



## On test

Malö 41 • Sweden Yachts 42 • Hallberg-Rassy 43

# Swedish match

As a country where one in eight people owns a boat, Sweden is home to some of the finest boatbuilders in the world. So when Malö, Sweden Yachts and Hallberg-Rassy launch new yachts in the 40-45ft bracket, you have to take notice. Tim Thomas finds out how the yachts measure up to their own high standards

**M**ention Swedish boatbuilders to most people and you will be met with a knowing smile. That one country can be home to such a cluster of highly regarded yards is one thing, but it does mean that Swedish yachts are judged by their own high standards. Each of the builders appear to have carved something of a niche for themselves, slotting into a market that by and large seems to avoid direct competition with fellow yards.

This is certainly true of Malö, Sweden Yachts and Hallberg-Rassy, which produce, respectively, aft cockpit cruisers, aft cockpit performance cruisers and centre cockpit cruisers. But while it is easy to see how these yards can co-exist, it is more difficult to compare and contrast between them. More important is the chance to see if the latest generation follows the tradition the country has built for itself.

So are these three boats worthy successors to the Swedish pedigree? ►



## On test



### Malö 41

**F**ounded in 1939, the Malö yard is the oldest in the Orust region of Sweden, where many Swedish builders are located. Their boats have long been recognised as true bluewater cruisers. With their origins in building folkboats, the yard introduced GRP construction in the late-1960s, but even today they remain relatively small, concentrating on hand-built quality products rather than quantity; yard output is between 25 and 30 yachts per annum, 11 of which are 41s.

Launched last summer, the 41 is instantly recognisable as a Malö. A couple of features have been modified, notably the change from angular windscreen to a smoother, curved affair, which helps soften her lines.

Designed by Ångermark Naval Architects, she retains the chunky coachroof profile, which provides generous headroom throughout below

decks. However, with her aft cockpit layout as the only option, this coachroof profile is kept well balanced and overall she is very pleasing on the eye. She has a blunt stem thanks to the Malö system of deploying the anchor through the stem itself. Available with either retroussée or counter sterns, both with different bathing platform options, she retains a classic appearance, but under the skin she is a very modern boat.

#### Under way

We took the 41 out for a blast in Poole. With 25 knots of wind across the deck and gusts into the 30s, it was always going to be a bumpy ride and a good test for any ocean cruiser. Thankfully, the 41 was more than up for the job, cutting to windward at 41° to true wind with a reef in the main and four rolls in the headsail and maintaining a comfortable 7.5 knots. When a gust came through she behaved beautifully even though we were slightly over-canvassed. Even when she did

threaten to round up, it was not a violent affair – she would head up until just feathering, before falling away again under good control. She felt stiff and responsive to the wheel, with enough feedback to feel what she was about to do without becoming too heavy when the rudder loaded up.

Cracking off a little, she surprised me with her performance, hitting 8 knots at just past 50° to the true wind and accelerating to nearly 10 knots on occasions with the wind just abaft the beam. Her pace was amply demonstrated several times when she slowed in the lulls because as soon as a small gust came through she quickly gained a couple of knots, almost throwing us off balance with her sudden surge.

With a relatively high displacement:length figure of 242 and a typical cruising sail area:displacement figure of 16.8, this is impressive indeed and suggests a hull that is easily driven yet capable of handling herself in heavy seas. Certainly, she charged through some heavy



The armchair to starboard in the saloon provides comfortable extra seating



A good worktop space and excellent handholds make the galley safe for sea



Nav station is adequate, although a concave seat would help at sea



**Left: the pleasing lines of the 41 combine with superlative sea-keeping characteristics. Right (above): one of the options on the counter stern version is this handy fold-out bathing platform. Below: the sprayhood extends to cover the whole cockpit with opening sides for ventilation**



chop without a creak, crack or crash and we are assured she is pleasantly quick in light airs, too.

The position of the controls is excellent for short-handed cruising. Primary winches are in easy reach of the helm and although there is a short main track on top of the arch at the rear of the windscreen, you can concentrate on playing the mainsheet alone – led to winches either side of the cockpit – without loss of performance.

