

*The Halmatic 30:  
a sweet-lined  
boat copied by  
the Nicholson 31*



## Sailing a Halmatic 30 from the River Exe



**Julian and Margarete Parlett ensured they were well briefed before buying a retirement yacht. They tell Dick Durham why they're delighted with her**

**W**hen you own a castle, home improvements aren't cheap so it's handy if you can make a bit of extra cash renting out your moat – one reason the Earl of Devon, who has the River Exe on his doorstep, takes an income from local yachtsmen.

He also receives rent from the yacht club at Starcross, sited beneath the towers of his mansion, Powderham Castle. But nobody seems to mind. In fact, most local sailors agree it's a lot cheaper than it would be if the earl

sold it off to a commercially-minded marina developer. One of those who certainly doesn't begrudge doling out the ducal ducats is retired solicitor Julian Parlett, 64, who, with Margarete, his wife of 40 years, rents one of the earl's Starcross swinging moorings.

I joined them both in bright, early summer sunshine as the cawing from a rook-infested cluster of pines echoed out across the river – until blanketed out by popping gunfire from the Royal Marines' training camp at Lypstone on the opposite bank.





*'She's the best boat we've ever owned – she even put paid to my wife's seasickness'*

Using a precarious, bathtub-style plastic tender, Julian gingerly shipped his outboard and puttered me out to *Kinfolk of Deben*, his handsome, duck egg blue Halmatic 30, which was swinging to the flooding tide sweeping up river at two knots.

With 10 to 12 knots of north-easterly breeze we set full mainsail and genoa, slipped the mooring and found we had to use the iron topsail as well – a 25hp Beta diesel – to breast the last of the flood downriver.

Even on such a settled day there was a lazy surf breaking across the entrance bar and we rose and fell over it as longshore loafers licked their ice-cream cones and watched us from the sea walls of Exmouth.

The old Havant boatbuilding yard of Halmatic, now long gone, once built and commissioned the Nicholson 32s for Camper & Nicholson. Designer John Sharp had worked with legends John Illingworth and Angus Primrose before setting out on his own and carving his own name with pride – not least with *Condor*, the Whitbread round-the-world maxi racing yacht. He then realised there was a demand for a smaller, less expensive →



*With a 25hp Beta diesel, we had no problem motor-sailing against the flood tide in the River Exe*



## ME & MY BOAT



craft than the Nicholson 32, so he drew the Halmatic 30, a heavy displacement cruiser with a high ballast ratio. His success with this boat was noted by Camper & Nicholson, who then turned out the Nicholson 31.

The Halmatic 30 has a long keel with a cut-away forefoot and transom-hung rudder – all traditional virtues. Her topsides are flared with a waterline beam narrower than at deck level. She is easily driven, thanks to her wineglass transom and shapely bow.

About 200 Halmatic 30s were built from 1979 to the mid-1980s. The moulds were later acquired by Barbican Yachts in Plymouth, resulting in the bulkier Barbican 30.

Julian has been sailing for over 40 years, spending most of his early years on the East Coast aboard his father Charles's boat *Jorrocks*, a wooden classic designed by Maurice Griffiths.

### Generous accommodation

'I bought *Kinfolk of Deben* ten years ago,' says Julian. 'She had just been sailed around Britain in 2001 and was therefore very well fitted out when we got her. Before that, we had a part share in a Trident bilge keeler – which replaced a 21ft Corribee, our first cruising boat.'

'We have cruised her to the Channel Islands, France and the West Country. She's the best boat we've ever owned – especially as she has put paid to Margarette's seasickness.'

'She parks at sea with amazing dexterity, and we love heaving-to behind headlands and then waiting for the tide. She rides so easily.'

On a broad reach we made 5.5 knots in 10-12 knots of apparent wind, carrying a tad of weather helm. She does tend to roll on a run and dead downwind, her speed dropped off to 4.5 knots. Upwind, she drove easily at 5.5 knots.

She enjoys wide sidedecks and her toerail sits up three inches proud of the deck, with scuppers amidships and aft. There's an electric windlass on *Kinfolk's* ample foredeck to haul up her 25lb CQR anchor and 50m of chain.

