



VANCOUVER 28

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This seaworthy offshore cruiser is a modified design that became popular in its own right. We sailed aboard the first yacht built

► *"She has obviously had an owner who kept right on top of the maintenance and defects list"* ◀

Robert Harris established his name many years ago as a designer of sound blue water cruising yachts, so it was no surprise when a couple tackled him in the late 1960s to design for them a small yacht that would take them from Canada to New Zealand in both comfort and safety.

So it was that the Vancouver 27 – the forerunner of the Vancouver 28 – was born. Its qualities as a cruiser offshore were soon recognised by an increasing number of serious cruising yachtsmen and women.

Kevin Seymour, a 43-year-old architect who has cruised for most of his life, was one of the serious sailors attracted to these tough little cruisers. He bought *Colavoce*, a Vancouver 27, in 1984. In many ways the yacht suited him well enough, but there were a few details that niggled – like the way a lump of green water lifting onto the weather side deck and running aft almost invariably hit the rail at the corner of the

transom and slopped over the coaming to soak his trousers.

As often happens between yachtsmen and builders, Seymour began imparting his experience to the builder, Pheon Yachts of Newhaven, now defunct. The upshot was that Pheon Yachts would incorporate Kevin Seymour's proposed detail changes in a new yacht, provided that he placed an order for the first one!

Seymour took delivery of the first Vancouver 28, christened *Islander*, on 16 May, 1986, a date he finds difficult to forget because it was his birthday and on that day he wrote a rather large cheque.

The Vancouver 28 is a very close relative of the slightly smaller Vancouver 27, but some very subtle changes

have been made. The hull and deck mouldings are identical to those of the earlier yacht, except that the transom has been raked back from the tuck to meet an extension of the deck. The Vancouver 28 boasts a short after deck as a result. This feature encourages water that finds its way aboard over the weather side to slip round behind the after coaming and exit over the lee quarter. The rail was raised by three quarters of an inch (19mm) and the deck inside the rail by 2in (50mm). This seemingly minor alteration gave the boat much more headroom, more useful height for cupboards in the galley ("At least the sauce bottle can stand up now," Robert says) and, generally, a much better feeling of space below.

The deep beam that once ran across the deckhead in line with the forward edge of the chart table has been removed and with it the possibility of scalping tall members of the crew every time they made their way forward through the saloon. *Islander* sports a wider quarter berth than the Vancouver 27. In port it may be considered a cosy double. The yacht has been used as the model upon which all the Northshore Yacht Yards' Vancouver 28s are based, but they do differ slightly from the original yacht. Kevin Seymour has made some detail changes himself, but her owner is good with his hands and, in many places, it is very difficult to differentiate between modification and original joiner work.

Islander was snug in her berth in Hythe Marina when we called on a dull and almost windless day shortly before Christmas last year. She was secured with almost over-size, tailored lines and lay stern-to the dock. The light genoa was stopped to the lifelines and the staysail was ready to send up through the forehatch.



Islander slips along in a breath of northerly air off Hythe Marina Village

She was obviously impatient to be taken out for spin even though there was hardly puff enough to stir her anemometer. Peering down the companion, however, we caught a glimpse of the well cared-for interior and noted

► "If we're chatting again in ten years' time, it will certainly be in this cabin, but we might need new cushions" ◀

with satisfaction that a posse of mugs had been assembled in the galley and that the kettle was on duty.

The yacht was particularly trim. The laid teak of the upper deck, the rail cap and the laid teak in the cockpit area had been recently scrubbed. All half-yard tails were neatly turned up; the yacht had an air of being well used, yet she obviously had an owner who kept right on top of the maintenance and defects list.

Below, we found a highly organised and well-maintained saloon. The joiner work was from nicely matched teak, the surface of which showed few of the marks that one would expect in a yacht whose log has ticked off more than 16,000 miles (25,000km) of long distance cruising. This does not take into account weekend sailing and the occasional daily excursion.

With the watery light in imminent danger of failing, we wedged our empty mugs in the sink, dropped the dock lines and took *Islander* out into Southampton Water to put her to the test.

A very light northerly air wafted us round the moored yacht on which we had marooned the photographer. *Islander* did her best, but this was definitely not a day for beating the daily run record. We returned her to her berth and shot below to warm ourselves and learn something of her achievements.

