



G A U N T L

Saluki was built in 1946. She has been owned by Nick and June Butler since 1961. LOA 40ft 6in (12.34m), LWL 32ft 6in (9.91m), beam 9ft 7in (2.92m), draught 5ft 9in (1.75m), sail area 672 sq ft (62.43 sq m).



E T S

The Gauntlet class ranged from compact 6-tonners to blue-water 26-tonners.

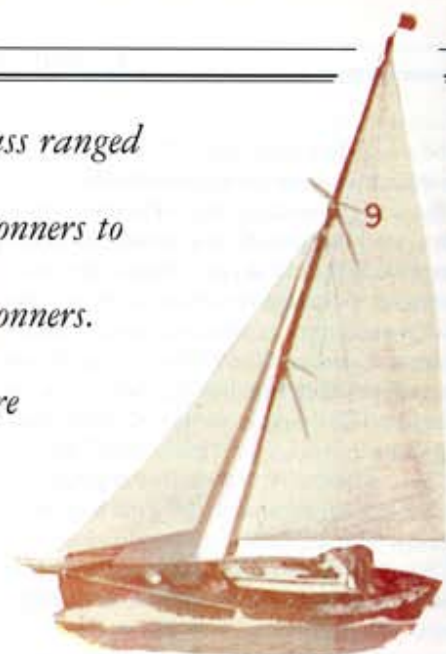
Whether they were used to race

around the cans

or to disappear

over the horizon, they were sound, solid boats.

Jim Hazel wrote to us of his fondness for the class and Robin Gates supplied the photographs.



It was 1934. In a yard in Lymington, Hampshire, H G May, not a man to be trifled with when someone questioned his designs, built a boat to settle a grudge. A new class had been born.

The builders of the Gauntlet class were the Berthon Boat Co Ltd. There had been a boatyard on their site at Lymington since the 1800s, the largest vessel built being the *Fortuna* of some 377 tons, when the yard was known as Inman's.

Inman's yard became the Berthon Boat Company when the Reverend E Berthon, who had begun construction of a range of collapsible boats at Romsey in Hampshire in the late 1850s, found it necessary to move to larger premises to extend the range. The yard's activities were transferred to the Inman site at Lymington, allowing Berthon to extend the range to 30' (9.14m).

In the early 1900s Morgan Giles & May were in partnership as boatbuilders at Hythe on Southampton Water. Here they constructed some fine craft, including hulls for a number of seaplane hulls. In fact the construction of seaplanes supported a number of companies in the locality, one of which was later to achieve fame as the maker of the Schneider Trophy-winning Supermarine. As can often happen in partnerships, the parties involved felt an urge to go their separate ways. The firm of Morgan Giles & May split up in 1917: Morgan Giles took his expertise to Teignmouth, Devon where he developed a successful yacht-building yard, and H G May moved a few miles westward to Lymington to become the owner of the Berthon Boat Company.

The boatyard at Lymington soon established a good reputation for the construction of cruising yachts, both power and sail. Yachts were the products of designers during that era, and boatyards only followed directions. However, most boatyard owners have a yen to develop their own ideas. The first H G May design to bear fruit was the West Solent One Design in the early 1920s. This was a popular concept, as proved by their building more than thirty of them.

Any good boatyard owner realises that while he may capitalise on a successful enterprise such as the West Solent class, he must look ahead to a developing market. Hence the thought of a well-founded cruising boat built on the batch production principle was considered

to be a viable proposition. The idea led to the introduction of the Gauntlet class.

The design concept of the Gauntlet class was a sea-kindly craft with moderate overhangs and draught, a fairly heavy displacement and an easily handled sail plan. The boat would carry four to five people in comfort. Good auxiliary power, capable of powering the boat against foul tides, was to be offered. The original quoted price was one thousand guineas, including ground tackle and sails. Even though the price did not include an engine, in 1934 the boat was considered to be extremely good value.

The quality of materials used and the methods of construction were of a high standard. Planking was pitch pine on grown oak frames. Through some clever design the ventilation was maintained in this area. A substantial bilge stringer was also a feature of the construction. The lower portion of the stem was carried well aft over the ballast keel to incorporate the mast step, thus preventing the garboard strakes from working under mast compression.

