

PERFORMANCE OF A MODERN SAILING JUNK

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Written by the owner of DUMA, a 12.5m Jonque de Plaisance in Scotland (2016)



Geoff Proven passed away in December 2018 and is greatly missed. How does one speak about a man larger-than-life who had so many interests and passions and who excelled in so many fields. He was a seasoned sailor, an engineer, an inventor, a musician, a motorbike racer, but with Geoff there is always more. His love of life was contagious and he touched many.

DUMA is a 12.5M Jonque de Plaisance which sailed the waters of west Scotland and here is what her owner (Geoff) had to say about her handling and performance in 2014:



Duma the Scottish Sailing Junk



DUMA will not point up into the wind as acutely as a modern bermudan-rigged craft. However her sail plan (junk schooner) and easily trimmed sails have several panels with full battens (currently refitted with bamboos) allow the crew to change sail profiles for maximum drive in any wind speed or attack angle. One can have flat or cambered sails, twisted in three planes! The resultant shapes can be intoxicatingly pretty to behold. But the shapes are also working to draw power from the breeze.

Making to wind'ard I tend to accept the loss of a few degrees to lee'ard by letting her pay off slightly. Her water speed is usually faster, there is less leeway, and her sails may also fill more nicely. Gaff-rig sailors also do this. Best not to "pinch" her too much, as they say. The for'ard leaning fores'l can also deliver very nice fast laminar flow to the mains'l when pointing.

In extremely light airs I have pointed DUMA very close to the wind, with satisfactory progress and little leeway, when bermudan types in range of hail seem to stall. This ghosting style always surprises me, and I am not quite sure why it manifests. One's attitude to sailing affects mood, so maybe I accept the slow progress as a boon, rather than a curse. Silence from junk rigs in light airs is mesmeric, soporific, much different to roaring slipstreams!

There is a handy slot between leech of fores'l and luff of her main. One can also shift the entire sails across their masts, giving undisturbed air to the luff (leading edge) of her sails; unencumbered by the mast bulk. Thus the air flow is cleaner, more laminar. Most other rigs (aside from square-riggers, and some luggers) must accept masking and resultant dirty air from their masts close to the luff.

The junk arrangement of tensioning lines between battens gives a vast range of possibilities in sail attitudes relative to wind speed and direction.

Added to all that, the masts are simple sticks with NO stainless steel rigging to fail or become replacement insurance liabilities.

After sailing many types of craft with bermudan, gaff, square and lateen sails, I would say the junk rig can hold its own against any of them, when averaged out in real-world situations sea-states, crewing levels, and wind speeds.

I recall when DUMA overhauled the annual Clyde Largs Regatta racing fleet as we passed by a group of high islands in a moderate F5 gusting 6-7. With two panels of mainsail reefed, we were enjoying a quiet family cruise, when the wind increased suddenly. No further attention was required to the rig or trim. She just got on with the job: safe, fast, upright sailing.

The Junk heeled at 5 degrees, whilst the «racing» crews were hanging off their weather rails trying to minimise the heel on the «modern» Bermudan designs. We were doing 10 knots true, recorded on a calibrated trailing log, on the same compass course as the racers. It was a broad reach, which is good for a Junk, but nevertheless, we were fast. It was a blast to be there.

It was extremely apparent that the Jonque De Plaisance DUMA was not only faster by a good margin, but she was a way way better seaboat, our crew nonchalantly enjoying afternoon tea on the poop deck, with no foul-weather gear needed either. High, and most certainly dry. Junks can be fast and weatherly, the Jonque de Plaisance is one such.

