

On test



Island Packet 40

On a cold and changeable spring day, Andrew Bray and Matthew Sheahan cruised the open waters of the IJsselmeer, in Holland, in the Island Packet 40

Standing on the balcony outside the marina restaurant as the sun dipped below the horizon, I could have sworn that the sea between me and the tranquil horizon of the IJsselmeer sloped uphill. Such is the visual distortion of the flatlands of Holland that those sailors more used to gently rolling hills and a chalk-cliffs coastline may have trouble adjusting to the perspective.

The same could be said of Island Packet's range of cruisers – at least from a European viewpoint. The climate, sailing conditions and expectations of American sailors sometimes differ considerably from those of their European counterparts and their boats are designed accordingly.

Occasionally the contrast is too marked to make them suitable for the changeable conditions of northern Europe, but in other cases an alternative approach can bring a fresh outlook to the market.

We travelled to the Flevo marina near Lelystad, tucked away in the southern corner of the IJsselmeer, to see which category Island Packet's latest addition, the Island Packet 40, fell into. Our hosts were Eric Bon (Dutch ex-Olympic sailor in the Flying Dutchman class) and his wife Yvonne, Dutch agents for the Florida-based company.

ON DECK

It really doesn't matter whether she is moored stern or bows to on the dock: you simply cannot miss an Island Packet. For a start, the cream-coloured hull and deck finish with teak-capped toerails produces a subtle but individual style among the ranks of bright white gelcoat topsides to be found in marinas.

But it is the family shape that is the clearest indication of her pedigree. Her high bow with the integral bowsprit/anchor platform may well cost you that little bit more when it comes to paying the harbour master, but the manufacturers insist that it permits more sail area to be carried, improves sheeting angles and provides ready stowage or ground tackle. All Island Packets have this arrangement.

All Island Packets have after cockpits, too,



Considering her long keel, we were surprised how different she felt sailing under cruising chute

with deep cockpit soles, aided by the rise in the sheerline aft and surrounded by substantial teak-decked coamings.

For many years these boats were well known for their unusual steering arrangement: the helmsman sat astride the horizontal steering shaft, onto which a small diameter wheel was attached. The configuration looked strange at first, but many of those who tried it were surprised to find how comfortable it was.

But today the system has been replaced by a more conventional arrangement, with a larger diameter wheel, although lifting the lid on the pedestal exposes another unusual detail which utilises a quadrant at the upper end of the vertical steering shaft.

This rugged approach avoids the need for any cables and the proportions of the metal-work inspires confidence from the start. The drawback, however, is that the steering is heavier than one would expect and lacks feel, especially on the wind.

The deck gives the impression of being clutter-free and this initial impression holds good once you get underway. All her halyards,

with the exception of the mainsail, terminate at the mast.

The sailing control lines are led aft to ensure that the boat can be easily handled in most situations from the security of the cockpit. What is particularly clever about the arrangement, especially considering the fact that she is cutter-rigged with slab reefing for the mainsail, is that the cockpit never feels overrun with rope tails. This aspect is helped by the rope tail lockers in the cockpit coamings.

Movement about her deck feels secure, with her teak grabrail running the full length of the coachroof top. High guardwires provide further support outboard.

RIG AND SAILS

Compared with some of her competitors, the 40 has a modest sail plan when you look at the figures for mainsail and 100 per cent foretriangle area. This, combined with a heavy displacement, implies that she may be short on power. In fact, her large overlapping genoa and self-tacking staysail are not included in the 100 per cent foretriangle area calculations, but they make a significant contribution to her performance under sail.

The only down side to this configuration is the effort required to sheet in the large genoa, a task made more gruelling by the cutter stay.

Other than this, simplicity is the key to the Island Packet's rig. She has a single-spreader mast, stayed with 1x19 wire rigging and the fore and aft lowers provide ample support.

Spars are supplied by Isomat (now called Sparcraft – Island Packet use their Offshore series spar), one of the largest production spar manufacturers in the world and one which is well suited to many of the mass production yachts on the market.

However, these spars would not be our choice for a bluewater cruiser. Spreader roots welded to the mast wall and a cast aluminium, welded masthead unit are better suited to those boats that generally cover fewer miles than a typical Island Packet.