Two days after she was launched she took part in the 1986 Round the Island race, but did not feature too high in the overall results. Shortly afterwards she made her way west and explored the coasts of Devon and Cornwall before extending the cruise to take in the Scilly Isles.

In her second season, *Islander* set

off from Falmouth in June keen to take part in the Cruising Association rally in La Coruña. The yacht took four days to reach down across Biscay, look in at Luearca and then rendezvous with the 11 other participants in La Coruña. Four of these were Vancouver 27s; two, including *Islander*, were Vancouver 28s.

In the summer of 1988, *Islander* sailed from Hythe Marina Village bound for southern Norway, but the light winds and limited time caused her to lower her sights and she shaped a course for the Limfjord at the southern end of Jutland.

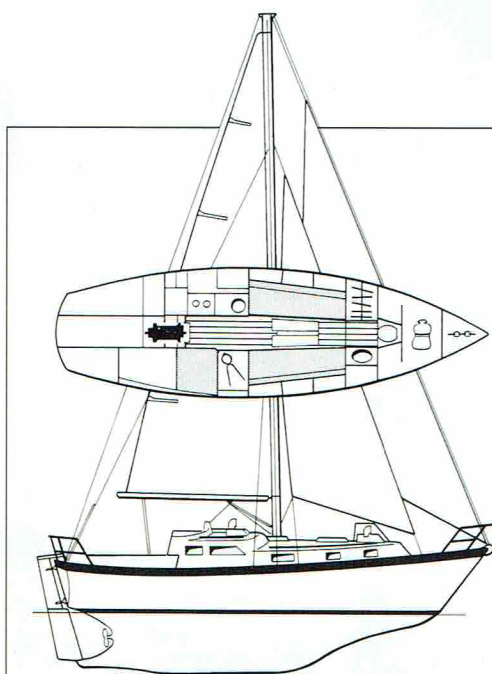
Even this plan had to be revised when really bad weather struck and, after a couple of uncomfortable days hove-to off Jutland, she scuttled back down the Danish coast to Esbjerg and, finally, to the mouth of the Elbe and the Kiel canal. Then followed a cruise round Zeeland and Fünen before passing once more through the Kiel Canal, running down the Dutch coast and crossing the North Sea to Harwich. *Islander* was now really beginning to clock up the miles. She averages about 3,000 miles each year.

In 1989, *Islander* crossed the Bay of Biscay once more to cruise the north coast of Spain from San Sebastian westwards to Santander. By the time she returned to England she had logged more than 12,000 miles since she had been launched.

Having been frustrated in her 1988 cruise to Scandinavia, *Islander* headed north-east once more last summer and this time succeeded in passing through the Limfjord, sailing down the Kattegat and up into the Baltic as far as Stockholm before retracing her steps to visit Copenhagen for the second time on this voyage. From there she made her way back to England via the Kiel canal. This foray into the Baltic clocked up a further 2,155 miles and kept *Islander's* owner away from the office for five weeks.

The photographer had long since gone, but Kevin Seymour and I pored over the yacht's considerable folio of charts while we discussed in detail the cruises that have been sketched in so lightly in the previous paragraphs. A gimballed brass oil lamp in the mast pillar filled the little cabin with a warm glow that kept the December chill at bay.

There seemed little point in asking Kevin whether or not he and *Islander* were well suited. "If we're chatting again in ten years' time", he said, "we'd almost certainly be in this cabin, but we might need some new cushions by then."



