Crealock 34

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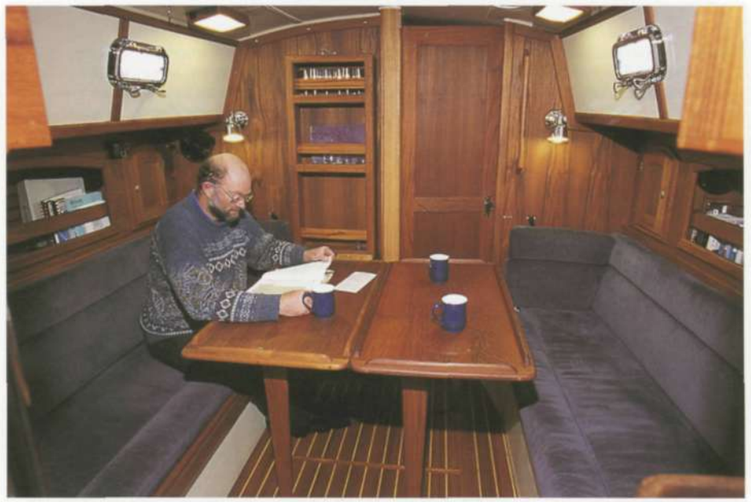
Photographs by Patrick Roach/PRPA

Crealock 34

A traditional looking double-ender with ocean cruising credentials

The Crealock range from Pacific Seacraft represents a different facet of American boatbuilding to that we are familiar with in the designs from Legend and Catalina.

Created by Bill Crealock, the 34 shares with her sisters a slim, low, double-ended hull with a powerful sheerline and well flared bow. She looks every inch a heavy, broad shouldered ocean bulldog, yet her underwater profile is quite fine. The well-raked stem curves easily into a deep forefoot which looks as if it is going to merge into a full-length keel. In fact, it is a long fin linked to a substantial, full-depth, skeg-hung rudder with the prop well protected in a cut-out. For a yacht of 10.4m (34ft) on deck, her displacement is modest, but her short waterline actually puts her in the heavy displacement category.



Left: the Crealock drives powerfully up the Solent. Above: the saloon is compact but well appointed. Below: the large chart table with the non-standard instrument pod

At a glance

For
- ❑ Good motion and sea-keeping
- ❑ Quality build and fittings
- ❑ Seagoing interior

Against
- ❑ Restricted accommodation
- ❑ Small cockpit
- ❑ Cutter rig complicates tacking

Although the hull profile is low, the superstructure is high and carried well forward to create full headroom below, right through into the forecabin. It is surrounded by wide sidedecks and a generous foredeck well protected by a high, moulded gunwale.

Below decks

The accommodation is built of oiled teak on a substantial internal GRP moulding, which includes the bunk bases, galley and chart table base. With white laminate panelling to the cabin trunk and deckhead, a bright, open ambience is created. Yet the woodwork is substantial and sufficient to avoid any feeling that it might have a plastic feel.

The amount of white trim also serves to increase the sense of space, which is important, for this is a small interior compared to many modern 10m (34ft) yachts. The raked stem and canoe stern push the accommodation towards the middle of the yacht where beam is by no means generous. However, this is a boat intended to take two people on comfortable offshore passages, so the important thing is the quality and convenience of the fit-out rather than its volume.

The photographs show an interior which has had some significant modifications made to the standard arrangement. The overhead stowage over the galley and the instrument box over the chart table are excellent and worthwhile additions which demonstrate the flexibility of Pacific Seacraft and its ability to listen to its customers. However, these two additions, while excellent, tend to reduce the apparent size of the saloon. The standard Crealock 34 would have a more open aspect.

The yacht we tested had been equipped to Voyagemaker level, which includes a number of 'extras' that adds approximately £15,000 to the price shown in the comparison table.

