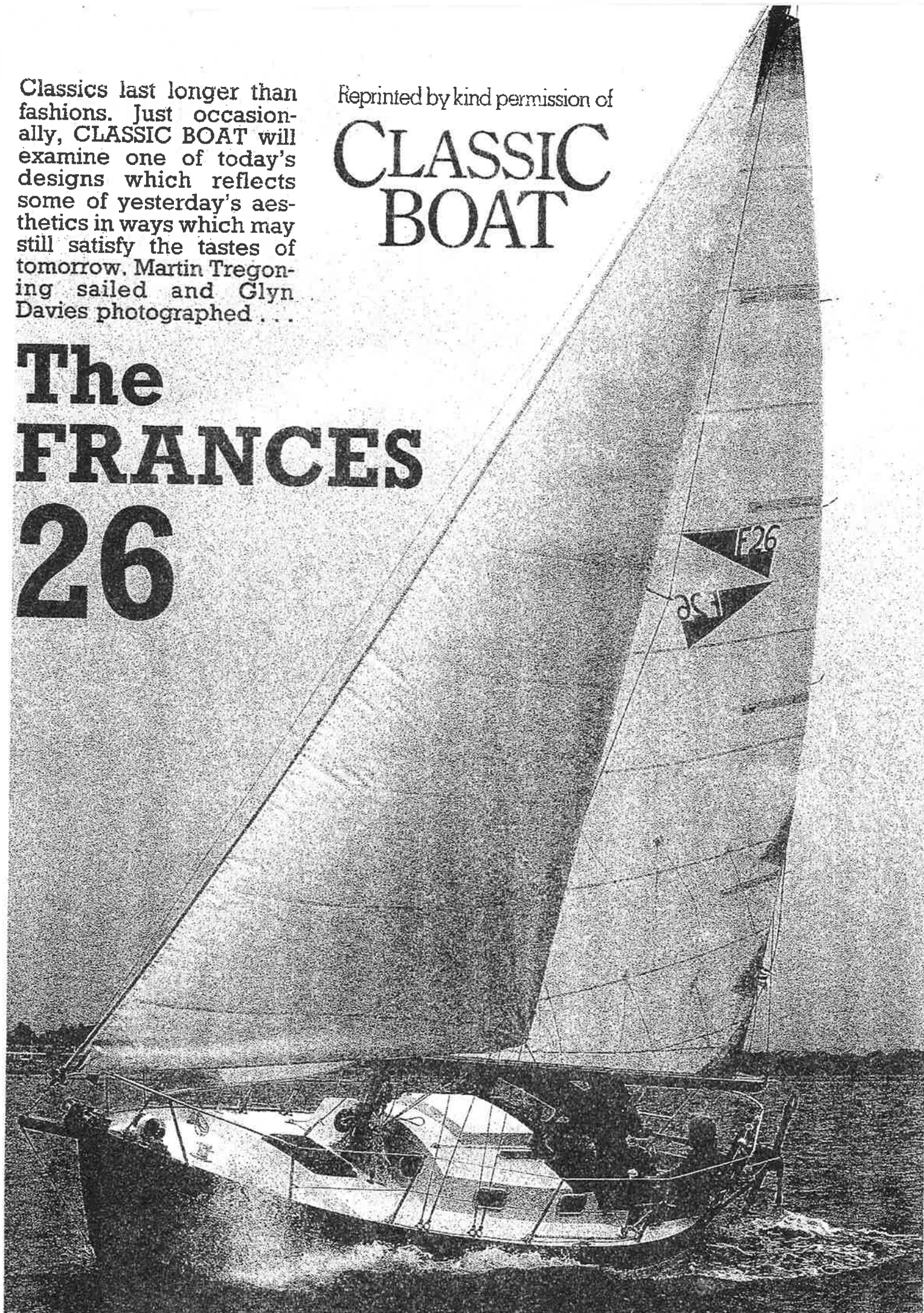


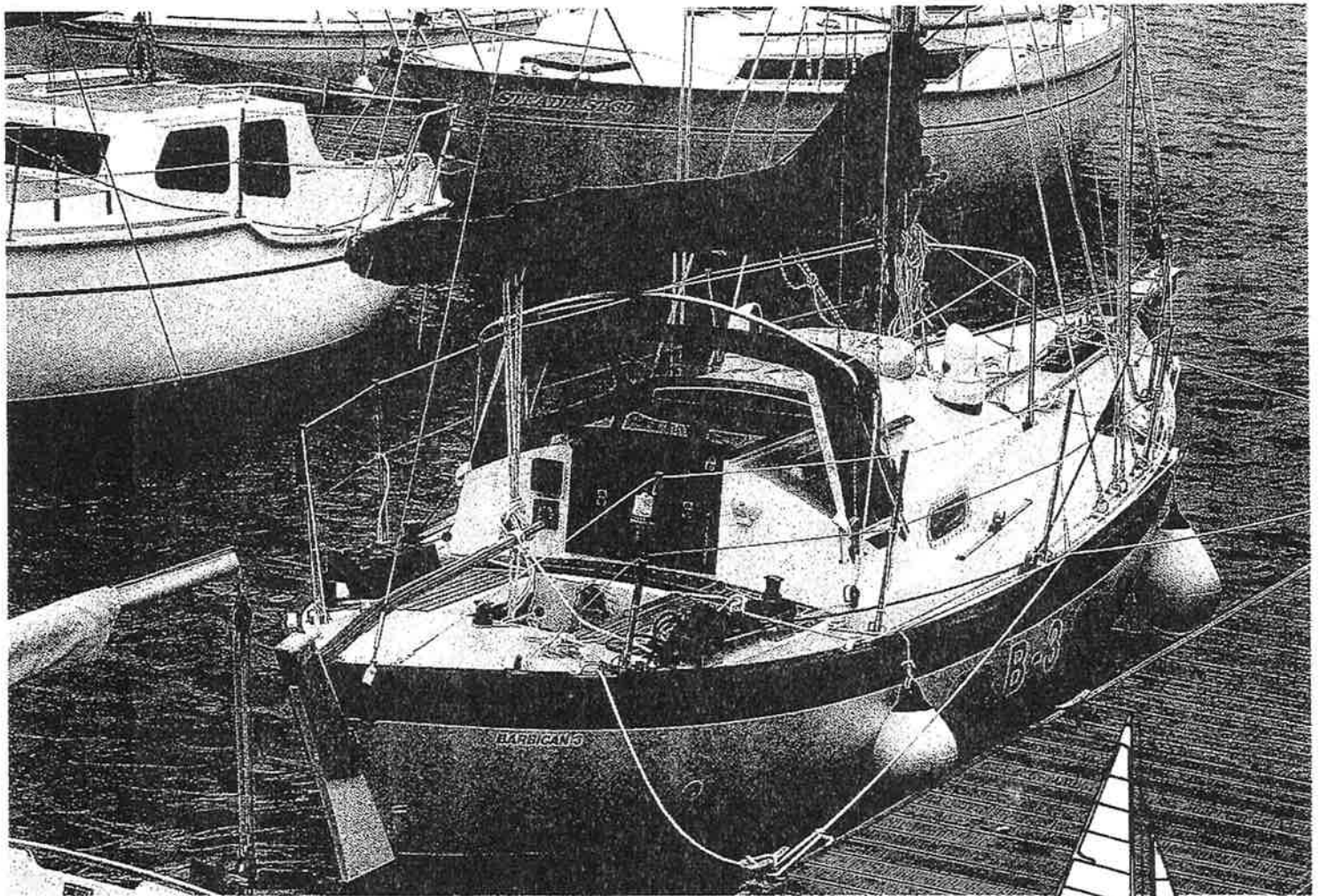
Classics last longer than fashions. Just occasionally, CLASSIC BOAT will examine one of today's designs which reflects some of yesterday's aesthetics in ways which may still satisfy the tastes of tomorrow. Martin Tregoning sailed and Glyn Davies photographed...

