

SUPREME TO SOUTHAMPTON

MADE TO MEASURE

Jack Jones called his new boat *Supreme* after a famous fairground steam traction engine, but the name could just as well refer to the quality of craftsmanship that went into building her. Alex McMullen joined the first Dale 51 on her delivery from Milford Haven to the Southampton Boat Show.



Background photograph: *Supreme* approaches Hurst Castle on her way into the Solent, near the end of her passage from Milford Haven. Right: a neat combination of helm seat and liferaft stowage on the aft deck. The stainless steel work is immaculate. Below: hefty foredeck fittings, including three bollards.



WITH night falling rapidly, we motored out of Westfield Pill and down towards the entrance to Milford Haven, to give ourselves a quick getaway in the morning. By the time we were passing between the tanker jetties it was dark. Or it would have been. The water was floodlit by the lights along the jetties and on board the ships and tugs, and by the flaring chimneys of the Texaco refinery.

It was truly dark when we nosed into Castlebeach Bay. We scanned the blackness for the buoy we knew was there and which we intended to pick up. It was not laid for pleasure craft like *Supreme*, but for the range safety launches (RSLs) that patrol the waters immediately to the south of the Haven entrance, around the limits of the Castlemartin firing range. We were prepared to move off and anchor if told to do so, but hoped that we could stay put for a few hours' sleep.

And there was a kind of legitimacy in our use of the mooring; were it not for the RSLs we would not have been here, at least in *Supreme*. When Jack was looking for a larger boat to replace his Dale (née Aqua-Star) 38, his final choice of a Dale (née Halmatic) 51 was influenced by the evident seaworthiness of the Castlemartin RSLs. *Supreme* is based on the same Talisman 49 hull.

Designed by Murray Cormack Associates, the Talisman is a powerful round-bilge semi-displacement vessel that has been around since 1976, primarily in pilot boat and patrol boat form.

Halmatic, who took over the Talisman 49 moulds in 1980, call it Halmatic 51 when a workboat, or Weymouth 51 when a motoryacht, the latter being almost identical in appearance and very little lighter in construction. Dale 51 is what Dale Sailing, of Neyland, call the motoryacht they build from the Weymouth 51 hull and superstructure mouldings.

You could say the Dale 51 is a version of the Weymouth 51, is a version of the Halmatic 51, is a version of the Talisman 49.

Supreme is the first Dale 51 and, if the interest she aroused at the Southampton Boat Show in September is anything to go by, she will be the first of several. We joined the boat on her delivery to Southampton, over the weekend before the Show opened.

She looks superb, the kind of craft even dyed-in-the-wool sailing men who call motorboats 'gin palaces' or 'stinkboats' will admit looks handsome, workmanlike and seaworthy. And it is not just first impressions that are favourable. Close inspection reveals a very high standard of fit-out, above and below decks.

Supreme's deck fittings are heavy-duty enough for a workboat of her size. The foredeck has three 9½in by 4½in (240mm x 115mm) bollards. But you won't find her quality of exterior materials and finish on any workboat. The stainless steel work — bollards, cleats, fairleads and goalpost mast — is immaculate, as are the teak decking and taffrail. On the cabin top, two boathooks are stowed in teak clamps with quick-release catches.

Massive rubber D-fendering around the gunwales and laminated teak rails above the waterline protect the topsides. The rails run right up to the bows, where they double as spray-deflectors.

Down below, the standard of joinery, in Burmese teak, matches any we have seen.



Above: *Supreme's* well-equipped galley, complete with trash compactor. Note the superb joinery. Above left: two boathooks are stowed on the cabin top, held down in teak clamps with quick-release catches. Left: the aft cabin, with more examples of Dale Sailing's very high standard of joinery.

Overhead lining is in panels, for ease of repair and maintenance, the edges concealed by teak laths, for appearance. All hidden surfaces — GRP and timber — are painted.

The layout of a Dale 51 is very much to an owner's requirements, although the superstructure moulding prescribes a basic midships wheelhouse/saloon with aft cabin arrangement, and the opportunity (unlikely not to be taken up) of an outside, aft-deck, helm position. Jack drew out his ideas for *Supreme* in some rough sketches, and commissioned yacht designers Laurent Giles Ltd to turn them into detailed drawings. Details were worked out as building progressed, at weekly meetings with Dale Sailing's project manager Owen Brown.

