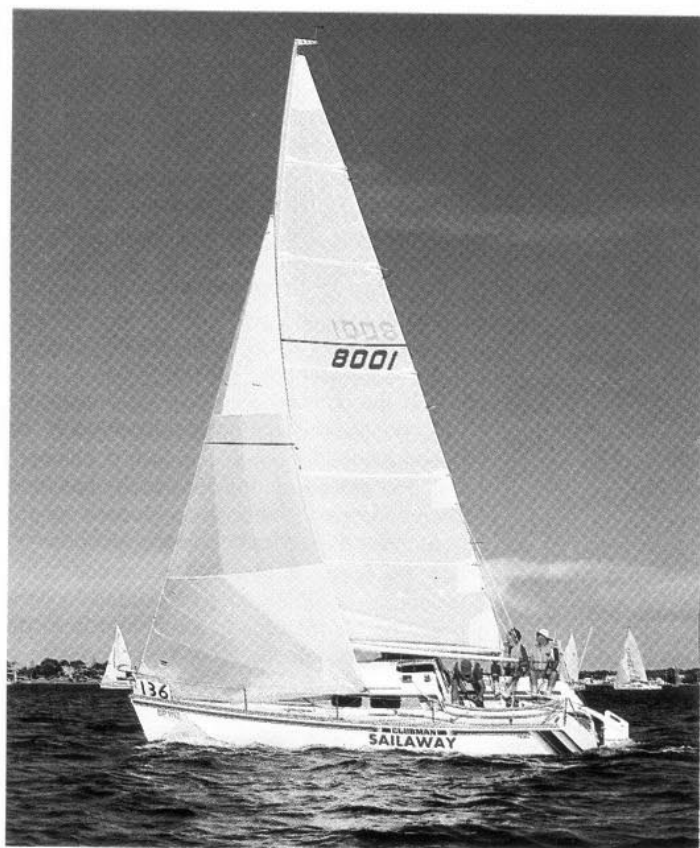


## boat review



# Austral 8 Clubman

Austral Yachts' new trailable, besides having the accommodation of a small yacht sails with a yacht-like feel. By Bob Ross

**F**OR NEARLY 20 years, the Keough family has been building yachts in South Australia. It gained a strong local following in the trailable market with the Austral 20, a robust little cruiser/racer with spacious accommodation including four full-length adult berths.

The Austral 20s have been raced keenly as a class at Brighton & Seaclyff YC and in distance races for trailables.

Austral Yachts has built 250 Austral 20s and is still building them. Adrian Keough, who has his wife Sue, daughter Patricia and sons Michael, Geoffrey and Scott working with him in the business, meantime developed and built the Austral 24 and Austral 30 trailables following a similar design theme with good accommodation for family cruising by road and sea, as well as racing performance. They have built about 100 24s and 30 30-footers.

Two years ago they began developing a new boat which would have more emphasis on performance without sacrificing the accommodation features which had sold boats for Austral for so many years.

They had approached Scott Jutson to design a modern hull to suit that concept. "Their initial boats fitted into the traditional concept of a trailer yacht; a mobile home where you could sleep aboard on the road or on the water," Jutson said. "They wanted a modern design that did not deviate too much from the full accommodation concept. I produced a set of lines, keel and rudder to make sure it would handle well and perform well."

The Keoughs were painstaking in developing the mouldings and detailing for the 8.25m long Austral 8 Clubman which Jutson designed them.

The shape was dinghy-style enough with fine entry and foresections, relatively flat run and waterline beam aft to give planing potential in a breeze. The firm turn to the bilge promised stability and the U-shaped aft sections in the style of recent International Measurement System designs, yacht-like balance.

**LEFT:** Clubman Sailaway in the National Trailable championships. The boat was stiff upwind with a crew of five. **RIGHT:** With 100 per cent jib on St Vincents' Gulf.



Sail plan is high aspect with not much roach in the mainsail.

They built two of them, loaded them up with the cruising accommodation — six berths, galley, space for a toilet, proper bunk and settee cushions, liners — and took them racing for results that exceeded their expectations.

