

34' CRUISING YACHT *VICTORIA 34*

DIMENSIONS

LOA:	34' 3"
LWL:	28' 4"
BEAM:	10' 7"
DRAFT:	4' 10"
DISPLACEMENT, 1/2 load:	12,719 lbs
BALLAST (lead):	5,525 lbs
SAIL AREA (100% foretriangle):	568 sq ft
DISP/L RATIO:	273
SAIL AREA/DISP RATIO:	16.68



Hull number one WINDERMERE. She was bought by a visiting American at that critical first London Boat Show. Chuck Paine and his draftsman built her interior.

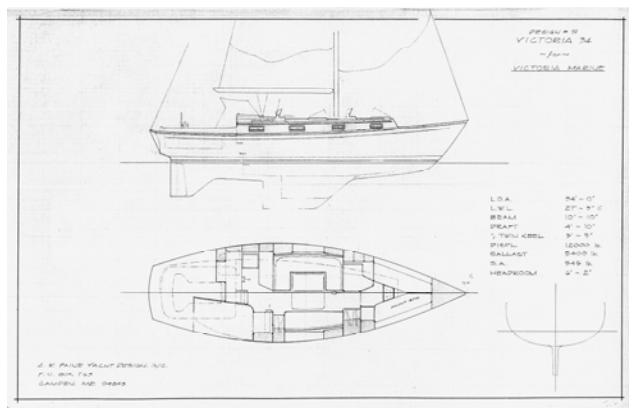
By 1985 Victoria Yachts were firmly established building Victoria 26s and 30s and the demand just kept on growing. At the London Boat Show in January of that year Peter Gregory began talking about a larger boat.

This time he did not want to restrict himself to a Morris design he could opt into but asked me where I thought the market was going. I answered larger, clearly, and towards higher performance than any double-ender could deliver. We settled on 34 feet and “British traditional”, an idiom I believed I had come to understand better than any then practicing British designer. He asked me to send him a preliminary sketch once I got home to the States. If he liked it his plans were to introduce it at the next London show—that is, in less than eleven months’ time— an ambitious schedule but with a lot of hard work by everyone concerned, just possibly achievable.

humanly possible if we were to accommodate his timeframe. He hired a company in Ipswich to build the hull mold and would build the deck tooling in his own factory. I began drawing the hull lines in early February and put Chris Davis to work on the other drawings. By early March the lines were completed and shipped off to Ipswich so that the hull plug could get going. Unlike many boatbuilders who treated the trade as a cottage industry Peter looked at it as a business. It was refreshing to have clear orders and fixed waypoints and to not worry about getting paid.

Peter and the company in Ipswich, which shall remain nameless, kept in touch by phone with Peter constantly chiding and urging that they progress at all deliberate speed. They assured him that the first hull would be delivered on time. In mid-August with 4 months left in the schedule I was asked to fly over and inspect the tooling. By then transatlantic flights were just part of my routine though this was before American Airlines thought up the morning departure from Boston which got you to London in time for a late dinner and a welcome bed. Before that wonderful innovation traveling to Britain was more than a bit grueling from a lack of sleep point of view.

When I was young and dreamed of becoming a yacht designer I’d pictured myself spending all of my time drafting, and the clients coming to me. What I became, I suppose, was an entrepreneur who did yacht design. The flight would depart Boston at 9 in the evening when you were ready after a long day for sleep— little of which was forthcoming. It was only a 6 hour flight and half of it was taken up with various irksome rituals such as the cocktail tray and the plastic-wrapped dinner and after if you were lucky a couple of hours’ sleep the breakfast before landing.



The preliminary sketch for the Victoria 34. Peter basically left it unchanged.

I sent him the sketch shown above. By then we’d spent enough time together that I could pretty much predict what he was thinking and sure enough, he changed virtually nothing from my sketch—just reminding me that he needed drawings as fast as

By five in the morning London time I'd be standing in the embarrassingly hour-long queue at passport control in the perpetually sweltering arrivals lounge at Heathrow. Then after another embarrassing hour and a half at the car rental office filling out forms I'd be on my way down the M3 toward Southampton. By that time I had become a committed Europhile but if you asked me if there was anything America did better than Britain I'd tell you, "not much but with one important exception—Car Rental!"

