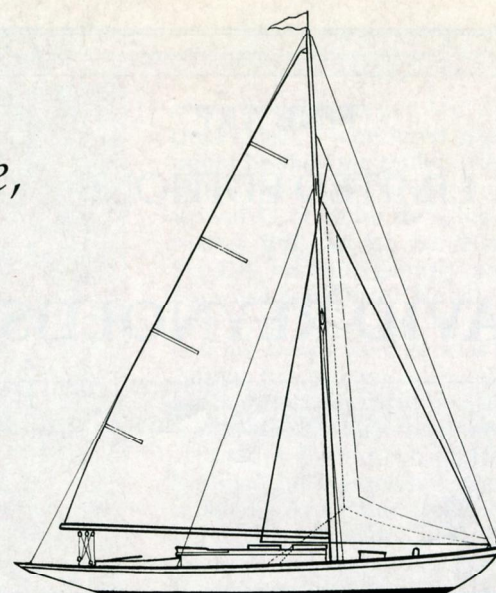


Ever on the look-out for style and elegance, Peter Phelan recently found a yacht far from her native Scotland.



VANDA

A BOAT FOR UNCLE ALFRED



Photographs by the author.

Naval architects, in common with writers, composers and painters, usually develop a distinctive style of their own, one which renders their work instantly recognisable. The late yacht designer, Alfred Mylne, was no exception: his hallmarks were speed, power and elegance. And with her fine lines, deep draught, narrow beam and long overhangs, the 41' (12.5m) sloop *Vanda* is typical of his designs.

Built in 1932 at Bute Slip Dock on Mylne's native west coast of Scotland, she was originally designed for his own use and to replace the family boat *Medea*, a Clyde 30. However, shortly after she was completed, "Old Uncle Alfred" – the affectionate name distinguished him from his nephew who later took over the family business – was approached by an enthusiastic purchaser and he reluctantly sold her. Having recently sailed *Vanda* I can well understand why she proved so tempting, for she is remarkably fast and, not surprisingly, throughout her life she has proved a consistent winner of races in and around Scottish waters.

Like so many older boats, *Vanda* has been modified to some extent by successive owners over the years but fortunately she still retains much of her original charm and the sparkling performance for which she is renowned. Her present owner, Neale Edwards, is an enthusiastic sailing man who obviously derives enormous pleasure from his yacht and thus he has taken a keen interest in tracing her history. He showed me a couple of fine black & white photographs taken by Ian Gilchrist of *Vanda* racing in the early 30s. They show her without the doghouse which was added at a later date and I could also see that she originally sported a bumkin and a large $\frac{3}{4}$ rig with twin spreaders and jumper struts. This lofty arrangement was subsequently changed in 1939 when the size of the mainsail was reduced and that of the foretriangle

Right: The dark varnished mahogany contrasts with the white upholstery and deck-head.

Below right: The original layout had no furniture up forward and was intended for sail stowage. Today the area contains a small heads and two single berths.

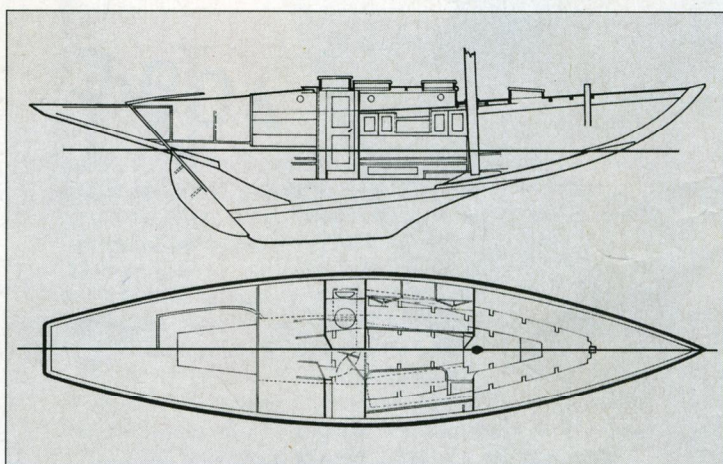
increased slightly; alterations which involved removing the bumkin and shortening the boom. Today she has modern metal spars which were fitted by Pat Feeney and Sam Cowan who owned *Vanda* from 1978 to 1984. They campaigned her seriously throughout that time and won many races. They were also responsible for some modifications below decks, replacing the earlier engine with a Faryman 24hp diesel and installing the accommodation arrangement that she has today.

