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# Parker 275

A sprightly shallow draught cruiser-racer

**C**ompared to some of their contemporaries G W Parker & Sons do very little in the way of drum beating for their range of lifting keel yachts. Instead, these niche boats appear to sell on merit. Certainly when we sailed the Castro-designed Parker 31 back in 1987, we were genuinely startled by her performance as a cruising boat.

She was one of a range of lifting keel yachts by Parker which included their Ron Holland-designed 26-footer (formerly the Super Seal) which subsequently 'grew' to 27ft. Last year, they went back to the drawing board, re-rigged her, rearranged the ballast, put on a new deck/cockpit and disected the hull mould in a major way. The Parker 275 was the result, with a hull wider at the stern, an elliptical transom and stem straightened to increase waterline length. Although the Parker 27 was used as a basis to work from, the 275 is a very different boat. Whilst her performance makes her competitive for racing (for example, the boat we sailed is due to take part in the Three Peaks Race on 22 June), the Parker 275's role is primarily a cruising one.

Central to Parker's range are their lifting keels, which give the designs an added, essential, dimension for those sailing or mooring in shallow areas. A boat on a drying berth can be regarded as a partial hedge against spiralling mooring fees, allowing some to continue sailing who might otherwise be priced out of the sport.

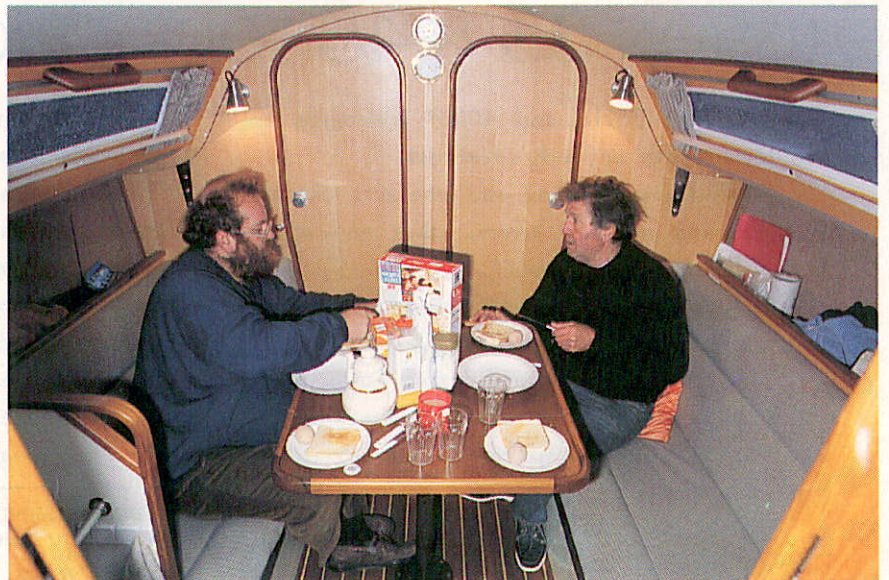
Largely designed around the lifting keel and shallow water cruising, the Parker 275 has a fairly flat bottom, with very little rocker and a straight sheer. The freeboard and coachroof height necessary for full headroom on a boat of this size (and shallow draught configuration) have been well disguised with graphics and deck/coachroof camber.

The earlier 27s had most of their ballast carried inside with a 250 lb dagger board, but with the 275 Parker decided to increase the ballast in the lifting keel. Building 700 lb into the board and the remaining 1,300 lb cast iron in the shallow bilge created a lower centre of



gravity, allowing more sail area and ultimately better performance. This modification meant fitting a 30:1 keel hoist requiring 180 turns of a winch handle, taking three to four minutes. An optional electric motor (costing £600) raises the keel in 30 seconds. A simple wire gauge to the mast indicates the keel's position and they are currently working on a locking device to hold the lifting keel down in the event of a knockdown.

