



# Sitting pretty

Caroline Strainig checks out one of the stand-out cruisers on the show circuit at the moment – the Swedish-built Hallberg-Rassy 34.

Take a traditional displacement cruiser, cross it with a modern production boat and what do you get? If I had to give a serious answer to that question, I'd probably say something like the Hallberg-Rassy 34. This popular European cruiser has traditional but modern lines, a fin keel and – uncommon in modern production boats – a skeg-hung rudder, albeit a short skeg.

For those not familiar with the name, Hallberg-Rally is a Swedish company that has been manufacturing boats for 40 years and in that time has turned out

more than 8000. They are renowned overseas as well-built, quality yachts capable of taking their owners anywhere they want to go, in comfort.

Several people have looked at importing them to this country over the years but the delivery time for even the smaller yachts was a major sticking point. Peter Hrones of Windcraft Australia, already distributor of the Swedish Scanyachts, German Hanses and Australian-built Lightwave catamarans, had been keeping an eye on the company for some time and decided to take on the distributor-

ship two years ago.

"I had a feeling that that long delivery time would change, and it has," he said. "Now we're looking at only six to nine months for the smaller yachts such as this."

### Current models

An aspect that attracted Hrones to the Hallberg-Rassy was that the company retained current models for a long time, simply tweaking them to make them better rather than altering the hull and size slightly so they could release a new model for marketing purposes.

"This boat is number 356," he said of the test boat. "Rather than change the hull they have kept it and just changed



TOP: Flying along under spinnaker in Europe. ABOVE: Heading to windward in the Pittwater sail test.

little features to make it better and better."

He said this also ensured excellent resale value, with most yachts selling for around their original purchase price even 10 years on.

"We have a huge waiting list for secondhand ones," he said.

### The look

As previously mentioned, the 34 is somewhat of a cross between a traditional



A sugar-scoop, walk-through transom is missing, but a handy step gives easy access to the swimming platform.

cruiser and a modern production boat. She looks roomy, but the ultra-high freeboard some designers are incorporating now to satisfy space-at-all costs buyers is missing – and with it the option of a second aft cabin under the cockpit. While the rig is fractional, it is only just so, and instead of today's oh-so-common swept-back spreaders and sugar-scoop transom you'll find straight spreaders and a traditional transom.

Features that add to the traditional look are the wealth of teak – it comes as standard on decks, coaming, seats, cabin sole and swimming platform – and raised timber bulwarks instead of toerails. You generally see bulwarks only on larger classic designs. A timber rubbing strake with a brass strip is another classic cruising touch.

### Layout and sail plan

The sail plan is practical and designed for sailing one or two-up. Controls are led aft to jammers on the cabin top and there are self-tailing winches on the cabin top for halyards and on the coaming for sheets. The traveller is mid-cockpit, which means that the mainsheet release is close to the helm if needed. It is removable when not required and a handy little table that lives in the starboard cockpit locker slots in to take its place. The said locker is the only large

cockpit storage compartment per se, but it is large enough to house a myriad of odds and ends. Gas bottles are stored aft (room for two) in a small locker under/next to where the helmsman sits.

The standard inventory includes a main, jib, rigid boomvang, lazyjacks, in-line reefing (two reefing points – a third is an optional extra), Furllex headsail furler and adjustable backstay. A wheel is an optional extra; the test boat had a tiller. I found this direct and easy to steer.

The straight instead of swept-back spreaders mean that the yacht can run square downwind without the main rubbing on the spreaders. You lose the ability to adjust mast bend, but this is really only of importance in a racing boat. The mast itself looked very strong – in fact, adequate for a boat several metres longer.

Sails are well cut and strongly reinforced at stress points. The brochure said they were of offshore quality and they looked it.

Side decks are wide with adequate handholds and the anchor locker deep to obviate the need to flake chain. The motor of the electric windlass is mounted below decks to minimise condensation.

A sugar-scoop, walk-through transom has been bypassed in favour of a more traditional closed transom, but those who want to take a dip will still



The traveller is in the middle of the cockpit, but low down so it is easy to step over. It is also removable and a table slots in when at anchor.