Having said that, the mainsail reefing system in the boom is good. Fully battened, with simple sail slider attachments to the mast, the mainsail is easy to hoist, stow and reef. The latter operation works particularly well as we found out in anger as a 25-30knot squall swept across our path. Isomat was one of the first companies to offer the single-line reefing system and it is still one of the best. ▷

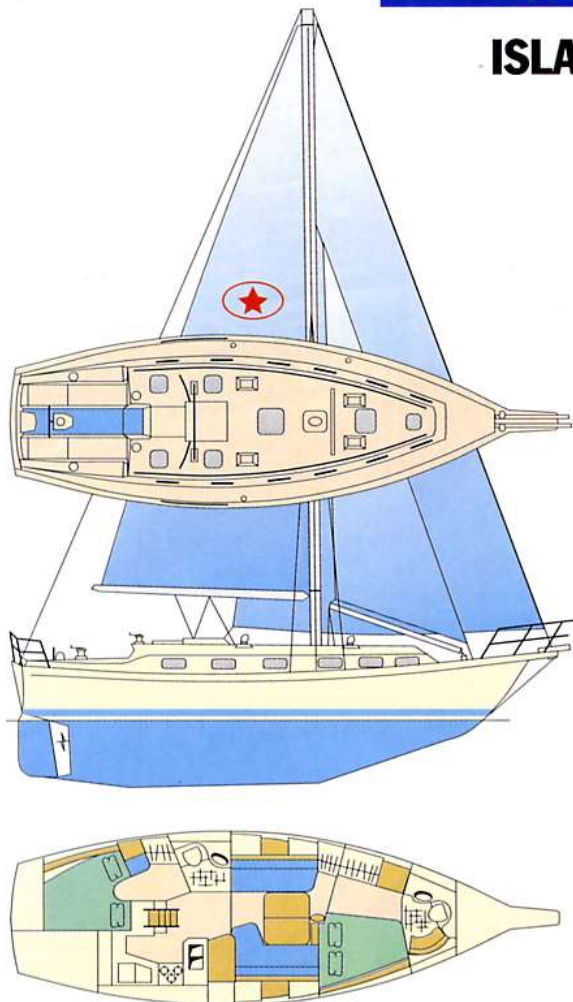
Main picture, there are plenty of handholds about the deck of this solidly built yacht.

Below, upwind, in 25-30 knots, with one reef in the main and the staysail set, she powered along, clearly demonstrating how stiff she is



Technical data

ISLAND PACKET 40



DATA

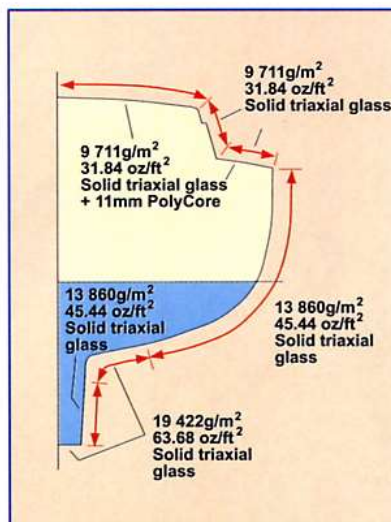
Prismatic coefficient 0.52
Immersion 250kg/cm, 1400lb/in
Ballast ratio 43.86

Designed by: Bob Johnson, Island Packet Yachts, see address below.

Kg/cm (pounds/inch) immersion:
 How much weight it takes to sink the boat parallel to DWL.
Prismatic coefficient: The ratio of volume to

Built by: Island Packet Yachts, 1979 Wild Acres Road, Largo, Florida 34641. Tel: +1 (813) 535 6431. Fax: +1 (813) 530 5806.
Marketed by: Island Yachts Ltd, Deacon's Boatyard, Bridge Road, Bursledon, Southampton SO31 8AZ. Tel: (01703) 402253. Fax: (01703) 405665.

