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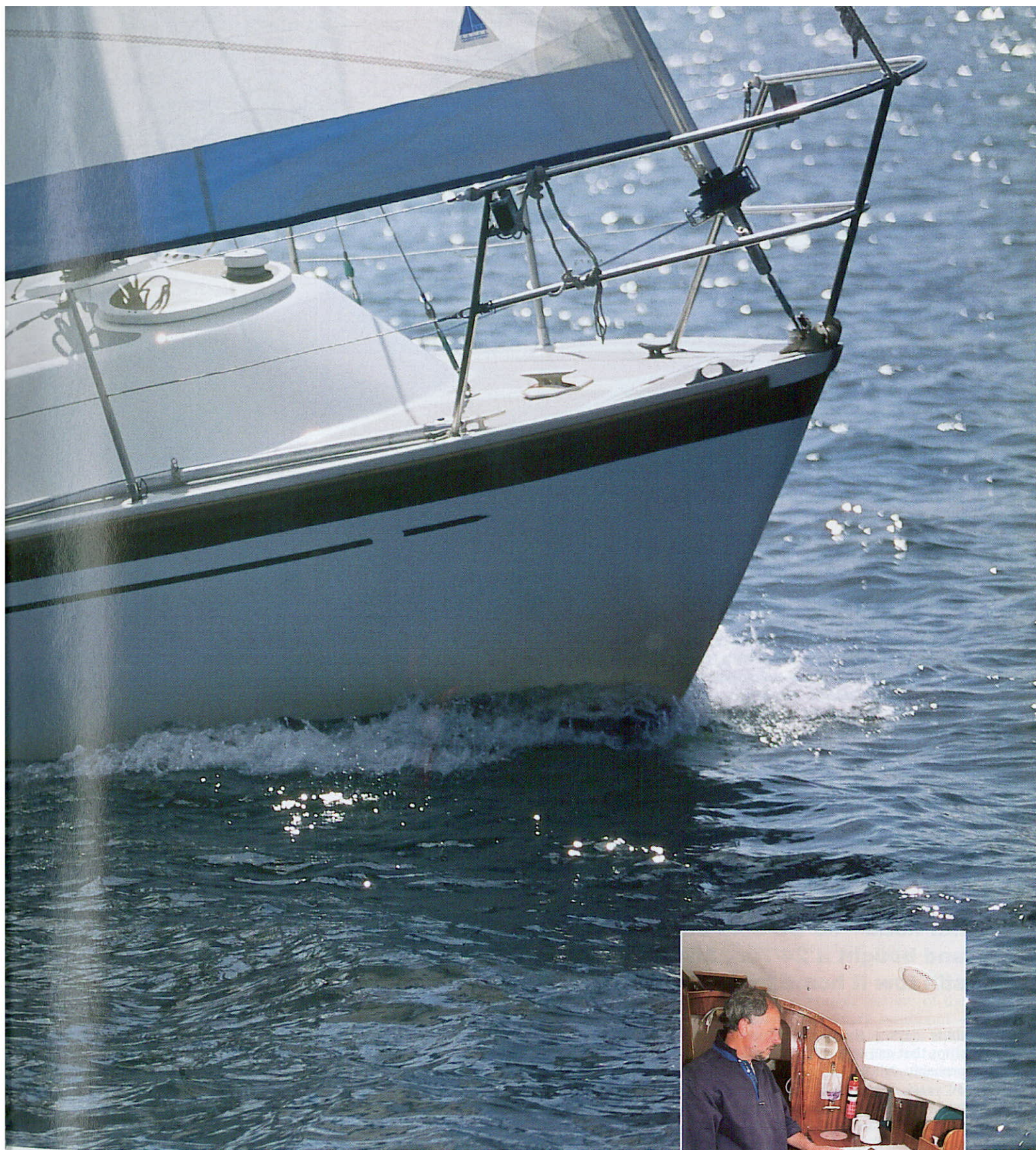
A photograph of a man in a dark shirt and cap sailing a white Hurley 24/70 sailboat on a blue sea. The boat is moving, creating a white wake. The man is looking towards the camera. The background is a bright blue sky and sea.

**PBO USED BOAT TEST** Price: 5,750 – £8,500

# Please be upstanding for the Hurley 24/70

How many cruisers with a 17ft 6in waterline can offer standing headroom, plenty of stowage, excellent seakeeping qualities and good sailing performance? Not many, says **David Harding** – but, with the Hurley 24/70, you get all this and more for the price of a secondhand hatchback...