The cockpit has Gibb 28 sheet winches and a Lewmar 7 for the halyards. With no aft deck and

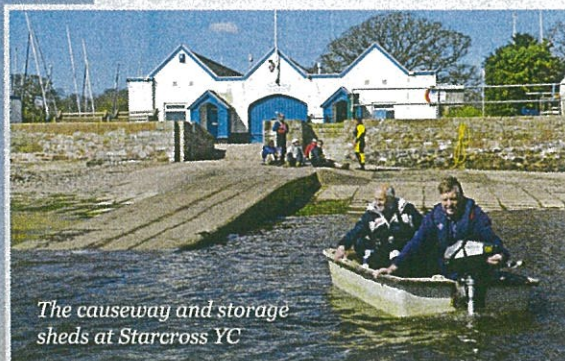


ABOVE: Ample deck space and a stout toerail are typical of the Halmatic's seaworthy qualities

LEFT: Skipper Julian Parlett and wife Margarette invite Dick for lunch in the roomy saloon

## 'Why I keep my boat at Starcross'

*Starcross's deep water swinging moorings nestle between acres of drying mud*



*The causeway and storage sheds at Starcross YC*

Passengers on trains from faraway Paddington bound for Penzance and the West Country get their first heart-stopping glimpse of salt water as they rattle along the Exe estuary. But the fact that there are railway tracks on both sides of the river has constrained boatyard activity somewhat. However, it has, at the same time, preserved an increasingly rare marine world that has disappeared from many other shorelines.

The Starcross Yacht Club is accessed through a tunnel under the railway line, said to



## 'She parks at sea with amazing dexterity – we love heaving-to behind headlands'

a transom-hung rudder, the tiller is situated well aft and does not take up space in the cockpit.

Her cockpit locker lids are of timber and sit flush on the lockers. Any waves breaking into the cockpit will go straight down into the lockers themselves – a potentially serious flaw, but easily rectified with catches and rubber seals. An oval hatch in the cockpit sole gives excellent access to the stern gland, prop shaft and back of the engine when removed.

Down below, the starboard settee in the saloon converts to a double berth. There's a pilot berth outboard and above it, which I slept in and found that it supported me well. Two slightly shorter fo'c'sle berths also convert to a double with an infill piece and the port-side saloon settee berth runs into a trotter box below a sideboard and locker unit.

'We've had six sleeping aboard, if you include the grandchildren, but mostly it is just the two of us,' says Julian. 'There's also plenty of stowage throughout and reasonable headroom. I'm six-foot tall and my head just misses the saloon deckhead – if I stand with my legs slightly apart.'

She is also fitted with PVC 'pockets' for extra storage, which does rather date her.

The accommodation layout has been thoughtfully designed for use at sea, with grab poles in front of the galley and nav station. The linear galley comprises a gimbaled stove with oven and grill, a coolbox next to the stainless steel sink and a bum strap to keep the cook secure in a seaway. There is a distinct lack of worktop space and the plate rack is shoe-horned in under the bridgedeck.

The heads door swings aft and shuts against

be high enough to accommodate its Victorian builder, engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel – making allowance for his top hat!

The club's ancient stone buildings accommodate dinghies, RIBs and dayboats used by its thriving youth sailing section.

### What does it cost to berth a yacht here?

The Earl of Devon takes £250 a year from Julian for his swinging mooring and a further £200 per annum goes to Starcross YC for membership and dinghy storage – a bargain, compared to typical costs in some other Devon harbours. Visitors can be accommodated on a spare swinging mooring by calling up the club in advance (01626 890470), or on two buoys owned by Starcross Fishing & Cruising Club a mile downstream. There are dedicated visitors' moorings at Bull Hill, and pontoon berths just inside Turf Lock on the Exeter Canal.

### What are the tidal constraints?

The Pole Sand at the estuary mouth moves around regularly, especially during heavy



The tiller is situated well aft on the transom-hung rudder, taking up very little cockpit room

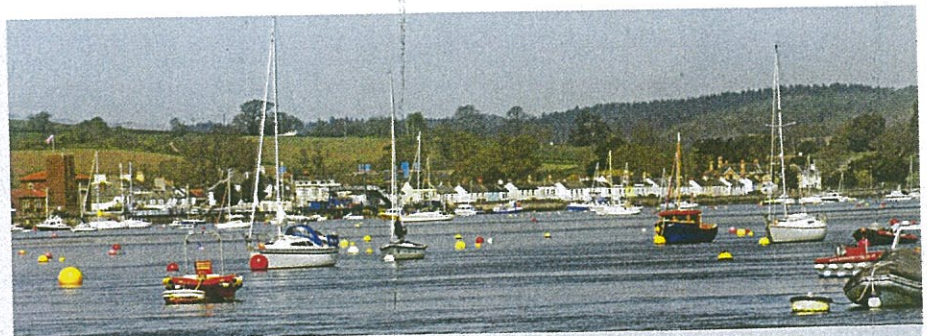
the forward bulkhead, cutting off the whole of the forecabin from the saloon – making the heads 'en suite' for the occupants of the fo'c'sle. There is a good-sized, traditional hanging locker opposite the heads.