I would often stay at "Park Farm Restaurant and Accommodations"—a lovely private hotel in Titchfield. The accommodations were four tiny rooms squeezed beneath slanted rough-hewn rafters in the attic. They were never fully booked so I could arrive at 7:30 in the morning and have access to my room. After a shower I'd drive to Warsash—a matter of mere minutes—and take what became my standard morning walk. England is laced with public footpaths and the one along the bank of the Hamble River between Warsash and Universal Boatyard is beautiful beyond description. I'd walk the footpath between the Hamble River, home to literally thousands of sailing yachts fully half of which were fascinating to me, and the fanatically preserved marshes of its eastern verges with their pelagic birds and priceless river-view country homes. Thus restored after the overnight ordeal I'd report to work at the factory at ten in the morning.



Park Farm Restaurant and Accommodations.

On this occasion I inspected the deck mold, which was coming along nicely. Peter and I discussed other details of the new boat and made plans to drive to Ipswich the next day to inspect the hull mold. The air was full of optimistic anticipation. Peter had laid out extensive pre-debut advertising for the new 34. There was going to be a glossy full colour brochure. The stand at Earl's Court would be the most elaborate ever. He'd hired young female greeters with perfect smiles and matching figures. He would want me there in a sales role of sorts, imperfect face and figure notwithstanding.



The public footpath from Warsash to Universal Boatyard.

We left for Ipswich at six in the morning in Peter's latest high-powered Autobahn cruiser. It didn't matter that the thing would happily top 150 without feeling a strain as the Romans had placed one of the world's largest cities inconveniently in the way. After half an eternity crawling around London on the M25 we arrived at the boatyard well after noon. The management met us at the gate. They appeared uncomfortable. Peter introduced his famous designer who had come all the way from America to see his beautiful hull. This presented a bit of a problem. It seems they hadn't actually started the tooling yet!

I was amazed at Peter's composure. Had it been me I'd have gone ballistic. Perhaps he'd had a suspicion that something was afoot and prepared himself mentally. But for sure we had a problem. A huge problem.

We discussed it all the long way home. He had invested so much by this point that any delay in actually selling new boats would put him under. To debut at the Southampton show—eight months later—would not work on two counts. He had rented the space at Earl's Court and it was too late to get his colossal deposit back. And didn't I remember his sage advice of a couple of years ago? There was only one London, and beside it Southampton paled to the level of insignificance in comparison. There was simply no choice. That first boat had to be at London Boat Show!

We parted company that evening. I had a flight out of Heathrow the next morning. Peter was dejected. He was hung up on the fact that until that time, in his experience you had to have a hull before you built an interior inside it.

I'd seen the way Tom Morris was building boats. He'd build the interior from the drawings to the point of near completion outside the hull, usually finishing it in a few large "units" before the hull came over from the molding shop. Then he'd 'glass it in and put the deck on.

I am in the final analysis an American. I don't believe there is ANYTHING that can't be done with sufficient good will and a lot of hard work. I saw a way out. As I said my good-byes to Peter I offered, "Well you know, I've built a few boats myself. And so has Chris, my draftsman. If it made any difference we could come over and build the interior for you. If you can get the hull by early November I think you can still make it."

- *There's NOTHING that can't be done with sufficient good will and a lot of hard work.*

A week later we had found someone to live in our home in Tenants Harbor and Debby and I, our infant son Nicholas, and Chris on a separate plane, were winging our way to London. There was no time to get the necessary work permits. We'd try to bluff our way through customs on three-month tourist visas. If they inspected our bags, which were absolutely clanking with hand tools, we'd be a goner and sent home. My one-eighth-Irish luck prevailed and the next day I was a boatbuilder again, living in a rented flat in Mercury Gardens, a modest housing estate in Hamble. One of the Desty brothers lent me a spare car so I could commute to work. Peter said I could have as many "chippies"- boat carpenters- as I needed. If Chris and I could build a boat interior in two months, the hull and deck would be ready to receive it.

