

White Cloud

I bought *White Cloud* in June 2007 as a 'project' for my, then, approaching retirement from teaching as a Technology, aka Woodwork, teacher.

When I bought her, the immediate previous owner, Robert Taylor, had started to restore her but sadly died shortly after. When we viewed her she was in 'a bit of a state' and seemed to provide me with the challenge that I needed. As it turned out, far more of a challenge than I had bargained for! Over six years later and having missed the target of her centenary, 2012, *White Cloud* was re-launched on September 23rd 2013.

There are no surviving plans and she appears to have been built, as a one-of, by Gann & Palmer in Teignmouth, along the lines of a Falmouth Quay Punt. I have found only one other existing yacht built by them despite evidence that shows they built a variety of types of craft for individuals as well as the War Office and that Herbert Gann was a very competitive dinghy racer of his own boats. The business ended, possibly after their yard was destroyed by fire, in bankruptcy. Gann moved to Canada and set up a boatyard there. I have been in touch with his granddaughter who is researching his history and who has a chest full of boat designs but, sadly, not of *White Cloud*.

Having no plans makes it difficult to see how she was originally laid out. She always had an engine and I assume that the hull has not changed.



The earliest photographs so far found date to the early '50's and show the external cabin little changed from when Robert Taylor began his restoration. Sometime between 1952 & 1958 Christopher Thompson sailed with his wife and three of his four daughters (pictured above in *White Cloud* in Holland) to Finland. I was delighted to meet Chris and two of his daughters midway through the restoration in 2011. One of his daughters reminisced to me how the squeaking and smell of the swinging paraffin stove made her feel ill on a trip to France.



The most useful photograph has come from a collection loaned to me by the last owner to sail her, Geoff Green of Ingatestone. Being almost a perfect side-on view, it has enabled me to take a number of measurements which have proved to be invaluable – especially when repairing the broken mast.

The inside of the boat has obviously been modified in the past – maybe several times – however ‘witness’ marks suggest that the

bulkheads are probably in the same place as originally built. Accommodation has changed. When I got her there was a fold-out bunk to starboard giving three berths in the main cabin and one berth forward. Correspondence contained with the boat’s documents suggests that at some time a quarter-berth was installed but resembled a coffin and was not very successful. No evidence of it remains.

Robert Taylor’s restoration began with removing the rotten cabin coamings and replacing them with a wider board to give an additional few inches of headroom below. Sadly, that is as far as he got.

My restoration has included:

- Hardening up every nail, replacing where necessary
- Splining above the waterline & feathering below
- New cabin roof & fittings
- Companionway & ladder
- Sheer strakes
- Some decking
- New stem post
- New mast top section, spliced on
- New bunks
- New galley
- New Navigation table
- New heads
- Replacement of some floors
- Replacement of ceilings
- Canvassing of decks and cabin top
- New electrics
- Rebuild of rudder
- New laminated ‘cranked’ tiller
- Removal of cast iron keel and replacement of keel timbers (I hadn’t reckoned on that!)
- New cockpit lockers, seats & lazarette
- New front and rear cabin bulkheads
- New 20hp Beta engine
- New engine bearers
- New fore hatch coaming
- New Mainsail and Stays’l, and, most recently, mizzen

When I obtained her, she had a 20hp Bukh diesel engine that was seriously corroded and had seized. I have installed a new Beta 20hp unit. The propshaft and propeller may need to be replaced; the latter has yet to be calculated and so its type and number of blades are not yet known. The advice was to try the existing prop and see how she performs; it seems to perform well enough with the engine speed up to about 2000rpm and will push the boat at along about 5-6 knots.

In late 2011 I applied for a restoration award from The Transport Trust and in October 2012 received an award and £1000 towards the restoration costs. For that I am extremely grateful! Mentally that was reserved for the new mainsail, but it was spent more than once! Up until now, I have carried out all the work myself, without professional assistance (apart from making up the standing rigging and, of course, the new sails) financing the project from my Teacher’s pension. I hope that I can continue to maintain her in this manner.

Les Weeks

March 2013/April 2018

Postscript – June 2020

In July 2019, in anticipation of my emigration to Western Australia, *White Cloud* was sold to her new custodian (the 26th!) Paul Stevens. Paul spent a relatively short time making some alterations to enable him to comfortably sail her single-handed. This included fitting stanchions and guard wires around the deck, a wind vane autohelm and a calorifier to provide him with hot water. His first voyage was the first leg of his single-handed sail to Portugal and *White Cloud's* new home port. To all accounts, she looked after him well.

L.W.