

Shrimper Mark 1 or Mark 2?

By Jon Davies (Shrimper 847 *Merriwinds*) (2016)

For the boat show in January 1996 at around Shrimper number 690 Cornish Crabbers introduced a new moulding of the superstructure of their popular 19 ft Shrimper, mainly to improve comfort and living aboard. The boat's hull and rig are almost identical to earlier boats so performance and racing compatibility are said to be unaffected. There is a belief that the boat got heavier although Cornish Crabbers state the displacement remains as 1065 kg. At first sight the changes are hardly noticeable and all Shrimpers look alike, but close up they become more significant.

Here is a list of the main differences with their perceived advantages and possible disadvantages:

There is now a self-draining cockpit. No more frustrating and awkward covers to fit before leaving the boat and no more pumping out the litres of water that still get in after heavy rain. No danger of the boat flooding if left unattended for months and the cover comes undone, or your towing weight suddenly increasing if you drive through a downpour. However, the cockpit foot well is shorter and shallower with less legroom and there is no handy storage beneath the floorboards. Also if you invite lots of friends aboard remember to shut the seacock as the cockpit sole can eventually drop beneath the waterline bringing wet feet all round.

Inside the cabin headroom is 10 cm higher and, with no floorboards, the sole is another 3 cm lower. This doesn't sound much but makes movement inside much easier; it may even be possible to put on your trousers without opening the hatch. As the cabin rear bulkheads are now higher the cockpit is slightly better sheltered from the wind. Nevertheless, the deck now seems a lot higher with quite a long step up and down. The mast has raised 10 cm with the deck, but so has the cockpit sole, so when standing in the cockpit, headroom under the boom remains the same. However, the cockpit seats have not been raised so when sitting there is greater headroom and, as the coaming has been raised by about 6 cm, the cockpit feels slightly more sheltered with a little more back support.

The cabin rear bulkheads are forward sloping with no cleats. This makes it possible to comfortably lean back when sitting lengthways in the cockpit. Installing instruments on the uncluttered bulkhead is also now possible. However, with the hatch closed, but without washboards fitted, there is now a significant area of the cabin vertically open to the elements.

The cabin front bulkhead has moved forward giving greater internal volume. Any increase in space in the tiny cabin is welcome, however the handy foredeck is now smaller making anchor raising and mooring more difficult and there is less room to store anchors, chains etc.

There is now a glazed hatch just in front of the mast which allows a reassuring second exit from the cabin (for fairly small, agile people), makes the cabin brighter and less claustrophobic and gives better ventilation. It does however need a cover at night if you don't want to be woken too early by the sun in your face.



Early Mk 2s had the same halyard arrangements as Mk 1s, but with two winches. Soon however they made the decks less cluttered by grouping all sail halyards on the starboard deck through rope clutches, and a single winch is fitted close to them. The jib halyard can now be winched tight and no longer needs a purchase. This feature can also be used to help raise the mast. The port deck is now almost completely clear with just the jib furling control. However, the Mk 2 halyards are all very close together and could be easy to confuse. Also, on the old system if a shroud fails there is still some support for the mast from the halyards on both sides. Finally, in the corners at the top rear of the cabin useful cleats for springs have been added.



The wooden step at the entrance to the cabin, with its useful storage underneath for the keel raising line has disappeared. The keel raising line now passes through a hole in the bulkhead and a jam cleat and, with nowhere to store it, just lies around where it can get wet. This water can be squeezed out as the line reels on to the drum and ends up in the cabin. The absence of the step, the cockpit floorboards and the wooden cockpit 'backrests' mean that the more plastic Mk 2 cockpit has lost a little of the charm of the earlier model.

The Inboard engine housing is now a permanent feature at the front of the cockpit for both in and outboard boats. On outboard boats where this is empty it provides a handy and very large locker space, but the housing does restrict the Mk 2 foot well. (On the very latest outboard boats you can now specify for the locker upper part to be omitted). At the stern on Mk 1s, both inboard and outboard, there is an extra locker on the starboard side alongside the motor well (or fuel tank space on inboard boats). This useful storage space has disappeared on Mk 2 boats.

The large port rear locker is now fitted with an integral keyed lock with a lifting handle. If you open the hatch but leave this in the 'locked' position and the hatch falls shut, as it is very prone to do, the 'tongue' breaks off and the whole lock is very expensive to replace.



At the stern the area between the mainsheet track and the transom has been filled in. This means that it is possible to sit right at the stern and lean back while holding the tiller without hurting yourself on the track. On inboard boats the diesel filler cap is located on the top of this wider transom area, which is far better than the Mk 1 system where the diesel tank is filled directly through the top cover and where any spillage can go directly to the bilge. The transom also now houses the inboard motor key switch, stop and start controls and instruments in a sheltered central recess. This location is far more convenient than on the Mk 1 where these controls are located inside the engine box and accessed by a circular hatch. The rear mooring cleats are positioned higher and

horizontally on Mk 2 boats and finally, a small but potentially important safety feature, the Mk 2 rudder has a step cut into the top of it to enable climbing back aboard.

The increased interior volume allows a choice of cabin layouts. The 'classic' is improved by having the front internal bulkhead further forward allowing a larger galley and storage area. The interior of the '2+2' appears palatial at first sight (to a 'classic' owner) as it now uses all the space available up to the bows giving a small 'v' berth suitable for two children or possibly one flexible adult. Under the front berths the triangular area can be used for storage, a porta-potti or a fitted sea toilet. This latter, known as the 2+ loo, appears to be the main reason for choosing the boat for some and is so hated by others that they have had it removed to gain storage space. If on-board catering is important the 2+ layouts with the stove hidden under a berth, restricted storage (the forward bulkhead lockers have gone and on later models the handy spaces under the main bunks are sealed up to gain buoyancy), and lack of fitted washing bowl or sink all mean that life on board has to be a little more carefully planned. Because of the new position of the stove on the 2+2 the starboard berth starts further down the cabin meaning that it is slightly wider at the shoulders, although you are lying deeper inside the quarter berth. The port berth is the same width as before.

Moving from a Mk 1 to a Mk 2 (especially the 2+2) means there is now enough room inside for the cabin to be a more relaxed environment, although if you take too much luggage the front area will be filled with bags and boxes due to the lack of built-in storage. If living space aboard is not a priority (or you have a good cockpit tent) and the boat is used mainly as a day sailer or for racing, then the Mark 1 is perfectly adequate and, in fact, preferred by many owners.

How can you tell a Mk 2 from a distance? If you can't see the sail number probably the most obvious difference is the 6 cm raised gunnel aft of the jib fairleads. On Mk 1s towards the stern there is no gunnel higher than the line of the wooden rubbing strake.

