



SAILING THE SALMO 11

Regular readers may recall our tales of adventure in Salmo kit-built dayboats from Poland. Now these capable craft are available over here, as Alice Driscoll discovers.

With photographs by Peter Chesworth.

I first saw the Salmo 11 at the London Boat Show and all arrangements for the boat test with Lockhart Boat Builders had been by email. So arriving at West Cowes with Ches, I'm firstly really surprised to see how young James Lockhart looks as he welcomes us off the ferry. The next surprise is his Scottish accent; I'd assumed he was from Cowes because that's where this new business is based. The third surprise is when James introduces his business partner Lukasz Stawski, who is from Poland. I'd forgotten the company is building a range of traditional-looking small craft by the Polish designer Andrzej Ksiazek.

Before we get to see the Salmo 11, I want to find out how this partnership came about. James originates from the Isle of Skye and is qualified as a carpenter and joiner. Lukasz was trained as an engineer in Gdansk but as a keen sailor he moved to Cowes because, he says, it is "the Mecca of international sailing". The pair met on a local building site, became friends, and started planning how they could use their skills in a business that they loved. This led to three months building a

17' (5.2m) plywood cabin boat while also refurbishing yachts. Renovation and repairs are still a key element of their work, with a Sigma 41 currently in refit.

Sharing a passion for smaller traditional craft, the duo wanted to investigate the market opportunities for a range of lightweight, easy-to-build boats. Lukasz was aware of Andrzej Ksiazek's designs, whose Salmo open boats have proved extremely popular in the Baltic regions and are acknowledged to be extremely sea-worthy. Readers may recall this was put to the test in 2011 when Aleksander Hanusz and Filip Sulkowski sailed two Salmo 15-S dayboats safely across the Baltic and back – see W92 – and in 2012, when they sailed them to the Arctic Circle – see W99.

But back to Lockhart Boat Builders. The pair built the Salmo 11 as their first boat, immediately taking it to the London Boat Show in January. "It was really an exercise to get ourselves known to the rest of the marine trade," says James, "and do some market research on what people are looking for in a small dinghy." Their conclusion was that potential buyers want

is easy to raise and lower and benefits from being loose footed without a boom – *bom* in Polish. The main sheet leads back to the stern where the paddle-shaped rudder and tiller are just the right size for this compact little craft. There are oars and rowlocks included in the boat but we've taken these out today as our intention is to sail.

It's a beautiful day, so we don't waste any time getting afloat. Lukasz settles down in the bow and answers my questions about Polish words for various boat parts. As we gently cruise up and down the Medina River in the light but variable winds, Lukasz says they have been taking the boat out in all conditions to put her through her paces. So far, they've not had any problems and certainly the sea-worthiness of the Salmo designs have already been proven. Later this year, Alexander Hanusz, who is a friend of Lukasz and James, plans to sail across the Atlantic in a Salmo 21; this will make him the first Polish sailor to cross the Atlantic in an open boat.

The Salmo 11 sails very well and I like the cut and quality of the T&J Sails. These sails are made in Poland and through their connections, Lockhart has now become T&J's UK agent. As we hear the happy shouts of young people having a go at sailing downriver at the UKSA base, I think about how this design of sailing boat, without a boom, would be ideal for children learning to enjoy sailing.

With room for four people, a lifting daggerboard and low draft, the Salmo 11 is certainly a great little sailing boat, and also would make a good tender to sail, row or use with an outboard. It will also be interesting to see some of the larger designs completed. The Salmo 15-S is based on a traditional Breton craft and as proved by Aleksander Hanusz and Filip Sulkowski clearly makes a good cruising dinghy.