The introduction of a new class generally stimulates prospective owners into requiring something a little different from the standard, especially in accommodation layout. It is a fine recipe for originality.

The choice of the class name is a story typical of the period between the wars. H G May was approached by a potential client to design a boat suitable for cruising and offshore racing. After inspecting the finished design the client apparently had second thoughts about accepting the proposal. He approached another designer and requested an alternative design based on the same requirements. After looking at both designs, the client chose the boat from May's competitor.

H G May was, to say the least, somewhat annoyed, as considerable effort had been expended to produce a good design. He had great belief in the design and, in his words, 'threw down the gauntlet' by having the yard build his design for himself, and challenging his erstwhile client to a match race, one new boat against the other.

H G May's confidence in his design was fully vindicated by his winning the race comfortably, thereby establishing in one fell swoop the potential of his Gauntlet against the latest design thoughts of his competitors. With just a touch of humour the first boat of the smallest Gauntlet class, launched in 1937, was aptly named *Mitten*.

It is interesting to note that the aft galley/toilet arrangement was quite popular and not a post-war development as is often thought. Likewise the aft cabin arrangement was incorporated in the original Gauntlet. However the forward galley arrangement was also popular, as before



Top left: The radiused top corners of the windows in Saluki's doghouse.

Middle left: Saluki's mast mounted main and headsail halyard winches.

Left: Forward hinged, box forehatch and laid side deck of Saluki.

Above: Dr Peter Burnett's Nausikaa, acquired through Captain O M Watts in 1953 for £1,800.

Right: Nick Butler takes Saluki down the Hamble river.

Below right: Wind vane steering gear fitted to Nausikaa. Note the permanent boom gallows in the background.





Left: Nausikaa's liferaft stowage dominates the yacht's foredeck, and holds an Avon Redstart and the air bottles to inflate it. The deck prism lights the heads. The pitch pine deck is covered with Trakmark.

Right: Saluki's steering compass is mounted right next to the engine control panel. To limit fluctuations in deviation, it would be advisable to remove the compass from varying electrical influence.



SAIL PLAN &
ACCOMMODATION
OF THE 8-TON
GAUNTLET



Upper left: Saluki's boom crutch is fitted at the forward end of the cockpit.

Middle left: Saluki's tiny galley viewed through the main companion which is closed by a pair of removable teak doors. A hinged sill prevents water on the cockpit sole finding its way below.

Left: Saluki's homely and well cared-for interior. Note the barograph and the diesel-fuelled cabin heater against the tiled section of the forward bulkhead.

World War II a paid hand was a common yachting accessory.

The introduction of the Gauntlet class to the yachting fraternity aroused considerable interest, accompanied as it was by the successful race. No one was more pleased and less surprised than H G May as larger craft based on the original theme were commissioned. As early as 1935 24- and 26-ton versions were produced, followed in 1936 and 1937 by two 17-ton and two 18-ton craft which had slightly longer overhangs. In 1938 two 8-ton Gauntlets were built, followed in 1939 by a 14-ton version.

After the war a number of 14-ton Gauntlets were constructed; then, in 1950, a new version of the 8-ton Gauntlet was introduced and six were launched, all with iron ballast keels. A feature of the post-war 8-ton and 14-ton Gauntlet was the introduction of a doghouse. This provided a sheltered sitting position, enlarging an otherwise small cockpit. Non-participating members of the crew would often use the doghouse to observe some of the action.