**O**n parts of the south coast, a newcomer would find it hard to believe that Britain ever had a boatbuilding industry – or that anyone goes sailing in boats under 35ft. Rows of big, high-sided new imports line the pontoons in expensive marinas, waiting for their owners to head down from town for the weekend. It's a different world from that in which many of us started our sailing careers, dragging an inflatable

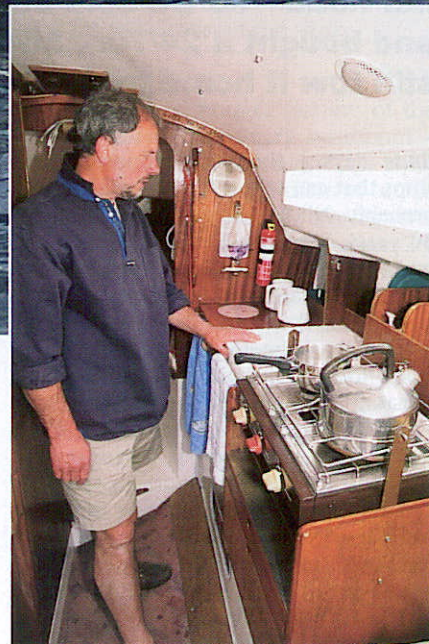


dinghy over the mud and rowing half way across the river to clamber aboard a 22-footer on a tidal mooring...

In other places, though, evidence of a bygone era still remains. Head up the Carrick Roads beyond Mylor, for example, and you could be back in the '70s: dozens of old Westerlys, Hurleys, Seals and Snapdragons lie happily to their moorings off Loe Beach – reminding us that, once upon a time, we used to build boats over here. More importantly, perhaps, they're

still giving their owners a great deal of pleasure three decades on – and you'd be hard pressed to find anything over 28ft among them.

So, instead of the big, new and foreign, this particular corner of Cornwall seems to attract the small, old and home-grown. But why's it such a stronghold of the sort of boats that, increasingly, buyers seem to be eschewing in favour of up-to-the-minute, wide-bodied alternatives fresh from the factory and with names



**Standing headroom in the galley – still unusual on a 24-footer.**



**The long, deep and sheltered cockpit is one of the Hurley's best features.**

chosen to evoke images of sun-drenched islands in the Mediterranean? After all, the Cornish are a canny bunch, and they'd never buy anything that didn't do the job.

If the rest of the mooring-holders off Loe Beach are anything like Mike Wills, they have good reasons for choosing their traditional British cruisers – however unfashionable they may be in some quarters. They don't expect the instant, step-on-and-go boating that some newcomers appear to consider essential, instead being prepared to put a little work into their boats. That way, they can enjoy sailing the sort of solid small cruisers that builders simply can't afford to produce

**“My wife announced that she needed to stand up without banging her head – so we sold our Hurley 18 and bought a 24/70... And we can still tow it home for the winter”**

these days – the over-engineered little ships that can take a few knocks and will probably still be going strong in another 30 years. Seen like that, it all begins to make sense.

In Mike's case, the Hurley was always going to be the logical move up from her baby sister – the 18, which he'd bought from local boatbuilder Paul Webster. “That little boat was the apple of my eye,” he said, “but I was delighted when, after a splendid summer, my wife announced that she needed to stand up without banging her head and to enjoy the better facilities of a larger boat. Hence the search for a 24!”

### **Finding a fin**

He managed to track down a fin-keeler which had been laid up ashore for some time at Galmpton on the River Dart;