A Clubman finished third over the line among the trailables in the annual Milang to Goolwa race, in a 10-15 knot breeze. In similar conditions it won the Thomas Hardy Memorial Trophy at Brighton & Seaclyff; a

yardstick race, usually won by a Sharpie, 505 or Flying Dutchman, from 150 starters.

The most surprising results, however, came from the National Trailable championships on Lake Macquarie at Easter. *Dr Feelgood*, steered by Michael Keough, came fifth and *Sailaway*, skippered by Adrian Keough was ninth in division one among 45 starters.

The boats ahead of *Dr Feelgood* were skiff lineage Young and Elliott designs while a Spider 22, Elliott 7 and Beale 7.4 finished between *Dr Feelgood* and *Sailaway*.

"They never expected the boats to be as competitive as they were in the nationals," said Jutson, who crewed aboard *Dr Feelgood*.

"We are very pleased with the way it has performed," said Adrian Keough. "We intended it to be a bit slippery but were not out for line honors."

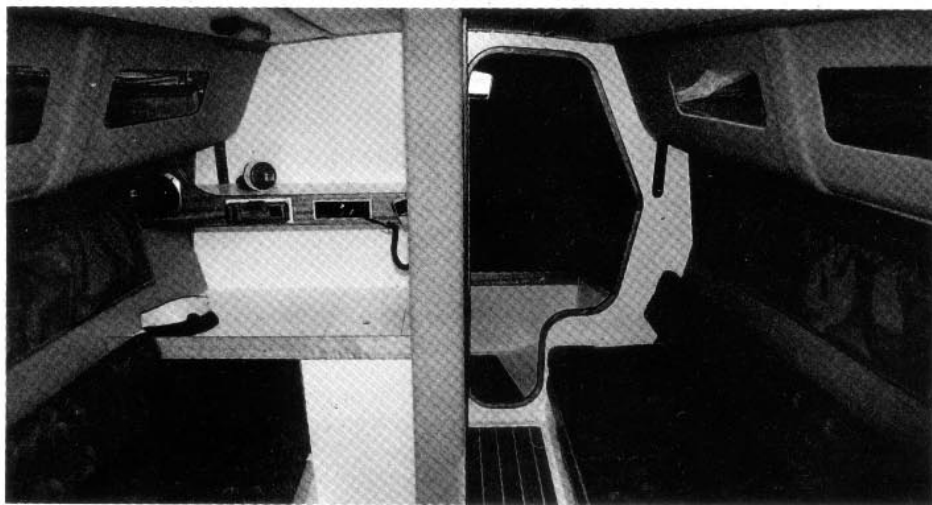
I watched the last race of the nationals; a distance event beginning with a series of downwind legs in which the well-sailed Youngs and Elliots under masthead spinnakers ran out to lengthy leads over the fleet.

On the wind, however, in a 12-14 knot nor'easter, the Austral Clubmen, which carry fractional spinnakers and were back in the pack downwind, looked much stiffer with five aboard than much of the competition and steadily improved their situations within





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the fleet on the return legs.

Jutson said: "History has shown through offshore fleets over the last ten years that heavier, more powerful boats tend to be at the front more than they have in the past. A lot of the downwind boats have their day, but they tend to be few and far between."

"This is more of a yacht, sitting in the heavier end of the trailer-sailer scale. As a general impression, it feels very yacht-like."

Jutson said he had ended the regatta without the bruises he had expected. "I think the ergonomics of the boat work really well. We were able to sail it as a racing boat; throw it around, tack quickly, have five crew move across it easily."

He said he was encouraging the Keoughs to have a Clubman measured to the IMS rule. "The idea of a trailable IMS boat that could be transported to a number of regattas like Hamilton Island Race Week would be nice concept," he said.

I had a sail on a Clubman, on Lake Macquarie, the day after the last race of the nationals. There was little, hardly any, wind at first, but we eventually dug into an 8-10 knot westerly flow. Sailing upwind, the speedo showed 6.8 knots, which seemed high, but possible on the dead-flat water.

