

# THREE TIMES A LADY

**REVIEW: CAREEL 18 MKIII**

**She may be aging in design, but the Mark III version of this classic pocket cruiser still performs with grace and style.**

**By James Hill**

**I**F ever a trailer sailer deserves the term classic, it's the Careel 18. This 5.6m trailable was among the first fibreglass models to be developed from Richard Hartley's original concept of a take-home, trailable yacht — it came out in the late '60s, a product of an era which saw a boom in family recreation from caravans to trailer sailers.

There were other trailables around then, such as the DeHavilland Rambler and the Griffin 17, but these designs have long since faded from the collective memory leaving the Careel 18 the great survivor of the fibreglass pioneers.

Longevity is one of the hallmarks of a designer classic. The success of Harley Davidson bikes and the Coca Cola bottle attest to it. It means that if a production is functional, well made and stays in the market long enough, it transcends the law of fashion obsolescence.

The Careel was first and foremost a great entry-level boat for young couples with kids, and that was the basis of its appeal. These days the cost equation sadly puts the boat beyond the reach of most of this market, but filling the void are the older couples who have the money and the time to go sailing. To them, the retro-60s stepped coachroof and soft, rounded hull lines are visual relief from the modern crop of racers.

A problem with building a design classic is that people snap up older models because they are great value

and still have factory-support for spares or repairs. Indeed David Rose admits that his biggest competitor is his old second hand boats. Offsetting this, however, is an active class association which has grown around the boat.

There are usually a few new boat orders through the year to keep the production wheels turning. David is also happy to run this side of the business on an enthusiasts basis, covering the overheads by a bit of brokerage and service parts for the large pool of Careel 18 and 22 owners.

He has no intention of retiring the design from production even though the boat this year notches up its 25th year of production. So far, 400 18s have been built and David and his wife, Pamela, see no reason to stop. As a young couple, they took up the dealership of the design when it was first built by John Duncanson of Adelaide. Later on, they took over the manufacturing rights of the Duncanson design.

The Roses were highly effective preachers for the boat and the family TS cause as a whole, because they were out there doing it with their own kids, leading by example. Rob and June Legg did much the same with their RL24, but there is no doubt that the Roses were one of the first people to lay down the ground rules as to how to sell trailer yachts. In Pamela's words: "the best showroom for a TS is the beach".

The Roses were able to sell several hundred of their Careels over the next two decades and this was largely due to the fact that they didn't just sell a boat — they sold a lifestyle. New buyers of a Careel 18, and later the Careel 22, became card-carrying members of the Careel Cruising Yacht Association.

This group ran the races on one-design principals, with spinnakers being banned to keep costs down and encourage family participation. The association offered not only a chance to race and cruise with fellow owners, but helped cement the strong family values of Careel sailing. In some cases, the kids

who crewed on the boats eventually grew up to become a second generation of skippers!

David Rose's commitment to a class-based design was also the prime reason for sticking with the same designs over many years. On many occasions it was suggested that maybe he should introduce a modern replacement, but when the class itself generated over half the buyers, David saw no sense in killing the design.

No doubt David also realised that the Hartley 16 was still plugging along in big numbers precisely because it was a one-design. Still, some concessions had to be made to progress, so over a period of time the boat was subtly upgraded in a Mk II and then Mk III model.

The Mk III, which came in around 1985, brought the biggest change to the

boat. After checking out the export market in Europe, David decided to increase interior space by lifting the deckhead height by 10 centimetres.

A new deck mould lifted the side decks above the gunwale line, instead of recessing it below the gunwale line

as it did in the earlier models. This had the effect of increasing headroom in the cabin, making the boat roomier and more comfortable below.

The new mould also gave the boat a new, clean look which did away with the old style teak gunwale capping and replaced it with a black vinyl rubbing strip which was more practical. Whereas the stepped cabin line was retained, the styling of the boat was modernised by more contemporary-looking coamings and wider seats in the cockpit.

The old, heavy-duty non-skid was dropped in favour of a new, low-profile non-skid in the same colour as the deck. The interior was smartened up with a smooth, moulded headliner and liberal use of teak trim around the bunks and over the centrecase table.

The Mk III has since been supplemented by a second version, the Continental model, aimed at the export

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market.