The galley, though compact, is well-equipped with hot and cold water, a coolbox which can keep food frozen in

Construction

Built to American Bureau of Shipping Plans Certification, the hull is hand-laid, solid laminated using biaxial cloths. Below the waterline she has a three-layer epoxy treatment and vinylester resin is used for the first laminate followed by isopthalic polyester resins.

The hull is reinforced with a substantial internal moulding which is bonded in place and incorporates floors and stringers. Primary bulkheads are bonded to the hull and deck and subsequently through-bolted to deck beams. The deck is a balsa-cored sandwich with ply in way of fittings and bonded and bolted to the hull.

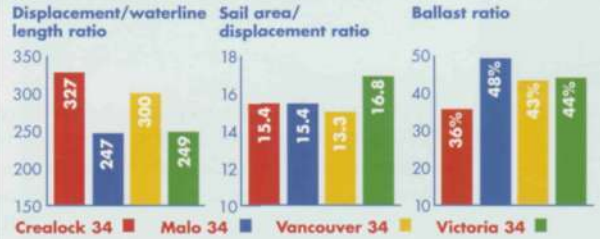
The keel is cast lead bolted to the hull with stainless steel bolts.

Comparative data for the Crealock 34

	LOA	LWL	Beam	Draught	Displ	Ballast	Sail area	Berths	Engine hp	Price
Crealock 34	10.40m	8.60m	3.05m	1.50m	6,123kg	2,177kg	49.6m²	5	38	£98,800*
	34ft 1in	26ft 2in	10ft	4ft 11in	13,200 lb	4,800 lb	534sq ft			
Malö 34	10.20m	8.46m	3.20m	1.50m	4,989kg	2,364kg	44m²	6	27	£135,125
	33ft 6in	27ft 1in	10ft 7in	4ft 11in	11,000 lb	5,280 lb	473sq ft			
Vancouver 34	10.44m	8.38m	3.23m	1.44m	6,350kg	2,727kg	44.8m²	5	27	£102,510
	34ft 4in	27ft 6in	10ft 7in	4ft 9in	13,976 lb	6,000 lb	482sq ft			
Victoria 34	10.44m	8.64m	3.24m	1.47m	5,770kg	2,506kg	52.8m²	6	27	£105,151
	34ft 3in	28ft 4in	10ft 7in	4ft 10in	12,694 lb	5,513 lb	568sq ft			

**Classic version. Price depends of dollar/sterling exchange rate*

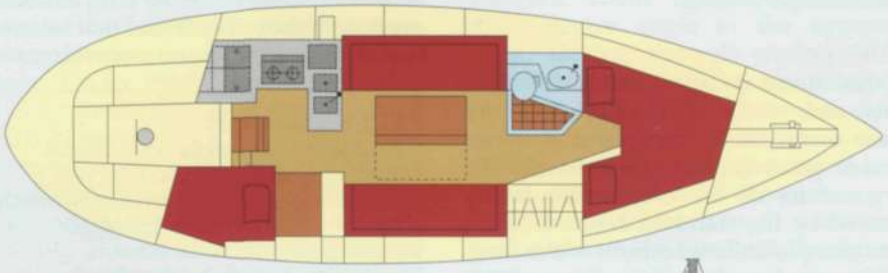
1: Sail area is taken as main and working jib. Price may include a larger headsail. **2**: The quoted engine hp is that offered as standard or, where there is a choice, the one we consider most suitable to its role. **3**: The price is the standard manufacturer's retail price inc VAT, the engine quoted above and the standard sail wardrobe which may differ from the quoted sail area.