The boat was very well balanced and felt extremely stiff. Even when there was under five knots of breeze, the boat was responsive to puffs. She was easy to tack.

Jutson was right about the ergonomics. The steering position was very comfortable once there was enough wind to sit outboard, over the outer slope of the cockpit coaming, feet braced against the teak foot rest recessed into the corner of the cockpit seat.

The boat was extremely well set up for efficient sailing, down to a windward sheeting Harken traveller car running on a curved track and bridge recessed into the cockpit seats. The deck moulding has landings and recesses for the winches, their back-up clam

**Interior has six berths in forward cabin, two settee berths and a double quarter berth to port. The stove slides across the top of the sink in the galley unit.**

cleats, horned cleats for traveller control lines and the pushpits.

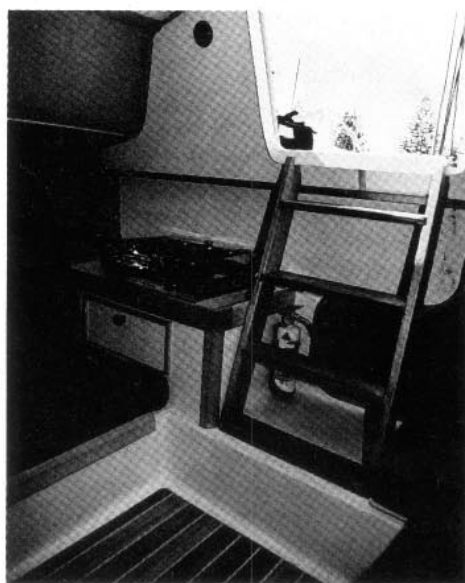
The halyards and sail control lines are led in tunnels under the cabin top from the mast aft to a pair of winches and banks of jammers within reach of the cockpit. This helps the crew roll easily across the cabin top during a tack.

The side decks are wide and unencumbered, apart from the headsail tracks which are set well inboard, allowing safe and ready access from stern to bow and have an excellent non-skid pattern. The cockpit floor and seats are covered with teak slats for secure footing.

Other touches reveal the experience probably gained from falling over items of deck hardware in the past: The stainless steel grab rails are recessed into the cabin top. The fore hatch, of perspex moulded to the shape of the cabin top, sits perfectly flush in a guttered opening with drains. The bow fitting, especially moulded of cast aluminium, butts into the alloy toe rails; anchor or mooring lines run through fairleads down a gutter in the foredeck into the anchor locker.

The box for the dagger rudder and tiller are a single unit, fabricated from two joined fibreglass mouldings. A trip device at the back of the rudder box releases to avoid damage if the blade hits the bottom.

The keel, is lifted by a six-part tackle leading to the port cabin top winch. When it is fully retracted the Clubman floats in nine inches of water. The top of the lead-loaded fibreglass fin is square in shape so that it can never drop completely out of the centre-case. Adrian Keough says the boat is stable enough to meet the Australian Yachting Federation's Category 2 self-righting requirements.



The rig is high aspect with very little roach in the mainsail and a high set boom. The mast is a well-tapered Baverstock, with caps and lowers over a single set of well swept aft spreaders.

Austral has addressed the problem of where to carry and stow the outboard motor. Instead of the usual untidy and weight-inefficient arrangement of lifting and angling it onto the transom, the outboard on the Clubman operates and is carried in well inside the aft starboard cockpit locker.

When not in use, it is lifted and the opening sealed with a filling piece. A Morse control lever and air vents for the outboard are located on the cockpit seat face.