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CLASSIC BOAT

The FRANCES 26



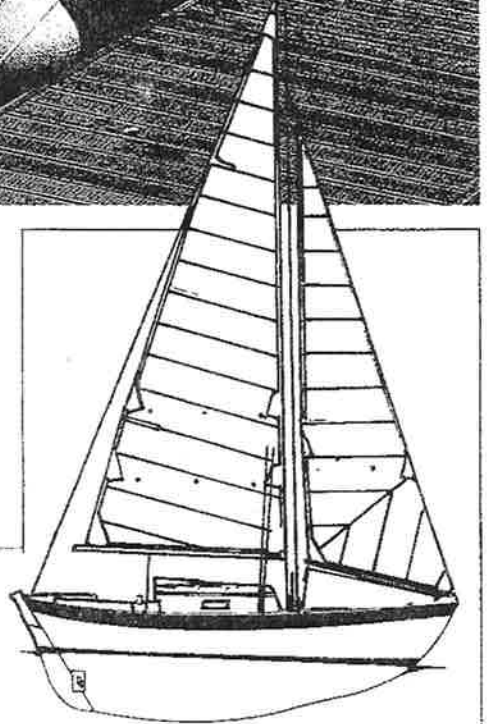


The fuel filler is located in the cockpit sole, immediately above the tank. Any spill can be contained and washed away through the large cockpit drains. It would be essential to ensure the filler was screwed tight to prevent any water getting into the tank.

Above the engine is the purpose-made electrics panel which can also be lifted out for access. The interior lighting includes lights over each berth and in the saloon. The navigation lights are a tri-colour and all

round white at the masthead plus a bicolour forward on the pulpit.

I thoroughly enjoyed my day aboard the Francis 26. She performed well under power and sail, proving to be a safe, comfortable yacht for local or more distant cruising, plus a little competition if desired. This boat is for the person seeking a boat built to a high standard with plenty of potential for incorporating his own ideas during the building stages and later.

