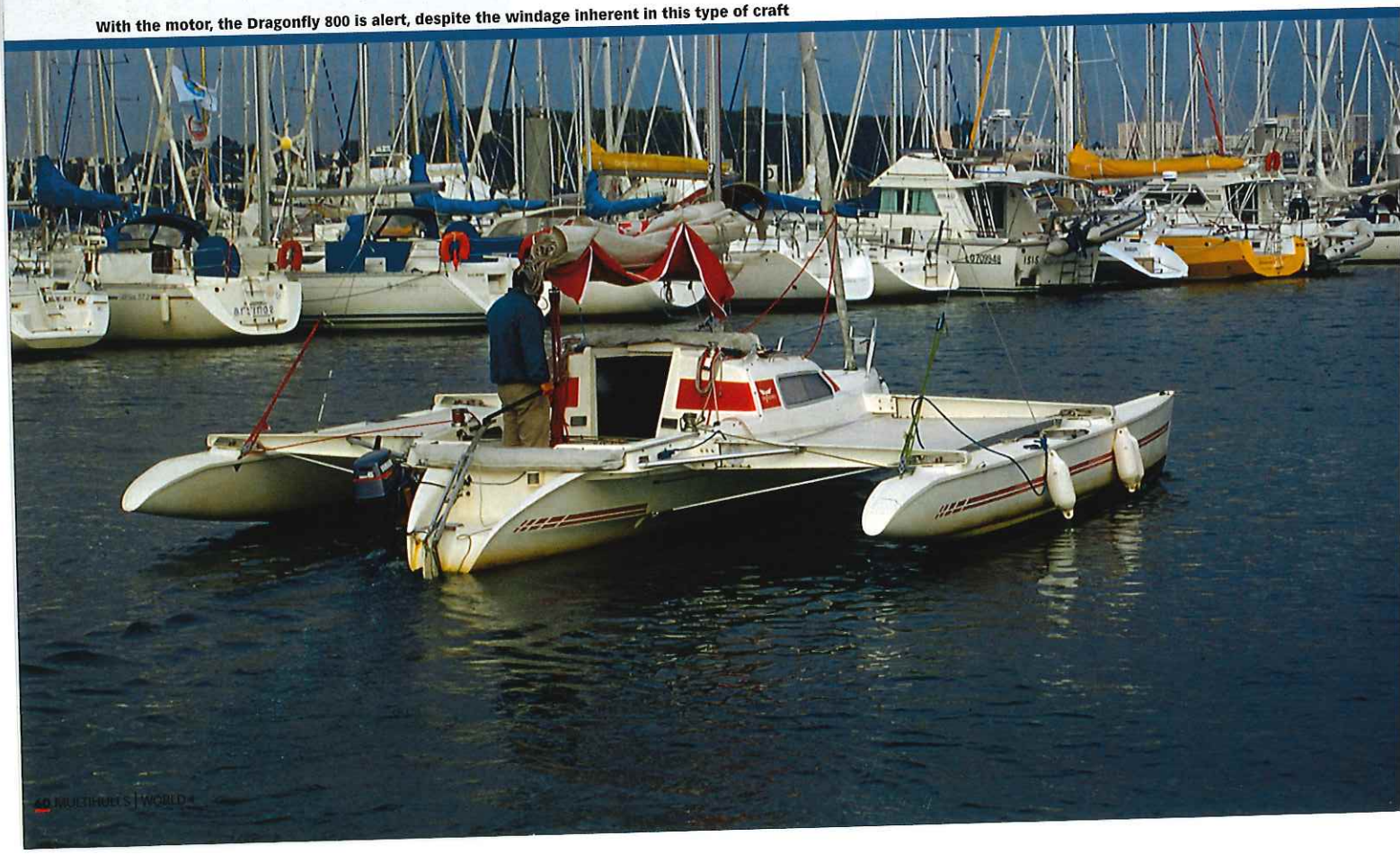
This boat was made to be a pleasure for the person sailing her on the water...

Dragonfly 800

FAST CRUISING ON 3 HULLS!

With the motor, the Dragonfly 800 is alert, despite the windage inherent in this type of craft



THE QUORNING BOATS SHIPYARD BASED IN DENMARK BUILDS THE DRAGONFLY LINE OF FAST CRUISING TRIMARANS. SOME ARE FOLDING AND TRANSPORTABLE AND THE 800 SWINGWING IS ONE OF THEM; IT IS ALSO THE SMALLEST IN THE RANGE. THE MODEL WE TESTED WAS BUILT IN 1993. HOW WELL DO THESE BOATS AGE? THIS IS WHAT WE WANTED TO DISCOVER.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY: GILLES RUFFET

The lines of this small (but beautiful) craft are sharp. She has a special look, with her small low-slung roof, with rather square shapes; she looks great, and her line is refined thanks in particular to the two red stripes along the central hull and floats. The boat on which we would be sailing today is already a few years old, yet she has an excellent outward appearance, and only the starboard float has rubbed a little; it would need tome touchups on the gelcoat.

