

Friday, July 21, 1967

# SILHOUETTE MARK III

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**JACK BISCOE** describes the developments incorporated in the latest Silhouette model from Hurley's at Plympton.

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IMPROVED SPECIFICATION

BETTER PERFORMANCE

ROUND BILGE HULL

MORE SAIL AREA

**W**HEN over two thousand of a single class of boat have been constructed and sold, it can hardly be disputed that the design must appeal to a very large number of people. In the case of the Silhouette, such success is even more remarkable when it is related, not to a small dinghy, but to a practical 17ft. 3in. overall sailing cruiser. The original design is now, however, some eight years old, and was of course conceived in the days when plywood reigned supreme in the world of mass produced boats and this medium dictated the hard chine form which was almost universal in that era for other than traditionally built craft. Although over the past few years production of the Silhouette Mk. II has been largely in resin glass, the design has remained virtually unchanged and has inevitably been eclipsed in terms of performance by newer products. Clearly improve-

ments had to be made if its popularity was to be maintained and full advantage taken of the wider scope offered by g.r.p. construction. The Silhouette Mk. III is built solely by Hurley Marine Ltd. of Plympton, Devon.

At first glance, and especially if first seen afloat, it might appear that there has been little change in the boat as a whole other than a new round bilge form and an increase in sail area. In fact, whilst the original overall dimensions and general arrangement remain unchanged, the underwater lines have been so drastically altered as to qualify the Mark III as an entirely new design. Stability is now pro-

vided by twin keels with internal ballast and no central stub keel, whilst a rudder of moderate aspect ratio is hung on a narrow skeg of minimum dimensions. Draft has been increased by five inches and the ballast by 150 lb., giving an increase in ballast ratio from 26% to 37%, and all this of course with a significant reduction in wetted area.

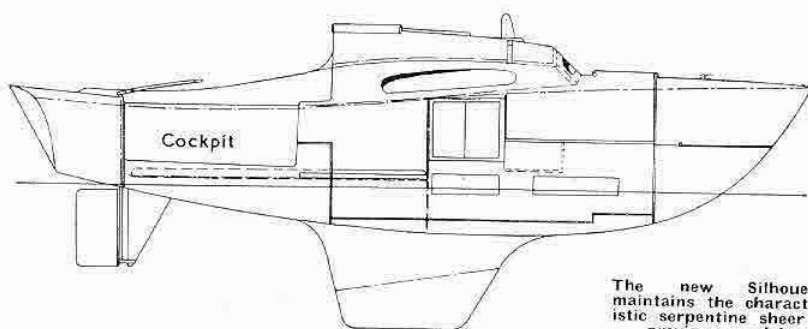
The higher ballast ratio combined with the increased draft has enabled working sail area to be increased from 115 sq. ft. to 165 sq. ft., or about 43%, the genoa further increasing this by 44 sq. ft.

The earlier accommodation plan remains unchanged, the standard cabin layout retaining the previous arrangement of two settee berths with built-in lockers under the bridge deck and forward ends of the cockpit seats, and an additional useful sized locker under the deckhead forward to port. An alternative cabin layout with a quarter berth to port and a fitted galley forward of this is available to order. This is an arrangement which would probably repay its extra cost in terms of convenience if serious cruising is contemplated.

(Continued overleaf)



*The Mark III Silhouette punches her way through the notorious short steep seas of the Bristol Channel.*  
(Photo: Biscoe)



The new Silhouette maintains the characteristic serpentine shear of previous models.



## SILHOUETTE (Cont.)

*The boat shown here is the bilge keel version which performed very well windward. A fin keel model is available but this draws a little more.*

