

# Freedom 39

A cat schooner-rigged cruiser designed for easy handling



**I**F THE CHARMED LIFE we led during the short test we carried out on this yacht is an omen for the future, the Freedom 39 should do well. On a day of thick fog and little wind we had a two cable square hole in the approaches to Southampton Water with both sunshine and a decent breeze, which was enough to take some photographs and have a couple of hours' enjoyable sailing.

With a hull by Ron Holland, a wheel-house style coachroof and accommodation to match, topped off with two unstayed masts with fully battened sails, the Freedom is a fascinating concept.

The hull and deck mouldings are produced in the Isle of Man and finished by Western Yachts in Falmouth.

Her appearance may take a bit of getting used to, but underneath the angular roofline is an undeniably fine hull which promises to be easily driven while still providing the internal volume needed in a cruising yacht.

The keel is a long fin with quite a shallow draught of 5ft 6in. The rudder is also of low

# On board

aspect and is well supported on a substantial skeg.

As with all wheelhouse cruisers, the focus of the accommodation is in the deck saloon. To port in the Freedom is a large table with seating round three sides. The table drops down to form a double berth.

On the other side is the internal helmsman's position. He is provided with engine controls and instruments, Decca and satnav as standard and an autopilot — but no wheel! Steering here is done using the left and right buttons of the Autohelm. It sounds odd but works very well in practice, though I would not use it for close quarters manoeuvring.

Astern of the helm position is the navigation area, which was a little small on the yacht we tested but is to be increased in size. The yacht is extremely well equipped with electronic navigation gear and electrics.

The wheelhouse is separated from the next stage forward by a low bulkhead, which allows those in the wheelhouse and the cook in the huge galley to remain in contact and also gives the boat a nice open-plan feel (the yacht we tested, see photographs, had a full height bulkhead here which is less effective).

The galley is a complete cabin as large as the saloon in many cruisers not a lot smaller than this one. The U-shaped working area has plenty of surfaces for food preparation, a full cooker, a refrigerated icebox and another cool box. The refrigerating unit is



dual operating, so that it will freeze while the engine is running but return to basic chilling when on battery power only.

Facing the galley across the widest part of the boat (12ft 10in beam) is the main heads. This is also exceptionally large with a separate shower cubicle. Forward again is the double forecabin, which has enough room for changing and a good selection of lockers, drawers and shelves.