Recently I caught up with the latter model for my fourth review of the little 18. Not surprisingly, I was able to spot the main difference immediately. Not only did the boat come standard with galley and toilet facilities and a few extras like fire extinguisher, it also had stainless steel cabintop handrails to reduce on deck maintenance.

David said the idea behind the Continental was to give buyers a boat which is ready to overnight cruise, but easy to maintain.

There is no timber on deck, except for teak trims around the main hatch to support the hatch boards. Even the tiller is a stainless alloy tube so seasonal

galley and even a mini saloon table. Space limitations on a boat this size, however, precluded a dedicated spot for a galley so certain cabin areas do double-duty.

Lift up a section of the port settee and you find a Maxi one-burner gas stove and cutlery draw. Reach under the starboard hand side of the companionway and you find a slide-out sink unit with water pump. Meanwhile, a Porta Potti chemical WC is found under the junction of the vee berth with its own lift-up hatch so you aren't fiddling with removing cushions.

The standard cabin also features moulded headliner, port curtains (optional) and carpeted floor and hull

take out the kids even if the boat does not have side liferails.

Safety is a strong theme in this design, with a roller jib being supplied as standard as well as single a slab reef mainsail. The roll up jib, in particular, is great for coming and going off beaches and gives you a quick way to reduce sail area in a sudden blow. The mainsail, too, can be reefed fairly easily, though the halyard is mast mounted. However, in most cases, the boat could ride out a blow with a full mainsail.

The draw back with the roller jib on the Careel is that it has the halyard led back down the forestay so it's hard to get the jib luff really tight for upwind sailing.

In performance terms, the 18 may not be a speed machine but, for its size, it sails surprisingly well. Upwind sailing is probably its weakest point due to its shallow draught (1.2 m keel down), but

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when free-wheeling off the wind, it comes into its own.

The modern Careel actually has a heavier keel than the old models and this provides the boat with a reassuring level of stability in strong winds. The boat is quite solidly ballasted by a 186kg, hydrodynamically shaped, cast iron keel which is raised on a hand-activated hydraulic pump. Not only has the possibility of capsize been greatly reduced, but there is enough built-in flotation under the moulded bunk furniture to keep the 18 afloat if swamped.

The design is user-friendly in that it has both a fold-up style keel and rudder which are less likely to cause damage when you hit a sand bar at speed. The hull also has an old-style keelson, assuring steerage way when the keel is up.

The Careel 18 is also a very easy boat to launch and retrieve. The rig and sail controls have been refined to the point where the whole craft can be rigged, or de-rigged by one person fairly quickly. The upper and lower side stays are joined and permanently clipped and

maintenance should be no more than a cut and polish for an hour or so.

This boat also sported the new factory option of a folding cockpit spray dodger, which might sound a bit out of place on a boat this small, but proved to be a real Godsend on the cold day of the test. While it doesn't help windward performance, the dodger certainly keeps the cockpit cozy and it makes up for the lack of a cabin-poptop. It is one option worth having if you plan to use the boat for extended overnight trips.

The cabin area and sitting headroom is surprisingly good for so small a yacht and one can well appreciate David Rose's claim that cruising in this boat would be no less comfortable than a larger TS.

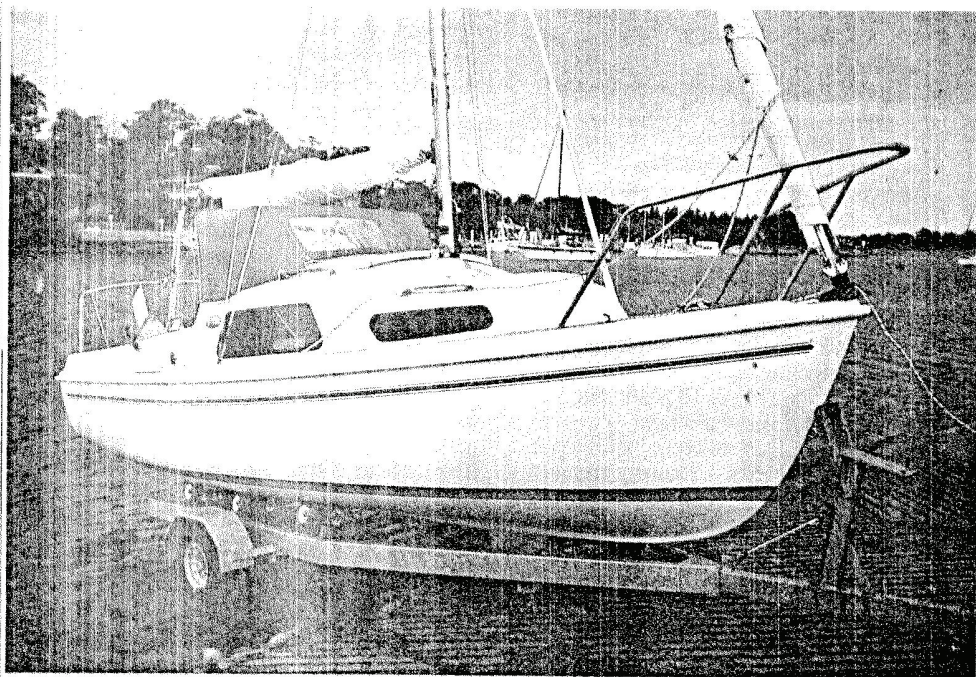
The little Careel covers all the bases of cruising including four berths, settees with backrests, a chemical WC,

