

WoodenBoat REVIEW

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Herlinbåtar/Herlin Yachts

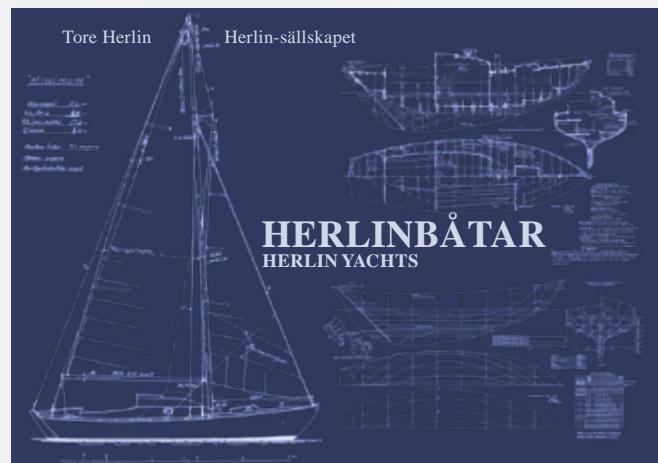
Herlinbåtar/Herlin Yachts: A Study of Yacht Types during the Period 1904-1966, by Tore Herlin. Herlin-sällskapet, Dalvandan 5, S-139 54 Värmdö, Sweden; nirvana-beta@telia.com. \$120.

Reviewed by Robert W. Stephens

This gorgeous book presents a collection of the work of one of Sweden's pre-eminent yacht designers during the first seven decades of the last century—a crucial period for yacht design, during which yachts evolved from their workboat roots to fulfill specific requirements such as inshore racing, ocean racing, and family cruising. Tore Herlin was in the vanguard of these developments, and with his designs and his contribution to the creation of rating rules, he helped shape the evolution of the modern European yacht.

Herlin Yachts is his distillation of this development in Scandinavia. He has carefully selected about a third of his designs, and used them, along with insightful commentary, to illustrate trends—good and detrimental—in yachts and yachting. This second edition is a re-issue by the Herlin Yacht Society of his original 1967 work, with the addition of a few drawings, a small amount of additional background text, and a delightful collection of photographs.

To call this a "coffee table book" is at once completely true and somewhat misleading; it's not awash in glorious color like most showy books of that type, favoring a more restrained aesthetic, but its format certainly requires something like a coffee table for comfortable perusing—at 12" tall by 17" wide, some elbow room and support are needed to leaf through the weighty, glossy pages, more akin to high-quality card stock than paper. The book is attractive enough for any yachtsman to want to leave on display; the navy-blue-bound hard cover with gold spine lettering is protected from the elements by a smooth matte-finish dust jacket

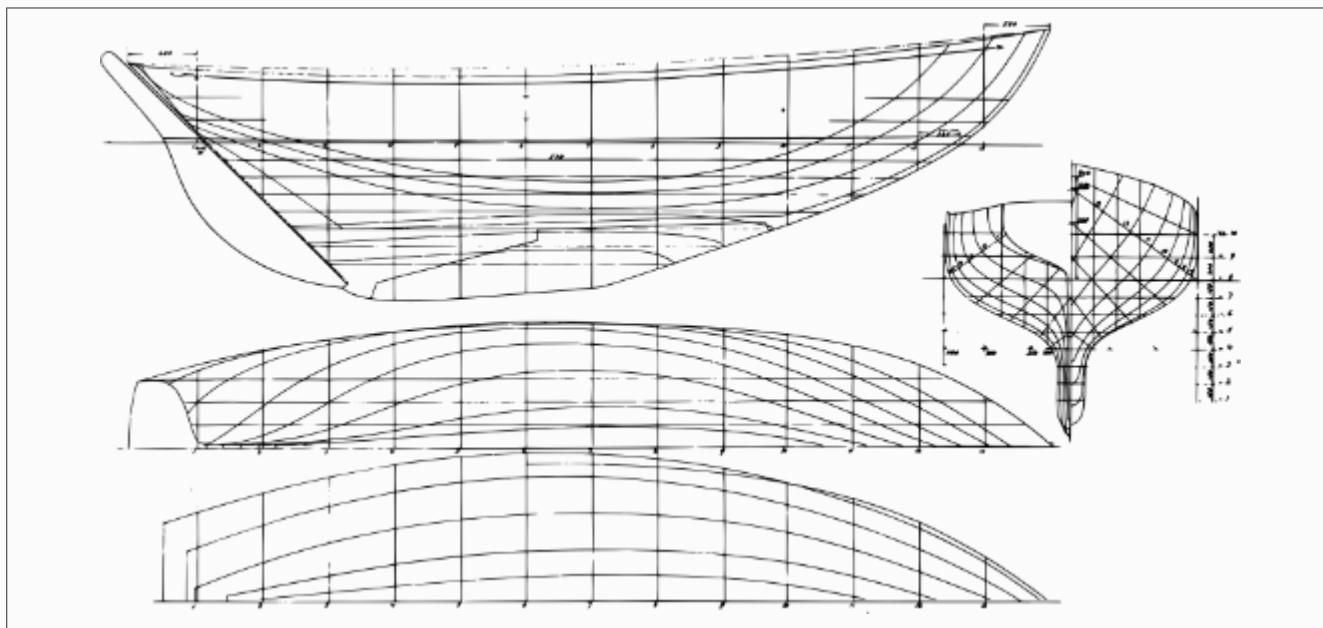


of the same blue tone, imprinted with lines drawings and sail plans in the

manner of old-style negative blueprints. The effect is simple and captivating—this is a book that you'll love to touch. The dust jacket is, in turn, protected by a light cardboard slipcover, finished in matching style, though not quite so luscious, either to the eye or to the touch.