The half-Admiralty chart-size navigation station at first appears to be an afterthought. It is squashed between the companionway steps and the starboard side. But this is a boon, as the thwart-style seat fitted between the companionway and chart table leaves the navigator – with his knees thrust into a cave locker beneath the chart table – neatly wedged into position for at-sea work.

There are no aft cabins or berths, instead the space is devoted to cockpit lockers.

*Kinfolk* was built in a one-piece mould, using premixed gelcoats with isophthalic backup. The previous owner had her gelcoat re-covered in 1994. The deck is constructed with Coremat stiffening, leaving an air gap for insulation. Although the Halmatic 30 hulls were built to a high standard, some of them were found to have suffered flexing in forward sections of the hull following extended offshore cruising. This was overcome by fitting extra lengthways stiffening.

The cabins are moulded as a separate, inner module masked in places with teak- ➔



Starcross has dedicated visitors' moorings and haul-out facilities in its sheltered estuary

easterly winds. Depth over the bar can be as shallow as one metre at LW but the channel is well buoyed, courtesy of Exeter City Council. Inside the river itself, sands dry out from both banks but there are all-tide moorings along much of the stream, which leads to the locked entrance of the Exeter Canal to port and the muddy port of Topsham on the east bank.

### What is the shelter like?

Once inside the river, shelter is good from all directions, although on the top of the tide in

south-easterly gales there can be a bit of a lop. In such weather the entrance is all but untenable except with local knowledge.

### What facilities are available?

Exmouth Marina in Exmouth Dock will offer berths to visiting yachtsmen if their regular users are away. Yachts can also dry out at Trout's yard in Topsham and alongside Topsham Quay. Chandlery, diesel, and marine engineers are available at Topsham and Exmouth, which also has a slipway.



# ME & MY BOAT

## Key cruising features



Grabrails run along the full length of the coachroof

The box at the foot of the mast holds the falls of the halyards

She has a sweet run aft

An emergency stormstail stay hangs in the starboard rigging ready for deployment

The pronounced sheer adds to her overall appeal

The high toerail is a welcome feature adding security to deckwork

Raked stem gives the hull a classic look



*'With judicious use of the throttle I can handle her, although she does tend to go where she wants to'*

LEFT: Julian makes a nightcap for Dick, who slept contentedly in the pull-out pilot berth

comfortable maintaining six knots at 3,000 revs.

'She kicks to port in reverse, and can turn in just over her own length, but manoeuvres like most long-keelers. With judicious use of the throttle I can handle her – although she does tend to go where she wants to.'

Engine access is excellent and all seacocks are easy to get to. Her rudder bearings are exposed on the back of the transom and therefore easy to replace. Her deep bilge is limbered, ensuring water ingress cannot build in one part of the hull and unbalance her. Fuel and fresh water are carried deep down in the keel, in aluminium and stainless steel tanks respectively – making her slightly stiffer under sail when they're full.

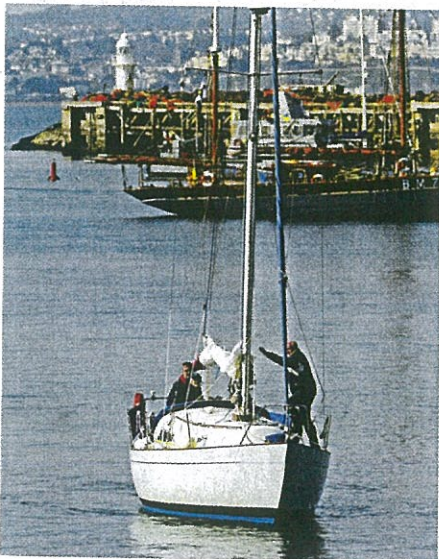
We sailed into Brixham Harbour after a rewarding day on the water and moored alongside the Town Pier for the night in company with the port's impressive sailing trawlers, now part of the Trinity Sailing Trust's heritage fleet. This 4.5-ton glassfibre cruiser might seem to have little in common with those legendary sea-boats but, like them, she'll keep her crew safe and relatively comfortable in almost any weather you're likely to encounter.