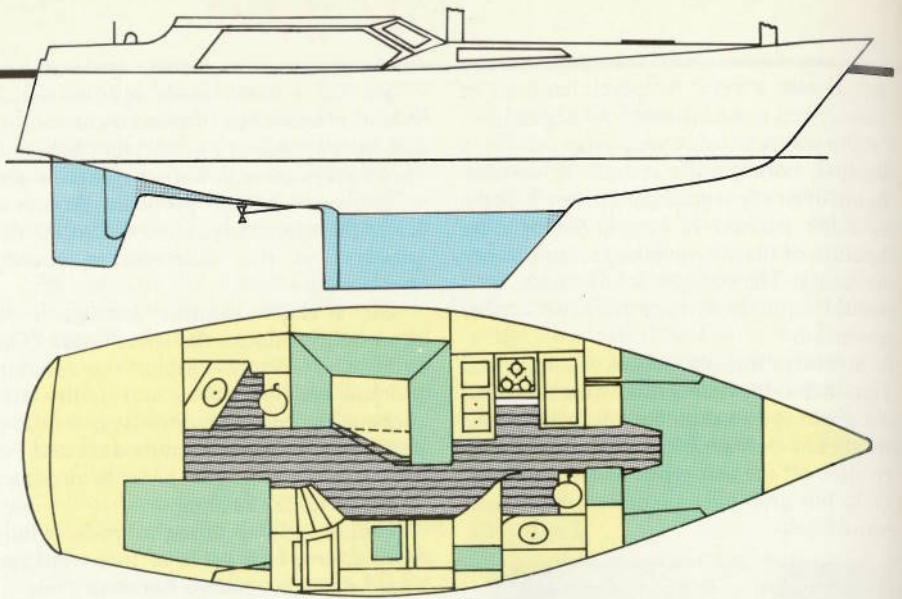
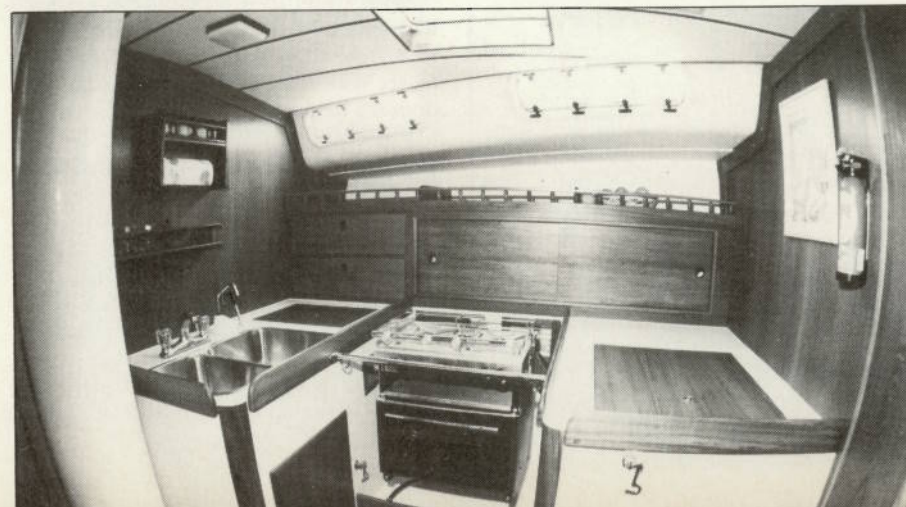
In the after part of the boat is a suite of double cabin and second heads. Again the boat we tested was laid out slightly differently to suit the requirements of a particular owner, but in our view the standard arrangement looks the more practical in general terms.

In this, you descend a couple of steps into the sleeping cabin which has a generous double and stowage with plenty of standing room. A sliding door gives access to the heads, which is a similar size to the other except for the shower cubicle.

The interior of the Freedom has a nice touch of style about it, from the semi-circular steps leading down from the cockpit to the wheel-less steering position and the huge galley. The woodwork is very solid and smoothly finished.

Leaving aside the no-wheel inside steering, perhaps the most startling feature of sailing this yacht is that all controls are handled by a single winch which is

**The heads with its separate shower cubicle (left). The huge galley (below) will be opened up into the wheelhouse to the left**



electrically driven, making her almost certainly the most effortless yacht we have ever crewed.

The winch, an adapted electric version of the Simpson Lawrence Anchorman (an unadapted model is offered to handle the anchor in conventional fashion), is operated by a footswitch on a central plinth in the cockpit, where it is unlikely to be triggered accidentally.

The winch provides more than enough power to give tight luffs and harden in the sheet of the foresail (the main is handled by a powerful, six-part double-ended tackle).

The standard rig comprises two carbon fibre unstayed masts imported from America. Either fully battened or wraparound sails can be specified. The former are probably easier to handle, the latter marginally more efficient.

Apart from being so easy to handle, we found the Freedom sailed well, though the speeds we recorded were not startling. As with all cat-rigged yachts, she likes to be sailed a little free and we tacked through about 90 degrees and held a comfortable course about 35 to 40 degrees off the wind.

The great thing is that she achieves everything with an absolute minimum of fuss; the fact that she is so effortless to work will probably lead to fast passage times, particularly in adverse conditions. With her powerful Perkins 49hp Prima engine she will also motor well.

Overall, a comfortable, long-legged, long-distance cruising yacht for those who put a low value on athleticism. JJ

## Specifications

LOA	11.89m	(39ft)
LWL	9.45m	(31ft)
Beam	3.93m	(12ft 10in)
Draught	1.68m	(5ft 6in)
Displacement	8,409kg	(18,500 lb)
Ballast	2,727kg	(6,000 lb)
Supplier	Freedom Yachts International, Portsmouth Road, Lowford, Nr Southampton SO3 8EP (Tel: 042121 5197)	
Price	£104,738	