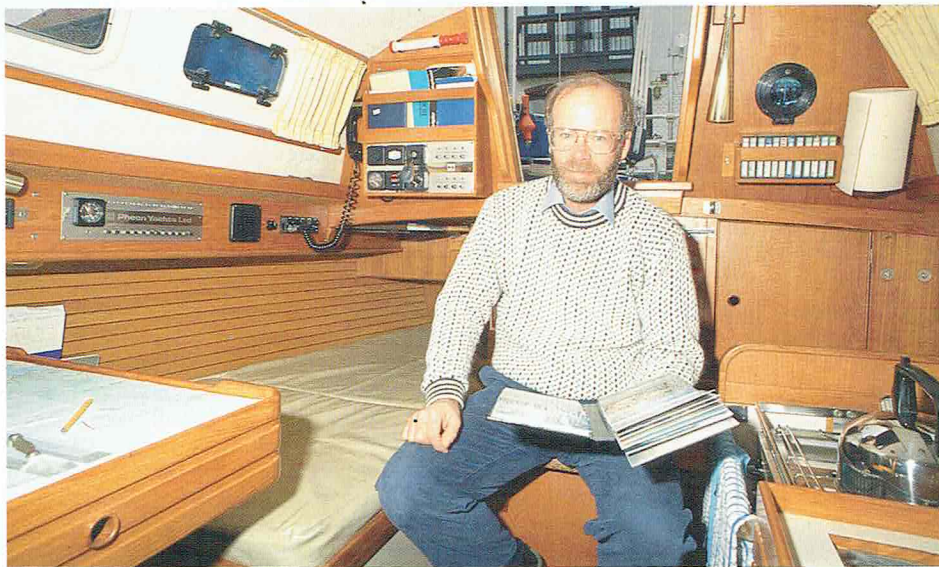
Dimensions:

LOA	28ft 0in	8.99m
LWL	22ft 1in	6.99m
Beam	8ft 8in	2.63m
Draught	4ft 3in	1.30m
Disp	8,960lb	4,064kg
Sail area (inc 100 per cent foretriangle)	375ft ²	34.84m ²
Ballast ratio	38.62	per cent
Berths	5/6	
Sail area: Disp	13.95	
Disp:LWL	371.44	

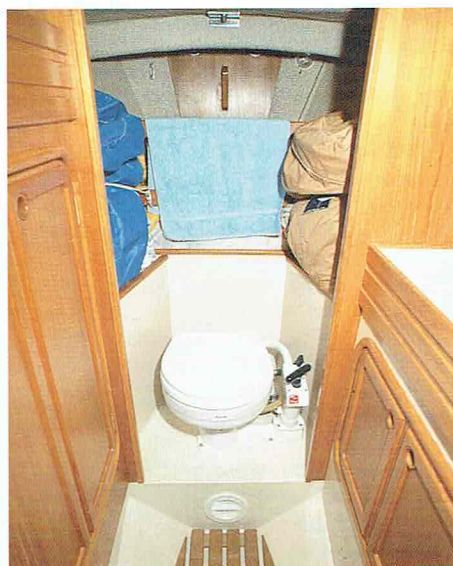
Designed by: Robert Harris/Phaeon Yachts

Built and marketed by: Northshore Yacht Yards Ltd, Itchenor, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 7AY. Tel: (0243)512611. Fax: (0243) 511473.

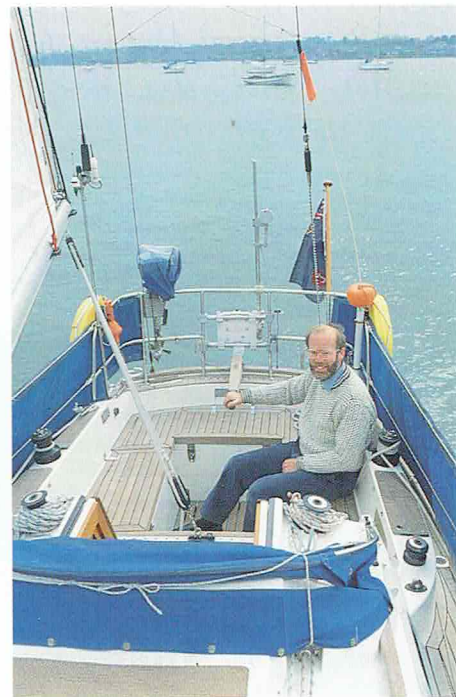
Left, plenty of stowage for groceries and effectively fiddled worktop areas in the neat galley. **Below**, Kevin Seymour goes through his photographic record of Islander's cruises to Spain and Scandinavia



Islander still wears her original suit of sails. A light genoa disguises the cutter rig



The head aboard the Vancouver 28 is compact, but very comfortable



Above, deep coamings make for security when the going gets rough. Two gas bottles and the liferaft stow in the locker beneath the after seat. **Left**, the saloon is light and airy. The clock and barometer have been banded on from Kevin's father's yacht

