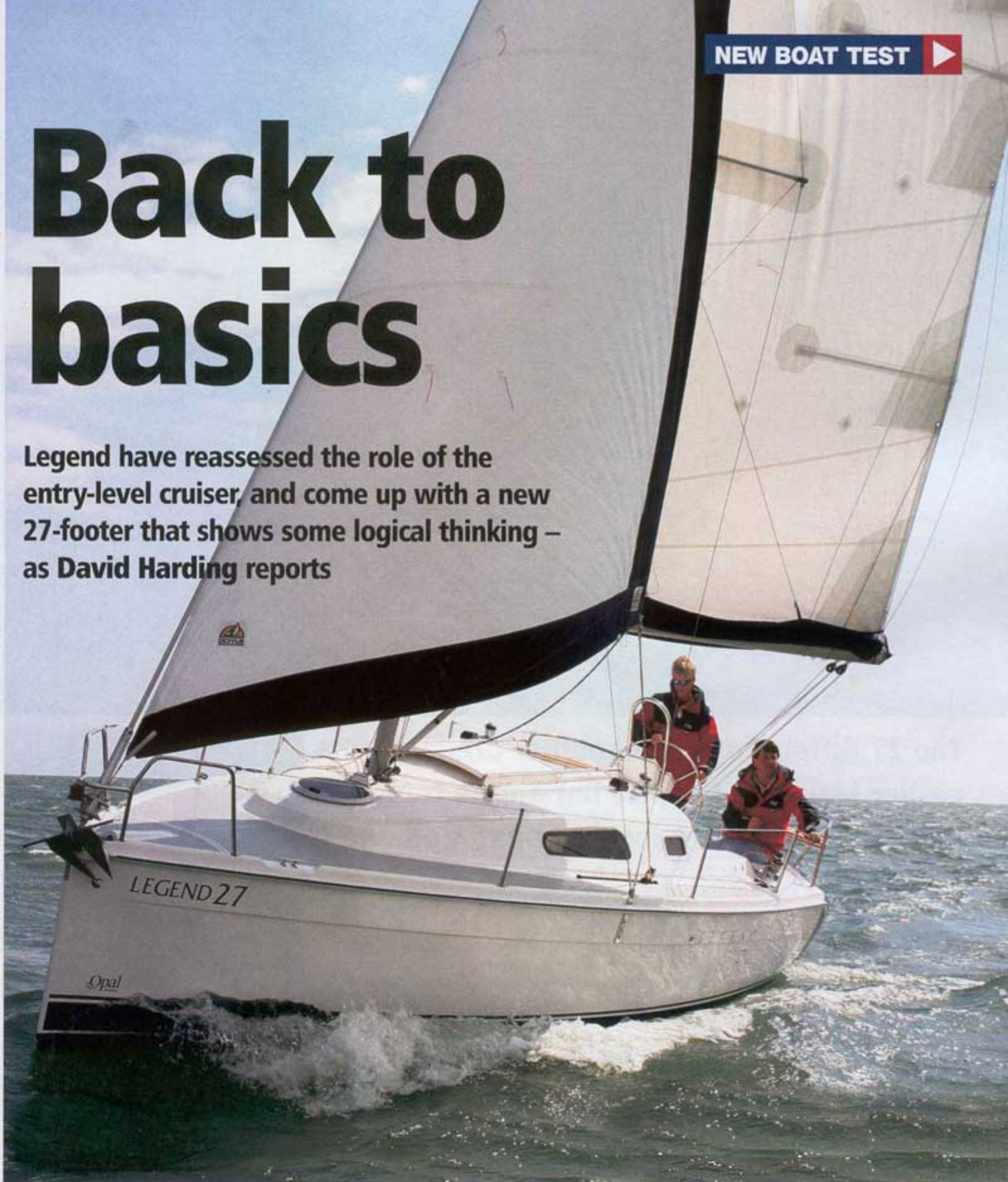


# Back to basics

Legend have reassessed the role of the entry-level cruiser, and come up with a new 27-footer that shows some logical thinking – as David Harding reports



Since Legend opened a factory in Britain a few years ago, their boats have undergone some significant changes. Back in the 1990s, their trailer-sailers used water ballast and the larger cruisers had big, powerful, high-roach mainsails – both features that led to some lively handling in a breeze. Then there was the far-from-conventional styling. Some sailors in Britain weren't sure what to make of it all.