Because the Parker 275 only displaces 5,500 lb, Parker have to watch construction weight carefully. Having said that, nowhere does the yacht feel light, due largely to the construction techniques – GRP/coremat sandwich in the topsides, balsa sandwich for decks and PVC sandwich in the coachroof. An interior moulding is fitted and fully bonded in, creating fur-



*Top: the galley is compact in volume but provides full facilities. Above: the table removes completely, giving the saloon a spacious feel. Left: the wire and parrel bead denotes the height of the keel against markers on the mast. Far left: the chart table ready for use. The chain supports have been removed on subsequent boats*



Patrick Roach

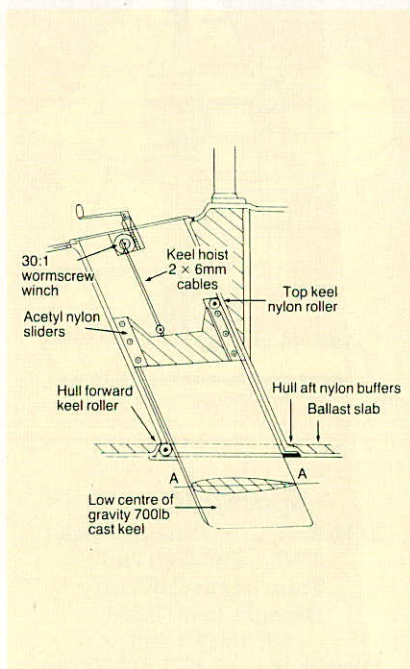
ther stiffness. A double gelcoat is used in the hull moulding, with Copperclad moulded in below the waterline. We were impressed by the standard of GRP work throughout, both in terms of fairness and finish.

### Below decks

Although it is inevitable that the lifting keel box will affect the accommodation, Parker's experience with them has largely alleviated the problem. One might say it has created slightly unusual balance of accommodation priorities, but the shallow draught capability far outweighs this.

The companionway on the 275 is off-putting; the hatch doesn't slide far enough forward (although this has been improved marginally on subsequent boats), making it necessary to turn on the rather steep steps half-way down.

Once below, the saloon accommodation is not especially spacious, but a number of good ideas have made the best of the space available. The chart table, for example, folds away against the hull side, providing generous access to the after double berth, whilst the saloon table removes completely (stowed in the after berth)



*Top: reaching well in light airs. The Parker 275 sports a single swept-spreader fractional rig. Above: the mechanics of Parker's lift keel*

transforming the central area of the boat.

Alongside the keel box is a walkway incorporated with the forward double, giving this compact cabin the facilities of a hanging locker, seat and room to get changed. Stowage is good and varied, and light and ventilation is provided by an opening hatch with Tannoy.

The heads occupies the starboard side of the keel box, and is a much more spacious compartment than you would expect to find on a boat of this size. This fully-moulded compartment has proper oilskin stowage, a moulded basin and, with the optional sump pump, could be used as a shower. Ventilation is catered for, just, with a Tannoy – a small opening deck hatch would make life more pleasant.

The saloon is comfortable and light, with seating for four around the aforementioned foldaway table. A trotter box to port and fold-up extension to starboard make the saloon berths 73in and 75in long respectively, and with lee cloths fitted as standard, both make good seaberths. Headroom in the saloon is 70¼in aft, 69in forward (increased by an inch on subsequent boats), and 63½in in the forecabin.

The chart table folds away completely,



The heads compartment, forward alongside the lifting keel box is generously proportioned and offers something rare on this size of boat, a decent wet locker

a well-engineered arrangement giving the best of both worlds – space when stowed, but a good navigation area with table measuring 29in x 24in (half-Admiralty size). A seat also folds up allowing the navigator to wedge him or herself in firmly at sea. With navigation facilities folded away, access to the quarter berth is good. Although wide (48in maximum) this berth is not really a double, other than for children, because both length and headroom under the cockpit moulding is limited to 73in and 16in respectively. Two opening ports (one into the cockpit, the other through the transom) give light and ventilation, whilst a pair of bins provide adequate stowage.

The galley is compact in size, but again through careful design they have managed to fit in a gimbaled oven, icebox, and a big locker. Worktop area is limited and the cook will need to use the saloon table for meal preparation.

Finish of the interior is excellent, the woodwork is to a high standard and clearly care has been taken in the finish and styling inside the yacht.

