

Modern Marbleheads

We asked Roger Stollery for an appraisal of modern design trends.

All professionally built modern Marbleheads are in carbon fibre and include designs and builds from David Creed, Graham Bantock, Trevor Jenkins, CM Yacht, Peter Wiles, Brad Gibson and John Taylor and others. Designs are also available capable of being home built by the amateur craftsman, planked in the conventional way, or as hard chine boats, or in carbon and resins for the more experienced builder from moulds that are available to hire. (See below).

Narrow Hulls

We have seen the continuing trend towards narrower hulls. The move towards narrow began in 1992 with the result that almost any modern design from that era can be competitive in a wide range of wind strengths. Today concentration is on low drag hulls, which come quickly onto the plane, supported by deep keels normally at about 600 mm, (although 700mm is the maximum in the rules). This trend to shorter keels can be seen in Graham Bantock's designs like Prime Number in the order of 600mm, and in Roger Stollery's Crazy Tube too.

Ballast Weights

In modern Marbleheads ballast weights are in the range of 3.5 kg, and fins are generally very thin, sometimes to the 00 NACA Series or more sophisticated sections in which the fin has a 6% thickness in relation to its overall width. Weight savings above the keel have a big influence on stability the reduction of say, 300 grams in hull/rig construction moving the centre of gravity down about 15mm to about 340mm below the hull. Examples of total sailing weights, taking into account 3.5 kg in the bulb, include overall displacements between 4.4 kg 4.7 kg overall. Recent work with even shorter keels makes mix and match possible, getting excellent results in light winds from renowned strong wind hull designs, but changes in fin length are not allowed at a single meeting. Vane boats are a little

different requiring a skeg for optimal performance and this can sometime be combined with the vane unit to give so that the boat can be sailed in either radio or vane form.

Current boats

The trend continues with Brad Gibson's Grunge, a boat with which he won the Worlds in 2012 and the Nationals in both 2012 and 13, a design which was heavily influenced by the BritPop design and like the BritPop has a chine along its length. It is narrower than both the Crazy Tube and Starkers; narrow with a powerful bow. With Grunge he won nearly every race, concentrating on lightness of construction and great attention to detail in the fittings. Graham Bantock's successful Prime Number, the Jeff Byerley's Dreadnought, a new design from New Zealand, which features a Creed fin of 700 mm, and a backward leaning bow reminiscent of the Dreadnought battleships of the early 20th century from which it gets its name. Another new design from down under is the Gothic MX designed by Frank Russell in Australia and made by MX Components in Thailand available here through CM Yachts.

Rig set up

The setup for conventional rigs is generally for shrouds to A rigs and freestanding for smaller rigs. Two mast positions may be provided if swing rigs are used and the mast is

moved aft when the boat is under shroudless conventional smaller rigs. Swing rigs are shroud-less and simpler throughout their range and have shorter jib booms than conventional rigs where the spars are usually equal. Swing rigs with conventional proportion sails are being tried using an offset pivot and look promising because of the offwind power of the swing rig combined with upwind speed to match the conventional in strong winds. For vane sailing, Marbleheads always carry conventional rigs and get their downwind speed by flying a big spinnaker on the downwind legs.

Designs for the home builder

Designs for the home builder include the Hobbit, by Roger Stollery based on Crazy Tube 4, to be planked up in the traditional way and Hurricane also from Stollery, designed as a vane boat with very simple 4 plank box sections and which could make an easily built starter Marblehead for radio. Established designs are available through the Marine Modelling plans service include the Graham Bantock's Monarch (2003) for the more experienced builder, Cumulus (1992) from the same board, and Bob Sterne's 1992 Monocat. Mike Dann has designs for a hard chine ply boat.



*Crazy Tube Free,
a Stollery design.
Photo: Roger Stollery*



Getting into Marbleheads

From the second hand market any Graham Bantock boat will be good, including the Paradox with which Graham won the 1992 World championship, Stollery's Roar Edge, David Creed's Stark for which an upgrade fin is available to transform its performance into a Starkers. The key is to buy a boat built after 1992 when the narrow hull became the norm. Boats like these are capable of good performance at club level in any conditions.

With thanks to Roger Stollery

More information

Marblehead Class Association
<http://www.marbleheadsailing.wordpress.com>
twitter@marbleheaduk
Class Registrar: Phil Playle. 01376 339362.

Marine Modelling Plans service
<http://www.cornwallmodelboats.co.uk/acatalog/mmi-marblehead.html>
Stollery Designs: 014583 421801

For the Spring Edition Brad Gibson is writing a piece on bringing older Marbleheads back into competitive trim.



*'Dreadnought' showing
chines and backward
leaning bow.
Photo: Roger Stollery*

*'Gothic MX' by Frank Russell.
Photo: Roger Stollery*