

Bunking down aboard *Moonspinner* was part of the excitement. She seemed enormous to me because I wasn't fully grown; but the security of the wooden microcosm worked its spell, Peter and I in the fore cabin, his parents in the saloon. Exhausted, I'd fall asleep listening to the gentle trickle-trickle noise as the quickening tide ruffled under her forefoot and down her long clinker planks.

Decades later I bought a clinker-hulled boat myself, a lovely masthead cutter-rigged Finesse 24. At anchor up a quiet creek, with my wife and son, we'd bunk down, our bellies full. Sometimes, Alec would have a pal on board, history repeating itself. That's satisfying.