

The attractively-styled Windrush 600 catamaran is an exciting family cruising and racing off-the-beach yacht.

Happy sailing in this one

The Windrush 600 catamaran is the most exciting family cruising/racing sailboat I've tested in years.

BY BILL BEECHAM Paul Hopkins BRIAN LEWIS

The 600 was designed by Richard Macfarlane and is a smart, futuristic-looking boat with sleek lines and colourful stripes down the length of the hulls. They call it a cruising catamaran designed for sailors who want to progress from the smaller racing cats. It is still fast enough to be raced, and comfortable enough for a family.

But because of its simplicity, practical design features, and excitement factor, it should appeal to sailors who normally look at more conventional mono-hulled boats.

Our test sail began after we rigged and launched at Fremantle Sailing Club.

You slip the foot of the mast into its step, attach the halyard, and then turn the handle to lift the mast into position.

Handling

I sailed the International 23 a few days before sailing the Windrush 600, so I had a yardstick. The latter is much easier to sail, is more responsive, more fun — and more likely to capsize.

The Macfarlanes capsized the test boat and righted it as quickly as a top hand could right a 14-foot catamaran. A few bucketfuls of water leaked into the leeward cabin and Richard Macfarlane has worked out that the cabins could be flooded and the crew could still right the 600 using the alloy tripod.

A sealed mast and a foam insert inside the top panel of the mainsail aided capsized flotation — no inverted mast to contend with. The foam panel gives something like 60 lb flotation 8.5 m from deck level.

Manoeuvrability was exceptional. Richard and Jay got me onto a beacon in the Swan River without denting the cat.

With the powerful rig it is easy to lift the weather hull by sheeting on hard, but the lifting is quite predictable, and brought back rapidly by dropping a little mainsheet.

We drove the 600 quite hard, and try as we did, it was not possible to bury the lee bow, which is usually the Achilles heel of fast cats when they are reaching. It was most reassuring to pull away down a big wave and not have to watch the lee bow anxiously.

It is nine miles from the tip of Rottnest to the North Mole of Fremantle Harbour and we covered this in 44 minutes, for an average speed of above 12 knots. A darned good for a 300kg boat with three adults aboard. We also put up the spinnaker to push it even harder, but the buoyant bow refused to go down.

The boat would be just as happy wandering around some quiet waterway with the family aboard on a Sunday afternoon, for there is a bundle of room on the trampoline for lounging around.

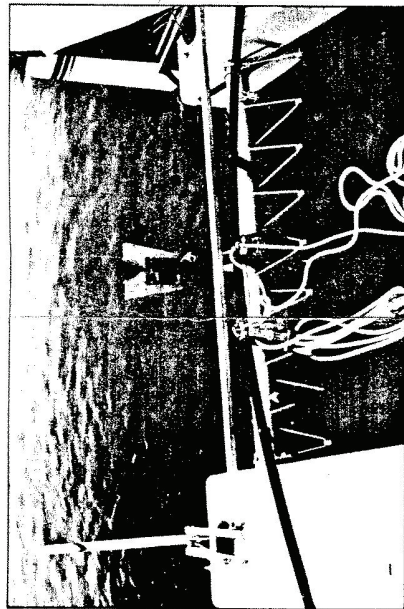
The rigging of the boat continues the Windrush concept of simplicity and efficiency, and it is possible to be sailing about 10 minutes after arrival at the water's edge.

I've always been a confirmed mono-hull sailor and the Windrush Yachts stable could easily change that. It's a no frills, yacht although it is a strongly built and stiffened with core sandwich materials.

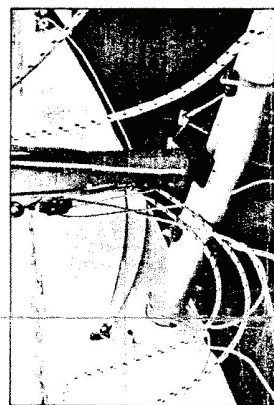
Once out on the open water we let the cat have her fun. It was tremendous fun and it was only with great reluctance that we headed back to the Windrush Yachts where we came up with yet another catamaran winner.

For looks, performance, price and value she'd be very hard to beat.

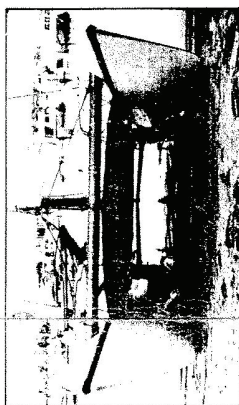
A word of warning: she isn't a docile plodder. She sails fast and feels like a Windrush 14 — catamaran enthusiasts who have sailed through the ranks to familyhood will love her.