Since the factory in Dorset has been

producing Legends for the European market, the range has become more – well, European. The styling is subtler, the rigs more modestly proportioned, and twin keels are an option that has proved predictably popular among British buyers.

Legend say that the decision to abandon water ballast, which was used in the 240 and 26, was taken largely because there's no longer a need to save trailing weight in the USA by opening a bung and emptying the tank as you haul the boat up the slipway. People who trail and sail on the

other side of the Atlantic tend to have such big cars these days – Sports Utility Vehicles, or SUVs – that weight on the trailer isn't a problem. Even the new 25, based on the hull of the 24, has been given a shallow lead keel.

Whatever their principal reason for switching to conventional, external ballast (and I would be surprised if criticisms of lack of stiffness had not played a part), today's Legends are very different to those of yesteryear.

The new 27, for example, is the result 



▲ Light and simple: the interior is unfussy, and designed for short spells aboard living out of kit-bags

◀ A hatch over the athwartships berth in the aft cabin is a useful safety feature, as well as improving light and ventilation

Once you've rolled away the headsail and dropped the main (with the help of lazyjacks and the integral sail cover that will be part of the standard spec) the Yanmar 2YM diesel swings into action, driving a two-bladed fixed prop via a Saildrive. We reached six knots at 2,600rpm and just under seven knots at full chat (3,400rpm). Manoeuvrability and stopping power were good, while subdued levels of both noise and vibration made the boat surprisingly habitable down below under power.



▲ Lifting the starboard cockpit seat beside the wheel reveals the aft cabin hatch

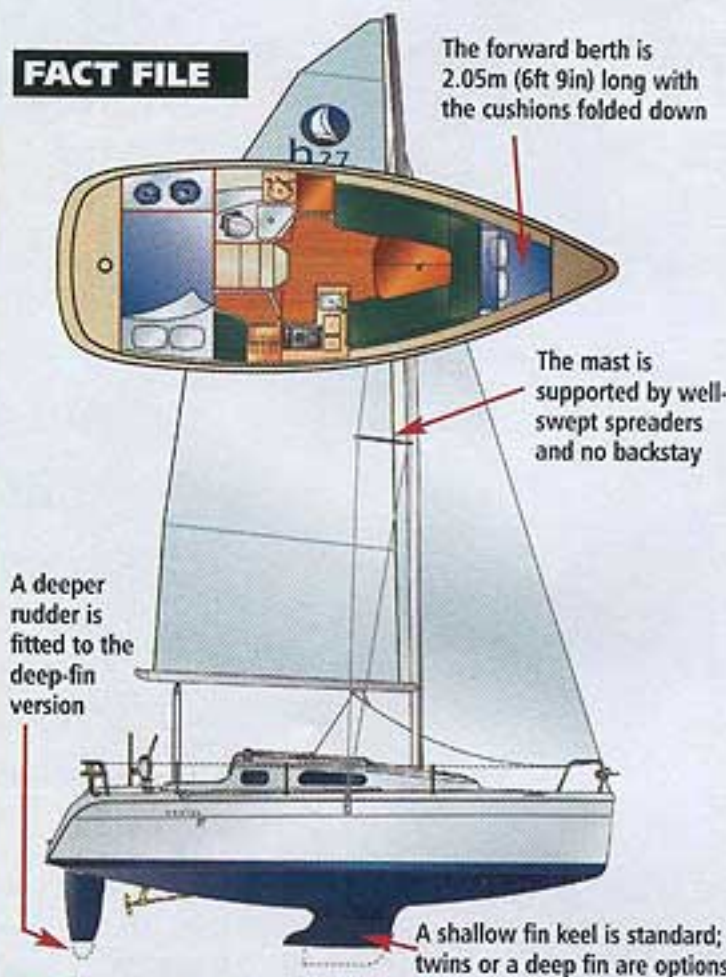
## Conclusion: continuing the Legend

This new addition to the Legend range appears to have been well thought out for her intended market – and that's not the purists, traditionalists or those planning much in the way of offshore passage-making.

She's designed to appeal to those who want a boat on which they're going to spend relatively short periods, and for whom simplicity, an affordable price, reasonable sailing ability and the option of twin keels are the most important features. With this boat, Legend's logic is hard to fault.



