



When renovation turns into restoration and then becomes a total rebuild, a boat of lesser character might never have seen the light again. But not *White Mouse II*. Tony Jones traces her progress back to pristine condition

True

A survivor's story



Main photo by Lester McCarthy; above photo by Oli Tennent

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Readers who recognise the boat in these photos either have a very long memory or access to extensive MBY archives.

White Mouse II has been featured before in the magazine – in July 1963, soon after she was launched at Dartmouth by builders Philip & Son; she was intended to be the first of a standard class, with bigger and smaller sisters to follow. The craftsmen who worked on her could never have imagined that nearly 35 years later she would be in as good, if not better, condition than new.

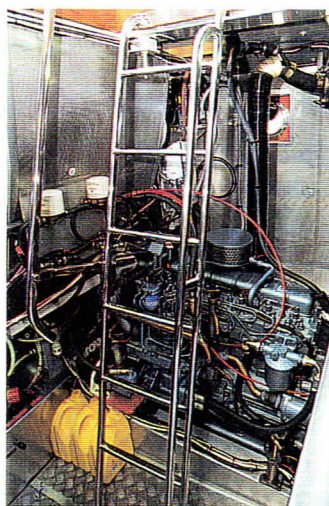
Her original owner was George White, a successful builder. Although her history since then is patchy, at least the initial registration documents have survived.

Eight years ago, David Glass discovered her in Antibes, and in the autumn of 1989 bought her from the second owner. She was in sound condition, and with a bit of tidying up looked as if she would make an elegant and unusual family cruiser.

But before work could start, her new owner had to arrange to get her back to England. Unfortunately, the professional skipper employed to take her



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Above: attention to detail in the engine room reflects the high quality of workmanship in the boat's restoration. Below: the galley has all the mod cons, including a microwave oven, freezer and washer-dryer, that would do credit to any modern motor yacht. Photos by Oli Tennent.

home ran into trouble halfway through the journey. On his inland route through France, an engine failed 20 miles outside Dijon, so it was decided that *White Mouse* should be laid up there for the winter.

Because of the logistics of getting her into running order for the spring, it was decided to complete the journey by road. But likely close encounters with several low bridges meant that her wheelhouse would have to be dismantled as well. By the time she arrived back in England in November 1990, she needed a bit more than a quick tidy up.

A change of plan

White Mouse was entrusted to the care of meticulous boatbuilder and restorer Ken Brown at Camber. That winter he started what he hoped would be a modest refit and engine rebuild.

But as work progressed and money was spent, the list of jobs became longer and longer instead of diminishing, and the finishing date retreated further and further into the following season.

The only way to solve the problem was to accept the inevitable: as the bills would eventually add up to the cost of a full restoration, that's what she should have.

And whereas moving forward had, at times, been slow and expensive, going backwards proved quick and easy. In a few weeks, everything that had gone in had come out again, and *White Mouse* was nothing more than a bare hull, a pile

of timber, a pair of sorry-looking engines, and a collection of assorted fittings. The real work now began in earnest.

But what form should the rebuild take? With classic cars, strict authenticity is vital if the value is to be maintained, but with boats it isn't so crucial.

It was decided that the original interior layout, with twin bunks in an aft stateroom that had no ensuite facilities, a basic galley and considerable space taken up by crew quarters forward, was not ideal for a family cruising boat.

At this stage it was decided that as the Glass family business involved making executive aviation and marine interiors, the boat should be used as a floating example of the company's work.

In this way, she could at least partly justify the loving care and attention, not to mention the expense, about to be lavished on her.

Inside information

The final result undoubtedly justified the many hours of heated debate, discarded sketches and abandoned ideas which preceded her triumphant reincarnation.

Her wheelhouse is now much larger internally than before. This was done without changing her external profile because the aft bulkhead was originally set well forward, providing a sort of open shelter behind the enclosed structure.

Moving it as far aft as possible has provided enough room for the wheelhouse to become a true deck saloon; a deep-buttoned settee in imperial blue leather faces a teak dining table, and the reversible backrest of the matching helm seat is the final practical touch.

Descending aft – the companionway is on the extreme starboard side, not



White Mouse II's redesigned helm console, with modern plotter, autopilot and fluxgate compass. Photo by Oli Tennent.

down the middle, as it used to be – the new layout includes a much bigger aft cabin with a large double bed, twin bunks in the guest cabin ahead of it and shared ensuite shower/toilet to port.

Forward of the wheelhouse there is now an open-plan dining and socialising area with a luxurious curved settee in place of the old, angular dinette to port. Along the starboard side, an immaculate sideboard unit is fitted with stowage.

The high sole, combined with generous windows in the coachroof, make this part of the vessel particularly light and airy. The space below is taken up with fuel and water tanks, forward of the machinery space.