Back ashore, we have more time to chat about this slightly unusual Anglo-Polish boatbuilding company in Cowes. It turns out there's a well-documented history of co-operation between the Island and Poland dating back to the second World War. In 1935, Cowes boatbuilder J S White, built two destroyers for the Polish navy on the Medina, just about where we had been sailing. The *Grom* – Thunder – and *Blyskawica* – Lightning – the only two ships of their type were the fastest and most heavily-armed destroyers of that time. Both saw extensive action in the war, most notably in the Norwegian Campaign, shelling German positions and targeting Luftwaffe aircraft. *Blyskawica* also had an active role in the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, towing the damaged British destroyer *Greyhound* carrying 1,000 allied troops back to Dover.

In 1942 she became famous again in Cowes. While she was undergoing a refit at J S White's shipyard, on 4 May 1942 waves of German bombers began an attack on East



and West Cowes. *Blyskawica* became a floating anti-aircraft base defending the towns. Her crew lit smoke canisters in an attempt to obscure the town from the bomber and her guns made the Luftwaffe fly higher, reducing the accuracy of their bombing. In two long attacks, more than 200 tons of explosives rained down on Cowes that night. Over 70 people lost their lives and many more were injured but without the actions of the Polish destroyer *Blyskawica*, it is said the devastation would have been much greater. Lukasz tells me there are many the memorials in East and West Cowes recognising the town's appreciation of the efforts of the Polish captain and his sailors.

With their plans to move into new workshops in East Cowes, I'm sure I will not be the only one to wish James and Lukasz success in their new venture. They have the combination of great skills, good designs and enthusiasm to succeed – and it's nice to new faces coming into this industry. The Salmo 11 will be on Stand A012 at the Southampton Boat Show, 11–20 September, so do say *czesc* – hello in Polish – to these 'overners' – Isle of Wight dialect for mainlanders living on the Island – allegedly!

CONTACT

Lockhart Boat Builders, 1 Waterside Close, East Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO32 6FW Tel: +44 (0)7979 610089
www.lockhartboatbuilders.eu



aesthetically-pleasing 'classic' designs but in a lightweight, low maintenance craft which can be easily handled by one or two people. They decided to focus on offering epoxy plywood boats at any stage of build: finished boats, pre-cut plywood kits, even plans. "Surprisingly, there seemed to be quite a lot of interest in people buying plans or kits to build boats themselves," adds James, "so Ksiazek's Salmo designs are ideal." The pair are really keen to see more people going back to the 'do it yourself' days and say they are happy to provide telephone support and advice for their Salmo builders.

The extremely high quality and detail of Ksiazek's designs was a good choice for Lockhart. To date Lockhart has only built the Salmo 11 but Ksiazek's range includes the Salmo 15-S, Salmo 18-S and Salmo 18-T, the 'tourist' model for comfort and leisure over longer journeys. The Salmo 20-F is a compact sea-going yacht with cockpit and room for six on board or for two people to voyage and sleep in comfort. There's even a couple of powerboats in the range, including the Salmo 19 Open and Salmo 19 which looks like a classic Venetian motorboat.

By now, we have arrived at East Cowes marina and can see the pretty little Salmo 11 rigged and ready to go. She's quite beamy and beautifully finished in white with a cream gunwale. Built from 1/4" (6mm) marine plywood, the broad lapstrake topside panels give the impression of a traditional clinker built boat. The stitch and glue construction keeps her extremely lightweight at around 110 lbs (50 kg) and a fine finish is achieved with epoxy and marine paints. She's ideal as a rowing boat, with rowlocks and oars and this boat even has a compact 2.5hp outboard on the transom. A rather neat 'door stop' arrangement prevents the rudder from getting damaged against the outboard shaft and propeller.

Inside the boat there's plenty of space. The Douglas fir mast is stepped on the forward buoyancy chamber, there's a midships thwart and an aft thwart for the helm. The gaff main



SALMO 11 AS SPECIFICATION

LOA: 11'0" (3.33m)

LWL: 10'4" (3.16m)

Beam: 4'10" (1.47m)

Draft: 7" (0.17m)

Sail area: 59 sq.ft (5.5m²)

Standard boat inc sail, oars and rowlocks: £5000

Top spec version as shown here: £5,600

Basic kit: £990

Plans: £80

