Lazy Jack

BELOW: The unfamilar sight which greets a bermudan sailor when decyphering the intricacies of an AeroRig. BELOW RIGHT: The interior is an uncompromising blend of function and proper sea comfort, with all the vital systems backed up for safety on a circumnavigation

Truly uncompromising ocean cruisers are rare. This is because the requirements of the few self-sufficient long-distance yachtsmen are markedly different from those of the coastal-hopping majority who are in regular contact with shoreside conveniences. Consequently, the blue water sailor frequently has to make do with a boat that is a compromise. The commissioning owner of the new Dijkstra 63 AeroRig *Lazy Jack* has learned this much through bitter experience. His previous yacht was a schooner on which 'I seemed to be spending three days a week repairing broken equipment'. No surprise, then, that he went to Holland for this custom-fitted aluminium cruising yacht on which every essential system has been chosen for its ruggedness and, notwithstanding that, duplicated.

The broad, rounded hull is of very faintly V section amidships extending into fine, flared sections at the clipper bow which falls to a knuckle just below the waterline. This bow, pleasant sheer and the broad arching transom might be thought to wear the scent of a 1930s Herreshoff. The underwater configuration consists of a fin keel and a skeg-hung part-balanced rudder with a trim tab. But perhaps the most noticeable external feature of *Lazy Jack* is a singular lack of standing rigging for the tapering mast which reaches 26m (84ft) above the waterline with spotless Awlgrip finish.

Those already familiar with the AeroRig will know that the usual web of stays, shrouds and spreaders, and its attendant colonies of hydraulic cylinders, rigging screws and blocks are not required. Stepped further forward than is customary for conventional bermudan rig, this fractional sloop rig is free-standing, hand-built from carbon-fibre with boom extending fore and aft from the mast for the jib and mainsail. It rotates in a low friction self-aligning bearing at deck level with loads in jib and mainsail balancing each other. This not only makes standing rigging unnecessary but considerably lightens the load on the mainsheet.

Hood's new Vectran cloth has been used for the furling jib and the mainsail. In addition, there is a permanently rigged storm trysail and a free-flying storm jib which can be hoisted on its own stay. Sail is set using Andersen electric winches and Spinlock clutches. The mainsail track doubles as a lightning conductor but, true to the back-up philosophy of the owner, there is also a heavy copper strip running down the fore side of the mast. Being fully battened, the mainsail passes through the wind quietly, also falling neatly between lazy jacks for a sea stow; its winged boom, wide enough for two people to walk along, is reminiscent of the J Class 'Park Avenue' variety.

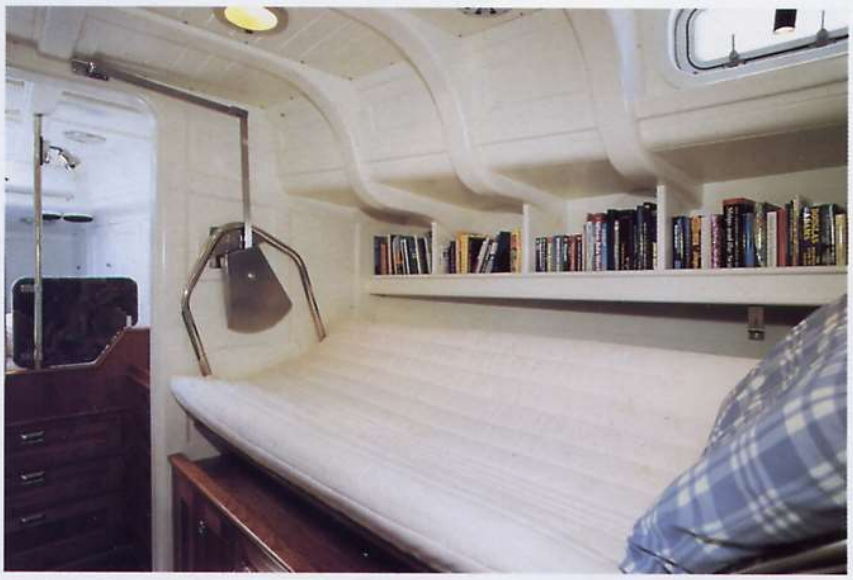
The efficiency of the AeroRig on a test sail in the Solent was remarkable. Once set, the entire 140m² (1,507sqft) sail plan was trimmed via the mainsheet so this rig will be well suited to the husband and wife embarking for a world cruise. Upwind, the yacht's instruments were showing seven knots boat speed in 12 knots apparent wind, and she was eerily quiet without the usual whistle of wind in the rigging. Tacking was faster and smoother than would have been the case on a conventionally-rigged yacht of similar size – there was nothing to do except alter course since the jib, clewed to a transverse track on the fore boom, looked after itself.

As the rig rotated off the wind it showed its superiority over conventional bermudan as the pre-set slot between jib leech and mainsail luff continued to work and gave sparkling performance without the need for specialised reaching or downwind sails. An ordinary bermudan jib bellies out and loses efficiency as the jib sheet is eased. Dead downwind, the boom spread at right angles to the centreline with all sail pulling easily. Gybing was a tranquil experience. Well past the point at which a conventional rig would have flown across, the jib backed first then the mainsail followed, the whole rig rotating under minimal load to feather on the opposite tack ready for trimming. An accidental gybe causes no damage, and should you wish to stop the boat, the mainsheet is let go and the rig feathers quietly into the wind. This makes lowering sail or slab reefing possible at a moment's notice on any heading. The cruising advantage is that more miles can be covered in a day and with less anxiety.

