

MacGREGOR 26

By GEOFF & KAREN DEWS

South Pacific Yachts of Queensland have increased their range of American imported MacGregor yachts with the MacGregor 26 trailer sailer. This follows the importation of the MacGregor 65 into Australia earlier this year. The MacGregor 26 is fully imported in a ready-to-sail version including mast, sails and trailer from the Californian factory.

The MacGregor 26 was launched three years ago and has become a success class in the United States. The design targets the sailor who has the family to consider, and likes to sail in sheltered waters. The 26 has sleeping berths for six which includes a large aft double bunk and a separate compartment which is designed to hold a portable toilet. The yacht is 2.5m wide with a trailable weight of 975kg which can be towed by a family car of 2.2-litre capacity or more.

The unique feature of the boat is the water ballast system which allows for the trailable weight to be kept down. The water ballast design is an important part in the stability of the yacht and works by opening a valve in the bottom of the hull which fills a tank that runs along the keel either side of the centreboard casing.

It takes approximately six minutes to fill the tank which gives the boat its self-righting characteristics.

The MacGregor requires only 38cm of water to float and has a swinging centreboard and kickup rudder which are completely above



Although bulky, the boat is good looking.



Huge double bed aft

the bottom of the hull when in the tilt position. The rudder shaft passes up through the hull and deck and has no transom mounted assembly.

A stainless steel housing at the lower end of the shaft holds the blade and eliminates the need for the rudder to be removed for trailing. The centreboard also swings back to be completely enclosed in the hull for trailing or shallow water manoeuvring.

The interior design of the MacGregor is directed towards a family boat to the point of the enclosed head amidships. The head features a lockable door and solid walls in which a chemical toilet could be installed. Storage space is limited inside the boat, but there is a large storage compartment at the aft end of the cockpit suitable for rope and anchor storage. The galley has a sink and storage space for a two-burner stove, although the stove is not supplied with the basic boat. Water storage is a soft plastic tank as there are no built-in water tanks. There is also an ice chest and a table recessed into a bunk which can be removed for cleaning.

MacGregor 26 - A low priced big trailer sailer



Sailing peacefully up the Southport Broadwater. Ideal cruising grounds for this kind of boat.



Sailing with the pop top up is safe enough in light breezes.



On the trailer, ballast water draining away.

A feature which would attract most Australians is the pop top hatch which lifts to provide full headroom in the main cabin and good ventilation. The disadvantage of the pop top is that it interferes with the vang on the main boom. The vang cannot be operated when the pop top is fully extended which impedes the mainsail set. A fabric cover with side windows encloses the pop top area to give protection from the weather but is only practicable when at anchor.

The cockpit is roomy and deep making it safe for children as well as comfortable for the helmsman. The cockpit is fully self-draining although no figures were available as to the time required to completely empty the cockpit of water. The designers claim that the boat will stay afloat even if the cockpit is filled due to the foam flotation incorporated into the construction of the boat.

The helmsman is close to the mainsheet controls which is ideal for single handing and when sailing the boat on the Broadwater near Southport in fresh gusty breezes, the response to the main sheet settings was critical to keeping the yacht at an acceptable angle heel. The main sheet block is mounted in a fixed position on the cockpit floor in front of the companion way entrance which can hinder people getting in and out of the cabin when the boat is under sail.

The construction is all fibreglass with no wood trim except in the tiller. The fore and aft areas of deck are strengthened with marine ply between the layers of fibreglass. There are no back plates for the deck mounted fittings but rather tapered laminates and the chain plates are bolted directly into the hull which transfers the loads directly into the basic structure of the boat.

Because the MacGregor is a production boat it is only available in the one colour, white, but the Australian agents will be adding their own colour trim.

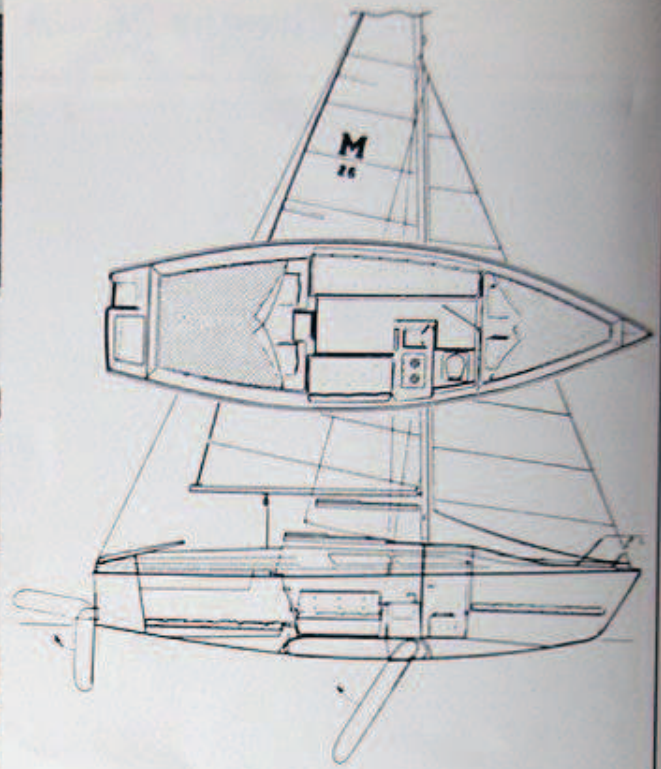
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Cockpit is roomy and the boat easy to handle.

Erecting the mast is done while the boat is on the trailer by using a labour saving block and tackle system mounted on to a lever arm.

The block and tackle lever arrangement system is made of light aluminium and can be easily stored on the boat. By using this system



Rudder and outboard motor are easily handled.

the mast can be lowered or raised by one person with no physical effort. The trailer is designed with a ladder at the front which allows for a dry launching by the crew.

The MacGregor has a draught of only 38cm, with the centreboard and rudder retracted, making it ideal for beaching and shallow water sailing. In the boat reviewed by "AY" the MacGregor's handling ability was good and even when knocked over in gusts quickly responded by rounding up due to the V hull shape. It would not suit the family that seeks blue water yachting, but is ideal for sheltered bays, rivers and estuaries that abound along the east coast of Australia.

The sail-away kit is priced at under \$36,500, which does not include an outboard motor. The outboard recommended by the manufacturers is between 7 to 9.9hp. and longshafted.

To make the MacGregor seaworthy and really comfortable, a number of extras would need to be added including all the required safety equipment which can all be supplied by the distributors.



Trailering is easy behind an Australian "big 6" car.

MacGREGOR 26 SPECIFICATIONS:

LOA: 25ft 10in
 LWL: 23ft 6in
 Beam: 7ft 11in
 Draught: 6ft 4in/1ft 3in
 Displacement: 2850 lbs
 Ballast: 1200 lbs
 Weights: Boat and trailer (builder's spec) 2200 lbs; trailing weight (measured -test boat) 2998 lbs; nose weight: 264 lbs
 Sail Area (main and jib): 236sq.ft;
 genoa 176sq.ft; spinnaker: 360sq.ft
 Engine: Outboard up to 10hp
 Designer: MacGregor
 Builder: MacGregor Yacht Corporation
 Sail area/displacement ratio: 18.789
 Disp/length ratio: 98.03
 Ballast ratio: 42.1%