■ Special thanks to John Allen, MBE, former commodore of Starcross YC, who drove the RIB for our photographer Bob Aylott

### WATCH THE VIDEO

Scan this QR code with your smartphone (or go to the link below) to view a video of Dick testing the Halmatic 30:

[www.yachtingmonthly.com/halmatic30](http://www.yachtingmonthly.com/halmatic30)



Entering Brixham where Kinfolk's crew spent the night alongside the Town Pier with trawlers

faced plywood to give her a less plasticky feel.

She carries a generous sail area on a fairly low-aspect masthead rig with a deck-stepped mast, cap shrouds on a single pair of spreaders, aft lowers, a babystay and a single backstay, slightly offset to allow 180° tiller movement. The halyard falls are coiled in a wooden box built around the foot of the mast. The babystay and lower shrouds were once fitted to alloy plates, embedded in the coachroof and deck moulding respectively. These became identified as a weakness and *Kinfolk* has been retro-fitted with stainless steel chainplates.

To set a storm jib in heavy weather, she has a removable inner forestay with a block-and-tackle on the bitter end, which hangs against the starboard cap shroud when not in use.

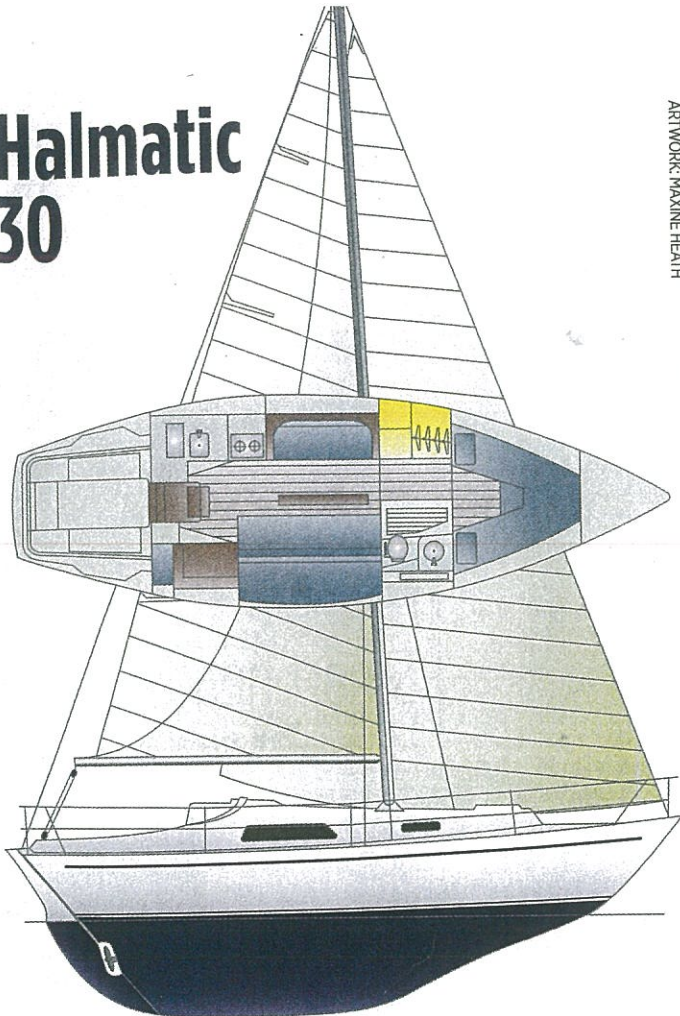
'Her original engine, a 17hp Volvo Penta MD7B diesel, was a pile of rust when we bought her,' says Julian, 'so we replaced it with a new 25hp Beta diesel driving a three-blade prop.'

