

BOATYARD

Where are dragonflies born?



Jens Quorning

Some boat's stand out from the rest, and some boatyards do everything they can to add extra soul to them.

This is the case of Quorning Boats and Dragonfly trimarans and, to understand, you need to travel to Denmark to meet Jens Quorning.

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A HANDSHAKE in a boatyard and an honest gaze: the date is set. There was no point in confirming, following-up, beating about the bush: six months later, Jens Quorning met us at the boatyard, a short distance from the harbour of Skaerbaek, on the western coast of the Danish peninsula. We quickly understood that nothing would be left to chance and that his team had organised the time we would spend with him or on the Dragonfly 28 Performance perfectly. This calm reliability and concern for things well done are the foundation of Jens's work and the reputation of the boatyard. Besides, how can you distinguish the two? Jens literally grew up in these workshops and saw his father Børge work on the old band saw that the joiners still use today. He saw the buildings get bigger, he imagined new boats with Børge, fighting alongside him to establish Danish trimarans on the European and then international markets.

AROUND FIFTY BOATS A YEAR

And he succeeded. For Jens, this success could not just be measured in figures. The boatyard built about fifty boats per year and this was a good result, but what is more remarkable is the quality. The quality of the Dragonfly niche, of folding trimarans, of which the Danish are true masters, and of the boats themselves. They are often tarred with being expensive boats. But there is a reason for this. Right from the moment we set foot in the yard – people get up very early in Denmark, they have a 30-hour working week by law – we caught sight of an overturned central hull of a dragonfly 28. You could instantly see the complexity of its hull shape, to which can be added the considerable structural constraints of the arms.

These constraints are all the more important, because as the trimaran is designed to be folded, so a strong crossbeam cannot be relied upon. At the fore beam and the mast, the most critical parts, the forces are transferred to a structural bulkhead. There are two of them, and although the whole boat is built using a GRP foam sandwich, these are the only parts made by infusion. Why is this? Here again, the reason lies in the complex shape which Jens believes would make the laying up and infusion too time-consuming. After looking at the problem from all sides, he decided to continue to hand lay the sandwich laminate, using a vinyl ester resin mix and a high-quality GRP for the structural parts. Aware that his boat was already expensive, he didn't want to add to the price by making the process more complicated. He was not about to compromise on the stiffness of the platform either. The result is dazzling speeds and the joy and thrills of being on the water. Especially if you have an inshore wind, with a breeze that comes in sudden gusts, bringing you from 8 to 15 knots every time, with a delightful whistle and scarcely a worry in the world.

Another reason for the high cost is the moulds. 50 are required to build just one dragonfly 28! Knowing that a set of moulds can be used to build roughly 300 boats and that 180 trimarans in the dragonfly 28 series have been built in eight years, it is easier to understand how long the models in the Dragonfly range last. And the moulds must rotate. At Quorning, moulds are only used for as long as is necessary. The hulls are placed in sorts of casing, to prevent any distortion before the structure is assembled. What is the point of designing beautiful hulls if they leave the yard misshapen, if only by two millimetres? Remember that the Dragonfly's architect is Jens Quorning himself, assisted by his partner Steel Olsen.

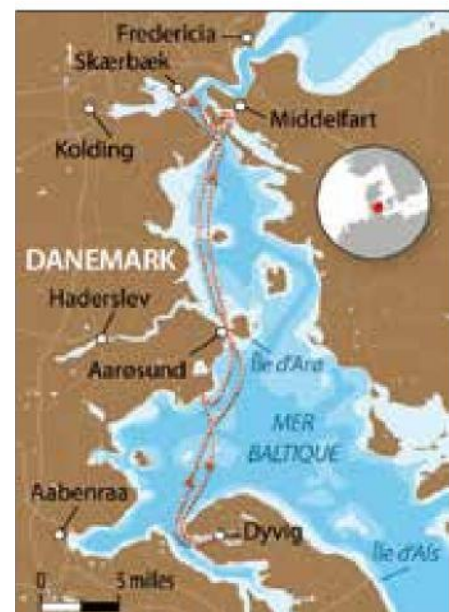


In the breeze, the trimaran structure takes considerable strain. It requires unique expertise to make it fold.

THE DRAGONFLY 29 PERF. IN FIGURES

Hull length: 8.75 m (28'). Beam: 4.99 m. (16') Draught: 2.54-6.50 m. (8'4" - 21'4") Displ.: 2,000 kg (with sails and engine). Area upwind: 64 m² (689 sq ft). Genoa: 21 m² (226 sq ft). Mainsail: 43 m² (463 sq ft). Mat.: GRP sandwich. Arch. : Jens Quorning/Steel Olsen. Const. : Quorning Boats. Starts at: €195,480. Price of boat tested: €239,360.