Displacement/waterline length ratio: D/(0.01 x L)³. Where **D** is the displacement in tons and **L** is the waterline length in feet. **Sail area/displacement ratio: S/Dv^0.666**. Where **S** is the sail area in sq ft (main and 100 per cent jib) and **Dv** is the displaced volume in cubic feet (displacement in pounds divided by 64). **Ballast ratio: 100B/D**

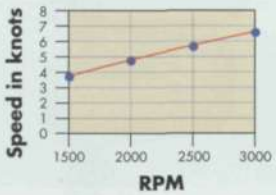
What the figures mean

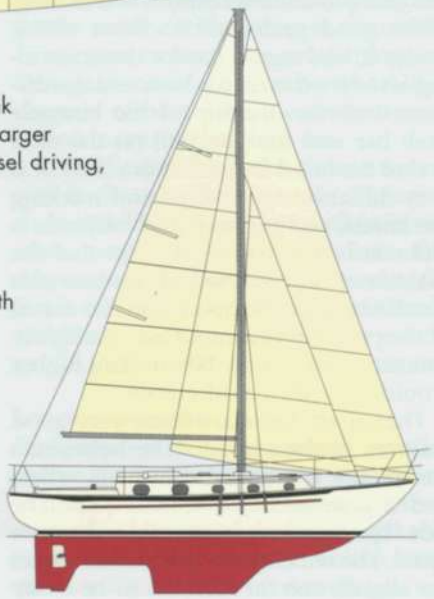
The Crealock's statistics work out interestingly. Her displacement is no more than moderate for her overall length but heavy for her waterline. It is interesting that she rates so much higher than others like the Vancouver 34 which are, themselves, regarded as heavy displacement boats. Her sail area/displacement ratio is about what we would expect for a yacht of this type. A little more sail might be handy in light airs, it says, but as the wind rises she will settle into a good, passage-making stride. Her ballast ratio may look a little low, but it should be remembered that she has an all-lead keel set low, so her righting moment is high. As we found, she is well able to stand up to her canvas.



Specifications

Water 284 lit (62 gal) moulded tanks
Fuel 140 lit (30 gal) aluminium, removable tank
Batteries Two 86Ah batteries, 50Ah battery charger
Engine 38hp Yanmar 3JH2E three-cylinder diesel driving, as standard, a two-bladed fixed prop via conventional sterngear
Designer Bill Crealock
Builder Pacific Seacraft, Fullerton, California
UK Agent EME Yacht Charter & Sales, Falmouth Yacht Marina, North Parade, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 2TD (Tel: 01326 211121; Fax: 01326 311230)





High toerails make for a secure foredeck

the lower section, and a generous gash bin. Where the owner has put a microwave oven is normally a pull-out crockery locker. Other lockers are plentiful, and particularly well-fiddled. Work surfaces are sufficient when the cooker cover is in place and the chopping board is covering the gash bin.

The chart table is delightful. Not only is it unusually large, but its sloping surface makes it easy to work at and the drawer beneath is deep. A flat area at the top of the table retains pencils and navigating instruments. Without the overhead console, instrument space is limited and the switch panel is well aft. There is no bookshelf dedicated to the chart table but the saloon shelving a short distance forward is more than adequate.

The only truly disappointing feature of the table is the large, but undivided, locker in the base. It is intended for hanging wet oilskins but is not really suitable. A couple of shelves or, even better, some drawers, would make a big difference. Astern of the chart table is a long quarterberth which is not too difficult to get into and makes a third seaberth.

The saloon has two long, straight settees, ideal for seaberths. The port settee can pull out into a double. The table can be fitted either on the centreline in the European style or, as on our trial boat, as a fold-up unit on the main bulkhead, a system favoured by several American designs and which creates a splendidly open saloon when it is stowed. When down, a set of three useful shelves is revealed. The drawback of the system is that the leg hinges tend to be vulnerable

Stowage in the galley is good but work surfaces are limited

Full headroom in the forecabin and two big stowage lockers

and, despite brass lined floor sockets, the locating pins can scratch the sole.

Two lockers on either side of the saloon flank long bookshelves, which will please the long-distance voyager with a large library. There is additional stowage behind and below the seats.

Fittings are all delightfully solid and include chrome-plated bronze opening ports and good quality overhead and reading lights.