Washboards have their own storage compartment in the cockpit lazarete.

find it easy to do so, courtesy of a handy little step that bridges the gap between cockpit and swimming platform. There, you will also find the obligatory fold-down ladder and a hot and cold shower.

Features that particularly caught my eye included the fixed windscreen-type dodger and adjustable canvas fold-down dodger extension. We left the latter up for the photo shoot but the canvas component folds down neatly when not required. I also liked the headsail track – a pulley system means you can adjust the car without leaving the cockpit – plus the fact that several harness attachment points are provided as standard.

### Down below

The interior is tastefully finished in mahogany-veneer plywood, and quality fittings and fixtures and good workmanship are much in evidence.

The layout is one most cruisers would be familiar with: a vee-berth cabin for'ard, midships a saloon with L-shaped settee, table and straight settee/passage berth, slightly aft a chart table and galley,



Deck drainage holes are routed through deck to avoid those horrible run-off stains you see on some boats.

and at the bottom of the companionway a head to starboard and a double cabin to port.

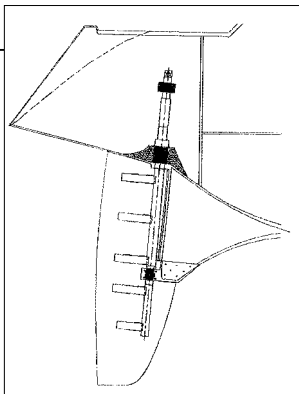
Stowage, ventilation and light all looked to be excellent and the designers had certainly put their thinking caps on. Nice touches I liked included ventilation holes under berths, a hinged instrument panel, plenty of room around the engine, a full-sized chart table, optional clip-down saloon carpet, angled portholes specially made for Hallberg-Rassy, and diesel heating with outlets in the saloon and cabins.

Hrones was particularly proud of the sturdy handholds and the light fittings, which were stainless steel as opposed to the more common plastic.

"See? You can even hang from it," he said, as he swung from a handhold on the saloon roof. "I weigh 15 stone and I wouldn't want to try that on most other boats!"

### How she sailed

Pittwater near Sydney is renowned for its fickle winds and our outing was no



The rudder has a small skeg, which helps protect it without overly affecting balance or the yacht's ability to reverse.

exception. One moment you'd be sitting comfortably in the groove and the next moment the wind would vanish behind a hill or there'd be a 40° wind shift. Nevertheless, the 34 was a dream to sail; in fact, you didn't really need to sail her. Admittedly, we had light winds but even so she was so well balanced that you could leave the helm for minutes at a time and she would stay on course. "Geez, doesn't she sit pretty!" someone exclaimed, as we sat back and relaxed while she steered herself.

How would she go offshore? Well, obviously we couldn't tell from our restricted outing, but there were several positive pointers. Firstly, she does not have the excessive freeboard you see in some production yachts today. The tradeoff is that you don't have the option of a second aft cabin, but I believe this is an overkill in most 34s anyway and a worthwhile price to pay for the reduction in windage and increased seaworthiness. Secondly, the 34 has a closed instead of sugar-scoop transom and this gives you protection offshore from following seas. Thirdly, the limit of positive stability is above average for a production boat this size – about 125°, some 10° above that required of Sydney-Hobart entrants. Fourthly, I understand overseas the Hallberg-Rassys as a brand have a good track record in the ARC rally.

While on the subject of performance, I came across an interesting little diagram in the brochure that showed average speeds in various wind conditions and sailing angles. Hallberg-Rassy said the



The saloon features an L-shaped settee to port, drop-leaf table and a straight settee/passage berth to starboard.



The instrument panel swings open so you can access it without recourse to a screwdriver.



The for'ard vee-berth cabin has copious storage in lockers, plus storage under the berth.



The head has a holding tank as standard, plus a large porcelain sink and two hatches for ventilation.



The galley has an Isotherm fridge with freezer compartment.

### Construction

The 34 is built to the high standards of European controlling body Germanischer Lloyd. The hull and deck are laminated and hand-laid, insulated above the waterline against heat and cold. Deck and coachroof areas and also the cockpit are of sandwich construction, laminated to the hull to form a one-piece construction. Bulkheads are glassed in through the bottom of the hull, and the boat has a bolt-on lead keel with 10 stainless keel bolts, most of which are accessible via inspection panels in the cabin sole.



