

# Gear On Test

## **NESTAWAY 8ft 2in pram dinghy**

**from £1250**

After featuring rigid dinghies in our May issue Buyer's Guide we were so impressed with the Nestaway Pram that we decided to put her through her paces.

At 8ft 2in long it isn't the biggest dinghy in the world, but there's plenty of room for two adults and a child. We've seen four adults on board one, but you wouldn't want to risk that in any kind of chop.

The concept of the 'nesting' dinghy (one half stows inside the other) isn't new, but examples I've seen in the past have tended to be rather, well, home made, shall we say? Nestaways are different. Like myself, company creator, Ian Thomson, is a huge cruising enthusiast. While in the Caribbean he saw the need for a rigid dinghy that could be stowed on the deck of a small cruising yacht, either

abaft the mast or on the foredeck, so after returning to the UK he trained as a boatbuilder and designed his first nesting dinghy as part of his course. Other models have evolved, but the 8ft 2in pram is a firm favourite as a yacht tender.

The Nestaway can be supplied in glassfibre (GRP), carbon fibre or cold-moulded varnished plywood. The entry level is GRP, but you can pay a bit more to brighten it up with some attractive varnished wood trim. The carbon fibre model weighs considerably less, so is almost becoming the standard product. Again, it can be enhanced with some wooden trim, but at the cost of extra weight. At 30kg, the carbon boat is lighter than some inflatables and can be carried in two pieces anyway. The

cold-moulded model is utterly gorgeous and would look at home alongside any classic yacht, but it comes with a hefty price tag.

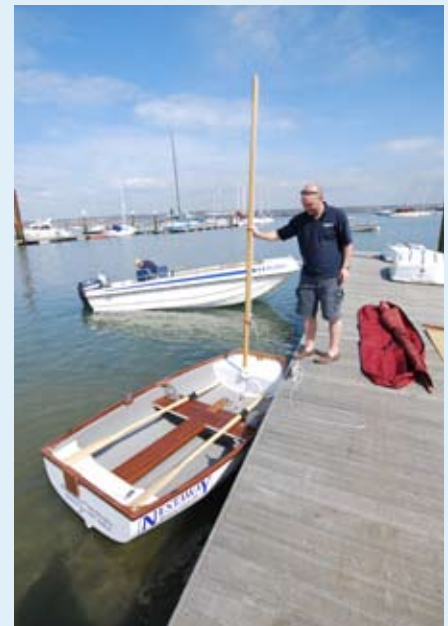
### **WHY HAVE A RIGID DINGHY?**

Back in the 1970s I sailed to Tahiti from the UK. We had a cold-moulded plywood tender about the same size, but not a nesting one. It was hugely superior to an inflatable when beaching through waves – so much so, in fact, that we often gave lifts to other cruising folk who only had an inflatable dinghy. For this reason alone, a rigid dinghy is, to my mind, better suited for blue water cruising.

Another argument in favour of rigid dinghies is their ability to sail. Having a sailing dinghy gives you or the kids something to do while the yacht is at anchor in that idyllic bay. Yes, there are a few sailing inflatables (I've even owned one), but they rarely sail well.

### **WHY NESTING?**

On modern yachts, the space on the coachroof at the mast is rarely able to accommodate a dinghy, as it was on our Arthur Robb Lion class cruiser. Apart from the problem of stowage on the yacht, carrying a standard rigid tender on



a car can be a problem too. With the Nestaway it's much easier – you can pop it on a roof rack in two pieces or carry it on a towbar conversion (see pic).

### **STABILITY**

We did try to capsize the Nesting Pram, but couldn't. I guess we could have managed it if we'd really tried, but even when standing right over on one side – something you'd never do – the stability was impressive (see pic).

### **UNDER OARS**

How refreshing it was to row a 'proper' rowing boat and the ease with which I got into my stride brought a smile to my face. Compared with an inflatable, the



Nestaway is easily driven, quick to accelerate, effortless to keep going at a good speed to counter a current and spins on a sixpence.

I also had a go at sculling, a means of propulsion of which I am quite fond. While there was no rowlock fitted over the stern, she was still quite easy to scull. If I were ordering one I would specify a rowlock on the transom.

When on my own in the boat she sits slightly bow down, which isn't a problem, because a second person, or some baggage and kit, would very likely be in the stern.

### UNDER SAIL

This was the bit I'd been looking forward to and I wasn't disappointed. I chose to sit amidships, hopping over the central fore and aft thwart as I tacked. Some might prefer to remove that thwart and sail just sitting in the bottom, but either way she's simplicity itself to handle. There's no boom to whack you on the head and no block in the end of the sail – for the same reason. The sheet runs from the stern, through the sail and into your hand. The only

change I would make would be to add a lifting tiller, but that's just my preference. I could easily have sailed her all day. Although there was only a gentle breeze we did set the deep reef in the sail. It was easy to lower the halyard, tie a few reef knots and move the sheet to the higher clew position.

A sprit rig is also available, but the lug is a better performer. *JT*

### PRICES

GRP hull, wood trim £1550.  
All GRP hull £1250.  
Carbon-fibre/Kevlar hull £890 extra. Without wood trim the weight is only about 30kg.  
Cold-moulded double-diagonal mahogany hull £4500.  
Standing lug rig £1070.

### WE LIKE

Small footprint on deck when nested  
Rows and sails excellently  
Easy to assemble



### WE DON'T LIKE

The price  
Lack of kick up rudder.

### VERDICT



The Nesting Pram does everything you might want a yacht tender to do. It rows, sails and motors well, stows in the smallest of places, won't degrade in the sun and she's great fun to use. Being semi-custom built also allows you to specify exactly what you want.

Is there a down side? I'm afraid there is. There's no getting away from the fact that the Nesting Pram is expensive. Although I don't consider it overpriced,

this kind of boat isn't cheap to build, so you have to pay for the privilege.

If an 8ft 2in tender isn't big enough, there is a larger three-section boat available.

**Contact:** Nestaway Boats

**Tel:** 01202 423094

**Web:** [www.nestawayboats.com](http://www.nestawayboats.com)

## ASSEMBLING THE BOAT...



This is best done on deck, with the assembled boat then being launched, but it can be done in the water.

First, line up the two halves (*pic 1*). Lift the bow section and offer it up to the stern section. There are stainless steel sliders in the bow section that slot into sockets in the stern section,



stopping the bow from pulling out and lifting.

To stop it all coming apart, three enormous phosphor-bronze bolts are screwed into fitted retaining sockets, hand tight. There's one each side and one down low in the middle with a rubber seal, because it is below the waterline (*pics 2 and 3*). If you've chosen the sailing version, all that remains is to pop the mast, daggerboard and rudder in place and away you go.

### DIMENSIONS

LOA 8ft 2in, beam 4ft 3in  
Stowed size 4ft 8in x 4ft 3in  
If you don't have a clear area of this size, it's likely that the boat can find a home over a hatch or vent. See the Nestaway website where there's a whole section dedicated to finding ways to stow the boat on deck.