Under power with the 75hp Yanmar, she felt controllable and responsive, giving a cruising speed of around 7.5 knots.

### Below decks

With the interior of each Malö being fully customisable, all parts are individually built. While you can choose your own layout, your choice of wood is limited to mahogany. Joiner work throughout is of the highest quality.

The version we tested had twin aft cabins and each had a large escape hatch into the cockpit

through the cockpit seats. A single aft cabin also allows a larger head, as well as more seating in the saloon. Headroom throughout is superb.

One thing you notice about this yacht is the thought that has gone into all those details that are important on bluewater passages; there are grabrails everywhere and lee cloths are standard.

The saloon table is a work of art, ingeniously folding out from a small square table to a large dining table. The navigation area has a good chart table, although the seat on the boat we tested was not shaped and might prove awkward when sailing heeled to port.

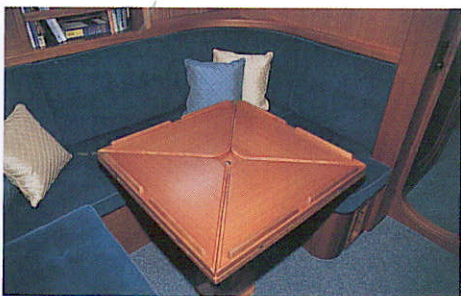
It seems thought has been put into every aspect of her design as a true bluewater cruiser – even the large transom locker has an extra flap on the front to make access that bit easier. An inner forestay provides extra rig security and a stay for stormsails and is attached high up the mast so no runners are needed. As well as a solid teak toerail, there is a sturdy base for the moor-

ing cleats, including those all-important and hefty midships cleats. The cockpit feels spacious and, with jackstays supplied as standard, safe as well. There is even a first aid kit in the spec.

The Malö 41 is a very pleasing boat and despite her high price tag, you get a spec that includes everything except a chart plotter. In fact, you could buy a standard boat and sail away for a holiday without adding anything but charts.

### Construction

The hull features a balsa core to below the waterline, which takes away the need for longitudinal stringers, although there is one to facilitate fitting of furniture. Bulkheads are glassed into the hull and a solid hull-deck join is helped by a flange on both parts. There is also an aluminium strip in the hull section, which forms the basis for the toerail; the join is glassed in, but a space is left under the toerail as a conduit for cabling and wiring. ▶



**The work-of-art saloon table unfolds ingeniously to double the size**

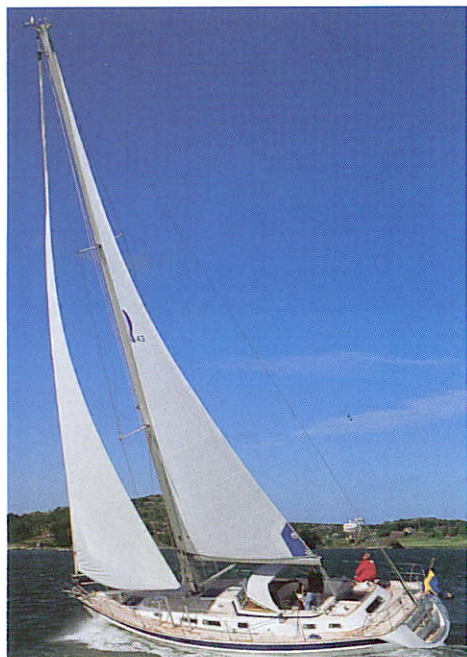


**Large forecabin has exceptionally good stowage space and a large double berth**



**Placing the galley abaft a bulkhead helps split the interior without making it cramped**

## On test



## Hallberg-Rassy 43

**T**he HR-43 is a direct replacement for the 42. Hallberg-Rassy have again employed German Frers and the idea was to start with a blank sheet of paper and come up with a new hull – to take what is good about the 42 and make it better, as Magnus Rassy put it.

The result is a yacht which is 1.3m longer on the waterline than the 42, has less freeboard and a higher coachroof profile. The hull, too, has far more beam in the aft sections. This allows the 43 a lazarette that is two and a half times larger than that of the 42, meaning the emergency steering gear can now be used on deck, and also giving the yacht considerable volume below.