Jack was keen to have two forward cabins in addition to the obligatory aft cabin, plus a comfortable eating area adjacent to the galley. There was room to spare for the four of us delivering *Supreme* from Neyland to Southampton. Jack occupied the en-suite aft cabin. Roger Stephens, Principal of the Dale

Sailing School and navigator for the trip, took one of the forward cabins and I the other. Phil O'Hara, freelance marine engineer, slept in the wheelhouse, above the engines which it was his job to keep running sweetly. The only criticism we would make of the layout is the absence of separate shower stalls in both toilet compartments; most boats of this size now manage to fit them in.

Supreme is powered by two 480hp Volvo TAMD 122D six-cylinder diesels. Over the measured mile she has achieved a top speed of 21½ knots at 2100rpm, with full fuel and water tanks. Dale Sailing are confident that with slightly coarser-pitch props she will reach 23-24 knots, cruising at 19-20 knots at 1900rpm. At the latter speed she will have a range of about 400 miles.

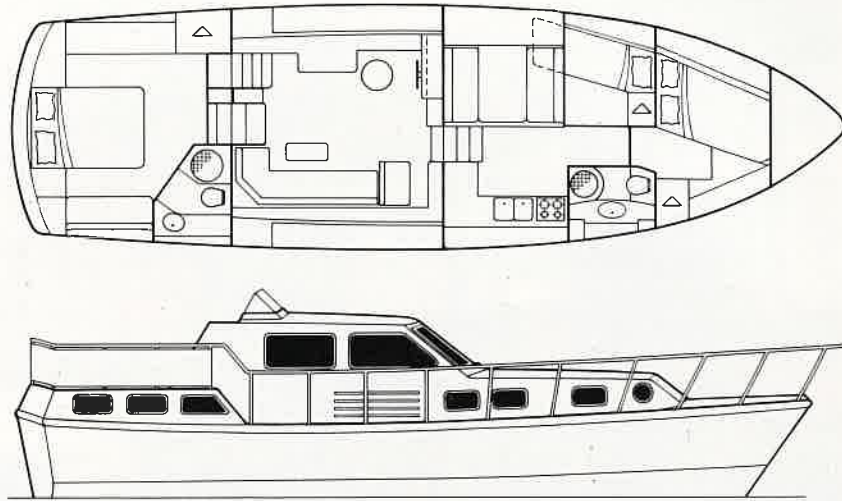
The engine installation is exemplary, with easy entry into the engine room through a large, gas-strutted hatch in the wheelhouse, and access right around the engines. By building the wheelhouse sole a little higher than in the standard Weymouth 51, Dale Sailing have

provided good access to the tops of the engines as well as making movement around them much easier. And there is still plenty of headroom in the wheelhouse.

We slipped our illicit mooring in Castlebeach Bay at 0430 and motored out of Milford Haven, heading south. For the first hour and a half, until it was light, we kept our speed down to 10½ knots.

Our brief experience of night-time working showed up a niggling fault. The masthead light illuminated the top of the windscreen and the cabin top enough to impair vision at the outside helm position quite seriously; a deflector plate under the light would solve the problem. At the inside helm, night vision was spoilt by a row of bright warning lights; it would be restored by smaller bulbs or, better still, a dimmer switch.

Daylight revealed a near-calm sea. The sun rose out of a bank of hazy cloud into a clear sky. At 17½-18 knots we headed towards our first waypoint, a radar training buoy, 24 miles WNW of