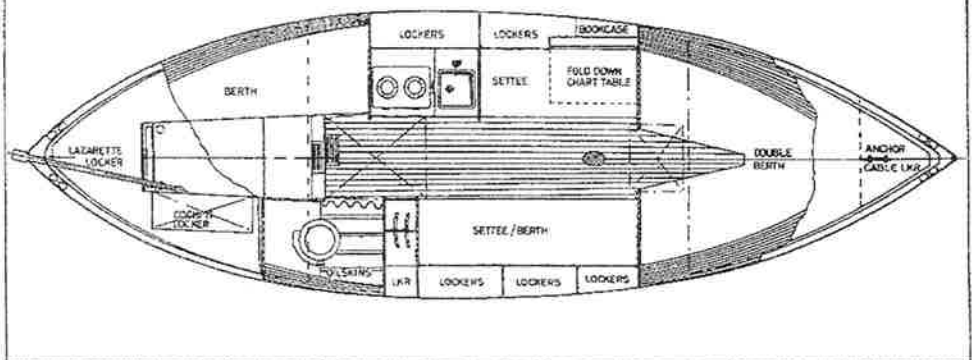


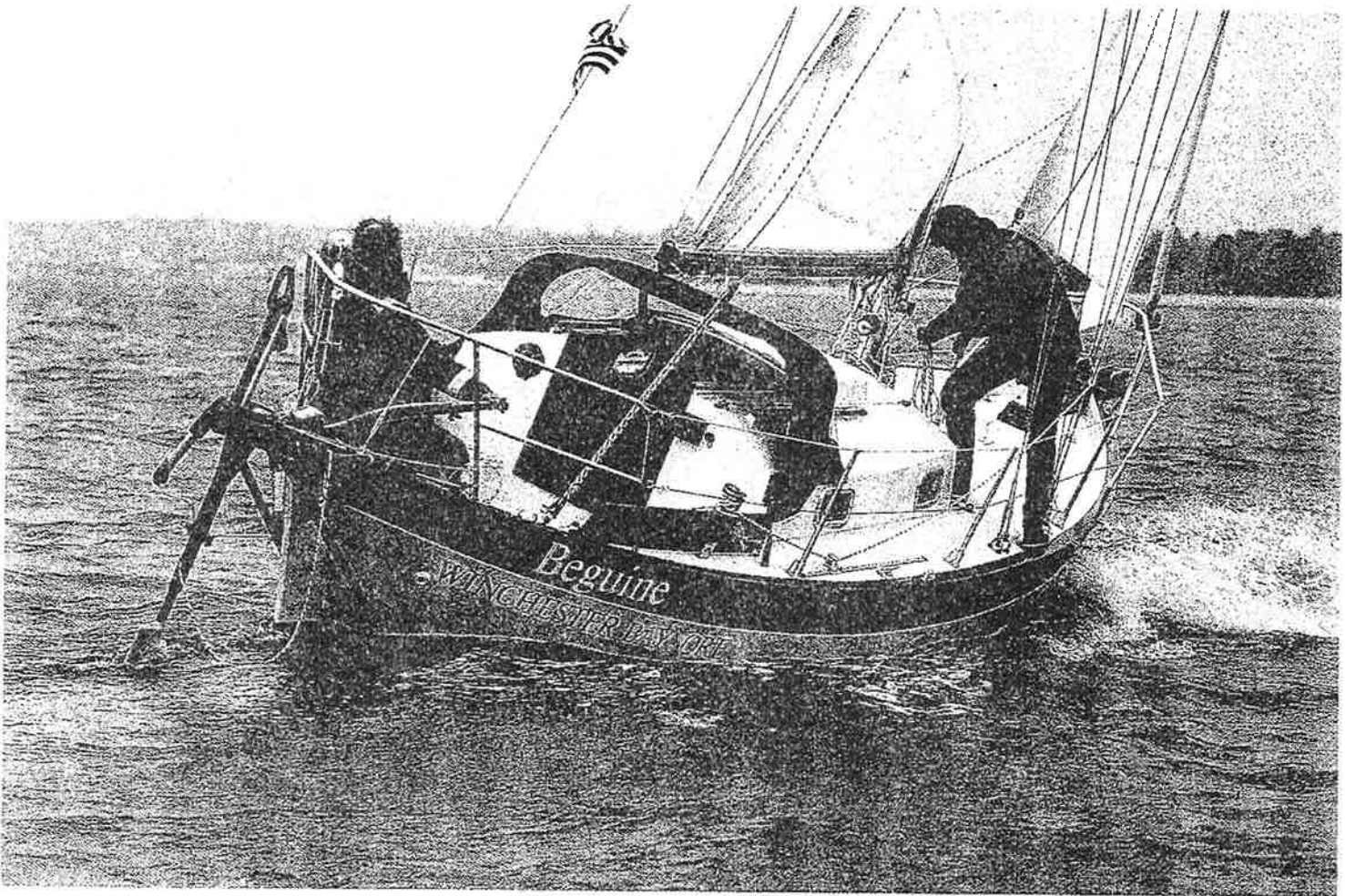
Above: Bernard Hayman, ex-editor of "Yachting World", did much to popularize the simple appeal of the Francis in Britain; this is his Barbican 3.