## On deck

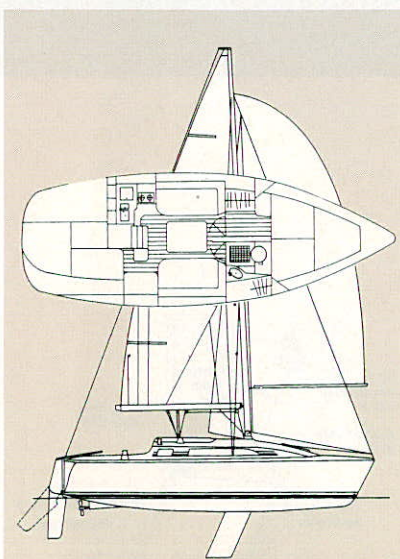
Our first impressions were of maintenance considerations. There is not a single piece of wood on the outside of the Parker 275; it not only looks good but the spring fit-out will not be a headache.

The ergonomics of the cockpit are particularly good; comfortable curves all round and a layout that will operate

at most angles of heel. Cockpit drainage is properly catered for with the well dumping through big transom scuppers. We would have liked to see more non-skid on the rounded cockpit coamings, although this is easily remedied. Similarly, a neoprene seal is needed for the hatch of the capacious cockpit locker. Detail is good throughout and you can't help thinking the boat is the product of a yachtsman's attention to such points, be it catches to hold open cockpit locker lids, or the sturdy pulpit. With marina charges (and vulnerability from passing craft) in mind, the rudder folds flat against the transom, the blade also lifting clear of the water.

All control lines are led neatly aft through Spinlock clutches to a pair of Lewmar 8s on the coachroof. Fabric pouches accommodate all rigging falls.

An otherwise excellent deck layout and design is let down by only one feature – the positioning of a single fore-deck cleat right in the eyes of the vessel. This is within a hand's span of fairleads and the (diminutive) anchor roller, and sooner or later will give someone pinched fingers as a result.



## Specifications

**LOA** 8.5m (27ft 11in) inc rudder  
**LWL** 7.49m (24ft 7in)  
**Beam** 2.81m (24ft 7in)  
**Draught** 1.6m/0.38m  
 (5ft 3in/1ft 3in)  
**Displacement** 2,497kg (5,500 lb)  
**Sail area** 35.3m<sup>2</sup> (380sq ft)  
**Price** £31,725  
**Builder** G W Parker & Son Ltd,  
 Horseshoe Lane, Kirton, Boston,  
 Lincs PE20 1LW  
 (Tel: 0205 722697)

## Under way

The single-cylinder 9hp Yanmar pushes the Parker at a comfortable 5.6 knots at cruising revs, 6.1 knots flat out, making up in economy motoring what it lacks in overall noise deadening. The Yanmar provides ample power for the Parker with manoeuvrability, both ahead and astern, being first rate. She turns in little more than her own length ahead and gains steerage astern at a low speed. We found that it is best to keep the astern speed down to minimise the weight in the tiller, a common consideration.

As the photos show, our trials of the Parker were frustrated by lack of wind. However, even with the wind rarely above 5 knots true, she sailed like a witch, accelerating perceptibly in the odd puff and tacking through 75-80 degrees every time. Her Portsmouth Yardstick has been estimated at 103. With just 5.2 knots of true wind (around 8 knots apparent), she was able to make 4.5 knots to windward.

Although it is dangerous to draw too many conclusions from such brief trials in light airs, we are confident that her sailing abilities will not disappoint even the more performance-orientated yachtsmen at club events.

## Conclusions

If the dedicated following that her predecessors have accumulated is anything to judge by, the Parker 275 will be a popular boat, being the logical product of all the lessons learned from them.

We came away impressed by the success with which she achieves her design/concept aims. The lifting keel is not a marketing afterthought; it works, and what is more, having been refined over many years, works well. That feature alone opens up fresh cruising possibilities and sailing areas like the Isles of Scilly or Channel Islands, for example, will take on a new complexion.

Coming from a yard which also builds racing dinghies, the 275 has been conceived, built and rigged by people who understand and employ appropriate technology throughout. As such, the weight is kept to a minimum (without compromising strength), the rig can be tweaked as much as you wish, and yet she still manages to accommodate full cruising requirements and comforts. For occasional racing and family cruising which need to embrace shallow waters, few boats come close to her. **GP**