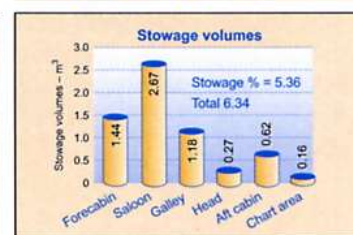
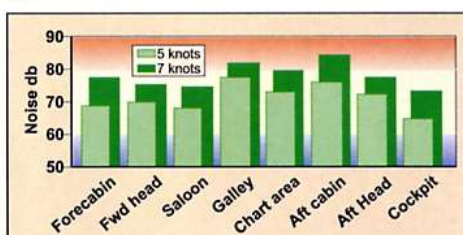
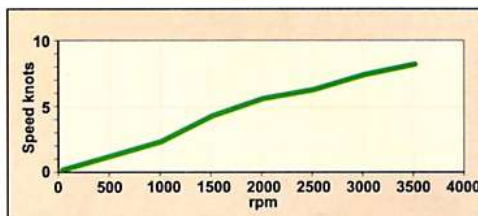
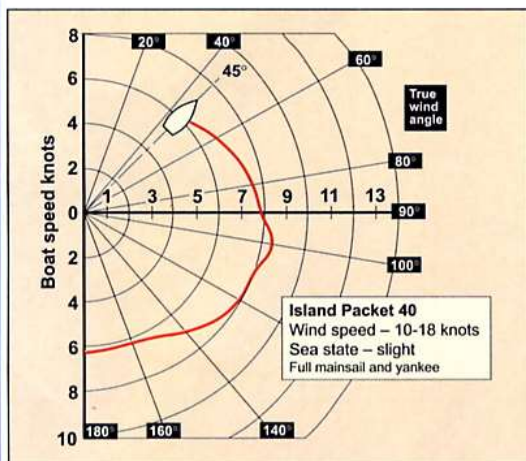
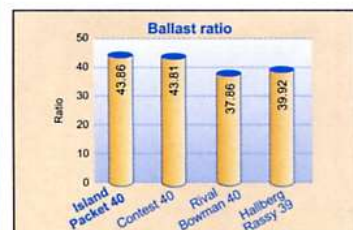
displacement to a volume of LWL and the maximum cross sectional area below the load waterplane. An indication of fineness or fullness of the hull.



Sail area: displacement ratio: This ratio gives some indication of power available. Higher numbers = greater performance.

$$\frac{SA(ft^2)}{(\text{Displacement (lb)} \div 64)^{0.666}}$$

Displacement:waterline length:
 Performance indicator. Low numbers = higher performance. (Displacement (lb) ÷ 2240) ÷ (0.01 × LWL (ft))³



Dimensions

LOA
LWL
Beam
Draught
Disp
Ballast
Sail area
Berths
Engine type
Power
Water
Fuel
Sail area:disp
Disp:LWL
Price ex VAT

ISLAND PACKET 40

12.65m 41ft 6in
 12.00m 39ft 4in
 10.36m 34ft 0in
 1.42m 4ft 8in
 10,342kg 22,800lb
 4,536kg 10,000lb
 71.98m² 774ft²
 4
 Yanmar
 13kW 50hp
 646lt 142gal
 341lt 75gal
 15.40
 166.75
 £139,500

CONTEST 40

12.01m 39ft 5in
 10.01m 32ft 10in
 3.86m 12ft 8in
 1.96m 6ft 5in
 10,991kg 24,230lb
 4,768kg 10,512lb
 78.31m² 842ft²
 6
 Volvo Penta MD22
 44kW 59hp
 500lt 110gal
 350lt 77gal
 16.09
 305.56
 £170,069

RIVAL BOWMAN 40

12.17m 39ft 11in
 9.75m 32ft 0in
 3.84m 12ft 7in
 1.50m 4ft 11in
 8,602kg 18,964lb
 3,257kg 7,180lb
 71.61m² 770ft²
 4
 Volvo MD22L
 36kW 48hp
 655lt 144gal
 436lt 96gal
 17.33
 258.33
 £154,260

HALLBERG RASSY 39

11.81m 38ft 9in
 9.30m 30ft 6in
 3.76m 12ft 4in
 1.83m 6ft 0in
 9,999kg 22,044lb
 3,992kg 8,800lb
 74.03m² 796ft²
 5
 Volvo Penta MD22
 43kW 57hp
 432lt 95gal
 373lt 82gal
 16.20
 346.80
 £131,643



The staysail is set on a boom and is self-tacking, making life easy for the crew in a blow upwind

ACCOMMODATION

Even if you consider that there are close European equivalents to the Island Packet's deck layout, you will be hard pushed to find a European-built boat with an interior like this one.