The heads is forward of the saloon on the port side where beam is still close to maximum, resulting in a spacious compartment with a shower and good stowage. Opposite the heads are two big hanging lockers.

The heads door also serves to shut off the forecabin at night when it encloses the hanging lockers and passageway to make a spacious, well-fitted cabin. The bunks are on the high side to make room for the tanks below. A small amount of underbunk stowage remains, but for the most part it comprises the hanging ockers and two long shelves.

The quality of workmanship and finish throughout the boat is to a high standard. Grabrails are well positioned for moving forward, and in the version with a central, fixed table, the stainless steel supports form additional grab handles. The sole boards are unusually stout and strong and cover bilges whose depth will please the traditionalist. Buried in it is the fuel tank which can be removed without dismantling the boat. Water tanks are stowed fore and aft under the forecabin bunks and the quarterberth. There is a holding tank also in the forecabin. Plumbing and electrics are all to a high standard. Several yachts have alternative red and white lighting at the chart table for night use, and some have it at the galley. That the Crealock also has it in the heads shows that the builder knows about offshore passagemaking. The boat is full of little touches like this, including zippered headlinings for access to the deck fittings and copper braided strip bonded in for the SSB ground plate, lightning protection and electrical grounding.

On deck

Canoe sterns usually mean small cockpits, and, while the Crealock is better than some, the working area is by no means generous in modern terms. The ergonomics of the cockpit are fatally flawed by the standard hood. While it has many excellent features – it is long, offers good protection to those sitting under it, and a grab bar for those standing aft of it – it is far too low, and the distance between the top of the binnacle grab bar and the handrail on the after end of the hood is just 200mm (8in). It is very difficult to get below and working the sheets, reefing lines and halyards is awkward. Add to this the fact that the mainsheet and staysail sheets are also handled under the hood, and the extent of the problem becomes clear. A slightly shorter canopy some 50mm (2in) higher would make all the difference.

That apart, there are some very good features in the cockpit. The helmsman has plenty of room behind the wheel and a comfortably humped seat. The side benches are a sensible distance apart. The winches for the yankee sheets are slightly too far forward to be easily worked by the helm, so when tacking one must either take one's time so the crew can get both headsails round, or the tack must be done on the autopilot. But short tacking in confined spaces is not what this yacht is about, and the cutter rig comes into its own when faced with deteriorating conditions offshore.

The wide sidedecks combined with shrouds taken outboard make moving forward easy enough. The high moulded gunwale offers good protection and, with stanchions securely mounted on top of them, the top guardwire is 765mm (30in) off the deck.

The foredeck is well equipped. Two large bow rollers are fed from two separate chain lockers. Chromed bronze hawse pipes feed mooring lines to two stainless steel cleats situated just aft of the spot where the optional anchor windlass sits.

Under sail

The Crealock sets a masthead cutter rig on an epoxy-coated alloy spar which is fitted with very wide, single spreaders. Fore and aft lowers are taken to chainplates on the outside of the hull, through-bolted to internal stainless steel straps. The rigging and fittings are all well up to standard.

A discouraging forecast and winds gusting to gale force in the river encouraged us to set the storm jib and staysail, and drop three reefs in the main as we set out into the Solent. In fact, the wind settled down to Force 5-6 with a moderate Solent chop. We found that one reef in the main, staysail and storm jib gave a

Opening ports

An opening port might seem a small thing to dwell on, but those on the Crealock incorporate many details which set them apart. The cast bronze, or chromed bronze, construction is reassuring in itself, but the glass is tempered and very strong. There are drainage channels to prevent the build-up of condensation water. Many ports are held open by plastic or rubber restraints in the hinges. These almost invariably lose their effectiveness in time. Pacific Seacraft has chosen the simpler yet far more effective solution of providing hooks in the deckhead to keep them open.