Indeed, volume below is the most noticeable change of all, because despite the centre cockpit there seems to be such space below decks that the saloon seems as large as on an aft cockpit

yacht, something many centre cockpit designs of a similar design fail to achieve.

The Hallberg-Rassy yard have been undergoing a few changes of their own recently, with a disused area of the factory now turned over to production. This means the yard now have 49 yachts in build at any time and produce 180 boats per annum. Many of the processes have been modernised as well – the six coats of varnish are now all done by machine, many of the woodwork parts are kept in stock and the yard looks crammed to the gills with yachts in construction. You could argue that this has affected the quality and of the three Swedish boats we tested the Rassy showed more hidden rough edges than the others. However, this is a comparative statement – the Rassy is still built to an extremely high standard.

### Under way

We sailed out of the marina near the yard at Ellös into a stiff 25-knot breeze. On top of this, a series of currents met in our sailing area so that a lumpy and uncomfortable sea had built by the time we reached open water. Of course, this is nothing for the 43. On the wind, although we took a soaking once or twice, she was comfortable, well behaved and so smooth it was like sailing with suspension.

She sat happily closehauled at 40° to the true wind, making a steady 7.5 knots through the lumps. She sports progressive purchase steering and although the wheel loaded up at times, it was never too much to handle. She also showed no sign of heading up in the gusts. Bearing away to a close reach, the speed rose to a shade over 8 knots and with the wind abaft the beam she sailed happily in the mid-8s, although rarely showed signs of rising much above 9 knots.

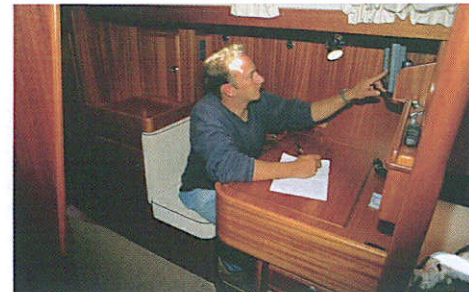
On a run, she had a tendency to wallow and



The large aft cabin has a huge berth and an ensuite head tucked round to starboard



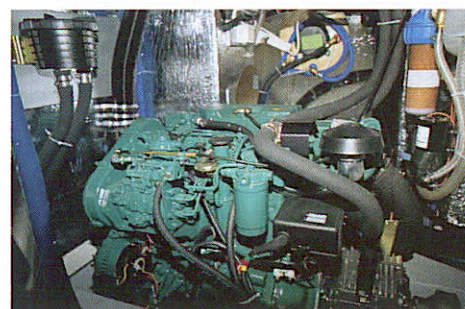
The passage aft uses the full height of the cockpit coamings for headroom



Navigation area is tucked into the port side and feels secure at sea



**Left:** as a centre cockpit design, the HR43 keeps very elegant lines. **Right:** mass production Swedish style – the factory at Ellös. **Below right:** although engine access is from the sides, it is comprehensive and there is ample space for a generator and other extras



roll a little on the steep seas, but playing with the balance of the sails might have helped correct this. With her centre cockpit and decent coamings she felt a very secure boat.

Under power the two-gear, three-blade folding prop worked well with the low-revving 55hp Volvo, which pushed the 43 to a quiet cruising speed of 7.5 knots. With the throttle opened up, she hit 2,900 revs, making a steady 8.2 knots without too much din.

### Below decks

Despite my earlier comments about behind the scenes finishing, the standard of joiner work is very high. Each bit of wood is inspected before purchase to maintain a uniform shade. And not just throughout one yacht, but throughout the entire range.

Hallberg-Rassy have gone for a slight change of tack with the styling of the joinery in the 43; all the locker and drawer fronts are flush

rather than having their own framing. Magnus Rassy says this is to give a more contemporary feel to the interior.

The interior itself is immediately striking for the feeling of space created in the saloon in spite of the centre cockpit. This is reinforced by the large aft cabin, with its huge berth, and a fore-cabin with plenty of cupboard space. My only gripe is that Hallberg-Rassy continue to build overhead lockers into the cabins (particularly the forward cabin) at a position and height so that you brain yourself if you sit up in a hurry.

