



Stripped down to the bare bones.

# AN EXPENSIVE MISTRESS



Much like falling in love, there is something about acquiring a boat that leads to a temporary loss of sanity. **Sam Jefferson** meets up with the owner of a 'project' boat who was utterly seduced by her comely lines.

"I had no intention of buying *Pas Seul*, it just somehow happened," Lee Price explained as we stood under the imposing steel hull of his Robert Clark 42 admiring her sweet lines. "I saw her advertised for sale and contacted the broker. The price was way too high and the broker advised me to just make the owner an offer and see what happened.

"I made what I thought was a laughable offer and, to my astonishment, it was readily accepted by the owners."

Picking up a beautiful yacht for a laughably small amount of money sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Well, sadly, there's a catch. *Pas Seul's* beautiful hull and seductive curves concealed a dark truth and, on the day when I met up with Lee about a year ago, he was surrounded by the remnants of what used to be his pride and joy's interior. The cabin top had literally been sawn off and removed, the rotten teak decks ripped

off and Lee was left with a bare shell. On that dark day on Hayling Island, he was also tearing his hair out with frustration at the pace at which work was being done on the boat as she lay in the shed.

"It's pretty soul destroying," Lee professed. "I started with what appeared to be a going concern, but the more we peeled back the layers, the worse things looked and ultimately we have ended up with a bare shell.

"A project like this is going to hurt me, but she's such a beautiful yacht I just feel it will be worth it in the end.

"You do get the odd dark day though, especially when you're working your backside off in the knowledge that almost all of that money will go straight back into the bloody boat!"

I left Lee that day wondering if he hadn't bitten off more than he could chew. I liked the fact that he clearly wasn't made of

money and was working like a madman to pay for things to be done. The fact was though that he had a very large shell of a classic boat on his hands and not a great deal of experience when it came to boat restoration projects.

A year later though, and things are slowly turning around. The boat is now at Thornham Marina, under the custody of Steve Hulme, a traditional shipwright, and work is starting to progress. Despite the trouble, Lee does own one of the most elegant boats you could ever wish to clap eyes on.

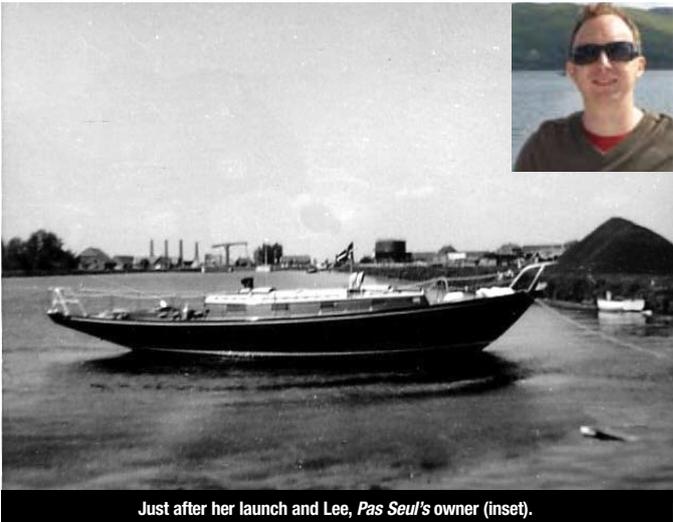
*Pas Seul* was designed by Robert Clark, a self taught yacht designer, who rose to prominence in the 1930s and was responsible for a number of beautiful yachts. Notable boats from his drawing board include *Gipsy Moth III* and Chay Blyth's epoch making *British Steel*, which circumnavigated the world non-stop, going



Early shots of *Pas Seul* in Holland (main pic and right).



A heated shed was a must have.



Just after her launch and Lee, *Pas Seul*'s owner (inset).



The cabin top was literally chopped off to remove the decks.

'the wrong way'.

The yacht was designed primarily for racing and her pedigree is evident. Lee believes that she is an elongated version of Clark's 1935 'Mystery' class, which garnered a reputation as an extremely weatherly cruiser/racer. The appeal of the boat is clear to see, but, one can't help but ponder what possesses people to get involved with a project like this.

"Many are the times I have asked myself why the hell I bought this boat" Lee professed: "In fact, the only time I don't ask myself is when I'm in the shed with the boat and then it starts to make sense.

"I started out sailing fairly standard glassfibre yachts. The boat I owned before *Pas Seul* was a Moody 33, which I bought in the Bahamas and sailed back across the Atlantic. A fun trip.

"After that, I decided I wanted something that was just a bit different and more elegant than your standard plastic fin keeler. One thing led to another and here I am."

### A VARIED HISTORY

The boat has a rich history; built in Amsterdam by a company that now specialises in producing flagpoles, she was commissioned by the owner of Travis Perkins, the builder's merchants, and was

initially raced hard, taking part in the Fastnet and other regattas. From hereon, the trail goes a little cold. However, at some point she was available for charter and also suffered what was described as a 'little sinking' at Figueira da Foz in Portugal.

By the time Lee got his hands on her, it was clear that someone had been living on her and she was in rather a sorry state.

"The initial plan was renovation rather than rebuild," Lee explained. "But the more we peeled back the layers, the more obvious it was that she was going to need a lot of work done to get her in a state to go sailing again.

"Initially I wanted to restore the teak decks, but a quick poke around under the sub-deck soon revealed that the plywood that they had been laid on was rotten and was not even marine ply.

"At this stage I was pretty much in a state of despair, but I have been very fortunate to have Steve working on the project, who has really done a good job on a limited trickle of funds coming in."

So far, the boat has been shot blasted inside and out and a good deal of corroded metalwork has been repaired or removed. A new deck has been laid, the coachroof is back on and has been repaired and restored and a spanking new engine is awaiting installation. The interior has also

been battered out so that some insulation can be put in. Originally she was fitted out as a racing yacht and her interior was pretty basic, but Lee wants to have a bit more luxury aboard. He reckons there is still a couple of years left on the project.

"Having now experienced what it's like to completely restore the shell of a yacht, I can completely understand why you have all these half finished projects rotting in boatyards around the country.

"The fact is though that I can't afford *not* to finish *Pas Seul*. I'm at the stage where I have spent a lot of money on something that isn't worth anything as she stands. If I finish the project off, then I'll have a yacht worth £100,000 or more.

"That is what I keep telling myself, although it really does have its moments I must say."

### SPECS – ROBERT CLARK 42

LOA	40ft 9in (12.2m)
Beam	9ft 1in (2.8m)
Draught	6ft 8in (1.83m)
Sail plan	Yawl
Designer	Robert Clark
Year built	1963
Builder	Gebroeders van Dam (Amsterdam)