



THE GRADUATE

☆ DURBAN AND
RHODESIA FAVOUR
THIS VARIATION OF
LOW-COST SAILING

Length . . . 12 ft. 6ins. o.a.
Beam 4 ft. 7ins.
Sail Area 83½ sq. ft.
Weight 170 lb. (min.)

IN 1952, Dick Wyche who, with his partner Digby Coppock, had been designing and building racing dinghies in England for many years, was commissioned by the magazine *Light Craft* to design a racing dinghy which, though a thoroughbred, would retail at less than £100 including sails. The result was the "Graduate" which was in fact sold for some years in England at between £90 and £100.

The Grad is really a hard-chine version of the British National Twelve or the Firefly dinghy. It has the same basic characteristics (other than being chine-built and not round-bilged) and has a similar performance.

The class is one design as far as hull form and rig are concerned, but deck and cockpit layout is optional, some boats having small side decks and side seats and others having rolled side decks. All boats have approximately 1,500 lb. of buoyancy in compartments forward and aft, and are easily righted after a capsize.

A deep-chested hull form and pronounced rise of floor and keel rocker, all typical of the British school of racing dinghy design, with the high aspect ratio sail plan, account for the Grad's lively performance to windward and the relative ease with which she is induced to plane in wind speeds of upwards of 12 knots.

The optimum combined crew weight in boats of this size is 280 lb., but 30 or 40 lb. one way or the other does not appear to make any material difference to performance except, perhaps, in extreme weather conditions.

As with other similar boats, however, trim is of vital importance in getting the best out of the boat and, because of the rocker of the keel, only small movements of crew are necessary to adjust trim for different points of sailing or wind speeds. For example, although the boat will start to plane without any movement of crew, she can usually be started sooner by a very slight movement aft of the helmsman. Once the boat is up, the expert can usually maintain a faster plane by gently trimming midships again.

The Grad is surprisingly dry, even when beating to windward in the rough seas sometimes experienced on Durban Bay. Any water that comes inboard is usually only spray which can be dealt with satisfactorily by two small self bailers placed one on each side immediately under the thwart. When properly tuned and sailed, no excessive weather helm is noticed and surprisingly enough, this is also the case when the mainsail only is carried. Yet, under gib alone, the Grad will tack to windward with comparative ease once the technique has been mastered.

In spite of her two feet shorter waterline, greater beam and smaller sail area, the Grad has shown herself to be more than a match for the Sprog in light airs, particularly to windward. In stronger winds of course, as would be expected, the Sprog can usually leave her, but not by a large margin.

The construction of the Grad is simplicity itself. She has no frames other than the forward and after bulkheads, of 6 mm. ply, framed, transom and apron. During building, two temporary frames are used, one midships and one forward. These are made of scrap wood

and are discarded or passed on after completion of the shell.

This gives a very simple and clean-looking cockpit and strength is maintained by a 4 ft. 6 in. long plate case extending right up to the forward bulkhead, bottom and side stringers, and two floor boards each side which are actually glued to the bottom ply. The bottom ply is 6 mm. and the sides and deck 4 mm. thick.

In the design, the forward part of the body has been conically projected to give a very pleasing and efficient entry with the chine not becoming apparent to the eye for about 18 ins. to two feet from the stem. The entry is slightly hollow, with a fairly sharp forefoot which helps performance to windward.

The mast is stepped on top of the forward bulkhead and rotates with the movement of the boom. It is oval in section and measures 1½ in. by 3¼ in. by 19 ft. 1 in. long and is of course hollow, with 5/16 in. wall thickness. The main halyard, of wire with a rope tail longspliced to it, passes through the mast which is stiffened by a pair of diamond shrouds carried on a 20 in. spreader and extending from near the foot to the mast band.

The centreboard and rudder are of ½ in. plywood suitably streamlined, the board being pivoted on a bolt and controlled by a handle and rubber friction brake. The rudder blade is held down by a rubber sprung lanyard controlled from the tiller so that when released, the blade floats up.

One of the most attractive features of the Grad is the extremely low price for which it can be built and it is this, with its delightful handling qualities and sparkling performance, which have led many members of the recently-formed Island Sailing Club in Durban to build them. At the present there are six afloat and racing regularly in Durban, all built by their owners, and another 18 are in various stages of construction. About six of these are almost ready for launching.

It has been found possible, by careful buying and a little ingenious improvisation in making fittings, to build a Grad excluding sails for as little as £40. Sails may be obtained for less than £20.

One local boatbuilder has started building Graduates either finished, completed hulls, or bare shells with finishing kits, and it is expected that this will encourage even more "not so handy" amateurs to go in for this delightful little boat.

The class in Britain is administered by a Class Association, and now has about 900 boats. In South Africa, besides the Island Sailing Club, there are two or three other Clubs with Grads in their fleets and it is understood that there are a few in the Rhodesias.

A Class Association was formed in Durban last year, which it is hoped will form the nucleus of a National Association, with provincial branches, should it so happen, as is anticipated, that the Graduate becomes as popular here as it has in Britain. In the opinion of the author, there is no doubt that there is room in this country for an inexpensive 12-ft. racing class which will suit the pockets and the temperaments of the more lively enthusiasts and which could form a stepping stone to the larger National Classes. ■