The galley is as good a sea galley as you will find, with excellent bracing all round for safe cooking in all weathers. The 43 allows four layout options – not as customisable as some yachts, perhaps, but well thought out layouts do not have to be altered too much. Wood finish can be either mahogany or teak.

A lot of thought has gone into the detail of the yacht; there are lights in all the wardrobes

and the fuel tank design has its own little bilge so water in the fuel can be separated. Opening the two side panels that provide access to the engine compartment reveals a small lift pump to remove the water from the bottom of the tank.

The largest of our three test yachts, the HR43 also comes with a comprehensive spec in the standard price, including electric windlass and some electronics.

### Construction

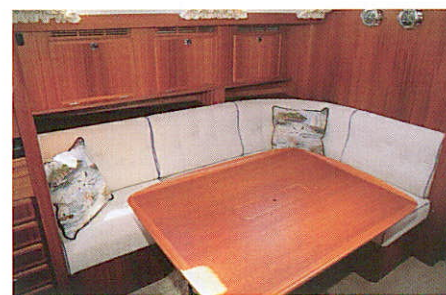
Rassy hulls are built 40km from the main yard by another Hallberg-Rassy company. Bulkheads are glassed in all round and the veneer is applied to the whole to cover the lamination work. Isophthalic resin is used in the hull, which employs hand lay-up techniques, and Divinycell is used in the hull sides to just below the waterline. Underfloor reinforcements complement the solid laminate in these areas and the sandwich deck is laminated to the hull. ▶



Armchairs to starboard in the saloon can be replaced with bench seating



Perfect for cooking in a seaway, the compact galley is to port of the companionway



Even though it is a centre cockpit boat, the HR43 feels roomy below decks

## On test



## Sweden Yachts 42

**W**ith the launch of the SY45, Sweden Yachts looked as though they had found their niche. This idea is reinforced by the launch of the Sweden Yachts 42, a beautifully finished and very attractive performance cruiser. With a more plumb stem than the 45, the 42 is sportier than her bigger sister and features a new extended bowroller/bowsprit that takes the furling gear forward of the bow and gives a larger foretriangle than would be possible with a conventional placement – important when the standard headsail is a self-tacker. She is also a beautiful boat.

### Under way

A large wheel that turns from lock to lock in just over one rotation is usually the preserve of racing boats and hints that the SY42 is no slouch on

the water. And so it turns out – even with a light 8-10 knots of breeze, she was quick to accelerate in the puffs and was a great boat to drive.

She remained close-hauled at around 35° to the true wind, making a shade over 6 knots, and cracking her off by 10° added a few tenths to the boat speed. In the light conditions she achieved a respectable 7.5 knots just off a close reach and when we bore away a little more and hoisted the gennaker – easily handled as the bow fitting has attachment points for such a sail – she reacted quickly to every puff.

Control at all times was superb; she felt light to steer but was never twitchy and was easy to get into the groove on the wind. It was a shame we didn't have another 3-4 knots of wind for our test because we all believed she would perform

as well as, if not better than her larger sister.

The helm position felt comfortable and although there is no curvature in the helm/transom seat to brace against, a foot on the other side of the wheel against the pedestal did the job. The cockpit layout is very similar to that of the 45 and the coamings are the right height for comfort while the seats are the perfect distance apart for bracing.

She sports a 55hp Volvo and is easy to manoeuvre under power; cruising speed was about 7.7 knots at 2,500rpm, with a top speed of 8.4 knots at a maximum of 3,100 rpm.

### Below decks

If you have seen the interior of the 45, you will instantly recognise the standard layout of the 42: owner's cabin forward, with a large double offset to port and an ensuite head and separate shower in the bow section; twin aft cabins and a



Furler and gennaker fittings forward of the bow roller make sail handling easy



Sweden Yachts' test tank, where each boat is soaked before launch



A workable galley which can feature a second fridge (see top right of picture)



Left: elegant lines, good handling, well laid out cockpit and performance – a great combination. Right: the steering pedestal has instruments close to hand. Below right: the bow fitting takes the furling gear forward of the bow. There is also an enormous sail locker abaft the chain locker



second head; and a large U-shaped saloon area with huge solid table. The table is the same as that on the 45 and the seating is the same size thanks to some neat design trickery. The bulkheads are 5cm closer together but the end seat-back cushions are 2.5cm thinner to allow the same seating area.