liner. The bunks are attractively upholstered in a woven fabric which matches the attractive teak trim around the bunk edges and centrebase.

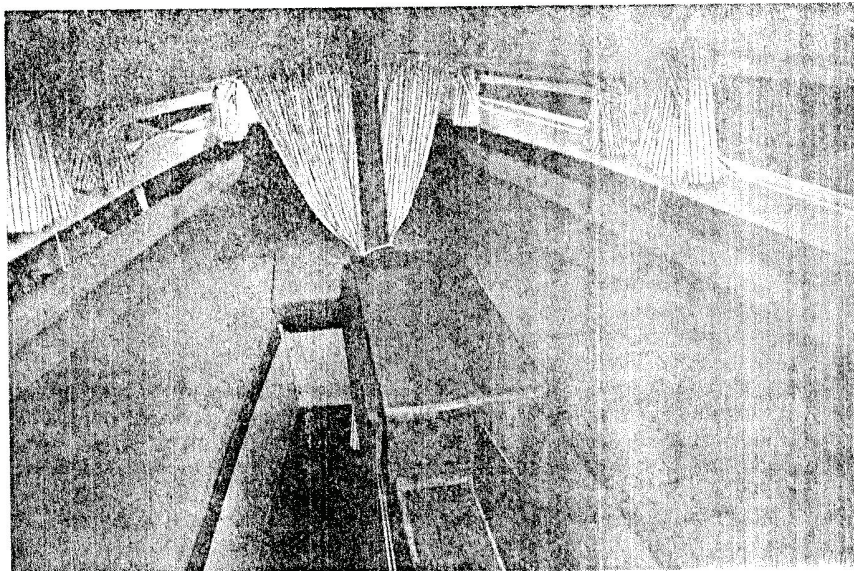
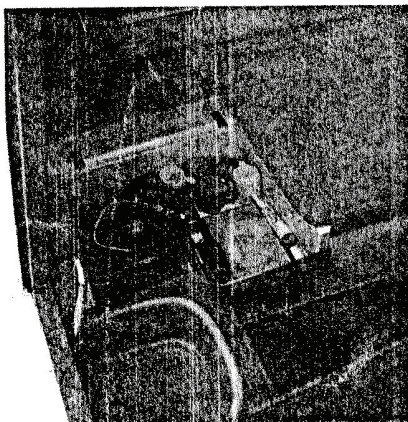
The Continental also features a comfortable padded backrest and open front locker shelves which provide lots of room for personal gear and boat items, plus a rather up-market looking teak drop-leaf table over the centrebase with handy centre shelf and slide out draw. The latter is ideal for stowing important items like your car keys.

With the table, there is room to seat four people, though the crew would need to have their cocktails in the cockpit when the cook's at work.

The latter area is surprisingly roomy for a boat of this size with wide, deep seats and reassuringly high coaming backrests. Certainly the security of the cockpit would make parents happy to



*The Careel is easy to launch (left); the galley sink and stove are tucked away under the companionway and side berth (below); the fore'ard cabin with padded backrests (right); the stern view shows easy access on the port side of the rudder (bottom).*



there's no backstay, so the only thing to attach is the forestay/furler.

The pivot-step mast is light and easy to lift and can be held in place by the inner forestay while you attach the jibstay at your leisure.

