

Only 5.6 m overall, this Shepherd-designed TS has the feel of a true yacht and 47 percent ballast ratio. The skeg-like fin keel and centreboard give her good windward qualities and extra stability.

THE INVESTIGATOR, one of the safest trailer sailers on the Australian market, is getting its share of publicity. And for good reason. I recently got the story behind this attractive 5.6 m yacht and found it's one of the few shallow fin keelers with a centreboard on the market. What's more, more than 70 have been sold in a short time.

It recently won a Gold Design Award from the Industrial Design Council of Australia. A feather in the cap of her designer, Kevin Shepherd.

Although the Investigator was designed and built in Sydney, most have been sold in Queensland where crews seem to be keen on trailer sailers which can take rough water and recover from a knock down without trouble. The boat is hardly known in its home port, although this will soon change, as its builders, Investigator Yachts of Sydney, are embarking on a national promotion drive and setting up dealerships in every State. In Western Australia the boat is already being built under licence.

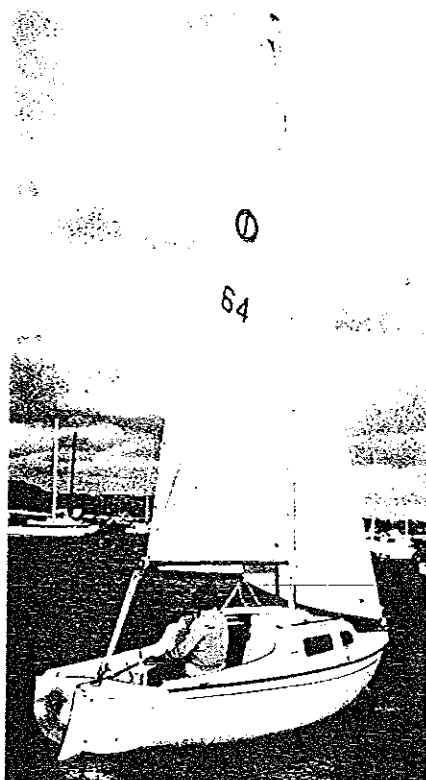
After a windy evening testing a stock standard Investigator supplied by the Sydney Sailboat Centre, I feel the boat will succeed in other States.

While its finish does not put it in the luxury class — it's on the basic though well-built side — the Investigator has a definite big-yacht style about it which, in many buyers' eyes, would make it more appealing than a conventional big-dinghy-styled TS.

Although its price has been bolstered by a dealer margin, the Investigator is an inexpensive mini-yacht which somehow gives the impression that you are getting an even better deal because the boat looks more like 7 m than something under that.

The big-yacht styling with its neat, curved sheerline, tucked-in stern sections and nicely-proportioned reverse transom is a tribute to Kevin Shepherd. Kevin has had a long history in the sport. He went through Gwen 12s, 16 Foot Skiffs and such into managing Rolly Tasker's Sydney marine centre (which closed some years back). From there he graduated to Admiral's Cup yachts and is presently with Hood Sails as a sailmaker.

He has an inventive mind and is always seeking better ways of doing



AWARD
WINNING

TS

JAMES HILL
SAILS THE
INVESTIGATOR TS

things. Years ago he made a raised mould on which he made a few Gwen 12 sails. That was *before* he became a sailmaker.

Sailmakers often make good yacht designers (such as Peter Cole) and Kevin is no exception as he has a good eye for nice lines. Before Investigator, he turned out two nicely-styled, fast cruiser-racers — the Marauders 24 and 27.

The yacht-like style of the Investigator grew from Kevin's brief for the design which, in a nutshell, was to create a boat which put safety first. For safety in exposed waters, the boat had to self-right easily after a bad

In the lee, in lighter winds, the Investigator glides along with little fuss. Lone skipper can control boat from cockpit.

knock-down, whether or not there were a lot of people on board.

Kevin designed the Investigator two years ago when he was working on keelboat designs. He felt that using hull form stability and heavy centreboards, used in many other small trailer-sailers, was not the way to achieve good righting ability.

He opted for a shallow fin keeler which had good pointing ability with a swing centreboard. It was the old tried and proved American centreboard concept updated. And it not only gave the 47 percent ballast to displacement ratio Shepherd was aiming for, but allowed the centreboard case to be housed in the keel to give more room in the cabin.