First impressions are of space, ample light and plenty of ventilation, characteristics that give clues to her Florida origins where the climate dictates the need for this layout below.

Another clue that she is from the other side of the Atlantic lies in her galley. Lift the lid on the fridge unit and you expose cavernous cold storage measuring 0.44m³ (15ft³). And her stowage capacity doesn't end there, either.

She has a massive 1.18m³ (41.84ft³) of stowage in a galley that is easy to work with solid handholds, sensible fiddles and a robust crash bar round the cooker. Ironically, considering the amount of stowage space, she was a little short on worktop surface as much of the area was taken up by the cold box and fridge.

Her saloon seating is fitted towards the outboard extremes of her beam, which helps to create the feeling of space. Simple rectangular cushioned seating in this area can be used as sea berths as well, although no leechcloths are provided as standard.

Lockers are provided throughout the saloon and a total stowage volume of 2.67m³ (94.19ft³) provides more stowage than in any other cabin. This in itself is impressive, as is the fact that such volume contributes to an impressive stowage factor of just 5.36 per cent, indicative of the vast additional space available.

However, in several areas, lockers exist beneath or behind other lockers which means you would have to be disciplined when stowing to avoid having to unpack unnecessarily.

The aft-facing navigation station shares its seating with the saloon settee. The location of the navigation table does mean that it is easy to communicate with the helmsman, but when you are sailing upwind on starboard, there is little to brace yourself against.

Easy access to the engine, despite its location under the steps in the main accommodation



Aboard our test boat, equipment such as a chart plotter and HF radio had been neatly installed into a shelf-height locker outboard of the seating, which was a tidy way of concealing the electronics, but did highlight the lack of instrument-mounting space in this area.

The forward cabin has a double berth set to starboard with its own shower and head unit situated in the forwardmost part of the boat. As in the saloon, there is plenty of stowage, although here it is mostly easy to get to, and includes a large hanging wardrobe.

Further sleeping accommodation is aft and to port, where another double berth is situated beneath the cockpit coamings.

The entire accommodation is fitted out in teak with a solidly-built glassfibre headliner on which grabrails run almost the length of the saloon. Polished stainless portholes in the coachroof sides enhance the purposeful look while also creating a traditional feel.

Where she was lacking, in our opinion, was in the bitty feel to the layout and the flimsy cabin lights. But despite this, she is well built and gives the impression of a boat that will last.



On test



Andrew Bray

Left, the conventional steering arrangement on a modern Island Packet. Above, slipping along...

CONSTRUCTION

Poking around behind the scenes both above and below decks confirms this impression. Her hull is a solid laminate using triaxial woven rovings whereas the deck is a sandwich construction using Island Packet's exclusive Polycore (R) foam core material.

The structural laminates are all designed to meet or exceed the ABS standards for offshore yachts. Beneath the waterline she has a long keel configuration and because of this her ballast is encapsulated in the keel moulding. Here two versions are available, the standard draught of 1.4m (4ft 8in) or the shallow draught version drawing 1.2m (3ft 10in).

Her rudder is semi-balanced and a basic rectangular shape in elevation. The rudder is supported at the top and bottom by two bronze bearings and the blade is constructed from a split glassfibre moulding with a foam core and a stainless steel shaft. Another example of their traditional approach.

Her standard engine is a 37kW (50hp) Yanmar 4JH which is fitted under the companionway steps. Access is quick and simple and items like the fuel filters have been thoughtfully positioned to ensure the minimum of fuss when it comes to maintenance.

UNDER POWER AND SAIL

Despite the fact that the engine is close to the main accommodation and adjacent to the galley, and despite the fact that her sound readings at five and seven knots were no better than average, she seemed a quiet and comfortable boat to cruise under power. This was ▢

On test

probably due to lack of vibration throughout.

For a boat with a long keel, her turning circle of around 1.5 boat lengths is good. The large rudder and its position at the aftermost point on the boat no doubt plays a large part in her manoeuvrability ahead. Steering when travelling astern was a little more tricky, though, especially in a breeze when you need to pick up speed before you can assert any authority over the boat's heading. At close quarters it is better to rely on the paddlewheel effect of the propeller to spin her about.