The nav area to port is superb, with the added attraction of a proper chart drawer, and the galley is a good size. But what you really notice is the standard not only of the joiner work but also of the finish in mainly hidden areas. The varnish is something of a triumph. Sweden Yachts use an oil-based varnish which is sprayed by hand and built up over six to ten layers. It takes two weeks to build up the required coats of varnish on each piece of wood but the result is a beautiful finish that is as good as I have seen on any yacht.

The interior is customisable, of course, and

Sweden Yachts claim they have never sold two identical boats. This is one advantage of being a small yard where craftsmanship is central to the philosophy. The yard has room for only six boats in production at any one time and they produce 25-30 yachts per year.

The attention to detail runs throughout; from screwing down the 12mm teak deck instead of gluing it, to the heating in the wet locker, or from the small steps and lights in the cockpit quarter lockers to washboard stowage on top of the hatch. A nice touch we nearly didn't notice was the mounting of the water pump on a flexible rubber base to dampen sound – it was just loud enough to hear the pump running but would not wake a sleeping crew

Like the other two yachts in this test, the SY42 comes with a comprehensive spec so you are not going to get any last minute surprises when you hand over the cheque.

## Construction

The hulls and decks of the Sweden Yachts 42 are built by Techno Fibre, a company which was formerly part of Sweden Yachts until it was sold a couple of years ago. The hulls, which have a 25mm balsa core, are delivered with the decks and bulkheads already in place. Bulkheads are laminated into the hull and structural parts and stringers are put in place as a frame glued in like a liner.

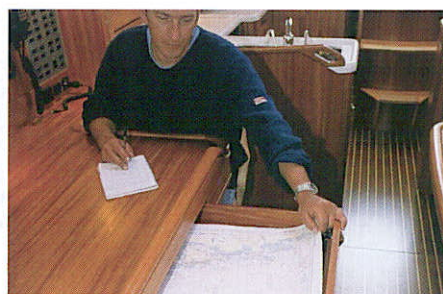
Decks are joined to the hull with glue, lamination and bolts for extra strength and the bolts are isolated from the toerail with a mastic material. The yachts also feature a steel beam system that takes the loads from the shrouds and distributes them through the bulkheads. This enables the inners and lowers to be quite separate, making for a strong stiff rig while allowing easy passage between them along the side decks.



The interior layout of the 42 is similar to that of her successful larger sister, the 45



Hinging steps on gas struts make access to the engine simple and comprehensive



A good navigation area is complemented by a superb chart drawer



Forward visibility from the Sweden Yachts 42's comfortable cockpit is good

## Round up

The Swedes seem to have fallen into the habit of calling their yachts by misleading names – the Malö 41 is a shade under 43ft LOA; the Sweden Yachts 42 is 43ft 6in LOA; and the HR 43 is 44ft 6in LOA. Whichever way you look at it, though, and in spite of relatively high price tags, each provides an awful lot of boat for your money.

### Conclusion

It is extremely difficult to make direct comparisons between these boats; indeed, this test only really highlights the quality in the Swedish boatbuilding industry. Each yacht has her market depending on what you want from a boat and the standard of finish and sailing characteristics of each are top notch.

So to some extent your choice will come down to your sailing and whether you prefer an aft or centre cockpit arrangement. Prices are similar and each boat is offered with a comprehensive standard spec. My personal favourite – although this is purely based on what I would want my yacht to do – is the Sweden Yachts 42, which has to my mind the perfect balance of looks, performance, practicality and finish. Having said that, there is so little in it I would sail off into the sunset in any one of the three.

It is more likely that your choice will come down to availability; since Sweden Yachts and Malö combined produce less than a third of the boats Hallberg-Rassy put out, the latter seems to make sense if you want early possession. But appearances can be deceptive and the HR43 is already so popular that you could be joining a 2½ year waiting list. It doesn't help to make the decision any easier but being unable to choose between three exceptional yachts is not such a bad dilemma to be in. If only everything in life was this hard.