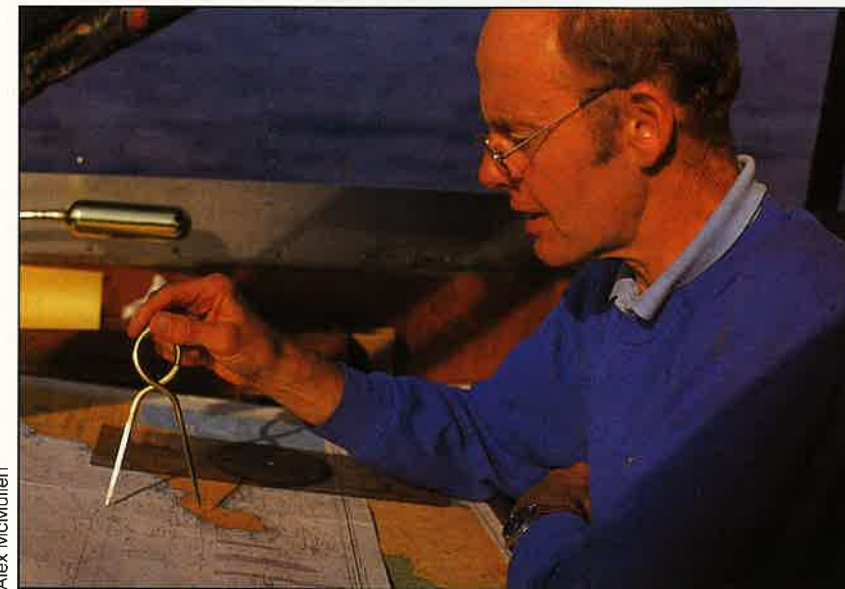
Below: owner Jack Jones drives the boat from the outside helm. Above right: Phil O'Hara carries out routine engine checks. The two Volvo TAM122Ds ran without any hint of trouble during the delivery trip. Right: Roger Stephens at the chart table opposite the inside helm. Below right: well-placed nav aids and comfortable sprung interior helm seat.



Alex McMullen



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Trevose Head on the north Cornish coast, two-thirds of the way along our route across the Bristol Channel approaches. The buoy was charted as 'unreliable', but it was there, on the nose.

This was motorboating at its most relaxed. There was little other shipping about, and nothing that came anywhere near us. *Supreme's* engines are well soundproofed, so we could talk to each other without raising our voices.

We took the inshore passage past Land's End, outside the jagged Brisons and inside the Longships Reef, with its helipad-topped lighthouse, and Kettle's Bottom rocks, which are uncovered except at high water springs.

In Mount's Bay we passed through a school of at least 20 dolphins, flocks of gannets and gulls, and the swirls of water from a beleaguered shoal of mackerel. The sea was now an oily calm, so we rounded The Lizard close-to, just outside Men Hyr rock which, at near to low water, was showing well clear of the surface.

Just under nine hours after we left Milford Haven, we entered Falmouth, only to discover that the normally reliable *Falmouth Industry* fuelling barge was not on station. It turned out she was servicing a ship at anchor outside the harbour, and would not be back for some hours.

We pondered using instead the Yacht Haven fuelling pontoon off the town, or Falmouth Yacht Marina, but both would have been more expensive and we had enough fuel and time to press on and get a few more miles behind us.

We looked up in 'Macmillan' ports where we could get 300gal of diesel or more at a favourable price and without too much of a detour. We rang the *Fowey Refueller* on Jack's mobile phone, to be told they would charge us 24p/lit (a not very favourable 109p/gal). Dart Marina, in Dartmouth, quoted 62p/gal, which goes to show the worth of shopping around when refuelling, especially if you are buying large quantities.

Dartmouth was 40 miles eastward, and Dart





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Marina's fuelling berth was due to close at 1830. When we said 1830 was our ETA they offered to hang on until 1900.

We set course for the Eddystone Light, which we passed at 1600. It was a veritable marine crossroads here, boats heading east and west along the coast and north and south to and from Plymouth. As we passed the entrance to Salcombe, the Island Cruising Club's ex-Brixham Trawler *Provident* sailed out of the harbour. She was a magnificent sight, her newly-painted green and black hull under a full set of tan sails.

In a freshening easterly, tending to southeasterly, we rounded Start Point and, keeping outside the Skerries shoal, headed for Dartmouth. For Jack and Phil this was a first visit to the River Dart, and both expressed astonishment that the place was so beautiful, that anywhere on the South Coast could compare to their beloved Pembrokeshire.

Dart Marina were as co-operative as they had promised to be. Special thanks are due to Paul, who helped us with our lines, patiently hung around way past his normal going-home time while we took on 446gal, an operation that lasted three-quarters of an hour, and then took me out in the marina launch to take some photographs of *Supreme* motoring up and down the harbour in the last of the evening sunshine. To cap it all, we were allowed to stay overnight on the fuelling berth, free of charge.