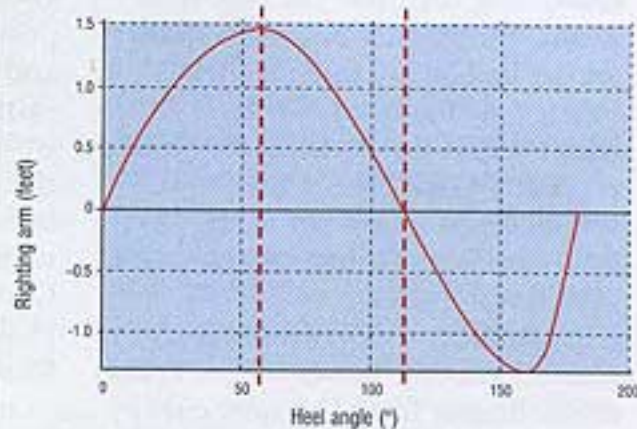
**FACT FILE**



**SPECIFICATION**

- LOA: 8.23m (27ft)
- LWL: 7.18m (23ft 7in)
- Beam: 2.95m (9ft 8in)
- Draught – twin/shallow fin: 1.05m (3ft 5in)
- deep fin: 1.52m (5ft)
- Displacement (shallow fin): 3,473kg (7,656lb) \*
- Ballast (shallow fin): 931kg (2,053lb) \*
- Sail area (mainsail & headsail): 36m<sup>2</sup> (387.5sq ft)
- Displacement/length ratio: 260
- Sail area/displacement ratio: 16
- RCD category: B
- Engine: Yanmar 2YM, 14hp diesel Saildrive
- Headroom (saloon): 1.83m (6ft)
- Designer: Glenn Henderson/Luhrs Marine
- Builder: Luhrs Marine, Portland, Dorset
- www.luhrsmarine.co.uk
- Distributor: Opal Marine, Mumby Road, Gosport, Hants PO12 1FJ. Tel: 02392 583242 Fax: 02392 581028. Email: info@opalmarine.co.uk Website: www.opalmarine.co.uk

\*Ballast (and therefore displacement) is increased with the twin keels and reduced with the deep fin



The GZ curve is based on a shallow-fin version with in-mast reefing, and is calculated without taking into account the buoyancy provided by the coachroof. It shows a maximum righting arm of 57° and the angle of vanishing stability (AVS) at 114°.

**INTERIOR**

# Down below

**L**egend have designed the interior of the 27 in recognition of the fact that many boat owners today go afloat principally for weekends and short breaks, hopping along the coast and from marina to marina.

For example, stowage for crockery and cutlery in the galley is in the form of a mesh bag that attaches to the hullside. On Sunday night, you fill it with the dirties and take it home for washing up. Similarly, the optional electric coolbox goes home with you so you can load up for your next trip. Back on board, it slides away beneath the galley peninsula and plugs into the boat's 12V supply.

This approach looks sensible for

weekending – and it saves Legend having to incorporate drawers and small lockers, which take time and add to the price. If you were spending any longer on the boat, however, the need to live out of kit bags might become irksome.

Consistent with the keep-it-simple approach will be an Origo 3000 gimballed hob in the galley of British-built 27s (as opposed to the part-240V, part-butane arrangement on the American test boat, supplemented by a microwave). A locker occupies the space below unless you choose to have an oven.

Forward of the galley and the 51 x 56cm (20 x 22in) chart table opposite,



▲ The cool-box slides out from under the galley peninsula

stowage is under the bunks only; there's nothing along the hull-sides. And the minimalist approach extended to the lighting. An extra bulb or two would be useful – especially over the galley, where you're currently working in your own shadow – and has now been added.

Unlike many small boats, the Legend doesn't use a full moulding to form the basis of the interior. A tray moulding incorporating a stiffening grid is bonded to the hull, and the Formica-faced joinery units are then located into their landings before being bonded in place.

Another unusual structural feature of the Legend 27 is the use of vinyl ester resin in the hull laminate.

Returning to the interior arrangements, a soft vinyl called Lizarette is used to line the hull above the furniture units, while the headlining is covered by stretchy, foam-backed vinyl with plastic track around the edges that allows it to be



▲ Crockery and cutlery live in a mesh carrier designed to be taken home

removed. Together with the sparing use of varnished trim, the linings and light Formica give a feel of brightness and simplicity.

Abaft the companionway, the double cabin to starboard contains an athwartships berth of generous proportions – 1.93m (6ft 4in) long by a maximum of 1.75m (5ft 9in) wide. Though not an ideal sea berth, it allows its occupants to lean back against the hullside and read in the light of the escape hatch. Lifting up the forward side of the berth reveals good access to the aft end of the engine and the gearbox.