Sweden Yachts are continuing to build on the success of the 45 and with the 42 they have produced a very similar boat which consolidates their presence in the market and affirms that they are happy to settle into their niche. It's a goal they appear to be achieving very well.

Malö continue to build top-notch bluewater cruisers. Many people liken them to the classic British builder Rival Bowman, which went out of business not so long ago, but even with their small production they must be doing something right as their future looks assured.

That Hallberg-Rassy are becoming the quasi-production builders of the three is not in question and inevitably this leads to a slight fall in some behind-the-scenes finishing. However, the standard of Rassy's is a long way from being in rapid decline and the overall finish remains very high.

Judged against two other beautiful yachts, even the smallest defects will seem major bug-bears, but the HR43's minor flaws are certainly not worrying. The finish may slip behind the other two a hair's breadth but attention to detail remains high and you're getting a slightly larger high-quality yacht at a very competitive price. ▶



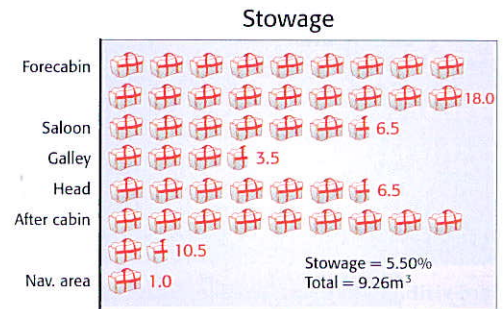
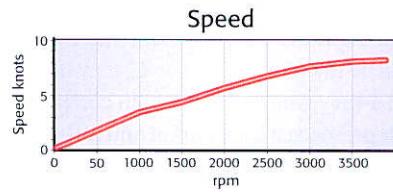
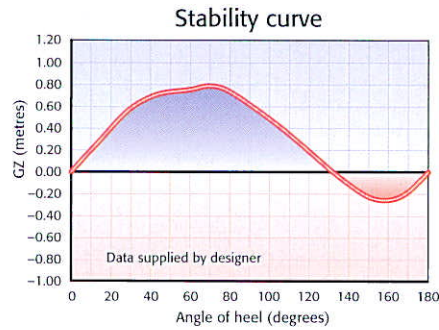
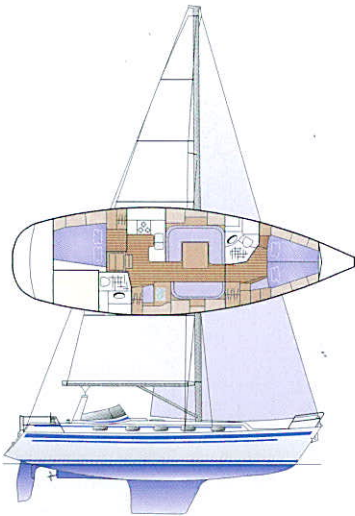
Malö's trademark blunt stem