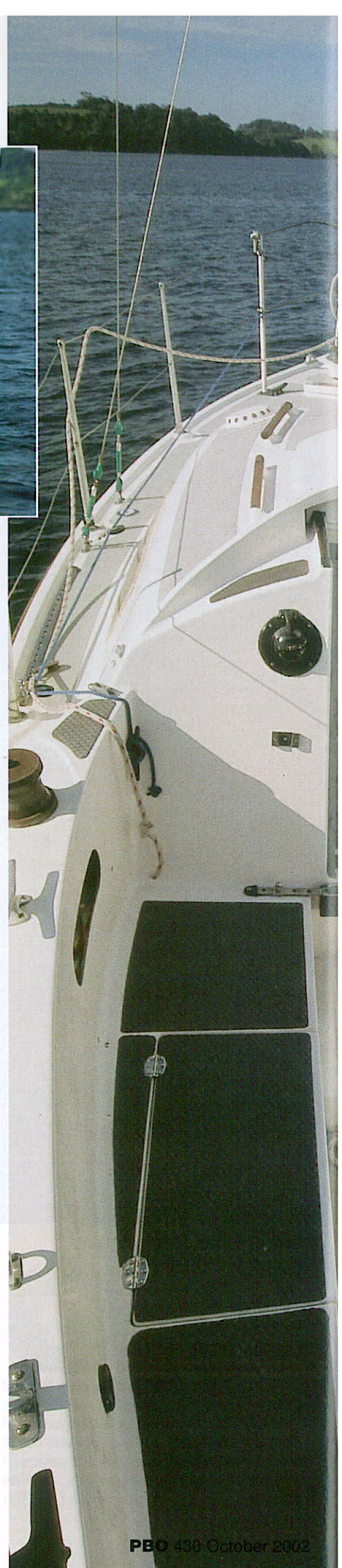
sailing from a deep-water mooring on the Carrick Roads, Mike had little need for a boat that could dry out.

“She was sound but in need of a little TLC when I bought her in the autumn of 1995,” he told me, “and it was a pleasure to complete a few jobs.” Owners of a less practical disposition might consider ‘few jobs’ to be a euphemism for ‘substantial overhaul’ given the scale of the operation, but the work presented few problems for Mike.

Among the bigger tasks were replacing the rubbing strakes, windows, grab handles and seacocks, fitting a new cutlass bearing, laminating a new tiller and, with Paul Webster's help, epoxying the bottom. He also had a pair of wooden legs made – and the hull reinforced accordingly – so he could take the ground if need be.

With some cosmetic treatment and a few other finishing touches including new dodgers, *Esmerelda* was ready to go. And now, with the addition of a new suit of sails from SKB in Falmouth, she looks very smart indeed.

The big question, though, still remains: apart from plenty of headroom and a reputation for sound construction, what does the Hurley 24/70 have to offer? Well, if you're familiar with the Hurley 22 (see PBO 359) you'll have some idea, because she's essentially the same boat that's been stretched in two directions: longitudinally and vertically. Marginally less pretty than her smaller sister, perhaps, she too has a long, encapsulated fin keel and plenty of ballast which, between them, promise good directional stability and a powerful performance in a blow. In fact, one 24/70 completed the Round Britain Race back in the '70s, apparently taking severe gales in her stride with little fuss.





When you look at her hull shape and study the ratios, it's easy to see why: with half her weight in a bulbed keel of respectable depth, she should have stiffness in reserve with no dependence on form stability. At the same time, her narrow beam, generous displacement and long overhangs will encourage a relatively gentle motion, though the slender stern might increase the pitching tendency in some conditions. Ted Brewer's Comfort Ratio confirms that she should indeed be a steadier platform in turbulent seas than most boats her length: her figure works out at an impressive 27.8. That's higher than a Sadler 29, virtually the same as a Westerly Pentland and nigh on double what you'd expect from a modern 24-footer. For steady, relaxing sailing, you could do a lot worse.

While we're studying ratios, what about the others? At well over 400, the displacement/waterline ratio suggests that she's something of a heavyweight by modern standards, though her waterline length will increase substantially once she's heeled. Similarly, her sail area/displacement ratio of 12.8 makes her appear rather under-canvassed – but that's largely thanks to the incredibly skinny, high aspect-ratio mainsail that was fashionable at the time in IOR circles. Piling on plenty of headsail area should get her going in light airs, especially given her modest wetted area.

On balance, then, the 24/70 should be a comfortable, well-mannered cruiser with a reasonable turn of speed. On the other hand, her weight and narrow stern will restrict her surfing ability downwind in a breeze – and with the wind abaft the beam in any conditions, that tiny mainsail will be of little help. It's barely more than a trim tab for windward sailing, leaving the headsail (and the crew winching it in) to do most of the work.

### Head high

One of the most notable features of the 24/70 is her extraordinary headroom – but how did Ian Anderson manage to let six-footers stand up in the cabin of such a small boat without resorting to offensively high topsides, when even a modern 26-footer with the same height 'twixt floorboards and deckhead can look rather inflated? Well, since the Hurley's day, boats have become beamier and lighter, as a result of which their canoe bodies (essentially the hull's depth below the waterline) have become shallower. In other words, you're standing lower down in the Hurley – so the height is gained below the waterline instead of above.