▶ you will be told that the same compound is used for windows in skyscrapers and won't let go in a hurry.

If such an arrangement isn't to everyone's taste, the method of securing the deck hardware is undoubtedly superior to that found on many modern production boats. It's through-bolted, rather than tapped into aluminium plates, with the fastenings reached from behind the removable soft headlining.

Some re-thinking on the hardware front is going to be needed, especially for anyone who sails competitively, because the moulded plinth at the after end of the coachroof can only accommodate three clutches either side. With the main and genoa halyards led aft, together with two reefing lines and the vang, there's only one spare. Cruising sailors as well as racing folk might like provision for more.

Since we were sailing an early model, a few details still had to be tidied up around the mast. The bottom of the extrusion had been cut without allowance for rake so it didn't sit flush on the heel casting,



▲ Reasonable anchoring provision, but detailed changes will be seen on production boats

the electrical cables emerged too high up the mast, and we had some temporary lashings for the blocks and the vang's attachment – but all those points should be remedied once production gets into full swing.

Spars are from US Spars and will be badged Z Spars on UK boats.

One further point to mention at deck level was an anchor roller that didn't project the anchor far enough from the stem even in its stowed position, though this was an American design and anchoring isn't an everyday activity for most American sailors. It might also be an idea to incorporate an attachment point for a cruising chute's tack line into the end of the roller.

For the standard white sails, Legend are now buying from the Doyle loft in New Zealand. The mainsail will have two single-line reefs and was fitted with full-length upper battens. Standard plastic slides on the luff meant that the sail needed a little help to come down, but it went up easily enough.

## Setting sail

It would be unfair to expect a twin-keeler with a fixed propeller to be a scintillating performer, but the Legend 27 didn't drag her heels. On our first outing, in 8-10 knots of breeze and flattish water, we made upwind at four knots and tacked through just under 90°. Bearing away and easing the sheets soon brought five-and-a-half knots-plus up on the log.

My principal reservation was the weather helm. Though far from excessive, it couldn't be trimmed out, making me wonder whether the mast was set up with too much rake.

Our second outing brought better sailing weather – 16 knots of true wind, which was about as much as the boat wanted under full sail. This time we clocked speeds in the mid-fours to mid-fives depending on the wave angle, our upwind progress being accompanied, as is normal on a twin-keeler, by the occasional thud as the root of the weather keel broke the water.

Pushing the boat further resulted in the rudder losing grip just before we dipped the gunwale. Heaving-to was accomplished happily enough, and we could gybe around to carry on sailing without adjusting the sheets.

Bearing away on to a broad reach, we picked up to seven-and-a-half knots and would probably have surfed at eight or more without the braking effect of the prop's fixed blades.

Given a fin keel, deeper rudder and folding prop (plus a tiller for good measure), I've no doubt that the 27 could be transformed from a reasonably slippery and well-mannered cruising boat with a subdued feel into a responsive performer with good competitive potential.

In cruising guise, she does what you would expect – there are no quirks or surprises, and she's certainly not slow.



▲ The Legend 27 is one of the smallest boats in the UK to have wheel steering as standard

sheets between the caps and lowers. On our test boat, the tack was raised on a strop to stop the foot getting caught outside the split pulpit.

The sheets then came aft via jamming foot blocks to Lewmar 30 self-tailing winches towards the after end of the cockpit; the alternative is to lead them to the pair of 16 self-tailers on the coachroof.

If you have a wheel and want to sail short-handed, having the winches well aft makes sense. On the other hand, they're more awkward to use with a full crew,

because the aft end of the cockpit can become congested. And with a tiller, the winches would have to be moved forward anyway because the helmsman would be sitting exactly where they're now bolted to the deck. In fact, on a tiller-steered boat you could probably reach the coachroof winches from the helm, and only have an extra pair further aft to handle the spinnaker sheets. These are important things to think about at an early stage on a small boat that comes with a choice of wheel or tiller.

The mainsheet is something else to consider. We had a Harken traveller immediately forward of the pedestal, mounted in a recess in the cockpit seats that's otherwise filled in. As standard, the mainsheet's bottom block attaches to the centre of the cockpit sole.