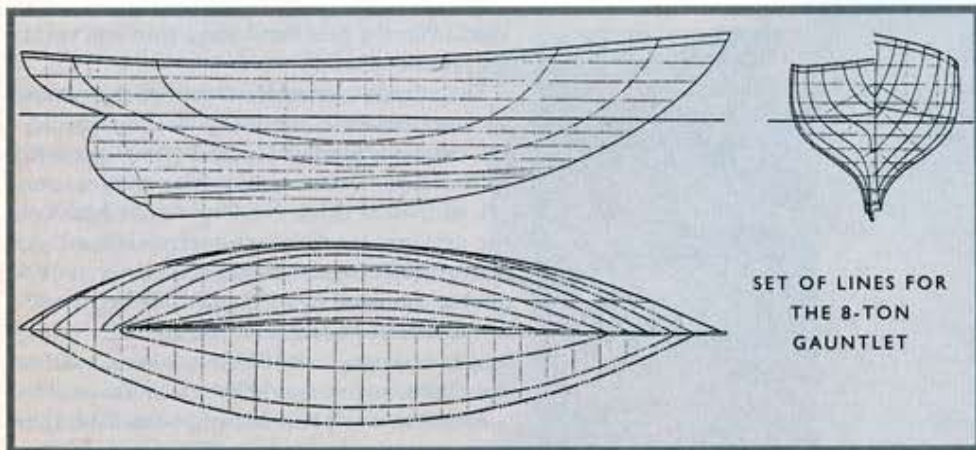
Initially Gauntlets were intended to be cutter-rigged, the 12-ton version having a short bowsprit and bumpkin, while the larger craft had all inboard rigs. The sloop-rigged 8-ton and 14-ton Gauntlets were the exception. These boats had probably the ultimate in wooden watertight forehatches.

Any good marketing scheme works to combine advertising with word-of-mouth promotion. Therefore it was not surprising that a number of Gauntlets took part in RORC events. They achieved a number of successes, especially in heavy weather, confirming both their sea-kindliness and their sail-carrying power.

H G May always endeavoured to have a Gauntlet available to race at Cowes Week, and popular history records that he was a disappointed man if he returned from Cowes still owning the boat. However this policy became well known to the yachting fraternity, and in 1936 so much pressure was applied by a prospective purchaser that May was reluctantly 'forced' to sell his Cowes Week boat only four weeks before the event. This could have resulted in his having no boat for Cowes Week, an unimaginable situation for the Cowes veteran.

However, through the unsung superhuman efforts of the Berthon Yard's shipwrights a replacement vessel was built in time to compete at the Week. This boat, the one shown at the head of this article on page 23, was named *Greengage*, and was possibly the best known of the class. In spite of the speedy construction she was built to a high standard. Delayed proof of this was that upon being sold in 1949, no work was required following the purchase survey.

Construction of the larger craft varied a little from the specification of the original Gauntlet, a number being planked in teak and incorporating one steam bent frame of American rock elm in between each grown oak frame. A testimony to the standard of construction is that the *Royal Charles*, when last seen by the author in 1985,



SET OF LINES FOR THE 8-TON GAUNTLET

still retained varnished topsides in immaculate condition. In the early 1950s building costs were rising steeply and clients preferred something that was unique and personal to them. This desire proved to be undoing of the design, and the last of the Gauntlets, an 8-tonner, was constructed in 1951. The end of the Gauntlet class wasn't the end of the Berthon Boat Company, fortunately, as they have prospered and diversified into many enterprises.

Reference to the list at the end of this article reveals that nine Gauntlets were built in 1936. This was the year which saw the launch of the largest boats of the class. Given the economic climate of the time, this indicates a successful sales programme combined with high productivity.

Many owners had long lasting relationships with the Gauntlets, and none have lasted longer than that of Dr Peter Burnett and his 8-tonner *Nausikaa*, who have now been sailing together for the past 38 years. The Hon Clive Pearson owned the 8-ton *Mitten* before World War II and subsequently the 14-ton *Cloud In The Sun*.