The beamy after sections of the HR43

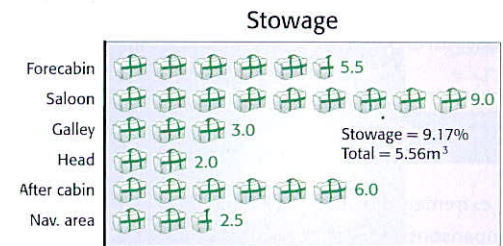
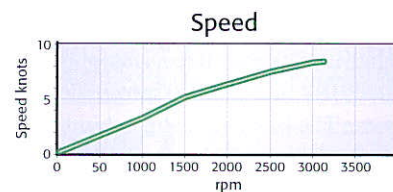
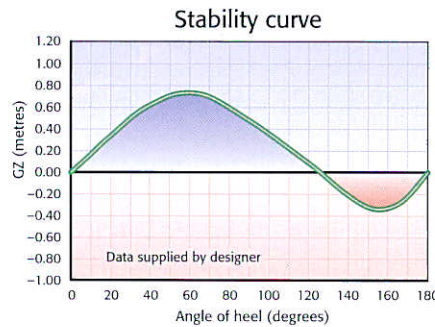
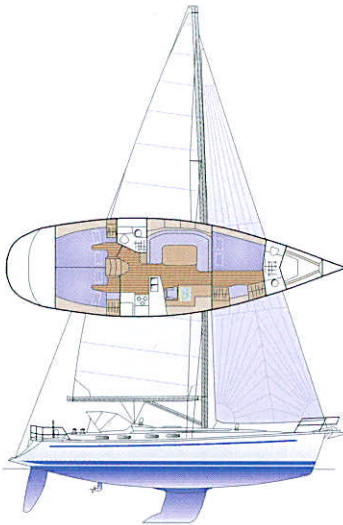
COMPARABLE BOATS	MALÖ 41		SWEDENYACHTS 42		HALLBERG-RASSY 43	
LOA	13.04m	42ft 9in	13.25m	43ft 6in	13.57m	44ft 6in
LWL	10.90m	35ft 9in	11.22m	36ft 10in	11.75m	38ft 7in
Beam (max)	3.97m	13ft 0in	3.90m	12ft 10in	4.08m	13ft 5in
Draught	1.99m	6ft 6in	2.10m	6ft 11in	2.00m	6ft 7in
Disp (lightship)	11,250kg	24,802lb	10,000kg	22,046lb	12,700kg	27,998lb
Ballast	4,350kg	9,590lb	4,030kg	8,885lb	4,750kg	10,472lb
Sail area (100% foretriangle)	83m <sup>2</sup>	893ft <sup>2</sup>	94m <sup>2</sup>	1,012ft <sup>2</sup>	94m <sup>2</sup>	1,012ft <sup>2</sup>
Berths	4/6		6		6	
Engine	Yanmar 4JH3-TBE		Volvo D2-55		Volvo D2-55	
Power	56kW	75hp	41kW	55hp	41kW	55hp
Water	555lt	122gal	425lt	93gal	660lt	145gal
Fuel	375lt	82gal	280lt	62gal	400lt	88gal
Sail area: disp	16.8		20.6		17.6	
Disp: LWL	242		197		218	
Price (ex VAT)	£237,000		£220,782		£216,929	

## Malö 41



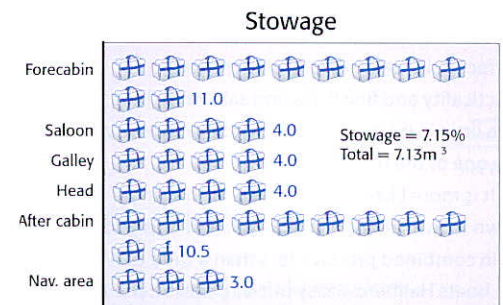
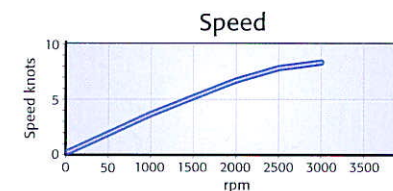
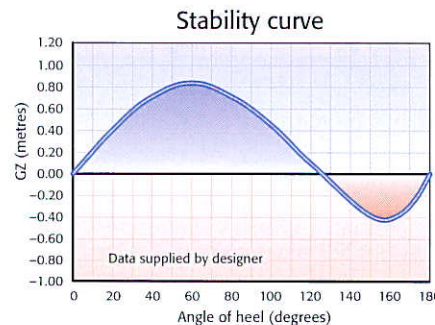
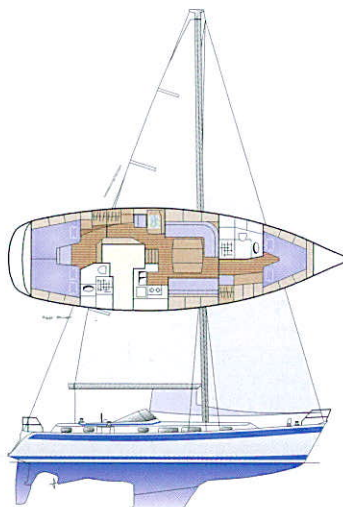
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## Sweden Yachts 42



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## Hallberg-Rassy 43



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