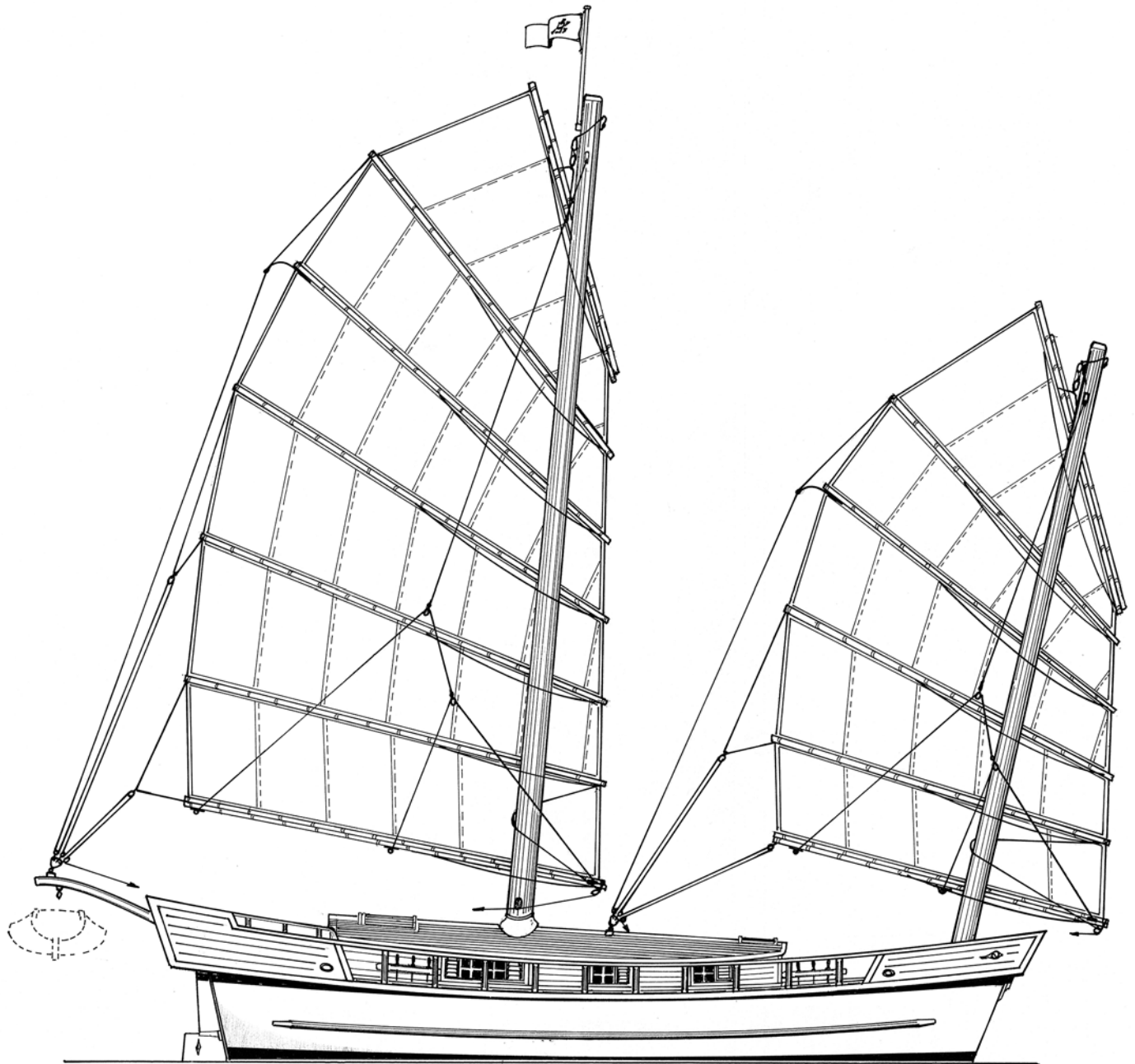
I was pleased, then delighted, then amazed at her speed when DUMA showed me her qualities on successive voyages a few days and wind-speeds apart. The incredible power delivered by her rig is at times breathtaking, especially off-the-wind. The sound of salty bubbles hissing past in her quarter-wake is music to my ears.

Geoff.

Duma the Scottish Sailing Junk



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"JONQUE de PLAISANCE" 12.50 M.

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