SPECIFICATION

LOA	26ft
LWL	21ft 3ins
Beam	8ft 2ins
Draft	3ft 10ins
Ballast	3500lbs
Displacement	6800lbs
Sail Area	327sq.ft

The secondhand market is steady according to the company, who expect boats to fetch the price in today's market that their owners originally paid. For further information, contact: Victoria Marine Ltd, Stone Pier Yard, Shore Road, Warsash, Southampton, SO3 6FR; tel: 0489-885400





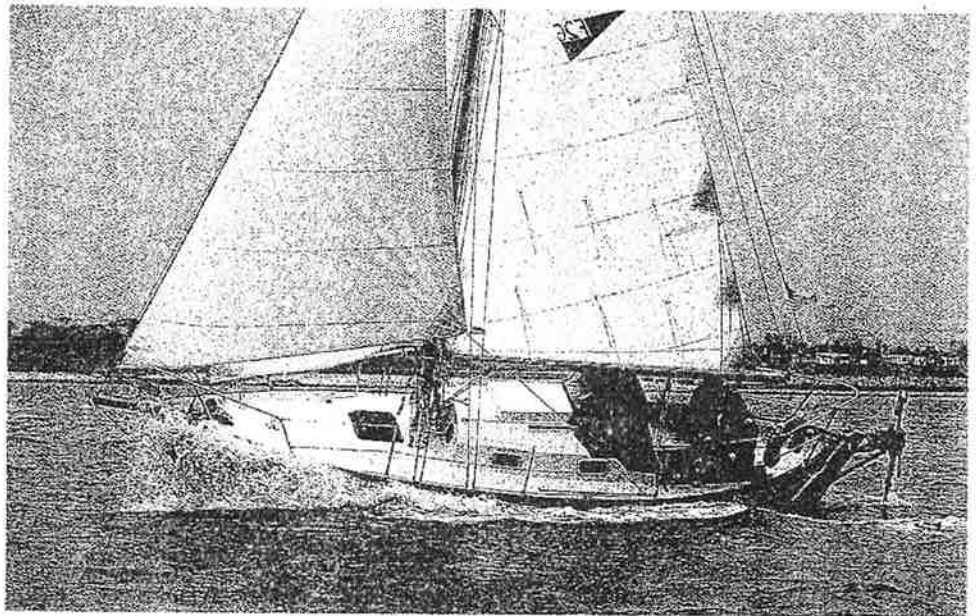
Above: The test boat had self-steering gear fitted but Martin found that the long keel made the Frances particularly adept at steering herself.

Right: The original Chuck Paine design had a flush deck but Victoria's version has an uncluttered well deck forward for safer anchor work and a neat, traditionally angular coachroof.

of the hatchway: disconcerting in an otherwise well designed craft. However, I then realised that what I had taken for a nicely moulded drip rail at the bottom edges of the coachroof was in fact also a grab rail, right around the perimeter of the area of most activity down below.

All the exposed interior surfaces of the hull were either clad in varnished strip planking or finished in gel coat making the whole accommodation easier to clean. Elsewhere all surfaces were teak veneered ply or white laminate with solid teak beading. Considering the fine woodwork, I was surprised that a saloon table did not come as standard, its inclusion would be worth an addition to the price.

