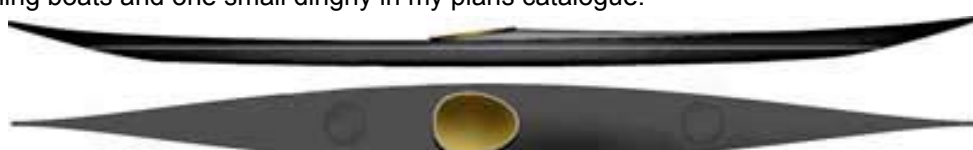


Björn Thomasson Design – small boats in Sweden

I discovered the kayak as an unsurpassed tool to outdoor life and exercise some ten years ago. Before that I was mostly into sailing boats – building and using. My first kayak was designed and built in pursuit of less complicated ways to spend time on the sea – and because what was then available on the market did not seem to fill the ticket. The kayak worked as planned. The second, a year later, was such a success that I started to get requests for plans and a building manual. Now, some years and a number of kayaks later, I have 15 kayaks, 8 canoes, 2 sailing boats and one small dinghy in my plans catalogue.



The craft as well as the building techniques have evolved quite a bit since I started - as a consequence of my own building but also from stimulating conversations with many of the 2800 (Feb. 2006) amateur builders who have built from my plans.



From the start I have focused on simplifying the strip building methods as far as possible, to provide the best conditions for the amateur builder to produce a functional and beautiful boat in reasonable amount of time, but also to minimize building time for the professional boat builder – a first time builder usually takes between 100 and 150 hours on a kayak project and the pro needs less than 40 hours. This Norwegian builder spent some time on the internet before choosing my Nomad:

“I have read [three well known American manuals] and get sweaty all over at the complication of things! It is a sheer pleasure to know that your minimalistic and functional approach really works. Scandinavians do it simpler!”

I have also strived to develop kayaks and canoes that are better than what is commercially available - lighter, stronger and faster – by focusing aggressively on those qualities in wood that plastics cannot match.



A mail from an enthusiastic American builder:

“You have designed a spectacular boat [Black Pearl], and have a wonderful web-site. I really find this fascinating stuff! I will definitely have to photograph the building process....unlike others I have read about or used, it makes so much sense...your unique, efficient and effective building techniques...This is GREAT stuff....I am incredibly psyched”.

In the last years I have become increasingly fascinated with the arctic origin of kayaks – both the form and function of the kayaks, and the paddling techniques, equipment and the approach to safety. I am drawn to a highly aesthetic, natural and very functional simplicity, that we seem to have lost sight of in the western world – reminding me of Shaker-design or the Japanese concept of Wabi-Sabi.

Basically I am an illustrator and graphic designer but kayaks, canoes and boats take more and more time. I use my own sea kayaks 12 months a year (some 600-1000 miles), since the south-western tip of Sweden where I live, is normally free of ice.

Owning a boat should be simple and trouble free. There is a saying: in the US boats tend to grow with the years – loa in feet equals the age of the owner, while in England the opposite is true - with age and wisdom the boats become smaller and more manageable – the pleasure in sailing is inversely proportional to the size of the boat. I confess to follow the English attitude in that respect. My first boat was a 36 ft ketch. The one I use now is 13ft – but I really prefer my little 26 lbs Greenlandic strip kayak Black Pearl.

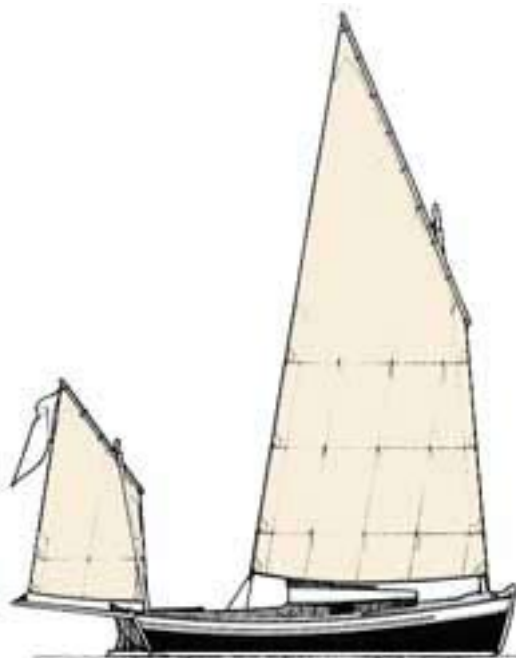
As a designer I focus on developing simple, functional and visually pleasing boats that are easy and cheap to build, handy in use and trouble free to own. Inspiration often comes from traditional workboats – since fishermen and pilots also demanded reliability and simplicity from their crafts.

A voice on Kanotyawl 400:

“Everything is beyond expectations and it was a wonderful experience. The rig proved fantastic and the boat behaved just as we had been hoping for. We tried to capsize on purpose but only managed to ship a few gallons of water.

The boat is very easily handled even in the erratic winds, we often experience on the Lelången. Many commented on the boat and rig very favourably, but failed to understand that a boat with such an archaic rig could go to weather, but it is surprisingly efficient close to the wind, in spite of the unstayed rig.

I am very satisfied with the boat and grateful that you have designed it as you have.”



Building methods are two – strip planking for the canoes and plywood on wooden stringers (or epoxied chines). The old durability problems with plywood have been eliminated with epoxy and fibreglass. With sheet materials hull forms are limited to hard chine, but that is a limitation that can be used as an advantage, since several highly developed traditional boats were built with hard chines.

Read more on my site: www.thomassondesign.com



Björn Thomasson
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