I was most keen to see how the boat would perform on the launching ramp and, while I think it could present more of a problem for launching in difficult launching sites such as a shallow sloped, sandy beach, it does make the grade as a TS in my book.

Interestingly, there are a few trailer yachts on the market which have even deeper draft keels than the Investigator, but I think such boats are stretching the TS concept a little too far.

I tested the Investigator from the launching to the retrieving stage from one of the indifferently-designed concrete ramps for which Sydney is (in)famous. The ramp has a steep slope which ran into shallows at low tide, which was about the tide we went sailing; and by the time we got the boat ready and headed for the ramp on Pittwater there was a cold and gusty southerly blowing.

When we got to the ramp I wasn't even keen on the idea of getting out of the car into the great outdoors, so I felt that any problems with launching would certainly put me at my critical best.

RIGGING HER

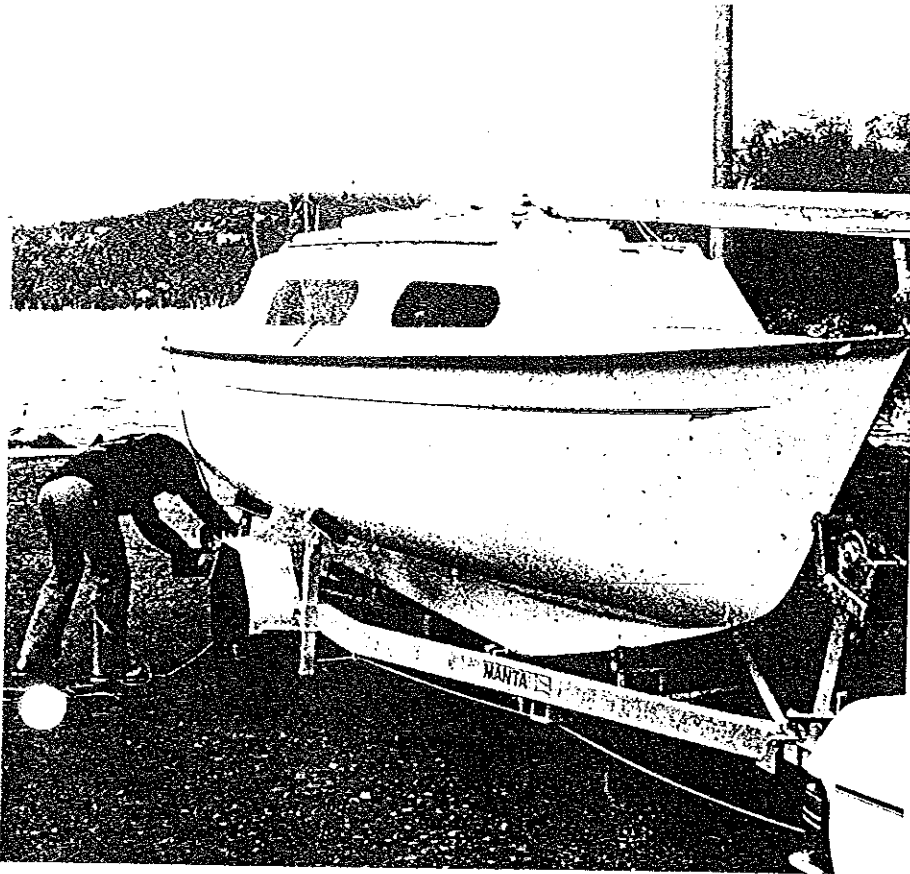
We didn't have the advantage of a mast support crutch for lifting the mast and, after tangling the stays twice, we had warmed ourselves by lifting the mast up and down a few times.

Like most TSs, the mast is rigged without a masthead jib and the mast is a reasonably long, yet light, 6.71 m. It pivots forward on a stainless steel pin which is held in place by a ring split-pin. The mast was easily raised by two people, though it would have helped to have the optional mast crutch.

One feature of our test boat was an optional but essential extra: headsail furling gear.

This equipment should be included on every TS, as it allows one not only to

At the launching ramp near Church Point, Pittwater. Special Manta tilt trailer took the hesitation out of launching her.