The roller boom means the mainsail can be left rolled up on the boom and stowed below. There is also a topping lift supplied as standard so the boom can be rigged without needing the mainsail to be raised.

The mainsheet attaches to the stern pushpit which has a reinforced stainless-steel tube, so it does double duty as the mainsheet traveller. This same pushpit is a very handy means of getting aboard the boat from the beach.

The transom is cut-away to cockpit seat level and, with a plastic foot step, it's easy to step aboard up under the stern pushpit.

The port side of the transom is used for boarding while the starboard side carries an outboard bracket to take a long-shaft 6-8hp outboard motor. A large cockpit seat hatch on starboard looks after the fuel tank, while the controls for the hydraulic keel are located to the port-hand side of the helm. It takes 30 pumps to lift the keel and there is a safety locking pin to hold the keel down, but designed to break if you hit anything really hard!

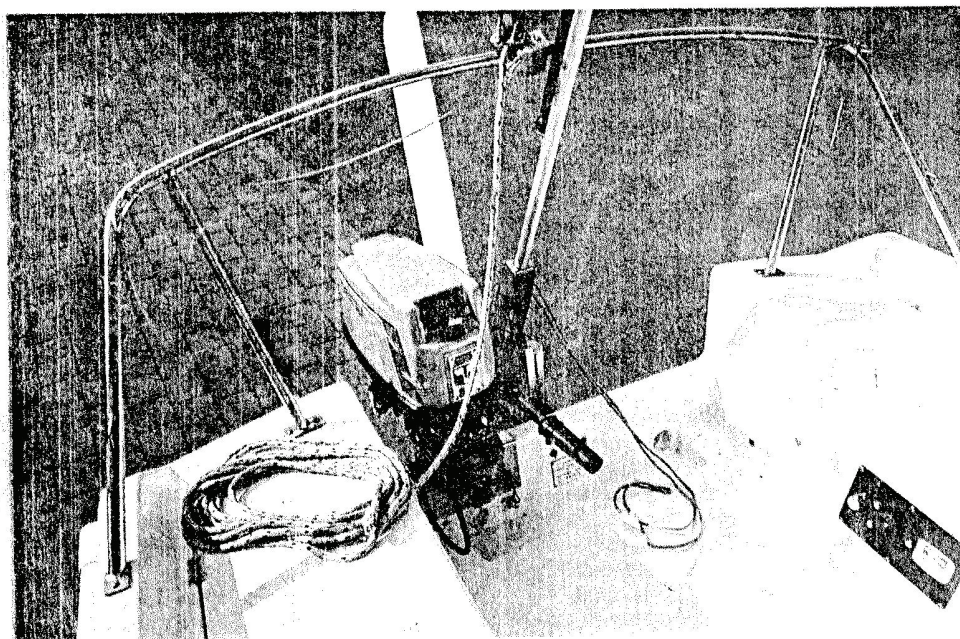
Overall, the Careel 18 MkIII still stacks up as a very hard boat to beat in the pocket-cruiser stakes, or mini-maxi as David Rose calls it. In terms of finish,

the Careel is certainly a cut above the average small TS. The moulding work is a credit to the building team and interior finish and woodwork is better than many larger boats I've tested.

From a towing point of view, the Careel 18 has an obvious advantage in being small. Although it's a rather solidly built boat, it weighs only 607kg. At this weight, it can get away with a single-axle trailer (with brakes) and be happily matched up to a medium-sized four-cylinder car.

Smaller also means more affordable and the Careel 18 certainly wins on this score. A basic sail away package with trailer works out to \$21,750, whereas the deluxe Continental with extras like galley, WC, fluoro cabin lighting and teak table unit costs \$24,900.

Handyman types are not left out of the picture either with David Rose Yachts now offering a basic assembly version (hull, deck, interior moulds and keel) for \$11,855.



#### CAREEL 18

LOA:	5.60m
BEAM:	2.26m
DRAFT:	0.3m/1.2m
DISPLACEMENT:	780 kg
BALLAST:	186 kg
SAIL AREA:	
Mainsail:	12.4sq m
Genoa:	7.5sq m
BERTHS:	4
SAILAWAY PRICE:	\$21,750
BUILDERS:	David Rose Yachts, Phone (02) 974 4701
CONTACT:	Careel Cruising Yacht Association, Ph (02) 520 7060; or VIC (03) 555 4431.