At sea

We headed towards Île de Groix. Assisted by her light displacement, and despite the considerable windage inherent in this type of craft, the Dragonfly is easy to handle, feels agile and, when you rev up the motors, she accelerates frankly. We hoist the sails. Despite the wear on the travellers, the mainsail rises easily, but when she is hoisted high, she looks distorted. In the Lorient channel, amid the constant comings and goings of fishing boats, including many Spanish vessels, we have to tack repeatedly. It's rather difficult to sail first past the semaphore of Port-Louis. With the wind blowing at 6 to 8 knots upwind, we reached 6.5 knots. But as soon as there were a few traces of wind on the surface of the water, the Dragonfly instantly accelerates, literally coming alive, to approach a speed of 10 knots, on condition however we bear away slightly. The helm is lively, agile and immediately responds to the slightest challenge. This boat is made to provide fun to the sailor at the helm on the water, the pleasure of speed, of course. Today, she's giving us plenty of that; with a very fluid passage on the surface of the water, she traces a lovely wake, imperceptible, light. Soon, the eastern coast of Île de Groix approaches, with the speed still oscillating between 5 and 7 knots. The wind falls, now under 5 knots; yet we keep on progressing at some 3.5 knots, where a monohull of equivalent size would be practically at a standstill. Where is the wind? The situation is frustrating, hard to accept onboard a boat that can run at 15 knots. However, the quickworks are not perfectly clean, and a small keel would offer us better performance levels, along with a fine wardrobe... We are really very close to Groix, almost grazing it, touching it. All we would have to do is stretch out our hand. The tender is lifted, to avoid scraping the bottom of the keel, and we sail along this great beach, in a meter or two of turquoise waters, a beach almost deserted at this time of the year, except for a few jet-skis.

We bear away and turn back. At 100° of true wind, we are sailing again at over 6 knots. In the channel between the island and the continent, the sea is still flat, and the wind deigns strengthen only a few tiny knots. We hoist the tri-radial spinnaker, regretting not to have an asymmetric one, which would have enabled us to have a better heading. So this tack won't enable

The maneuvers are easy, even solo...


The soft top makes the cockpit into a genuine extra saloon!

If the conditions so require, it is easy to steer this boat from the aft float beam

Beaching is easy with this trimaran...
And it would really be a shame not to take advantage of it!

Folding the beam is child,s play... and takes just a few seconds

Folding/Unfolding: Instructions

Unlike her direct competitor, the American Corsair (designed by Ian Farrier), whose beams fold vertically, the Dragonfly's cross-beam fold longitudinally. The operation is quite simple, and takes only a few instants. The efforts are taken up on a stay, a simple aluminum tube that is fastened to the hull. For the folding, you start by slacking the tackles that stiffen the runners-backstays. Then, you remove the pin. After that, you just have to take up the rope on the winch (after having released the cleat) to lift the float along the central hull. Unfolding requires reversing the operation, and you finish with the pin, and the runner tackle. The boat's beam is reduced from 6.05 m to 2.90 m. But this is still too broad for European road regulations. The floats must be disassembled, which represents a half-day's work for two people, between the moment you arrive with your trailer (pulled by a large sedan or a 4x4), and the moment you can start tacking.

DRAGONFLY 800 TECHNIQUE

Dragonflyer is No.21 in the series, in the Cruising version, launched in 1993. Production of the Dragonfly 800 is interrupted. Between the MK1 (Dragonfly 25) and the Swingwing, the model we tested, produced since 1989, over 400 units have been built, including the first models, that were not folding.

us to enter directly the access channel to the Ports of Lorient, and before entering the pass, we drop the spinnaker a few minutes to start off against with the solent and mainsail alone, closer to the wind before going back down into the channel. After all, we are at 7 knots. The boat moves well, light, with an insignificant volume of water displaced. A good boat. Just as the courier of Groix gratifies with its stem wave, the Dragonfly set off in the surf, and we're flirting with 9 knots. That'll be all for today. We're going back to Kernével, and Dragonflyer returns to her place along the outer breakwater.

We assemble the cockpit tent. The operation takes a few minutes, radically altering the boat's living space. It's doubled in no time and the cockpit becomes an extension of the saloon. When, in the course of the day, the sun make the temperature rise, the tent is partially folded. This shelter is ideal for the off-season, or even at the height of the season, in temperate regions where the evenings may be a little chilly.

A boat with two floats...

Let's start our tour with the floats; they are divided into several waterproof caissons, of which only the middle one is accessible. At the bottom of this central caisson, there is a compartment accessible through an inspection hatch. Water penetrates through the panels of the floats; the gaskets must be changed. On this type of boat, that can sail at high speeds, the slightest little crack lets the water in. Otherwise, on each float, there are a few traces of rust from the stainless steel, confirming the boat's age of ten years. Nothing more than normal wear. The waterstays, those cables under the beams between the floats and the central hull that take up the vertical efforts, were changed in 2001.