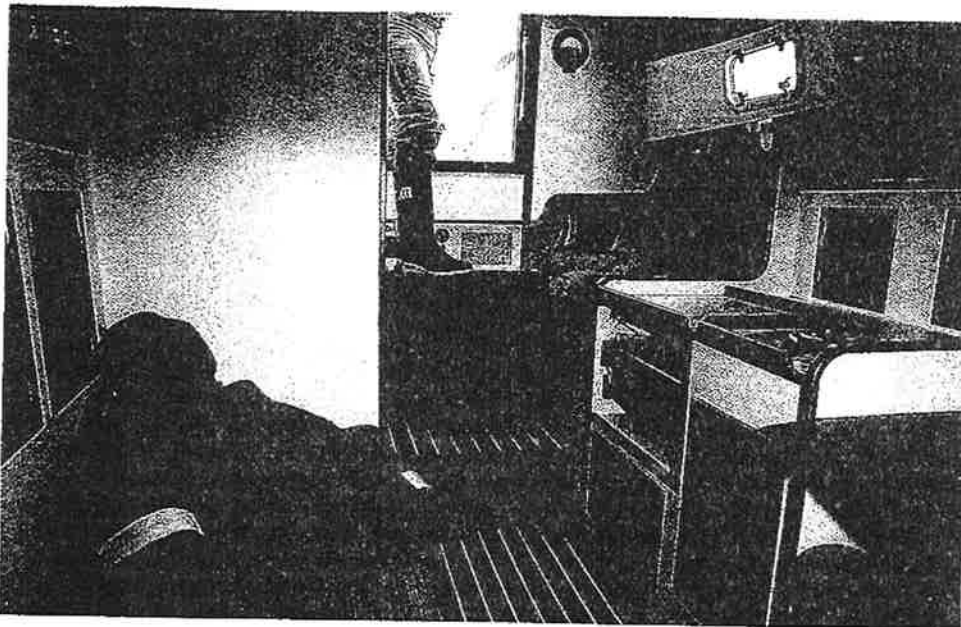
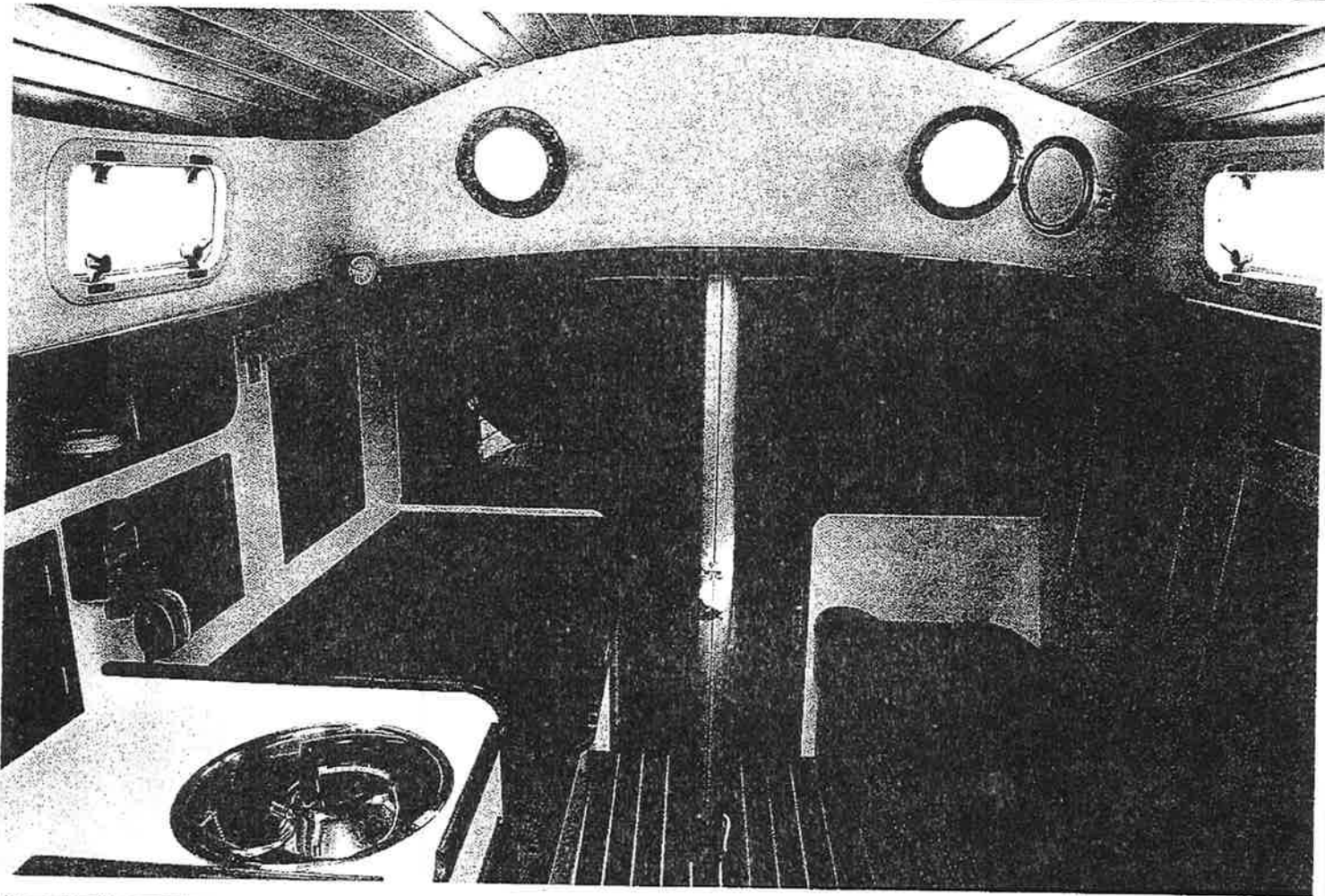
The cabin layout consists of two single bunks forward with an insert to form a double. There is a single settee/berth to starboard in the main cabin with a short settee opposite to port. Between this and the quarter berth is the galley area and sink. The quarter berth covers a small locker which the owner of our test boat had fitted out as a cold chest. Aft of this is the 20 gallon water tank with a filler on deck above.



