



Victoria Yachts - Frances 26



The owner of a new Frances 26 motors out on a crisp March day in an attempt to come to terms with the cutter rig and the handling characteristics of his long keel boat. He has already sailed and motored his new craft from Warsash on the Hamble to Eastbourne on the East Sussex coast but conditions were not ideal and this is the first opportunity to really try things out.

Well, so far so good! The main went up without a hitch and the yankee unfurled a treat. The foot of the yankee is high cut and affords a good view ahead. With the boat slightly heeled, the double-ender design is clearly visible.

The main boom is surprisingly long and quite low over the cabin roof. You can only afford to stand, when nicely settled on a fine or broad reach but the view ahead is fine when sitting at the tiller.



Yes, the Frances will sail to windward with the helm unattended for long periods. If you find a tendency for her to luff-up, then it is probably because the main is sheeted in too tightly.



What's going on now? Well he's paid extra for the bowsprit and three sails, so he'd better give it a go. The staysail is mounted on a boom, which means it can self-tack and of course you don't have to unhook the sail and store it down below.

Although boom mounted, it is still loose-footed and by adjusting the clew outhaul you can arrange for it to lie nicely parallel to the yankee. The well-deck makes one feel fairly secure when working forward of the mast.

Where's he gone now?



Not M.O.B., I hope. No, just gone below to make the tea. He hasn't got it right, I'm afraid. The clew outhaul on the staysail is far too loose. Setting the gap between the staysail and yankee is an art that is likely to take several years to learn properly. Never mind. This was the first proper outing.

The photographs here were all taken by my brother, Stanley Cosker, who was chugging around in his Versatility motor boat. Pevensey Bay is usually pretty quiet and it always comes as a shock when I sail into the Solent. I normally go about if I see another boat within a quarter of a mile.



All right, one last picture then. I'm still there and beginning to get the hang of it.

These pictures were all taken thirteen years ago, now. Jenny and I are still sailing the same boat, which has safely taken us over 14,000 nautical miles in all sorts of conditions.

The Frances 26 has an excellent performance for her size and carries full sail well. Many of our friends, in lighter displacement boats, are already reefing their mainsails and putting a turn or two in their genoas, whilst we sail on by under full sail.

Of course, some sailors do opt for the sloop version instead...

by Peter Cosker