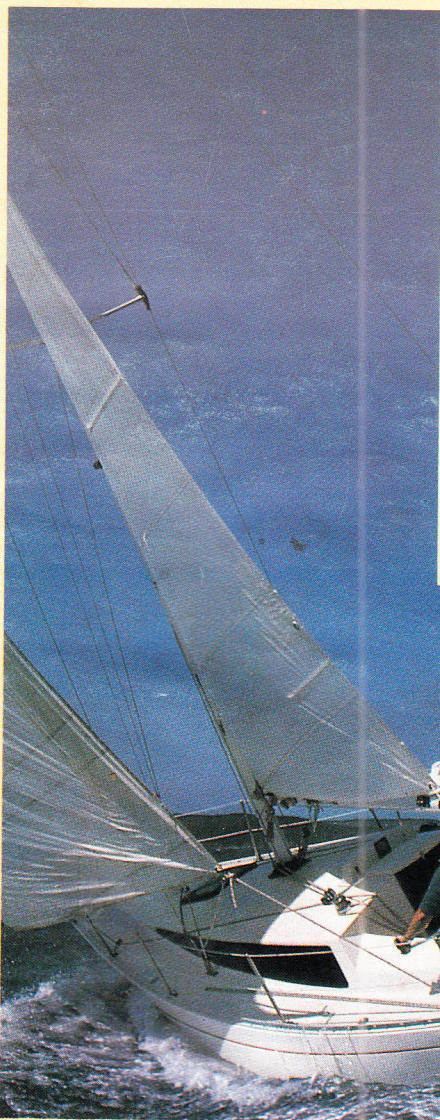


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sailboat tests



INVESTIGATOR 563

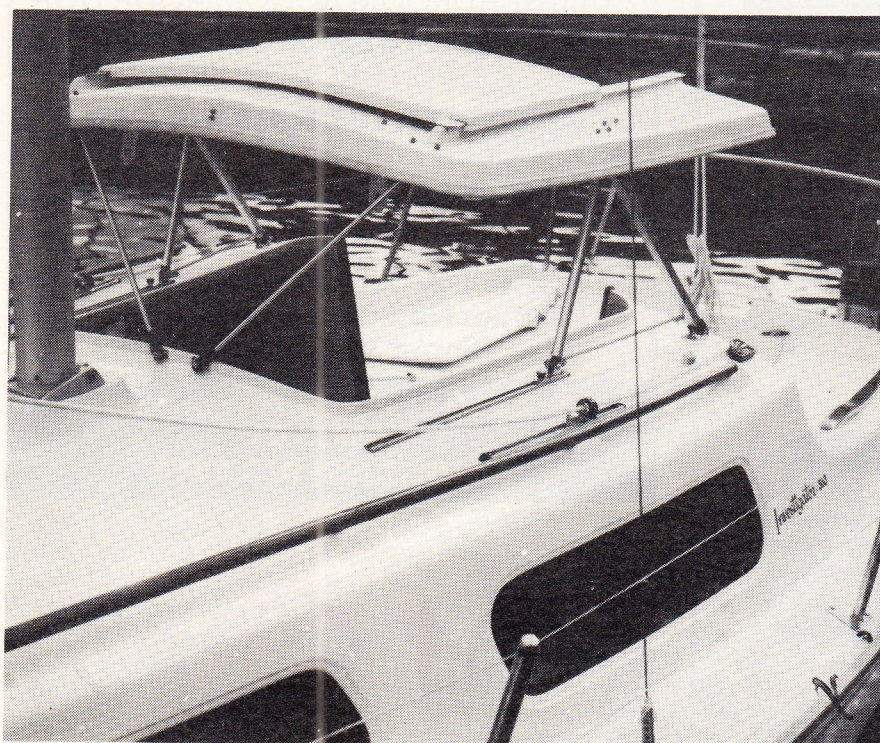
Trailer-sailers can be, for most intents and purposes, divided into two categories — those that are overgrown dinghies and those that are miniature yachts. Each type has its own advocates, and it depends largely on what the owner wants out of any particular boat which type will be selected.

The Investigator 563 belongs firmly in the miniature yacht branch, so much so in fact that it could be regarded as the model for the species. Unlike most trailer-sailers, the Investigator carries a full keel and only uses its centre-board to help counteract leeway. Its ballast, 346kg, accounts for almost half its all-up displacement of 750kg — and when you consider the Investigator is only 5.63m long, that's considerable. A disadvantage of having a keel on a trailer yacht is that it has a constant draft (0.5m) which means it won't take the ground as well as craft with full lifting keels, and launching it off a trailer becomes more complicated as well.

That aside, what you gain is genuine yacht-style handling on a smaller scale and the sort of stability common to big yachts that you simply can't take for granted on trailer-sailers. Furthermore the 563 is a well-mannered boat. It is easy to steer in most wind conditions and doesn't develop the sort of helm problems common to boats with no underbody. Consequently, the 563 has more appeal to the genuine cruising sailor where speed is not as important as motion and comfort.

Besides her long keel, the 563 has several other features that distinguish her from her opposition. The transom-hung rudder, for example, has its tiller through a





channel in the transom under the mainsheet traveller. Siting the traveller here means it is quite clear of the cockpit, allowing that space to be used to its maximum. The only disadvantage of this system is that the tiller cannot pivot. Rig otherwise is fairly standard; though in keeping with several other smaller craft like the Status Slipstream, there is no backstay.

The test craft had a simple jib furler, which was appropriate for the Investigator's chosen role as a comfortable, easy to handle cruiser. This small headsail sheets to the cabin top rather than the cockpit, again leaving the cockpit uncluttered.

Below decks, the Investigator again echoes its miniature yacht role, in that there is a full bulkhead under the mast step separating the

forepeak from the saloon, and the cabin sole is not divided by a centreboard case. This allows space for two good settee berths with sitting headroom, a small galley tucked in around the companionway, and a vee-berth in the bows with a toilet under a removeable panel. The vee berth is two small for most adults but OK for children. Good sized saloon windows, a pop top and a moulded forehatch provide plenty of light and air.

We were fortunate to sail the little 563 in brisk winds, as this is when most trailer-sailers reveal their vices rather than virtues. However as mentioned earlier, the 563 is almost viceless under sail. Upwind in a breeze we noticed no appreciable weather helm and the angle of heel was, again, consistent with yacht performance rather

"... the Investigator 563 is almost viceless under sail ... upwind we noticed no appreciable weather helm and the angle of heel was consistent with yacht performance rather than trailer sailer ... though easing the mainsheet did right the boat to some extent, this tactic was not critical ..."

than trailer-sailer, and though easing the mainsheet did right the boat to some extent this tactic was not critical. Off the wind the craft was equally well mannered and one could gauge the speed by the throbbing of the centreboard control wire, and that's common to most craft with a wire pendant.

Without trying to sound chauvinistic, this is a boat that will appeal to women who otherwise may not go sailing, because it is mild mannered, predictable, and offers genuine comfort for its size.

It will never be a speedster but it is a very practical small yacht, and deserves its ongoing success.

SPECIFICATIONS

Investigator 563	
LOA	5.63m
Beam	2.1m
Draft	54cm-1.14m
Sail area	17sq m
Displacement	750kg