Don't forget that, for a boat of any given displacement, tucking in the waterline beam will let it float lower in the water. You reduce the wetted area, form stability and internal volume, but increase headroom for the same freeboard, improve the balance and benefit from a more com- ▢

## Down below Heads you win



**O**nce you've accepted the novelty of being able to stand up straight – or, for a six-footer, very nearly straight – you begin to notice the other features of the Hurley's cabin.

For a start, there's stowage under the bunks, behind the backrests and below the side decks. As on many older, relatively narrow boats, no space has been wasted. The bunks are a generous length, too: no less than 6ft 6in each side – where they extend under the cockpit – and a full 6ft in the amply-proportioned forecabin.

Another remarkably spacious area is the heads. Opposite, the galley was extended by *Esmerelda's* previous owner, who removed the after bulkhead of what was the hanging locker. He added an oak pillar to take the rig compression – but, with the

mast being slightly abaft the bulkhead, Mike took his surveyor's advice and put in a matching pillar to port.

A fold-down chart table against the heads bulkhead was also fitted by the previous owner, while Mike built stowage for charts, pilot books and the like on the inside of the port after bulkhead. He's considering doing something similar to starboard.

Up in the bow, since the moulded-in water tank under the forecabin berth was showing signs of osmosis, he disconnected the deck filler and now uses the space for stowing warps. A small, plumbed-in supply now feeds the galley, with drinking water coming aboard in bottles.

▀ fortable motion. That's a rather simplistic explanation, but the principle explains why the Hurley – despite looking a little bulbous from some angles – is less of a head-banger down below than most boats her size.

For Mike Wills, that was one of the principal attractions. Whatever he bought also had to be easy to manage single-handed, relaxing yet rewarding to sail, and small enough to trail home for the winter behind a 4 x 4. His experience with the smaller Hurley – and her bigger sister's reputation – was enough to lead him to the 24/70. But has this 'new-generation' Hurley performed as he'd hoped?

To find out, I joined him for an afternoon's sail on the Carrick Roads in a gentle westerly that, sadly, never placed *Esmerelda* under any real pressure. Nonetheless, she felt reassuringly stiff in the odd fresher puff and, says Mike, shows little tendency to broach in

stronger conditions.

Neither did she hang around, making upwind at a good 4.5 knots, tacking through a highly respectable 85° or so and proving pleasantly responsive. As you'd expect, the long fin, deep, Vee'd sections and substantial skeg meant that she manoeuvred in a measured manner rather than spinning on a sixpence, but her unhurried temperament makes her easier to sail singlehanded than many modern, shallow-hulled equivalents.

Despite her easy-going nature, though, she was surprisingly sensitive to sail trim and weight distribution – suggesting that Ian Anderson wanted attentive trimming to be rewarded. For example, left to her own devices on the wind, *Esmerelda* rounded up gently (though she could be made to sail herself with the traveller eased) and hove to. From there, she refused to gybe round with the sails pinned in until we tried heeling to wind-

ward: it only needed Mike to step on to the windward deck for her to bear away and the boom to come across.

Since we were sailing in flat water, I had no opportunity to see how she could punch her way through a head sea, but she was stopped fairly abruptly by a wash from a passing motor cruiser. With relatively full forward sections, that's not surprising, and it reinforced my suspicion that there may be certain combinations of wind and sea in which she'd bounce around a little. As long as there's a bit of breeze, said Mike, he has no problems.

My only other criticism was the way in which the babystay made tacking rather awkward, since it's anchored well forward. It would have been harder still with a larger genoa – but the height of the roller-reefing drum called for a high-clew'd sail that also had to be relatively short in the foot to ensure a proper sheet lead. Unlike many sailmakers, SKB evi-

## Other boats to look at

### Sadler 25

23FT 9IN (PLUS RUDDER).  
PRICE RANGE: £10,500 – £12,000

The same overall length as the Hurley, the original Sadler has a longer waterline, a transom-hung rudder and a distinct performance advantage. She also came with the option of a centreplate, though most have fins (deep or shallow) or twin keels. Still competitive in the right hands – and a capable little seaboat too – she's also available new from ex-Sadler employee Andy Middleton at any stage of completion. Down below, all the essentials are there – but, at 5ft 2in (1.57m), the headroom's closer to what you'd expect on a boat of this size.