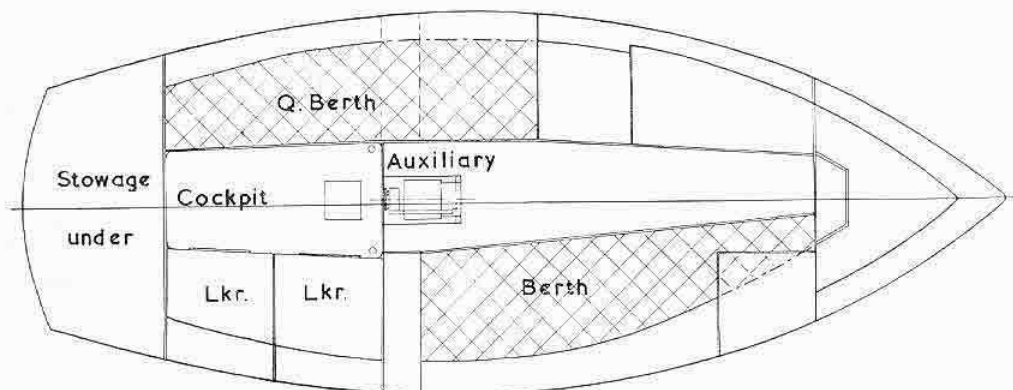
*(Photo: Bisc)*

On deck, a stemhead roller is now provided as standard in place of the more usual fairleads of inadequate size set inboard where chafe from chain or warp will quickly score the gunwale. The mast is stepped in a tabernacle which is a sensible arrangement in a boat which may well be trailer-borne for a large part of the season. The cockpit is self-draining and relatively large and will seat three or four when sailing without undue overcrowding. The rudder stock now passes through a tube moulded into the after end of the cockpit, and this

has made possible improved sheeting arrangements for the mainsail. A jam cleat is provided for securing the main sheet under way. Right aft is a generously sized locker with access through a large moulded hatch cover, and a moulded engine well for an outboard is provided on the port side of the transom. A light alloy mast, Barton roller reefing, stainless steel rigging and fittings, jam cleats for the jib sheets and Terylene running rigging are standard items.

It is when it comes to assessing the sailing qualities of the new Silhouette,

however, that it becomes clear that the Mark III must really be considered as an entirely new design under a familiar name. The first impression on going aboard is of a much stiffer boat where it is possible to move about on deck with complete confidence and this characteristic becomes even more marked when under way. We were fortunate in being able to try out two boats under widely differing conditions, first in light airs in Plymouth Sound and the second under more severe conditions in the Bristol Channel.



*This is the alternative accommodation layout with a quarter berth, galley shelf to port, inboard auxiliary tank, up rather a lot of space but an outboard motor is perfectly adequate.*

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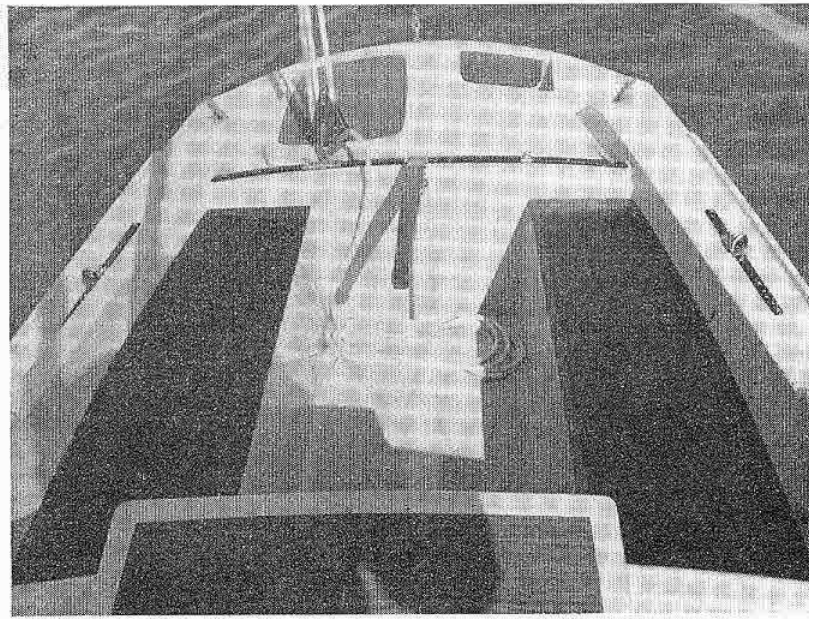
the former case—under conditions in which the older model was never at its best—the new boat moved easily to windward and slipped along in a more satisfying manner making good progress against an estimated two knot tide.