'In calm waters she will do seven knots at 3,600 revs, but that's pushing it. She is, though,



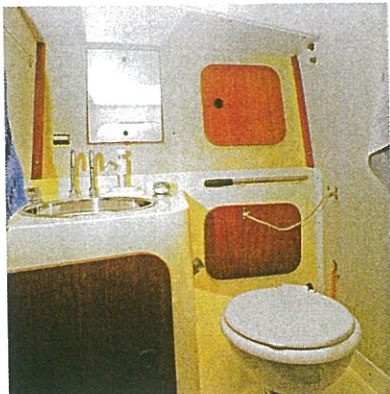
# Halmatic 30

ARTWORK: MAXINE HEATH



## FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Price guide**  
£16,000-£30,000
- **LOA** 8.99m (29ft 6in)
- **LWL** 6.95m (22ft 10in)
- **Beam** 2.89m (9ft 6in)
- **Draught** 1.37m (4ft 6in)
- **Displacement**  
4,475kg (9,866 lb)
- **Ballast** 1,600kg  
(3,527 lb)
- **Sail area** 33,44m<sup>2</sup>  
(360sq ft)
- **Engine** 25hp Beta diesel  
(originally 17hp)
- **Designer** John Sharp
- **Builder** Halmatic, Havant



The Halmatic 30 has a remarkably large heads compartment for a 30ft yacht



Julian at the nav station: from here it's easy to instruct the helmsman

## OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

### What's she like to sail?

Tough, seaworthy, reassuring and easy to sail solo, the Halmatic 30 is also well balanced on the helm and powerful in a blow to boot. She's no slouch either. But perhaps her strongest suit is her easy motion at sea. All heavy stowage is low down, along the centre-line – fresh water, batteries and fuel, as well as the engine – giving her a low centre of gravity and a commendable righting moment.

As you'd expect of a long-keeler, she has good directional stability and carries her way well. In light airs she tacked through 90°, but heels quickly. Julian reports that, once down to 25°, she rarely goes further, proof that the Halmatic is no lightweight hull that needs to be 'sat out' with crews used merely as shifting ballast.

She takes care of off-watch crew, too, with grabrails and posts in the places you are likely to hang onto in a seaway, yet not too much lurch room: if you do get thrown, you won't have far to fall. And the nav station, while at first glance a makeshift affair, is in fact delightfully practical and proof you don't need a whole load of space to navigate when a 'thwart' will do!

### What's she like in port and at anchor?

The benefit of a heavy-displacement hull that sits deep in the water, with moderate topsides and a long keel, is low windage. She'll always lie to the tide and won't 'dance' around her anchor or mooring in gusty conditions, as a flat-bottomed fin-keeler will. But the trade-off is less 'form stability' – which means she's slightly more prone to rolling when swell starts hooking into an anchorage.

There is 5ft 8in headroom under the raised forehatch, otherwise a stooping 5ft 6in in the forward cabin. There are no aft cabins – sensible in my view, as cramming in berths to the detriment of cockpit stowage is the wrong priority in a small cruiser. That said, the saloon is a real joy with over 6ft of headroom in a bright, roomy living space and space for a full crew to lounge in comfort.

She sleeps six if you don't mind close proximity to your shipmates, but for two (as Julian and Margaret sail her) she is comfortable and spacious. The galley works well in a seaway and it's adequate in size, although worktop space is limited. The heads compartment is impressively roomy for a 30-footer.

### Would she suit you and your crew?

The Halmatic 30 is a remarkably versatile yacht. Her rig delivers ample power in light airs, yet she'll take stronger winds in her stride. She's well-suited to a swinging mooring but her modest overall length won't make marina berthing prohibitively expensive. While trickier to 'park' than a typical 'fin-and-spade' cruiser, she's easier to drive in and out of tight spaces than many of her long-keeled brethren. Her 4½ft draught gives reasonable access to shoal waters and is not excessive for a mud berth. She'll dry out happily alongside a quay and her external cast iron keel runs right aft, providing a shoe on which the bottom of the rudder sits.

The Halmatic is weatherly enough to tack efficiently down Channel on a summer cruise, but thanks to her sea-kindly hull and seamanlike interior, she's also an excellent choice for long-distance voyaging, although her low form stability may give a rolly ride when running before the Trade Winds.

Boats of this type are designed to sail upwind with 20-25° of heel, which increases their waterline length to boost performance. But you won't get on with her if you, or your crew, hate heeling.

#### Does she suit your style of sailing?

##### CREEK CRAWLING



##### COASTAL PORT-HOPPING



##### OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING



##### TRADE WIND VOYAGING



##### HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE

