

BOAT REPORT EMPRESS TW39

Plenty of personal input went into this Taiwanese-built cruising home. We visited *Empress Lady* and her proud owners in Dartmouth.

"A HOME from home, a comfortable ready passagemaker, not a boat that you are glad to see the back of after a week's cruising," is what Roger Passmore and his equally keen wife Jill look for when taking their pleasures afloat. And there's no denying it, they should know, having been motorboating for fifteen years, the past six on a much-loved and much-cruised Broom 37.

Espousing the aft-cabin concept which allows the greatest possible privacy for guests and owner alike, of an overall size which they could handle between the two of them, and yet maximising their entertaining area and comfort afloat, the Empress TW39 seemed to fit the bill.

Furthermore, both UK agent Paul Dockerill and the Taiwanese yard themselves were keen to ensure Roger and Jill got just what they ordered, with their own very definite ideas and plans fully integrated into the basic layout and with the finish that had appealed to them on first seeing a TW39 at Southampton a year earlier.

Design

Although Empress will willingly modify the interior and bring their craft (the range goes up to 47ft) up to any spec, they offer two levels of fit-out and two basic internal accommodation plans. The Turbo versions, as in the case of *Empress Lady*, benefit from a very high standard inventory that runs from reverse-cycle air-conditioning to a fully integrated electronic navigation package.

Both normal layouts feature fore and aft cabins split by a large, raised saloon-cum-helm position. The main difference is that one has a double-stateroom concept with a rather more spacious en-suite forecabin than the model we inspected, which settled for a pair of good-sized singles set in a vee, with a smaller but still adequate toilet and shower compartment.

The Passmores then redesigned the galley and what would normally be a dinette area, to accommodate what Jill describes as "a flow-





system galley" and workshop-cum-general-store.

Unfortunately we could not persuade the in-house design staff at Transworld Boat Building to part with any lines plan, so we had to make do with a quick inspection of the hull as it came out to be re-antifouled.

From a reasonably deep but sharp forefoot, the hull runs back into a full 12in (30cm) central keel that finishes just before the P-brackets. Over the forebody the chine turns in slightly, before flattening out on its run aft, measuring 9in (23cm) wide over the most part. Two small sprayrails fade around midships, while the topsides here take a tuck inwards before dropping down to the main chine as they carry aft to the transom. The boat floats to this upper chine when at rest, and seemingly runs on the more pronounced lower one when underway — an unusual modification to what is a wide-bodied semi-displacement hull form, but one which works to good effect.

Underwater panel sections are pretty flat, our measurements for deadrise being a relatively shallow 14° amidships, 10° at the transom.

Exterior

With the amount of entertaining the Passmores undertake, the whole sequence of spacious flybridge, gently-inclined stairwell, covered raised aft deck and light roomy saloon is just ideal.

There is space on the flybridge, between the

two settees and the central helm seat, to muster eight comfortably should the weather permit. However, in usual conditions or in the evening the well conceived and solidly constructed GRP aft deck shelter can be battened down to various degrees, with a full set off roll-down sidescreens, doors to the sidedecks and a door and hatch to the flybridge.

We were pleased to find the flybridge so deep and secure; the feeling is of sitting in a cockpit rather than being perched on top of the boat. The bottoms of the commodious seat and console lockers are fitted with wood battening, a thoughtful touch, allowing damp items the chance to dry off.

The actual helm console is again well thought-out, especially with regard to the amount of instrumentation installed and the neat layout. A secondary radar monitor is fitted, plus a full bank of engine instruments. The coaming is topped off with a perspex screen held in place by a stainless steel framework that doubles as an all-round grabrail. In a similar vein, we were glad to see handholds adjacent to both stairwells as well as overhead in the aft deck roof-moulding.

Normally only the aft deck is faced in teak, but Roger has had the flybridge and sidedecks covered. These have been left with a drainage channel to clear water quickly from underfoot, and measure an ample 14in (35cm) wide, being bordered by a toerail topped with 28in (70cm) high guardrails.

Clockwise from top left: the modified interior with Jill's easily worked galley enjoying plenty of natural light, and the workshop-cum-store opposite.

Looking aft, out of the twin-bedded guest cabin, towards the full flag locker and a succulent choice of culinary and nautical texts. Quality teak joinery abounds, nowhere more so than in the master cabin where mirrors and the view through the large transom ports further increase the feeling of spaciousness.

Above right: the drop-leaf dinette doubles as a coffee table for more relaxed entertaining, while the helm to starboard ensures nothing is more than a glance away.



Another minor exterior modification is that the standard fore and aft bar-type cleats were replaced by 12in (30cm) bitts. There is no concession where belaying springs are concerned either, with two similar-sized numbers fitted to the top of the toerail on both sides, keeping the side decks free of obstructions. The ground tackle is handled by a no-nonsense vertical windlass complete with drum end, with remote controls at both helm stations. The chain feeds into a good-sized locker which can only be inspected via a hatch in the forecabin bulkhead. We were somewhat disappointed to find no provision for stowing warps forward; this being an aft-cabin boat with no lazaret or fixed locker seating, the only stowage is up on the flybridge.

The bathing platform is a GRP affair with a sturdy teak and stainless steel ladder running vertically down to it. A shower is fitted here, along with half-a-dozen fender holders.

Interior

Creating and treating a boat as a second home, and an uncompromising one at that, is more easily dreamed about than achieved, even with 40ft (12m) to play with. However, the Empress 39 has to be a pretty good place to start, and with the additional personal input from these particular customers one could quite happily never set foot off the boat again.

For the most part, the main saloon is very much

as standard, with a large comfortable U-settee to port and a sideboard opposite. However, the table, which is capable of taking an eight-person dinner party when the two loose stools are used, has been made with drop-leaves and can be lowered to make a coffee table. A bar has been installed within the sideboard, complete with a full set of cut-glass receptacles, while Roger's fixed helm seat hides the television and video.

A wheelhouse-type door has also been fitted alongside the helm, allowing the skipper to nip smartly out and lend a hand with the lines once alongside. Roger expanded on the original console, so everything is now smack under the skipper's nose. At first glance this can seem a bit of a jungle but, once you find your way around, everything is immensely easy to view and use. A hinged area between the main fascia and the vertical wheel stows folded charts and keeps the pilot book just a glance away. An intercom system runs through the boat, with a set usefully stationed at each helm position.

Moving forward and down from the main saloon is where the Passmores' boat differs from both standard layouts.

The galley to port is still U-shaped but allows Jill — who clearly thrives on entertaining, both formal and impromptu — to "prepare, cook and wash" in the manner of all good kitchen-plan books.

In addition there is lots of stowage in lined lockers, a trash-compactor and a domestic-sized fridge. The freezer is found in the non-standard



workshop and general store across the way. All the above are AC only. To serve these and the electric oven/hob and microwave, a 6.5kVA generator is fitted as standard along with the usual shoreside connections. The fridge and freezer are Hotpoint (there are none quieter apparently), 12V/240V units as normal. Other details with which the Taiwanese builders were happy to oblige around the galley were the hanging tea-towel cubby and the bins beneath the sole to take tinned foodstuffs.

Again to Roger and Jill's design is the run of bookshelves, flag-locker and general cupboard space set along the companionway to the forecabin. The latter is furnished with a pair of good-sized single berths and, as around the rest of the boat, plenty of storage: in this instance a three-quarter-height hanging locker and various cupboards, sufficient for visiting guests.

The en-suite shower and toilet benefits from easy-clean mouldings and a marblite sink top, set off with teak louvred doors to the ample stowage behind. This touch of wood recalls the warmth brought to the rest of the boat by the generous use of oiled teak.

Another plus which applies throughout the boat

is the full head-height pushed through the whole of its length. Roger is 6ft 2in, but does not even have to duck when he goes through the doorways.

Back aft lies the master-cabin, with a central queen-sized bed and acres of his'n'hers wardrobes and cupboards, plus a dressing table with pull-out stool. Beneath the berth is the water tank and access to the steering gear (an emergency tiller is provided). Two large, clear deck-type hatches have been installed as high as possible in the transom, not only to let in more light but also to make this a room with a view to be enjoyed over a morning cuppa.

There is a separate shower cubicle within the toilet compartment, and again marblite sink counter and full stowage. The toilets themselves on the Turbo-spec boat are electric.

Engines

The standard installation is twin 375hp Caterpillars, although 425hp units can be fitted, giving a claimed top speed of 30 knots.

However, the Passmores enjoy cruising around the 16-18 knot mark, and opted for less power. As

Top left: plenty of thought went into the layout of the exterior helm, which doubles up on full engine instrumentation and the nav package. Top right: in when you're out and out when you're in. The GRP aft deck moulding might not be to everyone's taste but allows the whole boat to be used no matter what. Centre right: the 39's relatively shallow vee, full keel and wide body make for a stable ride. Bottom right: leaner than the usual V8 installation, the straight-six Cummins ensure there is plenty of room in the fully insulated engine compartment.



a personal preference Roger decided to have Cummins installed, the chosen configuration being a pair of straight-six 6BTA5.9-M2 units, turning out 300hp apiece.

With a compartment designed to take the wider V8s, there is plenty of room to get at all areas of both engines, as well as allowing Roger a measure of freedom in reorganising the fuel and coolant service areas. To this end he has had the fuel/water separators and fuel taps brought to the forward bulkhead, together with the water strainers. Now, with these main service items close to hand, adjacent to the stairway access from the lower saloon, he can quickly give them the once-over without having to stop the engines or crawl between them.

Wing tanks account for fuel storage. These are fitted with sight-tubes, a cross-over pipe and the capability for the engines to draw solely from either tank, but this has not been carried through to the return lines. The standard Onan generator is installed to the aft end of the compartment, while the pair of main engine exhaust-mufflers are a peace-loving extra inspired by Roger.

The whole installation is soundly executed and well finished; all wiring is ducted, and the bilge gratings aluminium-faced, as is the foam insulation which we were glad to see covered all sides of the stainless steel tanks. Safety items include three automatic bilge pumps, a further manual unit and a smoke-activated Halon fire-extinguishing system (a modification from the heat-sensitive units installed as standard). Roger has also had a section of fireproof glass set into the stairway access, so he can glance into the compartment without opening it up.

Handling and performance

By the time we clambered aboard *Empress Lady* in Dartmouth at the beginning of September, she had been in commission three months and had nigh on 1200 miles on the clock, notched up over almost a hundred engine-hours. Entries in the ship's log showed a couple of cross-Channel sorties, one of which was extended to tour the North Brittany coast and Channel Islands, as well as innumerable hops and skips along our own South Coast.

A trip which seemed to sum up the steady passagemaking the TW39 gives the Passmores was the 100-mile run from the Dart to Southampton. With the wind southeasterly — just off the nose — and blowing a steady Force 5, they made it from berth to berth in five and a half hours, an average speed over the ground of 18 knots.

The weather report issued by the Coastguard for Portland, as they rounded the race some four miles off, confirmed their own impressions, "moderately rough" being the official verdict entered in the log. But, as they will both testify, they were as fresh when they tied up as when they pushed past the Mew Stone. Quiet and comfortable are bywords with the Passmores.

The previous day, in much the same conditions but westbound this time, the *Empress* lived up to her ladylike name, turning in a well-mannered passage, under the control of the Autohelm 7000 pilot, in some unpleasant seas coming up almost dead astern.

Our own, obviously shorter, encounter put the *Empress* in an equally good light, although in

fairness we found her a relatively wet boat, especially as the bow is best kept down to give a more efficient running angle, although trim angles were not a problem in themselves. Taking off some tab let the bow rise just slightly, allowing the spray to fall further behind and not come inboard.

For a fair wedge of boat, we were pleasantly surprised at her responsiveness to the helm, which allowed commendably tight 180° turns within a few boat-lengths, without recourse to the throttles except when flat out. Visibility is slightly restricted astern at the interior helm, the starboard quarter being the main miscreant; you have to make a conscious movement to check around the bulk of the screen pillar, but the bluff of the bow rides low enough to give a clear view ahead.

Our test figures confirm Roger's brief on what he expects out of the TW39 by way of cruising speed: 16 knots at 2400rpm, pushing up to 18 knots at 2600rpm. A full-throttle 2800rpm clocked a mile down on his estimate of 22 knots, our radar gun showing just under 21 knots, although it would appear that the turbo-pressure was slightly down.

Not wishing to barbarise the Passmores' spotless engineroom with spilt diesel by fitting our fuel-meter, we have taken the engine manufacturers' data and extrapolated it using a standard propeller-law curve to estimate consumption, mpg and range. At her 2400rpm cruise setting, consumption for both engines will be around 17gph (76lph), giving a range of just under 300 miles and 1mpg.

Sound levels were lower than average at cruising revs, starting to creep up only in the aft cabin as the throttles were opened fully. Roger's insistence upon having mufflers fitted helped keep the low drone of exhaust noise down, an area where aft-cabin boats suffer especially. The other usual problem, that of vibration, did not appear to be at all bad on the TW39, which we were somewhat surprised about because the tip clearance between the propellers and the hull was minimal.

Conclusions

To say that Roger and Jill are pleased with their TW39, both as a truly liveaboard motoryacht and as a comfortable passagemaker, is something of an understatement.

To get it just as they wanted kept them busy, both with Paul Dockerill and on two trips to the yard itself, where apparently the workforce could not have been more helpful. But although we've mentioned a number of modifications — good ones at that, especially in the engineroom — *Empress Lady* is still essentially a production boat, built to a production price albeit with the preferences of an experienced pair of owners stamped on it. The opportunity for customers to become so involved in detail design and construction is something which is rarely seen except with some Dutch boatbuilders. We found a good level of build quality throughout, with the traditional fit-out in teak as good as any we have seen.

The overall look of the *Empress*, with its rather boxy appearance, will not appeal to everyone. However, there is no denying that the enclosed aft-deck is a simple way of effectively doubling this already spacious boat's main living area. □

Empress TW39 Turbo

Engines: twin Cummins 6BTA5.9-M2 diesels, 300hp at 2800rpm, 6cyl, 5.9lt.

Conditions: wind NW Force 2, sea calm. **Load:** Fuel 50%, water 50%, crew 3.

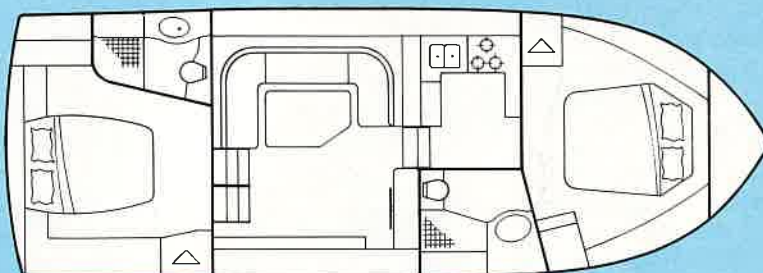
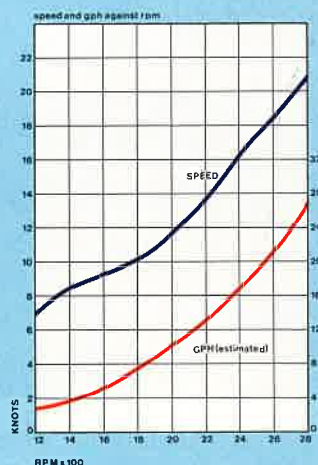
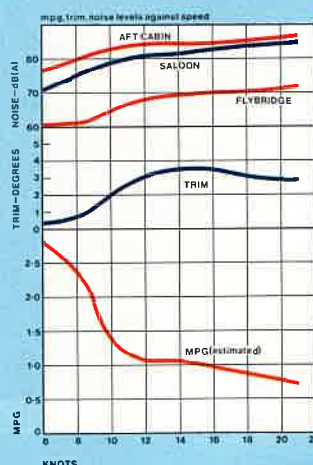
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	sound levels dB(A)			
							saloon	aftcab	aftdk	flybdg
1200	7.1	2.8	13	2.54	760	0.0	74	78	70	61
1500	9.0	4.4	20	2.05	614	1.0	77	82	74	62
1800	10.1	7.8	36	1.29	388	1.5	78	83	78	66
2000	11.5	10.1	46	1.14	342	3.0	80	83	80	67
2200	13.8	13.2	60	1.05	315	3.5	82	84	80	68
2400	16.0	16.8	76	0.95	286	3.5	83	85	81	70
2600	18.1	20.8	95	0.87	261	3.0	84	86	82	71
2800	20.8	27.0	123	0.77	231	3.0	85	87	83	72

Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 19.0 sec.

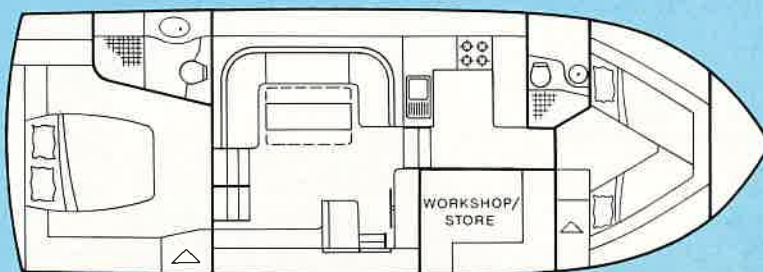
Loa	42ft 4in (12.91m)	Fuel	300gal (1360lt)
Hull length	38ft 9in (11.81m)	Water	120gal (550lt)
Lwl	33ft 4in (10.16m)	Engines	twin 375hp Cats as standard 6BTA5.9-M2 Cummins at 300hp as tested
Beam	13ft 8in (4.16m)	Price ex VAT	basic TW39 £123,750 standard Turbo version £159,500
Draught	2ft 11in (0.91m)		
Displacement	11.4 tons		

Builders Transworld Boat Building Co, 45 Peifhy Village, Sanchikanki, Taipei, Taiwan.

Suppliers Empress Yachts Ltd, Crendon House, Crookhorn Lane, Soberton, Southampton, Hampshire SO3 1RD. Tel: 0705 463549.



STANDARD LAYOUT



MODIFIED LAYOUT