

# A Buchanan: Drawin

**F**IFTY YEARS AGO, three friends and I were converting a ship's lifeboat to a motor cruiser at weekends on the little hard at the foot of The Lane at West Mersea. Peace had arrived two years before and everywhere in Britain people were refitting laid-up boats and thinking of having new ones built. Each lunchtime we gathered to eat our sandwiches and brew tea on a Primus.

One day we were joined by a fresh-faced young draughtsman from the vast De Havilland aircraft factory, north of London. He was called Alan Buchanan. His family had a summer house at Mersea where he sailed on his uncle's and father's boats, designing in his spare time.

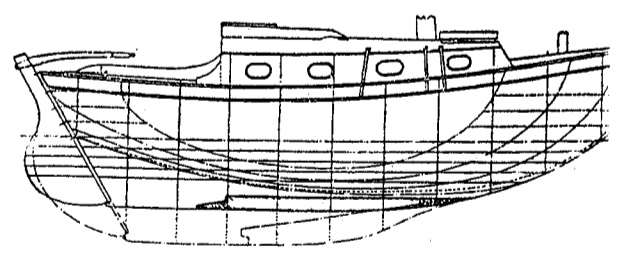
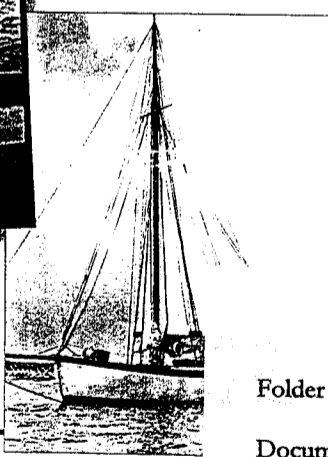
Alan was as fond of the East Coast as we were and enjoyed discussing small craft development, but his interest seemed to be in flying boats and their future as aircraft carriers. That two of our number were from shipbuilding and another a marine engineer lent piquancy to the argument.

Soon after, Alan Buchanan left De Havilland and set up as a boat designer, at first from his home in Enfield, Middlesex, then at Burnham-on-Crouch. He had the thorough approach of the trained draughtsman, coupled with an enthusiasm for creating his own style of soundly-conceived yacht. He could and still can, grasp the basics of a brief and execute the design in very short order, which is unusual in yacht designers.

At West Mersea, like all of us, he dropped in at the established little boatyard of William Wyatt. Since the 1930s Wyatt had been of great assistance to the three Buchanan boys, and maintained various craft for them. Wyatt's



Left to right: Buchanan in 1950s offshore rig; *Karin III* his live-aboard while starting out; the 1944 Yachting Monthly 3-tonner design; and *Starfire* under spinnaker



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