Canoe sterns

Many people consider canoe sterns have an aesthetic edge on alternatives such as counters, and certainly over modern broad transoms. But looks apart, what are the advantages of the design? Bill Crealock puts it quite neatly when he says: 'When the going gets really tough, your stern will probably have to serve as your bow.' In other words, when you are having to run before a gale, the canoe stern will present less area to a breaking sea, reducing the chances of a dangerous broach. Seas should part easily down each quarter and not climb over the coamings into the cockpit. Reserve buoyancy builds up quickly so the stern will also be lifted over the worst of the seas.

In less extreme conditions, the finer sections and absence of any surface to provide lift, will reduce her ability to generate power off the wind. For many, though, the chief drawback to a rounded stern is the loss of space. Aftercabins become almost impossible and cockpits tend to be a little cramped in the after end.

Battery switches are conveniently but safely placed by the companionway

balanced and powerful rig. When we later set the full yankee we were somewhat over-pressed, so we rolled half of it away. Under this rig she was actually slightly slower than under storm jib.

To begin with we charged off on a close reach with 25 knots of wind over the deck. She registered 7-7.2 knots and remained nicely balanced on the helm. The high, flared bow was keeping the water where it belonged. Coming on to the wind, she remained controllable even when the apparent wind rose to 30 knots. When she was overpressed she would round up slowly and politely and resume her course as soon as the squall passed. In these sort of conditions it was not surprising that she had a certain amount of weather helm. But she could be trimmed out to almost neutral helm, at the expense of a little speed.

Tacking a cutter is never a quick operation for two people, unless the staysail is self-tacking, and the Crealock was no exception. She would swing through the wind quickly enough but it was better for the helmsman to wait a while almost head to wind for the crew caught up. Then she would pick up way and be back up to speed commendably quickly. Her weatherliness did not appear to suffer from the cutter rig, and she could hold a comfortable 30-33 degree angle to the apparent wind, tacking through around 80-85 degrees. Sailed hard on the wind in 25 knots apparent, she would make around 6.3-6.5 knots, though by sailing slightly more comfortably full and bye, you could add 0.2 or 0.3 of a knot.

As one would expect of a narrow-beamed boat, she was initially slightly tender but she stiffened up at around 10-15 degrees of heel. The great thing was that gusts could be weathered at 30-35 degrees of heel with the decks awash, but no more that half lock on.

Overall, she showed a decent turn of speed, though she is no racer. More to the point, she was always well balanced and responsive and placed few demands on the helmsman, even in difficult conditions. She was directionally stable and took the seas well in a long, gentle motion with no hint of slamming.

Under power

The 38hp Volvo diesel is neatly installed below the companionway with excellent access through a panel below decks or through a large hatch in the cockpit sole. Noise and, particularly, vibration levels were on the low side of normal.

The engine has enough power and a little to spare for most cruising needs. Our boat was fitted with a non-standard, three-bladed, feathering Maxprop, which gave a top speed of 6.4 knots and a cruising speed of 6 knots. Handling in difficult cross-winds was entirely predictable ahead but the wind was too strong for her to pull her bow up into the wind going astern.

Conclusions

Pacific Seacraft does not churn out huge numbers of boats a year, but long production runs mean substantial numbers of most models are afloat and there has been time to iron out imperfections. The 34 has been in production for about five years, although she has only just made her début in this country, and already over 300 are afloat.

She is a good-looking yacht which delivers the promise of her appearance. She is not particularly spacious but she is comfortable, well thought out and tough below decks. On deck, she is again rugged in construction and well fitted-out by people who clearly know about the sea. The standard, or Classic, inventory is as good as most of her competitors, and the Voyagemaker version adds a range of extras for serious cruising. JJ

Bonding strips

Many yachts bought with deep sea cruising in mind are fitted with SSB radios. To be effective they have to be efficiently grounded, which means earthing them to a large copper plate or similar bonded to the hull. Fitting such a thing retrospectively can be tricky, so Pacific Seacraft, almost alone among production builders, includes an earthing strip in the original building process. The company also builds in copper strip for earthing the electrical system and/or lightning protection.