I can't recall ever having had so much fun as I had that intense autumn I spent living in England. I had learned to love the Brits that first time abroad when I spent a summer competing there as a college sailing star. They seem to universally love the sea that surrounds them and the wonderful sport of sailing that had also ensnared me. All countries are chauvinistic and believe themselves the world's hardest workers- a weakness we share as humans. I have never worked as hard as I did for those ten weeks I supervised the building of that first Victoria 34, nor I am sure did the chippies who worked for me.

On my first day in the factory I got down on my knees on a few sheets of screwed-together plywood I'd painted white and slowly lofted pieces of the interior from the drawings Chris had done a few months earlier. I knew it was a bit of theatre but I had to start somewhere. I just had to trust that his drawings were accurate—if things didn't fit when the

hull arrived we were toast. If the famous designer was willing to work that hard with his bare hands no young British chippie was going to be outdone, and they worked their hearts out for me. I suppose I respected them as no well-bred Englishman could respect someone who "only" did manual labour. But I didn't recognize "class" and that gave me a huge advantage. The chippies and Chris and I traded rounds (voluminous pints) of strong ale at the Rising Sun pub at the end of most days; and as the interior rapidly took shape we'd make weekly progress reports to the upper management every weekend over a meal at the Jolly Farmer Inn.

Debby and Chris and Nicholas and I flew home in early December- two weeks earlier than expected- feeling good about a job well done, all the moreso because three months earlier it had looked to be impossible.

As you might expect the *VICTORIA 34* made its debut at the 1986 London Boat Show gleaming in new paint and varnish with no aspiring boat-buyer the wiser about the narrowly averted miscarriage. Once again I endured that miserable night flight to arrive at a far too affordable London hotel to which I could not gain access until mid-afternoon, beyond the point of exhaustion. But by that point in my life I had learned that this was my destiny, and later that same evening I was standing in Earls Court Exhibition Centre between the impressive new stands Peter had contrived amidst his beautiful salesladies with the *VICTORIA 34* proudly displayed behind me as if it had existed forever.



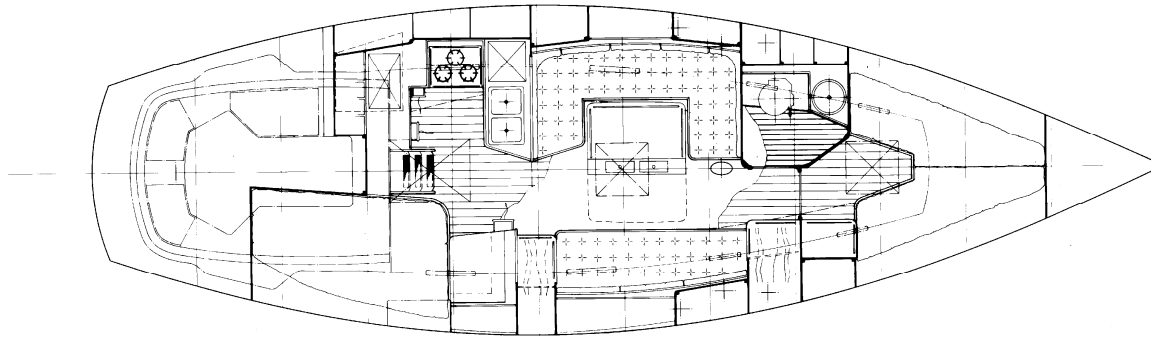
The Jolly Farmer, where the executive decisions were made.



The interior Chris Davis and I built that autumn in Warsash.



The first Victoria 34 at London Boat Show, 1986. The engine and electrical systems weren't installed yet, but nobody knew.



The final interior for the Victoria 34- one of the most successful cruising yachts ever built in Britain.