General stowage space abounds beneath all the berths and is supplemented by lockers and shelves above the main cabin berth and galley. The lockers have doors which ensure their contents stay where intended. Three of the doors give access to one long locker which might benefit from some partitioning. The heads compartment has a large open cave locker on the ship's side and a hanging locker on the aft bulkhead. The whole compartment is

draining so doubles as a spacious wet locker for oilskins.

The galley area contained a double burner cooker with grill beneath and a stainless steel sink alongside. The work surface was laminate with deep fiddles to keep everything in place except, perhaps, the cook: yes, that perimeter grab rail was to hand but I would also opt for fixing points for a safety strap. The sink is fed via a convenient foot pump to a swivel tap.



Above: Under the pleasing varnished deckhead of that coachroof, the moulded drip rail around its lower edges doubles as a grab rail.

Left: Looking aft, the corner of the fold-down chart table is just visible ahead of the galley, the companion steps conceal the engine and batteries and behind the half-bulkhead to starboard, there's that toilet for seven!!!

There are deep lockers below in which to hide those aspects of the cook's art which you don't want on display!—like the washing up liquid, pots and pans.

The navigator's area is, of necessity, a little restricted, consisting mainly of a hinge-down chart table with stowage beneath. The table extends the working area forward of the galley and might lead to dispute with the cook as to just whose work surface it is! The chart table, when hinged

up, hides shelves for Pilots and all the other volumes essential to the navigation. Space for navigational electronics is very limited, perhaps based upon the assumption that the skipper is also the navigator and will install remote cockpit equipment rather than large units below.

In order to make the most of a boat, it needs to be used as much as possible, whatever the weather. The cabin must be comfortable rain or shine, both of which

cause ventilation problems. The *Frances* has plenty of opening ports and lights. The main cabin area has three port lights (the fourth is in the heads) and two round ports in the forward bulkhead of the coachroof. The forward berths have a tinted acrylic access hatch with inside locking handles. The sliding main hatch is made of fibreglass into which a secondary tinted acrylic hatch slides. The main companionway is completed with parallel-sided washboards.

The engine box is located, in common with many boats, below the companionway steps and is well sound proofed. All of the steps panels are removable and so provide good access to the front and side of the single cylinder Yanmar diesel. The first step neatly forms a battery box which is large enough for a twin battery system if required. The main isolator switch is alongside under the quarter berth. A moulded drip tray beneath the engine stops much of the oil and dirt reaching the bilge.

The 12 gallon fuel tank is located aft of the engine although a filter is mounted on the forward engine bulkhead as any attempt to reach the tank itself would be very difficult.