Lazy Jack's accommodation reaches fore and aft from a centre cockpit and is accessed by protected companionways of seamanlike width and with tram window-style washboards which lift from the threshold. For downwind use, the aft companionway leads to the main living space surrounded by nine ports in a low coachroof which just peeps above the bulwark. Here, the starboard galley and navigation table opposite can be gimballed/tilted to compensate for roll/heel. Just aft, the saloon table and settees are designed around a square so that fore and aft or transverse berths can be made. As elsewhere, the joinery is precisely made in solid wood, mostly cherry or plain white and, while being smartly panelled, it is not fussy. This arrangement for the accommodation makes a great deal of sense. The area aft of amidships is probably the most comfortable area of a sailing yacht at sea. On most cruising yachts it is occupied by a large sleeping cabin which sees little use while sailing.

A passageway forward passes between the machinery rooms. These, like the fore peak, lazarette and built-in tanks, are watertight compartments accessed by immensely strong

ABOVE: Deceptively conventional-looking on the wind, the AeroRig's true character comes out when she 'wing a wings' downwind



ABOVE: A gimballed berth gives the game away: this is an uncompromised long-distance cruiser. BELOW RIGHT: The hoop not only carries twin radar antennae but wind indicators that a swivelling mast would render confusing

doors with large-levered handles typical of the Engelaer yard which is known for its work with commercial shipping. The owner's previous yacht had had a main driving engine and a bowthruster but for *Lazy Jack* he specified a pair of Perkins Sabre M90 diesels instead. 'Twin engines are more flexible because not only can you manoeuvre with them but you also have a backup in case of failure.' With the weight of the machinery, fuel and water tanks being above the keel, *Lazy Jack*'s pitching is minimal.

Passing by a gallery of family photographs, the switches and meters of the extensive systems control centre are ideally placed facing the forward cockpit companionway which exits from the protection of the pilot house for upwind use.

Immediately forward from here is a pair of opposing single cabins, ideal for temporary crew or guests who may join *Lazy Jack* on her voyage around the world. And forward again, beside a vertical flag locker and through a bi-fold door, to starboard there is a unique gimballed berth which was designed by the owner for use off watch. This is the ante-chamber of the main sleeping cabin which has its double berth athwartships flanked by hanging lockers and chests of drawers. A mesh door overhead connects with a deck hatch which, opened downwind or in fair weather, sends a current of fresh air all the way through the interior.

Sensibly, generous space has been allowed for the bathroom immediately to port of the mast housing, conveniently within a few steps of the forward companionway.

Lazy Jack's decks are clean with room to roam in safety, surrounded by a raised bulwark with rock solid tubular stainless steel guard rails. Unrelieved by teak, the extent of whiteness on deck causes some glare but will probably be easier to maintain in the long term. The large centre cockpit has been designed to maximise supporting surfaces for the crew while minimising the danger of being thrown across open areas in rough seas. It has a lightweight hard top which can be assembled to give all-weather protection and provide further sleeping space in warmer latitudes.

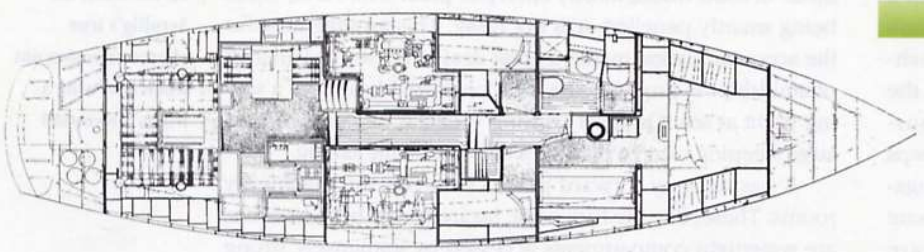
Port and starboard helm positions have wheel steering, electric winch for the double-ended mainsheet, controls for engine and any of three autopilots, and visibility of instrument repeaters and radar ranging across the somewhat utilitarian pilot house. A tiller amidships fine-tunes steering via the trim tab, but the wing-sited wheels not only make sailing more comfortable but also help with berthing manoeuvres. With the jib tacked high to its own boom, visibility forward is excellent on all points.

Apparent wind is given by an indicator mounted on the rig and, because the rig rotates, indicators for downwind sailing and true wind direction are mounted on a stern gantry which also supports Furuno radar antennae in a gimballed frame.

In addition to an inflatable, *Lazy Jack* has a hard tender, a 3.3m (11ft) Boston Whaler, stowed on the aft coachroof which is launched using the boom and an electric winch. Also stowed here ready for stern boarding is the passerelle, but for water-level boarding, and perhaps recovery of a man overboard, there is an aperture cut through the lazarette and transom with a folding teak and steel ladder. A gleaming, close-stowing stockless anchor lies flat against the transom, while ready on the bow are a CQR and a Bruce, one above the other, each with dedicated Muir electric windlass. This yacht is prepared for any seabed. Abaft the windlasses, a deck hatch opens the forepeak where bulky sail-bags are conspicuous by their absence and some shore-going transport is stowed – viz a pair of folding bicycles.

Lazy Jack answers the needs of her long-distance cruising couple with distinction, being comfortable, fast, capable and safe.

The AeroRig has yet to become a familiar sight. As *Lazy Jack*'s owner points out 'The logic is overwhelmingly strong.' Balancing tales of minimalist circumnavigations in unsuitable boats *Lazy Jack* looks like a fine example of the right boat for the job.



LAZY JACK

LOA	18.9m (62ft)
LWL	15m (49ft 3in)
Beam	4.8m (15ft 9in)
Draught	2.7m (8ft 10in)
Displacement	31.5 tonnes
Sail area	140m² (1,507sqft)
Designer	Gerard Dijkstra
Builder	Engelaer Scheepsbouw