Light fixtures are steel rather than plastic.

diagram could be used as a guide to "sail the boat at best using the apparent angles upwind and downwind that yielded the best speed made good."



# New Boats: Hallberg-Rassy 34

The rudder is skeg-hung but the skeg is short and the general configuration has more in common with a modern spade set-up than a traditional full-length skeg.

## Summary

While more expensive than other yachts this size we have featured in this column, the Hallberg-Rassy 34 is a beautifully built boat that excels in the quality department. If you're dreaming of the Whitsundays or Louisiades and looking for an up-market yacht to take you there, get your bank manager's number handy – you might just need it. The company also makes a 37, and a centre-cockpit 43 should be available for testing from April on for those looking for something a little bigger.

## STRONGEST SELLING POINTS

Hrones believes the yacht's strongest selling points are the quality of finish, high resale value and world-wide sailing capabilities. Other pluses he cites are the length of bunks, headroom and the builder's long record and reputation for excellence.

"If you understand boatbuilding and what real quality is, a Hallberg-Rassy is a yacht you can own for life," he said.

"Look closely at what comes with the standard inventory – tank size and construction, motor horse power, quality of deck gear, lead keel, joinery, the 12mm teak decks, diesel heater, etc etc – and then you will see the value."

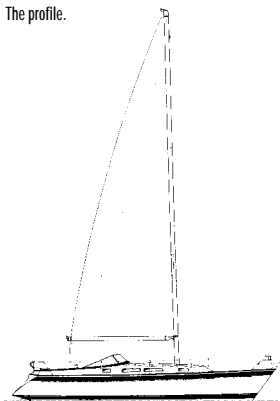
## SPECIFICATIONS



The layout.

<b>LOA:</b> .....	10.28m
<b>LWL:</b> .....	9.4m
<b>Beam:</b> .....	3.42m
<b>Draft:</b> .....	1.85m*
<b>Designer:</b> .....	German Frers
<b>Builder:</b> .....	Hallberg-Rassy AB Sweden
<b>Construction material:</b> .....	Hand-laid solid GRP and foam
<b>Limit of positive stability:</b> .....	125°
<b>Engine:</b> ..	Volvo 2030 29hp, with sail-drive and two-blade folding propeller
<b>Fuel-tank capacity:</b> .....	155 ltrs
<b>Sails:</b> .....	Elvstrom Denmark offshore version. Dacron main and jib standard. Sail area with working jib 55 sqm
<b>Deck hardware and hatches:</b> ..	Lewmar
<b>Radio:</b> .....	Local fit option
<b>Standard electronics:</b> ..	Raymarine ST60 log/depth/temp, fuel and water gauges
<b>Mast:</b> ..	Anodised Selden 15.35m
<b>Rigging:</b> ..	Over-size 8mm 1 x 19 stainless steel
<b>Headsail furler:</b> .....	Furlex
<b>Anchor:</b> ..	10kg Breeze anchor, short-link chain and 30m anchor line
<b>Water-tank capacity:</b> .....	255 ltrs
<b>Hot and cold water:</b> .....	Isotherm 22 ltrs from engine or shore power
<b>Saltwater to galley:</b> .....	Foot pump
<b>Stove:</b> ..	Two-burner gas with oven and stainless gas bottle (room for two)
<b>Refrigeration:</b> .....	Isotherm 12-volt with freezer compartment

The profile.



**Lee cloths/jackstays:** Factory lee cloths fitted for an extra \$450

**Options on test boat:** .....

- Lee cloths, CD-player, tiller autopilot, wind instruments, fitted carpet, mast-mounted spinaker pole and lines, three-blade folding prop, storm sail, pushpit life buoys.

**Price:** .....

**Delivery time:** .....

**Australian and New Zealand distributor:**

Windcraft Australia Pty Ltd, Shop 7/1714 Pittwater Rd, Bayview NSW 2104, ph (02) 9979 1709, fx (02) 9979 2027,

email boats@windcraft.com.au, website windcraft.com.au or hallberg-rassy.com

\* A shallow-draft version is also available.