He qualified in naval architecture at school, but he validated it by working in the United States alongside Dick Newick. Naturally, when you live among trimarans from such an early age...



Jens Quorning is a racer, architect, and boat builder. He also turns out to be a long 15-knot tacks on the Dragonfly 28 Performance, the pleasures of anchoring programme.



▲ In the mast workshop, most of the stainless-steel fittings are made on site.



▲ The hulls are placed in casing to prevent any distortion while the structural parts and accommodation are installed.



▲ The backing mould inside is very thin. Everything that can be in-built is; even the washbasin in the head, to reduce weight.



▲ The moulded wood features are painted in a booth, and this is definitely worth writing home about.



▲ After mounting the arms, the installation of the centreboard is part of the finishing touches.

This unconventional background has given Jens unique expertise in folding trimarans. His proficiency in empirical drawing and construction places him beyond the reach of the competition. Last year, a Dragonfly 28 Performance was riddled with sensors for an academic project. "It was fascinating to see a lot of things confirmed, but honestly, we didn't learn anything." And you can believe this! Under sail, he tells us that the force measured at the primary block of the mainsheet tackle was actually 1.2 metric tons. This is logical. When the boat can no heel no further to pick up a puff of wind, the structure takes the strain.

THE STRUCTURE TAKES THE STRAIN

And it takes a hammering. This is what you say to yourself when you sail full and by in a steady 20-knot wind a choppy sea. The speedometer swings up and down between 12 and 17 knots, nothing creaks, nothing loosens: the boat is perfectly safe. Under the reefed mainsail, our Dragonfly 28 Performance has the sail plan of the Touring version, with an aluminium mast and the old floats with straight bows. There is a huge difference in terms of performance and programme. In fact, the huge majority of the Dragonflies are sold in the Performance version, with wave-piercing floats for the 25 and 28, including a carbon mast manufactured for the most part at the yard. The profiles (filament winding) arrive bare. They are fitted on site and only with stainless steel fittings. The mast foot and its sheaves are a remarkable fitting, as is the hound collar, naturally strengthened by a cross line. It is very fine work. The joinery can be found in the neighbouring workshop and you feel that it is cherished by and the pride of the boss. Admittedly, everything needs to be light, but there is no question of overlooking the warmth of varnished wood. After all, we are in Scandinavia! And Jens rightly believes in the importance of this philosophy, which remains that

of a cruiser, even if it often sails at above 10 knots. This high standard is translated by magnificent laminated parts, moulded at the yard. Everything is varnished ad hoc in the painting booth on site, sanded, and re-varnished, etc. The impact on the atmosphere on board is irrefutable, without making the design unwieldy, which remains relatively elementary. Another striking feature is the quality of the finish, the command of a thousand and one tricks on board that have been tried and tested and improved over the generations of Dragonflies. On the other hand, the extra berth assembled in the passageway between the soles of the saloon is a new feature and it demonstrates that the team continues to rack their brains to make the boats as modular and habitable as possible. The focus is on quality cruising. On board, you quickly realise that Jens enjoys leaving drift in his wake as much as he does cooking his expertly marinated steaks at anchor, with a glass of red wine in hand. French wine what is more, even though we anchored leeward of a Danish vineyard. Yes, they do have one. It is on the island of Als, at the back of this almost lake-like stretch of water, which we reached by following a small sandy passage. Denmark is incredible! And the incredible Dragonfly capable of offering such high-quality comfort, following a day at an average of 13 knots, and which on top of that can be easily transported. This extra feature is linked to the fact that the Dragonfly folds. It is disconcertingly easy. It takes barely 5 minutes once the boomspit is pulled alongside the edge. Folding backwards, the floats lift the central hull a few centimetres and the boat becomes a sort very narrow pseudo-catamaran. Its initial stability seems very good, but you would definitely not sail in this configuration.



“ Composite workshop. A huge air extractor constantly renews the air. ”

THE QUORNING BOATSSAGA

1967



Family photo in front of the latest boat, the Trident 28, which is also the first boat built by Quorning Boats. However, Børge Quorning, Jens's father, had already designed and built others in Vancouver, in the early sixties.

1972

Børge builds a 16-foot trimaran, lashed together, for his young sons Eric and Jens. The boys call it the Dragonfly, without realising that the name would stick. At the time Jes is 10 years old and tacks for the first time on this trimaran.