With only 9'4" (2.8m) beam, she is decidedly narrow-gutted and with those fine lines, the accommodation below is, by modern standards, understandably cramped for a boat of 41' (12.5m) LOA. The area forward of the mast was originally devoid of furniture and intended for sail stowage, but an additional bulkhead has been installed some 3' (0.9m) forward of the main one to provide a small self-contained heads with a low storage unit opposite and a

SPECIFICATION

LOA:	41' (12.5m)	Port of registry:	Greenock
LWL:	34' (10.4m)	Designer:	A Mylne & Co
Draught:	6'6" (1.98m)	Builder:	Bute Slip Dock
Beam:	9'4" (2.8m)	Built:	1932

Engine: Faryman 24hp diesel



separate forecabin. This has single berths port and starboard with stowage space beneath them, but headroom under the foredeck is limited and the bunks are really only suitable for occasional use.

With joinerywork of varnished mahogany throughout, the saloon could so easily have been rather dark but upholstery in white vinyl and a white enamelled deck-head have ensured that the cabin has a light and airy feel. The saloon berths are set well inboard towards the centre-line of the boat and, as a result, in addition to lockers under the bunks, there are a series of three lockers along the cabin walls above the settee backrests on either side and a wide shelf – the top of which lifts to allow access to further lockers below – and thus stowage space is generally good. The folding saloon table is mounted amidships but with such a narrow cabin sole, movement around it is difficult and Neale often dispenses with the table altogether and leaves it in port.

Moving aft and into the area beneath the doghouse, there are a couple of half bulkheads separating the saloon from the remainder of the accommodation. Mounted against the porthand bulkhead facing aft, is a stainless steel gas cooker with two burners, a grill and an oven. Immediately adjacent, under the ship's sides and in the spot originally occupied by the heads, is the galley area. This is

Left: Laid teak and a minimum of modern hardware keep *Vanda's* wide decks uncluttered even around the mast.

a modest affair with a stainless steel sink and some simple stowage arrangements but it has proved perfectly adequate for the sort of sailing Neale enjoys. Opposite, to starboard, is a small hanging locker and a series of vertical shelves suitable for stowing odds and ends. Finally, there are identical quarter berths port and starboard.

Of course, the original design made no provision for an auxiliary engine and so, unfortunately, the large engine casing immediately inside the companionway intrudes a little upon the accommodation. However, it serves as a useful platform on which to mount the portable chart table! This is a purpose built affair, complete with stowage space for charts, which sits neatly on the engine box when required and stows away in the adjacent quarter berth at other times. With the installation of an engine and the addition of the doghouse, which incidentally provides well over 6' (1.8m) headroom in this area, the companionway door was offset slightly to starboard and today the ship's electrics, echo-sounder and other navigational aids are neatly mounted to port on the main aft bulkhead and are therefore readily to hand.

Up on deck, the cockpit is surrounded by low coamings neatly curving into the cabin sides forward in the style so often adopted by the late Dr Harrison Butler. There are no bench seats as such and no lockers other than a small hatch giving access to the lazarette; the crew effectively sit on the teak laid deck with their feet in a well, the sides of which carry canvas sheet stowage

pockets. Nevertheless, it is a comfortable perch, visibility all round is excellent and the canvas dodgers offer a degree of protection from the elements. Having sailed *Vanda* in near perfect conditions – sheltered water, warm sunshine and 12-15 knots of wind (yes, I do get such days occasionally!) – I can understand Neale's enthusiasm for the boat. She is delightfully well balanced, easy on the helm and, even in such light conditions, quickly achieved over 7 knots on anything other than a dead run before the wind. And for the photo session, Neale sailed her single-handed, proving that

despite her size she is very easily handled.

After spending all her life in Scottish waters, *Vanda* is now based at Mylor in the Fal Estuary in Cornwall and Neale makes the trip west from London to sail her as often as time allows. I was surprised however, to learn that she was the first boat he has owned and wondered what had attracted him to her. Apparently, having sailed as a child aboard a ketch of similar type owned by his godfather and later on 30 Square Metres in the Baltic whilst serving in the

armed forces, when the time came for him to devote a little leisure time to his beloved vintage cars and to buy a boat, he had a very clear idea of the sort of vessel he wanted. After three years of ownership, had he thought of selling her, I wondered? "Yes, occasionally, but I don't think I shall; she has all the qualities I like in a sailing boat," he replied. "Mind you, it would be nice to have something a little bigger." Familiar words!

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consistent winner
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