



LASHING two racing canoes together and adding a sail was the birth of the modern style catamaran we have today. It began on Canvey Island in Essex, progressing through fast day-boats like the Shearwater, Swift and Cougar until the name Prout became synonymous with catamaran.

From the development of fast racing craft came some small cruising cats, but a spate of capsize led the Prout twins, Roland and Francis, to take their development of cruising boats into a design that would be almost impossible to turn over due to combinations of keel type, sail plan and hull form.

Through Rangers, Ocean Rangers, Snowgeese, Siroccos and Quests, the accent was on a fast cruiser with plenty of room on deck and below but, above all, there was an accent on safety. There were racing boats, however, and many lightweight versions of the standard boats were built with bigger rigs and potentially faster speeds. It was not until the introduction of the Scamper, however, that the original, no-holds-barred catamaran concept of speed, fun and excitement was really reverted to.

We were able to sail the prototype Scamper 26 on a gusty day in the Thames Estuary. The boat had seen some hard sailing and obvious modifications had been made. Production boats will have the same accommodation, however, and will be essentially the same on deck — or decks.

The starting point for the Scamper was the already highly successful 26ft (7.9m) cruising cat, the Sirocco. The moulds were used to create two lighter weight hulls — layup is $7\frac{1}{2}$ oz/ft² topsides and 9oz/ft² bottom with $\frac{1}{2}$ in balsa in the deck. Then, instead of bridging them with a solid deck with its attendant superstructure, the hulls were given simple, almost flat-topped raised decks and were connected together with a trio of alloy tubes. A glassfibre tray forms the cockpit, a net trampoline fills the void forward and a big rig, highly reminiscent of the old Shearwater with a rotating mast, sits on top to complete the boat.

Fixing the three alloy beams to the hulls in a manner strong enough to take all the twisting and shear loads has caused problems. The final and tough solution was to slip the forward beam over two stubs that run through the hulls and are glassed to small bulkheads in the bows. The crossbeam is through-bolted to the stubs. The square section midships beam has a large flange at each end and this is simply attached with four stainless steel bolts through an alloy plate that



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