To many British sailors, wheel steering on a 27-footer might seem an unnecessary expense and complication. Wheels have traditionally been fitted to boats of 10-10.7m (33-35ft) and above, where a tiller would be so long as to take up too much cockpit space – but the Americans lean towards wheels on smaller boats, and Legend expect most 27s to have wheels. When they offered a tiller on the 28, it was chosen by just one customer.

At 71cm (28in) diameter, the standard wheel on the 27 is just big enough to allow the helmsman to perch on the coaming and see the luff of the headsail. There's room to make it bigger if you want a better helming position.

One compromise with fitting a wheel to

such a small boat is that rod linkage would project too far into the aft cabin, so cable is used instead. If you want to maximise responsiveness, give yourself the greatest choice of helming positions, make the mainsheet easier to reach, simplify the mechanics and save money to boot, the answer's simple: have a tiller. It's not officially on the options list yet, but if enough people ask for it...

Aft the wheel is a lift-out section that forms the helmsman's seat (if that's where you choose to sit). Just be careful not to drop it if you do lift it out.

More lifting goes on either side of the wheel. To starboard, the seat hinges up to reveal a hatch to the aft cabin – a source of light and air, and an escape route as well. To port is a locker that's shallow inboard and deeper outboard. The holding tank in its forward end looks fairly well wedged in but can, apparently, be removed. For security, you would probably want to change the lid's rubbery catch for a conventional clasp that can be secured with a padlock.

In other respects, the cockpit works reasonably well. As on most modern boats, it's a bit wide between the seats for leg bracing unless you're on the tall side or choose to slouch.

### Working arrangements

Moving forward from the cockpit, we find black-tinted acrylic windows secured by bonding compound and four screws. If you suggest to Legend that aluminium-framed windows might be more secure,



## The 27 differs from her smaller predecessors – indeed, from all earlier Legends. Despite her ample freeboard and high-volume hull, she's a sharper-looking boat, and one that promises a bit more fizz

▶ of a long, hard look by Legend at what people want in a small modern cruiser. One of their decisions was to keep the price down by not including hot water and shower, a battery charger and shore power in the standard spec – they reckon there are still some hardy souls prepared to put to sea in a 27-footer without them. If you want all that, plus the marine heads and electric coolbox, you have to splash out on the Marina Package.

Options are plentiful in other areas, too. You can choose a deep fin, shallow fin or twin keels, tiller or wheel steering, and a mainsheet fixed to the cockpit sole or on a traveller.

### Small beginnings

Without a doubt, Legend are taking the bottom end of their cruiser market seriously. Unlike builders who have given up on small boats in search of ever-greater profit margins, they've decided that brand loyalty is worth cultivating at an early stage: plenty of owners progress to larger Legends, so the earlier they can be brought aboard, the better. And the more

choice is on offer, the greater the chance they will find what they want.

Apart from using fixed ballast, there's another way in which the 27 differs from her smaller predecessors – indeed, from all earlier Legends. Despite her ample freeboard and high-volume hull, she's a sharper-looking boat, and one that promises a bit more fizz. If you're using the same hull for a basic cruiser and a souped-up performance version, that's essential.

The new 31, replacing the 306, has much in common with the 27, so Legend seem to be heading down a sportier track. Nonetheless, it's no surprise that most British buyers of the 27 have chosen twin keels, which were fitted to the American-built version I tested. With the exception of the two-tone decks that are standard in the US to reduce glare from the stronger sun, it was much as the boats will be from the UK factory in Portland.

So, now that Legend have left their towering rigs, water ballast and unconventional styling behind in their quest to become more widely accepted on this side of the Atlantic, what's the

competition for the new model?

Bénéteau's First 27.7 is likely to be considered by potential buyers, especially those who like the vertically lifting keel, as is Jeanneau's Sun 2500 centreboarder. Those who prefer the more traditional British approach and have a slightly deeper pocket will probably be drawn to the Hunter Channel 27 – and, of course, there are plenty of second-hand alternatives to choose from.

Legend are well aware that prospective buyers of the 27 might be making comparisons with 10 or 15-year-old boats, but say that the 27 has been designed to offer 'safe, turn-key family sailing without the maintenance hassles.' Whether we like it or not, we live in an age of step-on-and-go boating for an increasing number of people who, while not necessarily overflowing with funds, are restricted as much by time as by money.

### Rigged and ready?

In the modern style, the 27 has a wide sheeting base, a relatively large mainsail and a headsail of modest proportions that