A further central companionway leads down to the forecabin area where the layout differs most noticeably from the original plans.

A half-height bulkhead in the dining area and a coachroof that extends well forward mean that light floods into the port side galley from the forward-facing windows above.

The facilities include a Bosch combination microwave oven, sink macerator, built-in freezer and washer-dryer. To starboard is the day heads▷

Type
Philips 53 TSMY
Built
1963
LOA
56ft 6in (17.22m)
Beam
14ft 6in (4.42m)
Draught
4ft 6in (1.37m)
Displacement
36 tons approx
Fuel capacity
800gal (3,637lt)
Water capacity
400gal (1,818lt)



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and shower compartment, while the two forecabins have now been combined into a single guest cabin with a central double berth.

Home comforts include four 16,000 Btu air conditioning units, an Eberspächer 5kW heater, a ten-stack CD player and TV/video, plus an auto-paging Sealarm security system.

A practical approach

As well as a new interior, *White Mouse* has benefited from several other clever modifications and additions that don't detract from her period charm.

The tender, sitting in chocks atop the aft coachroof, was originally deployed by davits on the starboard side.

This would be fine with a crew to lower it, but more practical is the ingenious new crane powered by a Landrover winch concealed in the engineroom and controlled by a pigtail remote handset.

The Zodiac 280 RIB is also better than the original clinker dinghy; and a radio-controlled passerelle beats a heavy wooden gangway every time when berthing stern-to in Riviera marinas.

These photos give some idea of the standard

achieved by Ken Brown and the company craftsmen over the five years it took to rebuild *White Mouse*.

Regardless of where you look – in the bilges, on deck, around the engineroom or throughout the sumptuous interior – the workmanship is universally excellent.

The engineering specification includes a powerful Victron charger/inverter, a 14kW Onan genset, Vosper Thornycroft Naiad stabilisers, and a comprehensive Hi-Fog fire detection and suppression system.

Nothing has been spared in making this vessel a practical ship. Attention to detail is thorough, such as with the built-in winch for lifting the batteries from the engineroom.

Her engines, now reconditioned, are the original 105hp Perkins 6.354 diesels, looking smarter than when new. In 1963 she could reach a maximum of ten knots, limited, of course, by her waterline length of 47ft 6in (14.48m).

The contemporary report credits her with a cruising range of 800 miles on a tank capacity of 370gal, but doesn't state at what speed that was possible.

Her fuel capacity is now increased to 800gal, giving a



White Mouse II features plenty of room for dining and entertaining, in the deck saloon, above left, and the main saloon, right. Photos by Oli Tennent

range of no less than 1,500 miles at about nine knots. A total of 1,500 miles at a slightly reduced speed of eight knots means nearly 190 hours continuous running, or eight days at sea – that's serious cruising!

The lot of *White Mouse's* helmsman is a happy one, in any case. The redesigned console houses an Autohelm Navcentre, ST700 autopilot, fluxgate compass, and Furuno R8000 series radar. Flo-Scan fuel flow meters make sure the fuel is being used efficiently.

A Yeoman chart plotter and Philips GPS at the full-size chart table to port allow the navigator to work comfortably and confidently. Communications equipment includes VHF, SSB and cellphone.

Helming *White Mouse* is a thoroughly satisfying experience, although obviously quite different to a modern planing motor cruiser. In many ways she

feels like a proper little ship – good and solid in the water, with excellent directional stability.

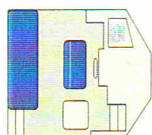
But spin that big wheel and her willingness to change direction on demand is surprising. The turning momentum of her 35 tons means that a degree of judgement and anticipation is needed to straighten out smoothly on a new course.

Berthing is best done in the time-honoured fashion of 'easy does it': with a vessel like this you don't roar up to the dock, throw the gear levers into astern and hope to stop on a sixpence.

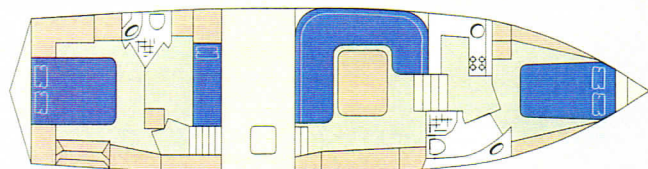
The future?

White Mouse is now set fair for another 30 years' successful cruising, but it probably won't be in the hands of those who masterminded her rebirth because they intend to move on to other projects.

Her new owner will need to be a particular type of person who has a penchant for classic post-war displacement craft, and an eye for that rare mix of boat building, engineering and design that spells sheer unadulterated quality. □



Accommodation plan – 1997



Side profile

