

The Nordic Folkboat – drawn by Tord Sunden in 1942 and built in wood before GRP versions were allowed from the mid-70s – was one of the most influential designs of all time.

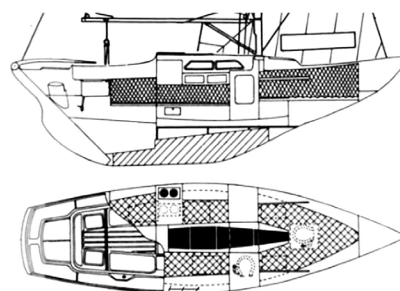
However even its greatest fans concede that this delightful and potent little package loses out when it comes to comfortable accommodation. Modified versions such as *Jester* and *Eira* completed the first OSTAR and many others have crossed oceans; but the Folkboat is hardly a spacious cruiser.

In 1966, Sunden came up with a solution, designing one of the most successful Folkboat derivations of all time; a beautiful GRP yacht that will grace any classic yacht gathering. The International Folkboat One Design (IF-Boat for short) was built by Marieholm in Sweden and – compared to its Nordic ancestor – it's slightly longer overall and on the waterline. It also weighs more, has a higher ballast ratio (58 per cent) and higher Sail Area/Displacement ratio (15.18) that enhances light-air performance. Add a self-draining cockpit and an outboard well or small inboard engine and you have a much more versatile yacht. Proving the IF-Boat's appeal, well over 3,000 were produced.

The Swedish IF-Boat Association (ifboat.com) says that of the Swedish-manufactured boats, about 2,000 were sold in Sweden. The rest were exported, mainly to Germany, Denmark, Norway, USA, Switzerland and Australia (where it was built under licence).

Over the years, several IF-Boats have made it to the UK and now number around 30. The major UK fleet is at the St Mawes Sailing Club (stmawessailing.co.uk and ifboat.uk). However, thanks to new sailor-unfriendly Brexit rules, importing an old IF-Boat into the UK will now cost more and be a trickier process, as will cruising in EU waters, once you set foot ashore.

Sunden wisely retained the time-tested seakindly Folkboat lines but designed the GRP tooling to achieve a more graceful roof profile and considerably more interior space. The larger sail area also gives good light air performance. Her sailing qualities are superb. Oliver Barstow of St Mawes SC told me “as one would expect from a Scandinavian-designed and built boat she is very capable in heavy weather and has an exceptionally good performance in light airs. With her long keel, fine lines and 7/8 rig she is well balanced and can sail hands off! The IF-Boat sails well unreefed; even in heavy airs. I will remember one Falmouth Week in extremely rough conditions when I first owned an IF-Boat. We were led



around in the Champagne race by another IF-Boat that didn't bother to reef and carried its full genoa all the way round the course.”

Oliver added that “St Mawes SC is home to a fleet of over 20 IF-Boats, 10 or so taking part in regular club racing. As well as round the buoys, there is an active Cornwall Offshore Group in which

INTERNATIONAL FOATBOAT

DESIGNER

Tord Sunden

LOA

25ft 10in (7.9m)

LWL

19ft 10in (6m)

BEAM

7ft 5in (2.1m)

DRAUGHT

4ft (1.2m)

WEIGHT

4,740lb 2,150kg

IF-Boats compete successfully. St Mawes SC organises the Eddystone race.”

Down below, the IF-Boat offers much more usable space than its Nordic Folkboat ancestor. A forepeak with two 6ft+ (1.8m+) berths, longer settee berths in the saloon, a simple heads, a rudimentary galley and improved stowage space combine to make a feasible family cruiser, even if headroom is a modest 4ft 8in (1.4m). And of course her performance, seaworthiness and easy handling make the IF-Boat as accomplished as a racer as she is when thrashing through heavy weather on a long cruise. Barstow said “Most local boats are crewed by two or three and – while a little cramped – we have overnighted with four aboard. However the IF-Boat provides very safe and comfortable cruising for two people. Helford, Plymouth and Fowey are favourite destinations and further west to Penzance and the Scillies.”

Another owner summed up her appeal well, saying “I was invited to crew on one and allowed to helm; and from that moment I was smitten. She sails easily in very light winds and doesn't really need to reef until Force 6. The helm is beautifully balanced throughout... I have yet to meet a sailor who didn't appreciate sailing one. However all boats are a compromise. The IF-Boat's low freeboard and long keel mean she makes virtually no leeway even in strong winds. The trade off is that she is a wet boat in a swell and does not have standing headroom below decks. However I am 6ft 2in (1.9m) tall and am quite comfortable in her, with a choice of three bunks that I fit into.”

Certainly, if I were looking for a beautiful and seaworthy GRP 'classic' for club racing and short-handed Channel cruising, the IF-Boat would be high on my list.

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Two on the market



1976, £8,500. Kept on the hard, competitive when raced. Road trailer. Lying N Yorkshire
apolloeduck.co.uk



1976, £11,000. New mast and sails 2018, 12hp Dolphin engine, feathering prop. Trailer (un-braked).
ifboat.uk see advertisement