

A guide to Australian trailer-sailers (incomplete)

Author unknown - possibly Bob Ross - Sailing magazine (late 1970's)

Introduction

It goes without saying that in compiling a guide such as this the author is very dependent on the co-operation of boat manufacturers.

In this case many of the manufacturers provided a boat for me—and my test crew—to sail and evaluate personally. Others did not provide a boat but supplied all the relevant information. A few, regrettably, supplied nothing and any information we needed had to be searched out from other sources.

This accounts for the fact that many of the trailer-sailers listed in this guide are described in detail, while some have only limited information about their construction and performance. Where no co-operation was received from the manufacturer, a few have only sketchy details gleaned from outside sources.

In the case of the New Zealand craft, however, it was the geographical problem that prevented me from testing them personally, for the New Zealand manufacturers were, to a man, most co-operative and helpful. The details of trailer-sailers in that superb sailing country are those supplied by the manufacturers.

Investigator 563

Most people like a boat to look like a boat! Kevin Shephard has already indicated his preference in

this field as designer of the prettiest medium-sized yacht afloat—the Marauder 725. He has carried the same concept into the Investigator and she is a pretty boat along classic lines.

The hull is standard round bilge with little tumblehome and fair rake at the stem. The entry is fine and clean, and in fact this boat's hull carries much of the Marauder's lines forward, only the broadening of the trailer transom getting away from the 725 style. The cabin line, too, follows this trend, being fairly standard with large windows making the interior light and airy and a wide poptop hatch which allows good headroom in the hatchway.

The underwater profile, however, is quite different. Far from standard, the long keel slopes back at a low angle from the forefoot, if in fact there is a forefoot, for the angle between stem and keel is almost negligible. This permits easy trailering in that the boat rools herself onto the trailer, there being only an insignificant step between the flat of the keel and the rake of the bow. It is in this long sloping area that the 368 kilograms of ballast is situated, and through its centre the centreboard plate drops down. Undoubtedly, this is a first-class piece of design work, incorporating as it does features of positive righting stability, trailerability, and the recessed centreplate.

A number of other interesting design features are to be found in this boat. The transom-hung rudder can be unshipped, reversed and reshipped to provide a rear crutch for the mast when the boat is on the trailer. The forward hatch is formed by the opening front window of the cabin in motor

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boat style, a good innovation as it gives good light, forward visibility from down below, and through ventilation, a feature many larger boats could copy. The outboard is fitted under the cockpit seat on the port side and is simply pivoted down through a hatch in the hull, so that it never has to be lifted, merely swung up and down.

The moulding of the Investigator is solid. The decks and cabin top have a firm feel when you walk on them, and there is none of the 'twanginess' often associated with boats of this size in glass fibre. Except, that is, on the pop-top which is a bit on the light side. However, this would not need to be too heavy, as a common factor with the pop-top on some craft is the hernia that comes with raising it!

Non-skid surface, hand rails and all the usual trimmings come with this boat which is well fitted and rigged. Single lowers and uppers form the shroud rig, with $\frac{3}{8}$ forestay and tensionable backstay offering a certain amount of flexibility to the mast. The test boat was fitted with safety rails which, of course, are not standard but which, surprisingly, did not interfere with the operation of the boat as they frequently do on small craft.

Down below, the lack of centreboard casing makes this a very big little family boat. The four berths make for easy family accommodation, with the two forward bunks concealing a central toilet, either pump-out or suitcase variety. The bunks also house the built-in buoyancy which totals 0.7 cubic metres in the form of sealed air tanks. Galley and sink are provided for in a slide-out arrangement under the cockpit which means they can be stowed out of the way when sailing.

Inside, this little boat is extremely roomy, light and airy. Apart from the lack of centreboard casing, which gives her big boat appearance, a unique 'oriental' styled bulkhead between main saloon and forward cabin provides the strength and separation needed at this point without cutting the boat up into small sectors. Together with the forward window, these features enable one to view right through the boat and out onto the foredeck, giving a tremendous feeling of spaciousness. The hatch or window is well secured and sealed to ensure watertightness.

A main and jib totalling 16.2 square metres comprises the rig with the halyards running back to the cockpit so that all sailing operations from hoisting onwards can be carried out from the cockpit position. I found the sail area quite sufficient to move her along nicely in the light stuff, and not over-canvas her in the squalls. But for heavy weather, the boat is fitted with roller reefing so that sail can be taken in quite easily. Winches are not fitted and are not necessary, and the track is mounted right aft out of the way of passengers and crew.

Hard on the wind the Investigator sailed well and pointed up beautifully, although on the test boat the close-sheeted jib (on the cabin top) seemed to be backwinding the main, and I would suggest the sheeting points could be eased out to a slightly less acute angle. She responded quickly to main sheet pressure which is necessary in small boats to ensure that they are kept sailing at their best, even through squally conditions such as we encountered. She had only slight tendency towards weather helm, even in the hard squalls, and try as we might, there was no way we could put her gunwale under, so she is not tender and the 50 per cent ballast ratio (the norm for deep-keel yachts) worked well.

Eased off, this little boat really flew through the water. At no time did she give us a moment's worry, handling responsively and riding with good stability through the squalls. I would like to see the tiller hinged as it tended to catch the knees a little when going hard about, and my suggestion to this effect was taken by the builder who intends making this adjustment in future models. Otherwise on or off the wind, she showed no bad tendencies and handled like a charm.

Dead downwind is where the long keel showed up and she sailed a line straight as a die. There was no boom vang fitted to the test boat but again, this is to be rectified in future versions. The centreplate has little or no weight in it, and there is no need for the hydraulic or mechanical lifting gear usually associated with boats of this type. A simple light line near the cabin entrance is all that is required to lift the plate and a cam cleat holds it in position. By juggling a little with the

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centreboard. the performance of the boat can be improved, and this is something that will delight the heart of owners previously used to centre-board dinghies.

As a family trailer-sailer she is first-class, and that's a comment from one who is not too keen on trailer-sailers in general. But this little boat has had a tremendous amount of thought put into her design and it has all paid off. She is pretty—a delight to the eye—roomy, and a pleasure to handle. Add to that first-rate performance, and you must come up with the answer that the Investigator is an ideal little boat for beginner and enthusiast alike.

SPECIFICATIONS

<i>LOA</i>	5.63 m
<i>LWL</i>	5.02 m
<i>Beam</i>	2.1 m
<i>minimum Draft</i>	0.54 m
<i>Displacement</i>	750 kg
<i>Ballast</i>	368 kg
<i>Berths</i>	4
<i>Motor</i>	4 hp (2.98 kw) outboard
<i>Main</i>	9.4 m ²
<i>Jib</i>	6.8 m ²
<i>Manufacturer</i>	Yacht Sales Cureening Cove Sydney NSW 2000

