**BUYING OR BUILDING A HERON DINGHY**

New Herons may be purchased in both wood and foam sandwich glass construction. This guide is to help you in making the choice and also what to consider if buying a second hand boat.

The class is very helpful and advice will be available from many of the owners who will have built or restored boats. Visiting a Heron club will allow you to see the different boats.

The class has a good record of the boats built and although they may not be able to give a full history of the boat, they should be able to tell you the original date, builder and the original name of the boat.

**NEW BOATS:**

**WOOD:**

New boats in wood may be constructed either as the traditional framed construction or a stitch and glue method. Plans for the former are available from the Heron Dinghy Class Association insert link to plans order page and plans for the latter from Selway-Fisher <http://www.selway-fisher.com/Other1013.htm#HER> . The stitch and glue method is perhaps the easier and there are additional information sheets available from the association to help you finish the boat. The panels are cut out and wired together around bulkheads and when all is secure and the shape checked the seams are all taped with glass tape and epoxy. The panels are coated with epoxy and the boat finished with paint and varnish in the normal way. The framed construction is a little more complicated and time consuming but both methods are achievable by a competent wood worker. You will need a workshop but the average garage is adequate.

A kit of parts for the main hull (stitch & glue method) should hopefully be available from Jordan Boats. <http://jordanboats.co.uk/JB/index.htm>

Wooden boats may be home built by the owner or professionally built. Prices for the latter will vary but most small boat builders will be happy to quote for building a boat in either method.

**GRP:**

The class builder of Foam Sandwich Boats is Dave Butler <http://www.butlerboats.biz/heron.php>

Dave can offer both all foam sandwich boats and also a composite boat with a Foam Sandwich Hull and beautiful ply wood decks. He is happy to provide finished boats and with some work left to complete should you so choose and will be happy to discuss your requirements.

**SECOND HAND BOATS:**

As with all second hand things it is a case of “caveat emptor - buyer beware”. Herons often appear on eBay with excellent descriptions which may not match reality. There will be some boats which are obviously in good condition but others which may hide a multitude of problems and you need to be prepared for a project. You should visit the boat and see what you are buying before you commit!

**WOOD:**

Herons have been built since 1951. There are some very early boats which are still in good condition but many will have succumbed to age or will need major restoration. This can be an interesting and rewarding project, but not necessarily if you want to be out sailing without the need for many hours in the garage. Many Herons were home built either from plans or from kits supplied by Bell Woodworking. The standard of workmanship can vary greatly so examine the boats very carefully. There were also many professionally built boats by Bell Woodworking and many other small boat builders. Generally these will have been better constructed but it will depend on how the boats have been cared for over the years.

Examine the hull carefully and look for signs of rot or soft wood. It can all be replaced but it will take time and money! Many boats get left without attention, covers rot and water sits inside in the corners and rots the wood away. Rot is the biggest problem and do check centreline structure very carefully. Again it can be rebuilt but in many cases it is likely to be uneconomic. The amount of work needed will make it such that you would be better putting your time into a new stitch and glue boat either from plans or a kit.

The later stitch and glue epoxy ply wood boats should be in better condition because they are newer and the epoxy treatment seals the wood. However, again do check the condition because the boat may not have been well looked after.

There are various means of buoyancy used in the wood boats. The stitch and glue boats have buoyancy tanks as part of their design. The original wood framed boats used inflatable buoyancy bags which will need to be in good condition. It is acceptable to convert boats to various forms of built in buoyancy tanks and this will have been done on some wood framed boats.

**GRP & FOAM SANDWICH:**

The first GRP Heron was built in 1969 and there was a steady number built from then on. You will find many available and generally they will still be solid if possibly a little heavy with age. Repairs and rebuilds are very achievable with care and these boats will continue to give good service. Wood was also used in the construction and this must be inspected carefully.

GRP was developed into Foam Sandwich construction by Dave Butler to produce a stiff hull which was down to weight. The construction uses a sheet of high density foam sandwiched between two layers of GRP. These boats are relatively recent and should still all be in good condition assuming they have been looked after.

Do check all boats regardless of construction, where they have sat on trailers or trolleys. This is a place where problems can occur over time.

There are different rigs, sails and foils allowed in the Heron class so do read the information sheet on this subject as well.

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