Investigator had a secure, stable feeling about it which instilled confidence.

I agree with one report that the boat is ideal for the beginner. Once under way I hoisted the mainsail leads which, thanks to old-fashioned luff slides, can be bent on (fitted to the spars) before hoisting.

As with many other TSs which have pop tops, the Investigator has its main halyard housed on the mast. While I don't think it really necessary to lead the main halyard back to the cockpit, I think it is worth it, particularly if you are keen on the single-handed idea.

The pop top, of course, is the fly in the ointment for leading any halyard back aft as it requires that they be led through at least two turning blocks to get them out of the mast and around the top.

HOW SHE SAILED

We had a little too much wind for our full main and jib but I persisted with flogging the boat along in the belief that if anything was going to break it would be then.

Sailing performance was quite impressive once the breeze eased off, and we weren't over-cannased.

We sailed into a bay to get out of the wind and to test the boat's performance in the light stuff. Interestingly, with only standard jib and main she skipped along at about the same speed in the lighter puggs and I gained the impression that she was quite at home in light weather beating.

The centreboard was necessary for upwind work while on a reach or run it really helped the speed to get it up; it certainly was no trouble to raise and lower the board as it could be done one-handed by the helmsman.

For the test pics I found I was easily able to sail the boat single-handed, particularly helped by the jib furling gear and the way everything was led to within easy reach.

We didn't try the boat offshore but I am sure that with such a good ballast ratio and stable hull form the little Investigator could look after herself well if called upon.

ACCOMMODATION:

Going below the Investigator opens out as a warm, comfortable little cruiser uncluttered by a centreboard case or by mast protruding through the cabin roof. It's hard to get a lot of room into a boat of only 5.6 m length but Shepherd has done a fine job in making the Investigator into a quite comfortable little ship below.

To begin with, Shepherd has

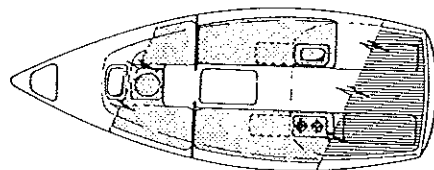
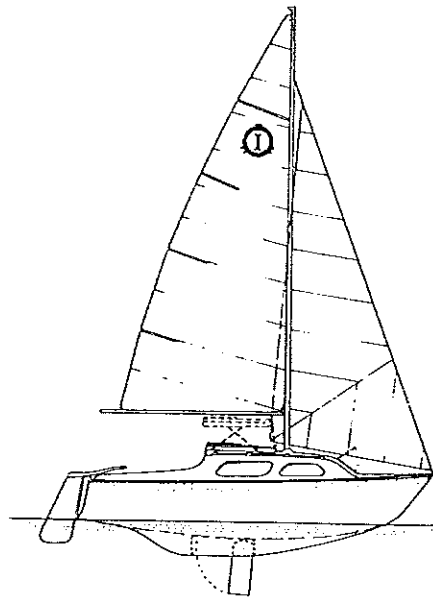
rig the jib ready for use when pushing off the ramp or beach but also in a small sailing boat it is a nice, neat way of reducing sail area if caught out in a storm or squall. Provided the furling gear can handle the headsail; some are just too small to work when it blows hard.

The Investigator's jib halyard doubled up on the forestay and was tied off on the tack end of the furling gear. Kevin Shepherd used a similar system on one of his early Valiants (a Gwen 12). A light line ran right aft to the transom from the furler, where it ran via a small deadeye to a small cleat in the cockpit, where the helmsman could easily operate it.

Another brief for the design was for the boat to be easily sailed single-handed and, in this respect, I think the designer has done a good job, as all the major controls except the main halyard, but including the centreboard lifting line, are led to a position where one man in the cockpit can reach them.

Our launching effort proved a success, although we nearly died from the cold water. The boat slid off the tilt trailer easily enough, although we damaged the rudder. The rudder is a solid blade and, while you could have it attached for launching off a constant-slope ramp, it did not work on the ramp we used.

Once under way, even in the fresh conditions we experienced, I found the



AWARD WINNING T.S.

designed the interior around four fixed berths in a conventional plan of two settee berths in the main cabin and two vee berths forward of the main bulkhead in what could be called the forecabin. The main bulkhead neatly divides the two sleeping areas but is cut open enough to prevent a closed-in feeling. The bulkhead in our demonstrator had a timber edge ring front and was painted white to enhance the interior.