1980



The Dragonfly 25 is not yet a folding model, but it is the first trimaran to be commercially named this way. Børge and Jens build it to occupy themselves while temporarily laid off, for the simple reason that there are no orders! Difficult times for the boatyard...

1985

The Quorning brothers excel in the "Round Britain & Ireland Race". Eric comes first on an optimized Dragonfly 25, Jens comes second on his prototype, *Quick Step III*, with a rotating wing mast. Thanks to these wins, people started to talk about Dragonflies in Europe



1989



The Dragonfly 800 MKIII, from the Dragonfly 800 launched in 1987, is the first folding trimaran of the range. Its success helped get the boatyard off the ground. Paul Elvström (photo below) even ordered one!

2017...

Jens has been managing Quorning Boats since 1995 and is celebrating its 50th anniversary. The success of the range has increased since the 2000s. The launch of the Dragonfly 25 in 2015, and then the 28 Performance in 2016, modernises the line with wave-piercing floats.





▲ Centreboard and rudder lifted, you can place the bow on the sand without a

The boatyard abandoned the wing mast to guarantee stability: the profiles offered are all round. Overnight, the crew divided itself among the aft cabin berth, which can be accessed by sliding the companionway sideways (it remains usable), the open cabin, just forward of the head and the two berths in the saloon already mentioned. They are all very comfortable.

REAL CRUISERS A JOY TO LIVE ABOARD

Good quality berths, a real galley with an astonishingly large fridge, marine toilet with washbasin, we are definitely on a real cruiser. We used the spinnaker to get back to the boatyard. It was an opportunity to appraise the clever barber-auler system which can be used to locate the genoa position off-centre, but also to secure the spinnaker almost anywhere you want, within the limit of the boat's beam! The helmsman, comfortably supported on raised benches, steers the boat with two fingers on the tiller extension, even a high speed, thanks to the cleverly compensated rudder.

Such fun! Naturally, we were sorry to lash up the spinnaker in its sock before stowing it away in a float at the end of this short trip, 30 miles there, 30 miles back, that represented five hours of sailing in all. Naturally, at nearly 13 knots on average, the playing field is not the same. What would it take for it to be worthy of the title of the ideal boat? Some people have sought this all their lives. After 48 hours with Jens Quorning, you feel like you have seen the light. If you really had to temper your enthusiasm, you would naturally talk about the price, even if it seems technically justified. You could also talk about the design, particularly of the Dragonfly 32 and 35, which are a little dated with their round stern. But the dependability of the boatyard, its experience – 50 years of know-how 1,100 trimarans built – and the resulting intelligent design are beyond reproach. You can also see from the way Jens Quorning sails that he is a man who looks ahead constantly and who knows what he is doing. You can count on him to maintain his lead. His dragonflies will continue to swirl around sailing grounds in Europe.

HelloMulti – a passion for trimarans!

The change was announced at the Nautic boat show in Paris, where Charlotte Matthijsse and Julien Binard exhibited the Dragonfly 28 Performance. This couple from Vendée, formerly employed at Bénéteau, created the company HelloMulti, which now imports Dragonfly trimarans, continuing the work of Jean-Marc Le Goueff (Multisailing), who acted on their behalf for twenty years or so. Charlotte and Julien are both very enthusiastic and backed by sound experience. They fell in love with the Dragonfly and want to establish a service centre in the long term, providing servicing and a winter refit exclusively for Danish trimarans. What is more, they have also recently become the sole distributors for Neel trimarans. Learn more: www.dragonfly-france.com for Dragonfly trimaran imports, and www.hellomulti.com about the company.



▲ In front of the head, you have access to the open cabin where you can isolate yourself.



▲ The sideways sliding companionway makes it much easier to access the aft "cabin".



Pratique The drawer fridge to the right of the companionways is perfect.



Pratique At night, berths unfold on either side of the table.

DRAGONFLY 28 PERFORMANCE GUIDED TOUR



▲ To port side, you have the raised saloon with a sea view, to starboard the passageway, which is closed off if you use the whole table. The panel running length of the central unit is folded down to so that you can rest your feet.



Pratique When the boat is folded, you can move about without railings.



Pratique Downwind, the tackle to leeward hooked onto the clew tautens the leech and acts as a preventer providing safety.



Pratique The rigging is brought back into the coaming, under the lifting seats.



Pratique The engine control (hydraulic and gas) is below the locker hatch.



Pratique Clever and well-finished storage in front of the hob.