ABOVE: Stern view shows radial traveller, surf cat-style kick-up rudders and outboard motor bracket that doubles as mast support when mast is lowered.

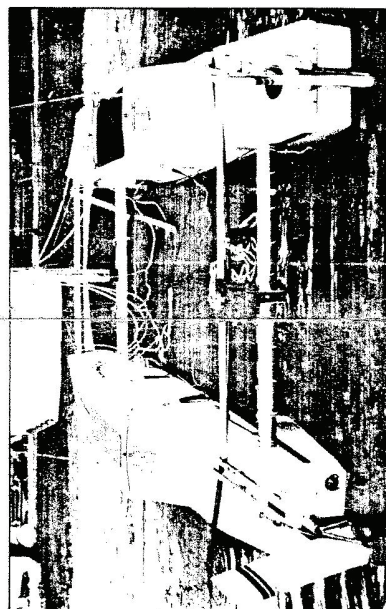


RIGHT: Centre crossbeam fairs into hulls, mast is rotating.



RIGHT: High-lift lever is simple method of tensioning forestay and rigging. 2-1 jib sheets means no winches.

BELOW: Trampoline deck continues to bow crossbeam providing big area of deck space.



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Windrush 600

The Windrush 600 has been designed by Richard Macfarlane with his own dual requirements in mind. Firstly, high speed cruising to the islands accompanied by his wife and two young children. Secondly, serious yacht racing at club level; either against mixed fleets of catamarans and trailer sailors or competing with other Windrush 600's in a one design class.

The 600 is large enough to accommodate sleeping space inside the hulls yet small enough to comply with the maximum road trailing width of 2.5 metres. A lightweight large diameter mast has been chosen to facilitate easy rigging. A small diamond stay will give the required stiffness. Considerable thought has been spent on trailer design and the 600 is as easy to launch and rig as a Surf Cat.

To compensate for the extra weight of a cruising style cat, and allowing for the fact that the majority of our customers will have considerable cat experience, the 600 has a fairly large suit of sails. The jib extends past the mast to an adjustable track on the inside of the cabin moulding. The mainsail is of high aspect ratio with 10 battens and on a rotating mast. One feature of the rig is the boomless mainsail with which we have had some experience and find very efficient. This has the advantage of simplicity, reduce weight and allows us to safely increase mainsail area using a low foot. A full width semi circular mainsheet track is attached above the beam to give full control of the mainsail. The full bottomed hull shape requires centreboards and these are attached offset on each hull to avoid intruding upon accommodation space. Both the high aspect ratio rudder and centreboard pivot backwards for beaching.

Although our main requirements are quick rigging and seaworthy comfort for the family, the Windrush 600 will appear on the racing circuit. We would expect a 600 to be raced by two crew on a trapeze, possibly extending light weather performance with a 300 sq. ft. spinnaker. Off the wind in heavy weather the 600's incredible forward buoyancy should allow her to keep powering forward without fear of nose diving. The 600 will be a very exciting boat downwind in a blow.

Despite the relatively large sail area on the standard 600, capsize will be a rare occurrence and then only when the boat is pushed to the limit by a strong crew. The 600 will fly a hull fairly easily but this is simply controlled by mainsheet. However, the limited beam improves diagonal stability considerably and it is the bow down, forward diagonal, capsize that catches out the experts on over-wide catamarans. All the same capsize must be considered in the design of any cat and the new 600 can be easily righted by its crew. A righting 'A' frame is attached to the front beam beneath the trampoline, on capsize it can be swung out giving the crew a 3 metre righting lever. To prevent the boat from turning upside down the large diameter mast is sealed and we have increased this buoyancy by adding a foam insert to the top panel of the sail. If the 600 is capsized with its hatches open then a few minutes work with a bucket will be needed to clear it. However, the boat has sealed buoyancy compartments forward and aft of the cabin area so there is no danger of swamping.

The Windrush 600 is a practical "no frills" sailing boat, very strongly built using the latest fibre-glass techniques of stiffening with core sandwich materials. The 600 is very attractively styled, her sweeping aerodynamic deck shape will set the pattern for sailboats of the eighties.

Standard Specifications			
Length	600	19ft 8in	
Width	2.5	8ft 2 1/2in	
Weight	300kg	660lbs	
Mast Height	8.5m	28ft	
Sail Area	22.3 sq m	240 sq ft	

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