The bulkhead takes the load of the mast step on deck and helps to tie the hull and deck shells together at this critical area.

Where are the galley and toilet, you say? Shepherd has (justifiably in my mind) made the galley a slide-away unit or units. They consist of two slide-away sections that disappear up the quarters and under the cockpit. The toilet head which can be either a pump-pull or chemical type is an optional extra that is fitted between the vee of the two for'ard berths.

The two galley units are the stove on a port side and the sink on the starboard side, they slide out over the aft third of the settee berths allowing enough room for the cook to sit either side-saddle on the berths or on the ice box which could be placed on the saloon floor during cooking.

The galley unit is sold as an optional extra which I think is sensible, as many people will not start overnighting in this size of boat till they have sailed for some time. Many owners, in fact, will be using the boat for day cruising and they

will just add interior extras as they go along.

For overnight stays one could have a curtain or fold-away door in the opening of the main bulkhead to provide extra privacy to the two sleeping areas.

A table has been designed to fit between the two settee berths but one can also use the for'ard vee berth timber cut-out as a table in the cockpit.

The berths suit full-sized adults and are designed to be easy to get into; the pop top brings the headroom from a good sitting height of just under 1.5 m to a standing headroom height of 1.6 m.

The standing headroom was OK for me but tall people might find it a little short — the answer would be to have a custom set of pop top arms made up so the pop top height is brought up more.

The pop top mechanism needed a two-step method of use which was a little old-fashioned given the new spring-loaded one-step pop tops that some other TSs use. However, if worked well and the whole thing seemed to make a good watertight seal when locked down on the cabin.

The interior was reasonably well finished with interior furniture moulds and a moulded glass floor and headliner. The interior was finished in flow gel coat and light colors. I particularly like the large window area which gave plenty of light below. Ventilation was also well taken care of when the for'ard hatch was open — it would be possible to leave this hatch open while you were moored at night and not take in rain.

Up top the cockpit provides comfortable seating (with back rests)

for four adults. There is a port and starboard cockpit locker one of which is big enough to take the outboard while the other houses an ice box.

On-deck gear is well thought out and has been obviously worked out on the drawing board and not slapped on as the boat developed.

Apart from the anchor well on the foredeck which, bless the builders, has its own hatch with a lock, there were sturdy handrails on the cabin-top and good non-skid on all areas where a foot could be placed — cabin top as well as deck and cockpit floor.

In standard sail-away trim the boat comes with useful stern mooring cleats as well as a mooring bollard on the foredeck.

It is worth noting that the handrails, bilge pump and Ravia outboard bracket are included in the standard sail-away boat.

One of the best ideas I have seen for a long time for a TS, or any boat for that matter, was the recessed moulded steps in the transom of the Investigator.

For safety or just for swimming and boarding these steps are a great idea.

My test boat looked a little spartan below, lacking as it did any optional extras or even bunk cushions, however, judged overall, the Investigator appealed to me as an honest, safe little yacht that was well built. It also has attractive lines which I think is really an important aspect when choosing your dream and speed ship.

Once upon a time yachtsmen used to put attractive lines well above such mundane features as accommodation and how expensive the boat was to buy but then, I guess, that really was in the past.

Apart from the rudder not being able to be fitted before launching and maybe a for'ard hatch a bit on the small side, the Investigator is pretty good for a boat that is only 18ft 6in long — as I said before she really appears more like 7 metres.

All the extras we think necessary — such as internal gear and an outboard, outboard transom bracket, jib furling gear, interior and nav lights, WC and, of course, the trailer — bring the price from \$5450 to about \$8300.

Other necessary items in our book — pulpit, pushpit, lifelines and a boom crutch — would add another \$500 to the price. Altogether the price would then be about \$8800, as at June 1977. Good value. *



FACT BOX

INVESTIGATOR by Kevin Shepherd
from Investigator Yachts, Sydney.

LOA	5.6 m
Beam	2.13 m
Draft	533 mm/914 mm
Displacement	659 kg
Ballast	317 kg
Working sail area	14.64 m ²