As with most small bilge-keelers it was found that it paid to sail the boat fast and full to windward rather than try to squeeze too high. Compared with the older, hard chine Silhouettes, the Mark III has much improved windward ability and the new sheeting arrangement for the mainsheet gives very good control over the mainsail. The lower block of the mainsheet system is provided with a Gibb jam-cleat and fixed to a slide which runs on a track mounted across the after end of the cockpit. Simple screw stops are provided to limit the travel of the slide.

A steady onshore wind at the top end of Force 4 setting up a short steep sea against an ebbing tide in the Bristol Channel enabled a better appraisal of the boat's sailing and sea keeping qualities to be made, and of its ability to meet the requirements of a small cruising yacht. With the three rolls in the main and a working jib she certainly did not give the impression of being over canvassed, although on the wind better progress was made and increased comfort obtained by easing the mainsheet in the stronger gusts. Except at excessive angles of heel, the boat remained comfortably balanced without any tendency to develop excessive weather helm.

Off the wind, with eased sheets, the Silhouette provided really exciting sailing, tramping along in fine style at five to six knots, and making light of the short steep seas which were such obstacles to progress where her elder sisters were concerned. Before the wind, she showed no undue tendency to broach.

Under these comparatively severe conditions for a small cruiser, she remained remarkably dry, and certainly gave the impression that she could stand up to worse weather with a competent crew aboard. It was also most noticeable that even with four adults seated around the cockpit and bridge deck, there was little change in



*The relatively large self-draining cockpit provides seating for three or four adults. Note the simple and effective mainsheet cleating arrangement. (Photo: Biscoe)*

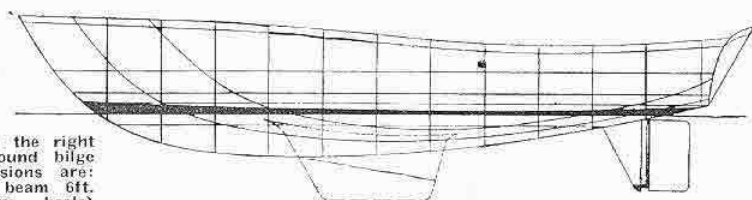
the fore and aft trim—again a great improvement over the Mark II which was so sensitive in this respect.

For owners who are not faced with the problems of drying moorings and tidal creeks, a fin keel version is available which may reasonably be expected to perform rather better to windward, and prove a little stiffer due to the lowered centre of gravity. Be that as it may, a boat of this size is likely to spend most of its life inshore, and the advantages of twin bilge keels in terms of ability to take the ground and ease of launching will probably outweigh any marginal improvement in performance provided by the single, deeper fin.

A choice of inboard engines, with or without electric starting, is available if required, but all these installations involve a significant loss of space at the after end of the cabin where it is most needed and considerably restrict access through the cabin hatch. Their cost is relatively high in proportion to the price of the boat, and the majority of owners may well consider that this cash can be better spent on extra sails or gear. A 1½ h.p. out-

board would be quite adequate as a auxiliary engine, whilst the 3.9 h.p. Mercury fitted to the second boat tested gave the yacht an excellent performance under power, and this with a delightful degree of smoothness and silence at a price of approximately two thirds that of the cheapest inboard offered.

To sum up, the Silhouette Mark I must inevitably retain its place amongst the best buys in the pocket cruiser class, and anyone considering the purchase of a boat of this size and who has been put off by the no rather staid reputation of the early Silhouette, might well think again. Like all other Hurley craft, they are moulded under Lloyd's approved conditions in their new factory at Plympton, and each boat carries a Lloyd series production certificate. Spars and sails are also made on the same premises, as are the standard trailer. A wide choice of colours is available and the standard of finish in relation to the price is of a high order. All in all, a fine little boat which sets new standards in a well established and world-wide class.



*The body plan on the right shows the new round bilge hull form. Dimensions are: L.o.a. 17ft. 3in.; beam 6ft. 7in.; draft (bilge keels) 2ft. 1in.; draft (fin keel) 2ft. 8in.*