Deck layout

In the rear, the transom bears the rudder, and a small swimming ladder. The rudder articulation system is quite remarkable. A lever arm activated by a tackle can lift and lower it, without making it necessary to play the trapeze artist in the back of the boat. The helm is equipped with a clamp and a stick. At the bottom of the cockpit, a trunk holds the outboard motor feeder tank, a bucket and other useful odds and ends. The cockpit is actually quite spacious, for this size boat, I mean. It can hold up to six people, seated on the teak benches, still in good condition. The mainsheet track crosses the cockpit, the seven-part Frederiksen tackle is quite recent and is in very good condition. The Profurl furler is new, but the (Evelström) sails are original equipment. At the start, the genoa jib was a hanked-on sail, with vertical battens; it was altered to adapter to the furler. The wardrobe also includes a spinnaker, in good condition, which seems to have been little used. At the mastfoot, the part that held the sliders at the bottom of the track is gone, and has been replaced by a makeshift device that is neither attractive nor practical. Moreover, the roller sliders are quite worn. All that will have to be changed; it will be necessary to have something more "serious".

Some of the cleats will also have to be changed. And there are many of them on this boat, between the usual fittings and

The mainsail tackle is quite something...

The galley: minimalist, but sufficient for the agenda

The interior and the bench in "sitting" position

what is necessary for folding the floats. In the rigging, it's surprising to note that the spreaders are made of stainless steel. Just in back of the furler, there is the anchor-bucket, which holds the 8-kg Fob anchor. There isn't much to do, but it is necessary for peace of mind.

The central hull

The companionway is broad, spacious and practical. Water seeping through the starboard porthole has stained the bench on that side. The Plexiglas will have to be removed to substitute the stopgap measures applied here for a succession of coats of polyurethane mastic. In the galley, there is really very little in the way of storage facilities, just enough to hold a pot, two or three packages of noodles and a few bags of instant coffee. All the woodwork looks worn, although it's nothing catastrophic. Some of the varnish, however, has been redone recently, but superficially. These signs of age are the marks of an insufficiently ventilated boat. To starboard in the companionway, there is a kerosene burner. You may like that, but this one is getting worn. Given my experience with this type of burner and my memories of all the problems it can entail, I would suggest replacing it with a gas burner! The switchboard is located on the front of the burner block. A solar panel, very poorly placed under the boom in front of the companionway, recharges the 70-Ah battery, installed in 2001. Across from it is a small sink, equipped with a simple Whale hand pump; the water tank is in front, behind the battery compartment.

This equipment is obviously rather crude, but perfectly adapted to the day-boat concept or coastal camping. The centerboard is manned from the inside, on the aft side of the compartment, on either side of which is a folding panel. Under the benches, wooden panels unfold to become a comfortable bed, once covered with pillows. Four people can easily sleep onboard this boat, on the double berth of the box bed in front and the two single berths in the saloon. The transformation is easy and efficient.

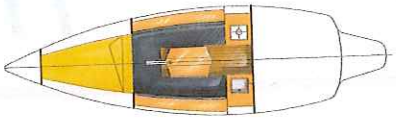
But the boat's mystery remains unquestionably the head, located in a trunk in front of the centerboard casing. You have to be both a contortionist and an equilibrist, and hope your butt is small enough to be able even to consider using it; or stand no higher than 5 feet tall. And even then... The most plausible technique seems to be to shed your clothes at the foot of the companionway, before heading, bare-bottomed, to the hole. Good luck!

Conclusion

This boat is sold with her trailer and cockpit tent. She will have to be overhauled, the most important point being of course the sails, but, as we were able to see, some of the fittings must be changed. After that, you'll just have to hook on the trailer and boat to the back of the car to go sailing wherever you like. In the off-season, it isn't necessary to pay for a berth in the port; you can keep the boat in a garage, or simply in a courtyard. And you will have a fast, seaworthy boat that's a pleasure to sail and will be able to accommodate you with one, two or three other people for a memorable holiday riding the waves...

SPECIFICATIONS

Designer:	Börge Quorning
Construction:	Polyester sandwich
Length:	8.00 m
Max beam:	6.05 m
Folded beam:	2.90 m
Beam for transport (disassembled):	2.50 m
Draft:	0.35 m / 1.40 m
Displacement:	1,050 kg
Mainsail:	20 m2
Genoa jib:	14 m2
Tri-radial spinnaker:	70 m2



Freshwater tank:	40 liters

LAST-MINUTE NEWS!

Since we ran our tests, Dragonflyer received new equipment: everything we deemed needed replacement. Thus, she now had a new genoa jib in spring 2002, and a mainsail last autumn, both sails of Dacron. The sliders are new, as is the rigging, running and standing. The problem of leakproofing the portholes has been solved and the impacts on the floats repaired. The burner was replaced by a gas model. Thus, the boat is now ready for lots of sailing!

She is on sail for €56,000.
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