Our sailing trials on the IJsselmeer started in 15-20 knots of true wind and flat seas. Under full mainsail and full genoa we started by putting her through her paces upwind. In these conditions she felt powerful and stable as she blasted upwind at just over six knots. At this speed and in these conditions you can really feel the momentum created by her 10 tonne (22,800lb) displacement, regardless of whether you are on the helm or not.

Yet despite her displacement and her long keel, she is surprisingly sensitive to mainsail trim. When the helm does start to load up, dropping the mainsheet just a few inches down the traveller makes all the difference. Her Ronstan mainsheet track and sensible purchases on the control lines make this possible.

She is a stiff boat, too. In 20-knot gusts she hardly altered her angle of heel.

But one aspect that surprised us was how close-winded she was. Sailing at 45° to the true wind, with genoa sheet leads on the toerail, was impressive for this type of cruiser, albeit in flat water conditions.

Cracking off onto a reach saw her speed build to a maximum of 8.4 knots at 100°T and typically over seven knots until we started to sail much deeper. Impressive stuff, especially without a spinnaker. With a cruising chute set, she felt even better balanced. In fact, so much so that it confirmed our view that earlier in the day, and without the spinnaker, she had indeed felt a little lifeless on the helm.

Variety was the order of the day during our trials as the changeable conditions sweeping the IJsselmeer had the wind as light as five knots true and as high as 30 knots in one squall.

In the breezy conditions we set the mainsail with one reef and the staysail. She powered upwind, driving herself and making light of the strong, cold and dense winds. From his cosy position behind the spray dodger, Eric looked back and said: "Now look up the mainsail and imagine just how much wind you would have to have before you put the next reef in."

It was a valid point, the Island Packet 40 seemed to love these conditions. And with just the staysail and mainsail set, tacking was a truly single-handed affair. All that was



Top, the saloon table folds open, but also folds upwards against the bulkhead. **Above left**, looking aft to the navigation station and galley. **Above right**, the comfortable double cabin forward

required was for the helmsman to turn the wheel, the self-tacking staysail responded each time, the sheet car sliding easily on the track.

She is a long-legged boat. Her well balanced helm, despite the lack of feel, keeps her tracking straight, even in gusty conditions and she is stiff enough, too, to make sure you are not continually retrimming.

CONCLUSIONS

The Island Packet may look a little out of the ordinary in European waters and certain aspects of her design are indeed better suited to warmer climes. But there is no getting away

from the fact that she is solidly built, sails well for her type and will last.

She is one of the new breed of Island Packets, replacing the IP38, and superficially it is difficult to see where the changes have been. But once you sail her you are left in no doubt that this is a new hull shape with an easier and more powerful motion. With a practical and comprehensive specification, the boat is priced at £139,500.

Sometimes an alternative perspective offers a fresh approach, despite the difference in background. The Island Packet is a boat from over there that could work well over here. □

IN THE November 1994 issue of *Yachting World*, we published a short test report on the Island Packet 40 as a part of our Southampton Boat Show review. This report now needs amplifying.

The article was based on a trial sail in Southampton Water in near gale force conditions and stated that the boat was reluctant to tack easily unless plenty of boat speed was built up by first bearing away. This was on the trial boat's maiden sail and, because it was only possible to take in one reef as the pendants for the second reef appeared to be jammed inside the boom, she was sailed with just a single reef in the mainsail and the full staysail, the yankee being fully rolled.

During our subsequent full test on the IJsselmeer in Holland on a well tried boat, we did not experience the same difficulty with tacking; in

fact, the Island Packet 40 tacked steadily and predictably, without any special skill of technique throughout the sea trial, including during a brief 25 to 30 knot squall sailed under the same rig.

We discussed this discrepancy at some length with Eric Bon of Bon Yachts, Dutch importer of the Island Packet range. He noted when he studied the photograph taken on the day of the first test that the staysail boom on the boat supplied to *Yachting World* was stopped amidships.

Any yacht so out of trim, he suggested, may experience some difficulty in tacking as proper boat speed would be difficult to attain. Incomplete preparation may have contributed to the situation.

We are now confident that it is unlikely that the problem encountered in our first test would be experienced by anyone sailing an Island Packet 40.