We had burned 446gal (2027lt) of diesel, in 14 hours' running, covering 235 miles at an average speed of 16.8 knots. That represents a consumption of 31.9gph (145lph), or 0.53mpg (0.12mpl).

With only 100 miles to go, we left Dartmouth next morning at the relatively respectable hour of 0630, into a northeasterly Force 2, increasing to Force 3 and possibly, for a time, Force 4. *Supreme* pushed her way through the moderate seas we encountered with barely a shudder, and we only had to switch on the wipers intermittently to clear the wheelhouse windscreen of spray.

These were not very testing conditions for such a vessel. Back in 1976 I had a run in the first Talisman 49 from Southampton out to the Nab Tower in a Force 7. She proved then what a good rough-weather boat Murray Cormack had designed. Her ample beam made her steady in

beam seas, she ploughed comfortably into head seas and held her course well with the waves dead astern. In quartering seas she yawed somewhat, as will most motorboats in such conditions, but remained quite controllable. *Supreme* had shown a hint of this behaviour as we approached Dartmouth from Start Point, but otherwise behaved impeccably.

We crossed Lyme Bay on a course to take us outside the Portland Race, off Portland Bill, and then headed for the Needles, keeping a couple of miles off Durlston Head, in order to clear the lesser known but still potentially vicious race off that headland.

Just as we started to think what an easy, trouble-free trip it had been, there was a sudden smell of diesel. It was coming from outside, and the cause was quickly detected. *Supreme* has two centreline tanks with a filtration system between them — fuel can be pumped from one to the other to clean it or to adjust the trim — and Jack had accidentally switched on the fuel-transfer pump. Fuel was being pumped from one nearly full tank into one completely full tank, and out of the latter's breather, to be blown back onto the deck.

Jack and Phil went out to scrub it down, with some Bilgex cleaner in a bucket of water. Jack managed to get some of this unpleasant mixture into his eyes and, although he washed them in fresh water as soon as he'd finished the job, his left eye became painfully sore. He aggravated the injury by insisting he steer his own vessel into the Solent and up Southampton Water.

By the time we reached Southampton, he was in considerable pain. We carted him off to the Southampton Eye Hospital, where he was told he had damaged a cornea. The eye was treated and covered up, and Jack was instructed to keep his other eye closed as much as possible. It too was affected.

It was a painful way to discover the need for a very minor modification: the fitting of some kind of safety cover over the fuel-transfer pump switch. And it was a sad way to end what was otherwise an almost faultless delivery. Happily, Jack's eyes were fully healed when he returned to Southampton a week later, a justly proud and happy owner, to see his boat on display at the Boat Show. □

Supreme heads up the Dart, past Kingswear. The beauty of the river astounded the two first-time visitors from Pembrokeshire.

Dale 51 Supreme

Loa 54ft 6in (16.61m).

Beam 15ft 3in (4.65m).

Draught 5ft 3in (1.60m).

Displacement 19 tonnes.

Fuel capacity 850gal (3865lt).

Water capacity 140gal (635lt).

Engines 2 x 480hp Volvo TAMD 122D diesels.

Electronics Furuno 1930 radar, Robertson AP200DL autopilot, Robertson Robchart 200 plotter, Shipmate RS5310 GPS, Shipmate RS4500B Decca.

Autopilot, plotter, GPS and Decca are interfaced.

Price about £475,000 ex VAT.

Enquiries Dale Sailing Company Ltd, Brunel Quay, Neyland, Milford Haven, Dyfed SA73 1PY. Tel: 0646 601636.

Postscript

Supreme has now returned to Milford Haven, to Neyland Marina, where Jack Jones will keep her. The return trip, carried out under the threat of gales but in winds of no more than Force 5, was trouble-free. Cruising at only 15 knots (1700rpm), the boat burned about 25gph (114lph), a small saving in fuel consumption. Jack is planning cruises to south-west Ireland and, having had a brief taste of the West Country, hopes to return there and head further south to the Channel Islands and Brittany.