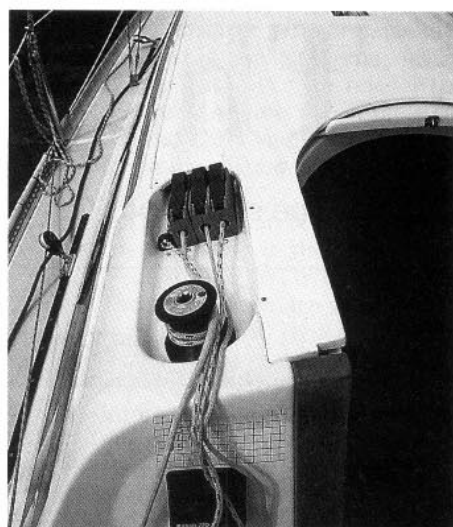
An option to the outboard is to locate a small inboard centrally behind the companionway in a two quarter-berth layout.

Right aft in the floor of the open-transom

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**LEFT:** Cockpit has teak slats on floor and seats and inset teak foot rests. Controls for the outboard and vents for its compartment are under the traveller. **RIGHT:** Halyards and sail control lines are tunneled under the cabin top.

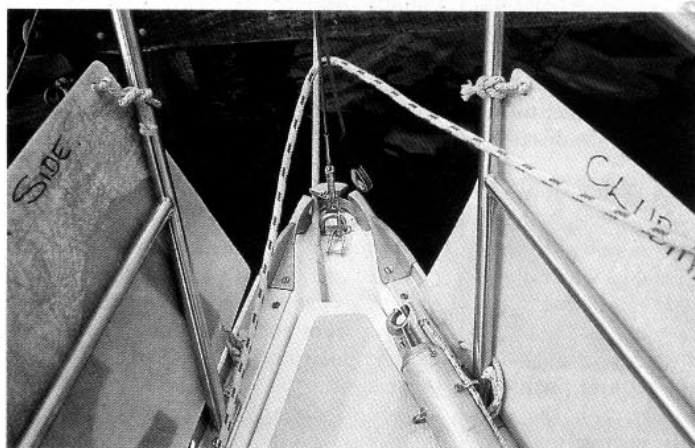


cockpit is a locker for the fuel tank and general wet storage. Forward of the traveller under the starboard seat is a huge locker, of almost nine cubic feet, through to the hull skin.

The Clubman is of fibreglass/foam construction using Kevlar and E-glass over Divinycell and balsa cores with vinylester resin for stiff, light structure. An internal grid moulding, filled with foam and bonded to the hull, besides contributing structural strength, provides separate and easy to clean compartments for items like the battery box and under floor storage.

There are four main structural bulkheads,

**LEFT:** Bow fitting and groove in foredeck lead mooring and anchor lines neatly into the anchor well. **RIGHT:** The outboard auxiliary in operational position within its locker; hull inflill is stowed on the shelf above it.



of E-glass and Divinycell sandwich, vacuum-bagged for strength with lightness, located aft of the anchor well, at the chainplates, companionway and between the outboard locker and aft cockpit locker.

The interior is neatly finished with vinyl headliner, carpet on exposed topside areas, ash inlay in the teak faced plywood floorboards and teak trim.

The forward cabin has a double vee berth with simple and light netting stowage bins attached to the topsides.

The main cabin has two full length settee berths with comfortable back rests. There is stowage on the shelf behind the back rests. Tucked to port alongside the centre case is a navigation table with an opening for the ice

box beneath recessed into it. Plate racks and glass/cup holders are fitted over the table.

A small table folds down from the after end of the centre case.

To port aft is a double quarter berth. The space aft is big enough to provide sitting headroom over the berth.

To starboard of the companionway steps is the galley unit.

The stove slides and locks over sink, for proximity to the companionway opening, when it is in use.

The "deluxe" version, including stove, sink and toilet, is priced at \$48,000.

Sails, motor and trailer would put the complete package into the \$55,000 to \$60,000 price range. ▲

## SPECIFICATIONS

Length overall.....	8.25m
Beam.....	2.45m
Displacement.....	1200kg
Ballast.....	367kg
Sail area.....	32sq m

**Designer:** Scott Jutson.

**Builder:** Austral Yachts, 20-22 Cottage Lane, Hackham, SA 5163. 08 384 5487; fax, 08 326 1537.