I suspect that this book will live its life outside the slipcover, in any case—it poses too great a barrier to spur-of-the-moment leafing through. While Herlin carefully selected his drawings as illustration to accompany the text, and while the story told by the two is compelling to the student of yacht design, the true enjoyment of this book will be found in returning again and again to caress the pages and let the beauty of Herlin's drafting wash over you, while you drift into daydreams.

However, for those times when we're ready to exercise our minds a bit further, valuable nuggets will be unearthed by those who carefully study Herlin's commentary along with close examination of his drawings. He speaks with authority as one who helped yachting and

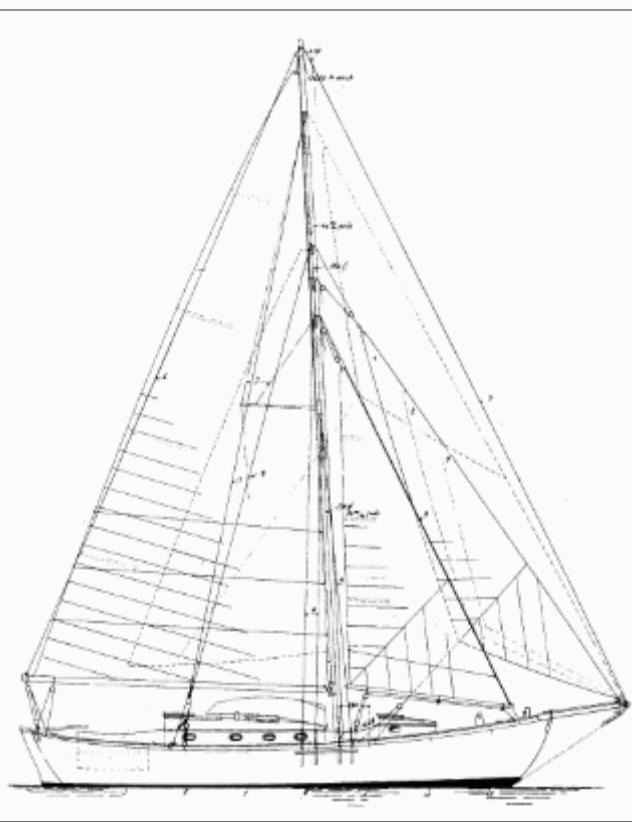


yacht design through the growing pains of developing successful rating rules, and his opinions on the difficulty of creating a rule that doesn't cause yachts built to it to be poor performers and unsafe boats is well worth serious attention. He has pithy comments on the success (or lack of success) of the Square-Meter classes, well-supported by a collection of lines of some of the prettiest examples of marine sculpture that I've seen in a long time. Pretty, yes, and fast as well, but Herlin felt concern for their less-than-excellent seaworthiness. In discussing the evolution of the International

Rule (which brought us boats like the Six-Meters and the 12-Meters), Herlin distills the immense challenge of the rule-crafters into a single insightful sentence: "When the construction of sailboats is based on certain rules of measurement, they tend to derive their characteristics from the rule or rather from the deficiencies inherent in the rule."

While Herlin Yachts is not intended as a catalog of plans for construction, there's plenty of fodder here for ambitious builders who can work from basic plans. Each yacht includes detailed hull lines with a scaling template to allow picking offsets from the print; a few yachts include offsets (handwritten in the metric system, but readable), and most include a construction midsection with scantlings and enough detail to pick out the backbone arrangement. Several were originally designed for easy, inexpensive construction, and thus would be within the reach of an ambitious amateur. Since many of the boats are designed for lapstrake construction, adapting them for more modern construction using glued plywood for the planking would be straightforward. Best of all, Herlin removes any uncertainty about the ethics of lifting plans from the book: "...if anyone would like to borrow my lines he has my blessing. It may save his life."

The plans presented all show (not surprisingly) more or less Scandinavian influence, and include a pair of nice lapstrake skiffs; a pair of simple daysailers (one with bolt-on fin keel, one with centerboard); and a thorough collection of variations on the theme of a classic Scandinavian type, the Bleking skiff, an open boat with transom stern and long keel. In search of greater seaworthiness and safety, as well as better sailing performance, Herlin develops this type into a wholesome and handsome yacht, with examples ranging from halfdecked daysailers to sizable ocean racers. While not a Herlin design, the most familiar example of this type is the ubiquitous Folkboat. Also represented among the collection are several classic Scandinavian doubleenders, as well as the aforementioned Square-Meter boats and a number of



International Rule boats of notable moderation and beauty for boats designed to that rule.

All text is presented both in Swedish and in English, and while the English translation occasionally requires a bit of interpretation (mostly within the additional text added for the second edition), that's a small price to pay for Herlin's insights. He wrote at the end of his career, on the cusp of a great transition from traditional full-keel yachts to modern fin-keel yachts, and so there's a certain curmudgeonly slant to his opinions about the seaworthiness of the new. But his views on what makes a successful, seaworthy, fast, and beautiful yacht speak for themselves in his exquisite drawings, so beautifully presented in this volume.

Bob Stephens is a principal of Stephens, Waring & White Yacht Design in Brooklin, Maine.

Herlinbåtar is priced at 800 Swedish kroner—about US\$120—plus shipping.