

A Review of the New Cormorant and a Comparison with the Original

by Elizabeth Baker



A Review of the New Cormorant and a Comparison with the Original

by Elizabeth Baker

At Beale Park Boat Show in May 2008, I welcomed the chance to sail the New Cormorant dinghy. It was designed, as was the first Cormorant, by Roger Dongray. As the original Cormorant is no longer being built, I was delighted to learn that a new one is now being produced. Although the hull shape is the same as the original, the new boat is very different, both in rig and internal lay-out. It is produced by Seashell Boats of Lostwithiel, Cornwall, website www.seashellboats.co.uk, as a kit boat for home construction in marine ply, but I think they would build the boat for you if you didn't want to do the work yourself. The new boat is 200 lbs lighter than the original, which would be an advantage when handling ashore.

I think the New Cormorant would appeal to a slightly different market, although I could be tempted if I needed a new boat and the original Cormorant was no longer available, but I was attracted to the original Cormorant for its unstayed mast and its GRP hull, which needs less maintenance and allows more sailing time. The single gaff sail kept the rig simple for single-handed sailing.

In contrast to the unstayed mast of the original Cormorant, the New Cormorant has a deck-stepped mast with shrouds which is stepped further aft to make room for a jib on a bowsprit, which is attached to the deck through a samsom post. This provides the boat with a little extra power in light winds, and gives the crew something to do. The mainsail rig is the same as the original, a high-peaked gaff which lowers into a topping-lift. It has the same gooseneck fitting

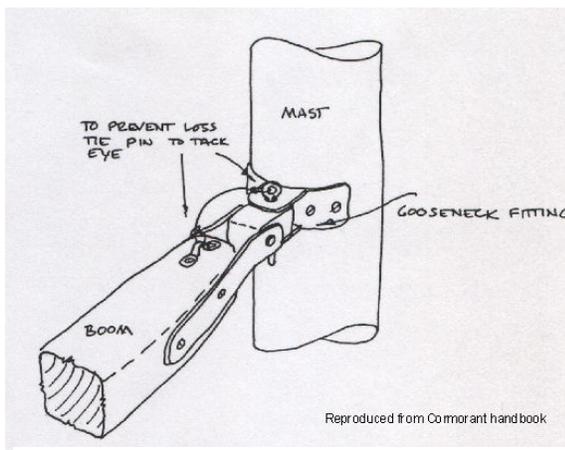


Fig. 1
Gooseneck fitting

which I found so troublesome on my own Cormorant (Fig. 1). It was difficult to line-up the holes on the boom section with those on the mast so the pin could be dropped through, and the metal quickly bent as a result of accidental gybes. The screws fixing it to the mast worked loose and eventually resulted in the mast breaking. I replaced my own gooseneck fitting with a wooden crab-claw arrangement.

The boom and gaff are also lighter than the original, which would be a definite advantage. A rope horse is substituted for the original sliding mainsheet track.

Inside the boat the foredeck has been shortened, providing easier access to the bow and a larger cockpit, but less under-cover stowage. The

centreboard, instead of protruding through the foredeck, is in the conventional position. The lovely wide side benches and built-in buoyancy have been retained, but the stern buoyancy tank has a big, lockable hatch large enough to accommodate an outboard motor. However, I would keep my outboard mounted on the transom and use this space for stowage of camping equipment. I was pleased to see that the facility to raise the floorboards to deck level, providing a sturdy sleeping platform, has also been retained.

I would miss my sunken well with drainage holes behind the transom, which provided a useful place for stowing opened cartons of milk, fruit juice or soup. The water slopping in and out kept them cool, and automatically cleaned-up any spillage. However, a couple of additional side lockers observed near the stern would be useful for stowing small items.

I sailed the boat in a brisk wind and she was very responsive on the helm, although I was not convinced she was quite as good to windward as my own Cormorant. On a small inland lake, I was unable to judge how she would perform in the waves of the open sea, but as the hull shape is the same, I imagine she would be equally seaworthy.

I see from the website that the New Cormorant is available for hire from Mylor Boat Hire, near Falmouth <http://www.mylorboathire.co.uk/boats1.html> so if you were sufficiently interested, you could go to Cornwall and try one out for yourself.



The New Cormorant sailing on Beale Park Lake, near Pangbourne in May 2008.
Note the additional jib and bowsprit, and rope horse.

Original Cormorant for comparison
(picture copied from original Cormorant brochure) ►