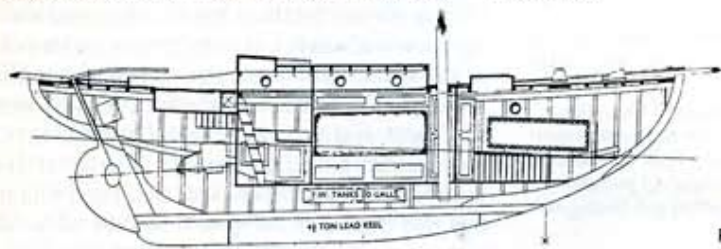
Possibly the most interesting love story is that of the naturalist Oliver Hook's relationship with his Gauntlets. He commissioned *Osprey* in 1936. After selling her shortly thereafter he was driven to renew his flirtation by having *Grey Seal* built in 1938. In the 1950s he sold her and she was converted to a sloop rig. However, the course of true love is strong. Stricken by what we may think of as

rigging-guilt, he persuaded the new owner to sell her back to him. He wasted no time in having his beloved *Grey Seal* restored to the original cutter rig.

A number of Gauntlets were re-engined after World War II with the new generation of small efficient diesels. Possibly the most interesting was the installation of one of the first 20hp Enfield air-cooled diesels into *Lentune*. The surplus hot air from this unit was ducted around the craft to multi-directional 'Punkah Louvre' vents, thus providing the first central heating of this type.

In the 1950s the 26-ton Gauntlet *Gael-Na-Mara* had an elegant doghouse of teak fitted by Berthon. It had large radiused corner posts which initially required a 9" (229mm) square cross section to provide an adequate rabbet and corner radius. The top of the side coaming also had a curve fore and aft. This, in conjunction with the crop of the beams, required very skilled craftsmanship, especially for the construction of the sliding hatch. The joiners were quite rightly proud of the much-admired finished product. Miles Wyatt was obviously impressed, for subsequently a similar doghouse was fitted to his boat *Bloodhound*. ☞

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance given in the preparation of this article by W R (Bob) Meath, former chief draughtsman of the Berthon Boat Company, and to Joe Blatchford of the same company. Thanks must also be extended to a number of present Gauntlet owners who assisted in providing photographs.



ACCOMMODATION PLAN OF THE 12-TON GAUNTLET



BOATS OF THE GAUNTLET CLASS

The list below shows the names of the various Gauntlets built, their year of construction and the first registered owner. H G May commissioned a number of Gauntlets that were sold either before launching or shortly afterwards. In these cases the second owner and the name of the boat at that time are given.

8 TON (PRE WAR)

1937 MITTEN	Hon Clive Pearson
1939 NAUSIKAA	Col JJ Crosthwaite-Eyre

8 TON (POST WAR)

1950 MIRANDA OF LLYN	O Stonehouse
1951 GAY WIND	W G Farrer
1951 BARDU	Maj J Wilkinson

12 TON

1934 GAUNTLET	Lord Churston
1935 GREENGAGE	F A Pitel
1935 HEATHER	H W Goodwin
1935 RED GAUNTLET	K A E Moore
1935 SUSSEX MAID	Maj P Garret
1936 GUIDING LIGHT	Earl of Normanton
1936 MURESSE	Lt Col F I Ford
1936 OSPREY	O Hook
1936 PAVIROMA	F Paget Bowyer
1936 PERIGRINE	Maj C H C Illingworth
1937 BORREGO	A M Symington
1937 LENTUNE	G D Russell OBE
1937 SINLOO	T N Clouston
1938 GREY SEAL	O Hook
1938 MORNING FLIGHT	D N Letts
1939 TIGER C	Capt P G Back

14 TON

1939 PEGASA	Sir Roy Feddon
1946 DEHRA	H D Brown
1946 SALUKI	Maj W Martineau MC
1947 CLOUD IN THE SUN	Hon Clive Pearson
1947 GEMINI	J K N Davis
1947 MEHALAH	G P Pattinson
1948 GAY GAUNTLET	Lt Col E J H Merry
1949 TORRIDGE	G D Lock
1949 EILA ROSE	S Bourne
1950 ST GEORGE	H F Fleming

17 TON

1936 COCH-Y-BONDHU	C H B Wilson MC RFC
1936 SYRINX	H R Illiffe

18 TON

1937 JENNY SPINNER	K Moore
1937 NEON	F A Keeling
1938 ROYAL CHARLES	M de B Monk

24 TON

1936 MAIDEN LIGHT	D D Capper
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26 TON

1936 GAEL-NA-MARA	F J G McLoughlin
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