

Investigator 563

"When you are not in control, it takes over."

These were the words used by a happy Investigator 563 owner who took me out for a test sail on a day of strong southeast winds in Sydney recently. He was describing an incident he experienced with the boat after spending the night in a calm anchorage, only to be clobbered by a sudden storm the instant he had raised the anchor to return home.

"I found out later it was blowing 50 knots. I couldn't get the jib unfurled . . . there was water breaking over the boat. . . after a while I just gave up and she settled down on her own. Then I was able to get the engine going and motor her out of it. I tell you, that gave me enormous confidence in the boat."



This photograph of an Investigator appeared on the cover of the December 1981 edition of Australian Boating magazine.

The Investigator 563 is a confidence inspiring little craft - more like a small yacht than a trailer-boat. This is in no small part due to the fact that she has a keel - quite a long one, which draws 0.52m and her weight, 750kg of which ballast is 346kg or about 45%. Designed by Kevin Shepherd, the Investigator has proved to be a popular and sought-after small vessel over the five or so years she has been in production. Many owners, like the one quoted above, have had their boats for a long time and would not consider changing.

DESIGN: The Investigator is 5.63m LOA, 2.09m beam and carries 16.3 sq.m. working sail. She has a wedge shape with a wide transom, clean round bilges and a fairly fine entry. Underwater, her hull lines depart radically from standard t/s practice in that the forefoot continues into a keel, gently rounded and reaching its maximum depth some two thirds aft of the bow under the cockpit in fact, before sloping in another curve back up to the transom. The rudder is mounted on the transom with a fixed tiller. Inside the keel there is an unballasted dagger board which can be lowered to increase her windward ability.

Below decks, the boat again was set out like a yacht, with a full ring bulkhead under the mast-step, separating the fore cabin from the saloon. The forward cabin had a vee-berth that could sleep small adults but would be better suited to children, with a chemical toilet under. The saloon had two good sized settee berths, and there was room for a rudimentary galley around the companionway steps without interfering with the berths. Because of the keel, there was plenty of storage low down - the ship's battery in fact was under the cabin sole level.

Sitting headroom is good in the saloon, but the boat also has a substantial pop-top. The forehatch is part of the cabin and there are big windows in the saloon. Two huge deck lockers, one outfitted for the auxiliary engine's fuel, were in the cockpit, which has superbly rounded bench seats and a high coaming.

RIG: The Investigator is fractionally rigged with two shrouds a side, no backstay, and the mainsheet attaching to a solid traveler system over the transom. The test boat was fitted with jib furling gear, and the owner had added a set of mast tensioning shrouds, but admitted the boat probably didn't need them.



One of the prettiest small sailors afloat, the Investigator stood up to her canvas in the conditions. Note position of tiller - almost no weather helm.

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UNDER SAIL: As mentioned, I sailed the Investigator on a blustery day, with winds up to 25 knots but calm seas. The owner opted for the smaller of his two jibs, but we decided to leave the main unreefed and see how she went. In the full force of the breeze, the Investigator heeled gently and sped off to windward with no drama at all. There was hardly any weather helm - just enough to give the right amount of feel.

On a fast reach the weather helm was slightly greater, but fiddling around with the dagger plate may well cure this. One curious thing about the boat on a fast reach was that it fairly throbbed: the owner said it had done so since new and he used it as a gauge for knowing he was at top speed.

Once, in a big gust, I had to ease the main to keep a reasonable angle of heel, but the general qualities of the boat were that she seemed particularly stiff and secure. Ironically, I would have liked to sail her in light air as I suspect her weight would prove she was no great speedster. In the conditions prevailing, the little Investigator was at hull speed most of the time, and stood up to her canvas very well.

CONCLUSION: This is an ideal boat for a family where Mum is reluctant to go sailing because she's afraid the boat will tip over. Its great appeal is its sea manners and looks: there would be very few small trailer yachts as pretty. She is definitely old fashioned by today's standards, but this is no criticism.

Specifications

LOA	5.63m
LWL	4.95m
Beam	2.09m
Draft (up)	0.53m
Draft (down)	1.14m
Displacement	750kg
Prices	\$6995