Test report: PBO 359

### Samphire 23

22FT 7IN.  
PRICE RANGE: £7,000 – £9,000

With her long keel and a displacement similar to the Hurley's, David Cannell's chunky little ship offers solidity and steadiness in ample measure. Interior space is respectable, too: the deepish hull contributes to the 5ft 6in (1.68m) headroom, and you've got four berths if you want them. She takes a little breeze to get going, though – and the original engines tend to be on the small side by modern standards – but your biggest problem might be finding one: only about a dozen were built, and people are often queuing up to buy them.

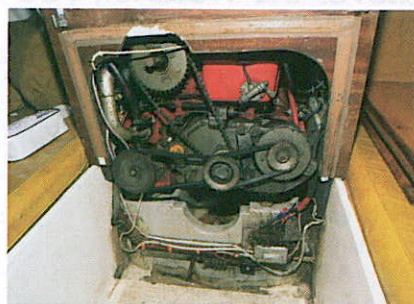
Test report: PBO 385

### Leisure 23

22FT 8IN.  
PRICE RANGE: £7,500 – £12,000

The original version inherited the old 22's chunky deck moulding, while later models benefited from the sleeker, SL-style superstructure and a few inches of extra freeboard. Otherwise, it's the same boat underneath, and one whose performance matches her name. Heavy and narrow by modern standards – like the Hurley and Samphire – she's a steady, comfortable cruiser that you're most likely to find in twin-keel form, though a bulbed fin was also available and would doubtless make her progress under sail a little less leisurely. Down below, the 5ft 10in headroom and enormous galley are the main features.

Test report: PBO 374



The original engine is a tight fit under the cockpit.

### HURLEY 24/70 SPEC

|                                             |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>LOA</b>                                  | 23ft 9in (7.24m)                      |
| <b>LWL</b>                                  | 17ft 6in (5.33m)                      |
| <b>Beam</b>                                 | 7ft 5in (2.26m)                       |
| <b>Draft</b> – fin                          | 4ft 1in (1.24m)                       |
| – twin                                      | 3ft 4in (0.95m)                       |
| <b>Displacement</b>                         | 5,040lb (2,286kg)                     |
| <b>Ballast</b>                              | 2,500lb (1,134kg)                     |
| <b>Sail area</b> (main & 100% foretriangle) | 235sq ft (21.83sq m)                  |
| <b>Engine</b>                               | Petter AB1WM 5hp diesel (or outboard) |
| <b>Headroom</b>                             | 5ft 10in (1.78m)                      |
| <b>Designer</b>                             | Ian Anderson                          |
| <b>Builder</b>                              | Hurley Marine                         |

### HISTORY FEET AND METRES

■ Introduced in 1972, the Hurley 24/70 was the first of the Hurleys whose names reflected their length in both imperial and metric units – in this case, 24ft and 7m.

She was fitted with a 5hp Petter diesel and built for a couple of years before the demise of Hurley Marine. The moulds were then taken over by Atlanta Marine, who continued production for a few more years.

dently take the position of the genoa tracks into account.

### Looking forward

One drawback of the Hurley's high coachroof is that shorter members of crew will have difficulty seeing forward from the cockpit. The heavy camber also makes it a little awkward to walk over, while the narrow side decks are only marginally easier to negotiate. Getting forward, then, is more of a challenge than on some boats, especially since the moulded non-slip pattern stops well short of the edges. And there's none on the hatch garage or the sloping front of the coachroof.

Otherwise, the deck seemed sound and showed few signs of ageing. Significantly, there were no stress cracks around the secure-looking stanchion bases, though Mike plans to inspect the bottom of the stanchions themselves in case the combination of aluminium, stainless steel and

salt water has left them weakened. He's prepared to chop an inch or two off all of them if need be.

Back in the cockpit, you find a pair of coaming lockers – a rarity on modern boats – a half-depth locker each side (with false floors) and another in the stern. But the outstanding feature is the 6ft 6in (1.98m) between the transom and the bulkhead. Few 24-footers can boast a cockpit of that length.

Neither can many of them match the Hurley's blend of roomy accommodation, an easy-going nature and a respectable turn of speed – qualities that will never go out of fashion. Sometimes, though, they lie unrecognised in boats that potential buyers dismiss as too old and tatty: that's why it's good to find people like Mike Wills, who have the time and know-how to administer the necessary TLC, and the experience to recognise a cracking little boat when they see it.

PBO