

WILLIAM FIFE III 52 FT BERMUDAN CUTTER 1902/1988



Specification

SIBYL OF CUMAE

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Designer	William Fife III	Length waterline	34 ft 5 in / 10.49 m	Engine	Thornycroft 4 cyl 36 hp diesel
Builder	William Fife & Son, Fairlie	Beam	8 ft 8 in / 2.64 m	Location	United Kingdom
Date	1902	Draft	6 ft 7 in / 2.01 m	Price	GBP 235,000
Length overall	51 ft 7 in / 15.72 m	Displacement	11 Tonnes		
Length deck	51 ft 7 in / 15.72 m	Construction	Double mahogany topsides; single planked cedar underbody		

These details are provisional and may be amended

Specification

BROKER'S COMMENTS

SIBYL OF CUMAE might just be the original Spirit of Tradition yacht. For about 80 of her 120 plus years she's been very successfully in fusion between her original role as a state-of-the-art racer - a gaff cutter rigged 36 Feet Linear Rater - and as a fast and comfortable cruiser-racer, and experimenter in rig design. Since enjoying a major restoration in the mid-1980s, SIBYL has been sailed and raced extensively in two ownerships, with recent seasons involving a round-Britain cruise, an out and return North Sea and Baltic passage from the South Coast of England to take part in a Swedish classic yacht regatta, and sailing to her birthplace for the 2022 Fife Regatta. Modern sail handling systems allow such voyages to be done with minimal crew, while her very nicely appointed accommodation offers a comfortable floating home. SIBYL is ready to be enjoyed just like this, or reinstated to the original highly refined 'flat-top topsail' gaff cutter rig for truly authentic Mediterranean classic racing under the CIM Rule. Whatever it's to be, SIBYL OF CUMAE's lines are quite breathtaking – she could only be a Fife.



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RESTORATION REBUILD

RECENT REFITS

2019

- Engine off, workshop overhaul

- Complete electrical refit by PR Systems, Plymouth

2018

- 5 x Planks replaced starboard side at chainplates

2017

- 5 x Planks replaced port side at chainplates

RESTORATION 1985-1988

- Vessel stripped down to bare hull: deck, coachroof and ballast keel removed

- All the original planking and steamed timbers were in good order and retained

- New deck and coachroof fitted to 1930s configuration with raised after part
- Steel reinforcement added in way of mast to minimise rigging strains
- One ton of lead cut from ballast keel to compensate for engine, tanks, new accomm.
- Rig changed from ketch to bermudan sloop/ cutter

Specification

HISTORY

WILLIAM FIFE & SON YARD NO. 486

SIBYL OF CUMAE is a very special throwback to a heady turn of the 20th-Century episode in yacht design history. She was born as the 36-Foot Linear Rater ENSAY - a state-of-the-art racer - during the flamboyant final fling of the Yacht Racing Association's Linear Rating Rule, just before the International Yacht Racing Union's International Rule would impose moderation on European racing yacht designers for around fifty years.

That few yachts have survived from the 'raters' era has a lot to do with many being extreme 'skimming dishes' with plate-and-bulb keels, and the materials technology not yet invented that could give strength to such hull shapes while keeping them light enough to perform. But SIBYL OF CUMAE is very much alive, because within the Linear Rating Rule's liberties William Fife Jr ('III') found a way to build fast yet strong 'keel boats' - as they were then known to differentiate them from the plate-and-bulb boats.

This was important at the 36-foot level rating band as these boats (at 30+ft lwl; c.50+ft lod; 1600+ft sail area) were considered the smallest that could be expected to sail between the major racing centres of the Solent, Belfast Lough, and the Firth of Clyde; they had to be able to do that without structural failure. SIBYL has re-enacted such a voyage twice in recent summers, with aplomb: in 2018 during her round-Britain cruise, and in 2022 sailing from the south coast of England to the Clyde for The Fife Regatta, and back. These are not her only long distance sorties in present ownership.

ENSAY's commissioning owner was 'small boat' racing enthusiast John Stewart Clark, a child of the immense wealth generated by his Paisley, Renfrewshire family's Victorian era success in the cotton thread industry which they dominated internationally alongside their great local rivals - and by 1902, partners in trade - the Coats family. One of Clark's earlier 'raters', the GL Watson-designed Length and Sail Area Rule plate and bulb keel Half-Rater NITA, hung from the davits of his father Stewart Clark's 200 ft 1893 steam yacht VANDUARA, also designed by Watson. VANDUARA was also

Atwell cruised and raced SIBYL into the early 1930s on the south west coast of Ireland where she became nicknamed 'Black Sibyl' to avoid confusion with his Cork Harbour One Design of the same name. In 1935, ownership transferred to Cork Examiner newspaper proprietor Tom Crosbie who gave her a coachroof and more extensive accommodation. Her subsequent races against future SIBYL owner and Royal Cork YC flag officer Henry E. "Harry" Donegan's Charles Nicholson 50 ft gaff cutter GULL were of local legend. Donegan took over ownership of SIBYL in 1946 and raced her that season from Dun Laoghaire to Cork in the second leg of an RORC race that had started in Plymouth.

In 1947 she was due to take part in the Dun Laoghaire to Clyde race, but after Donegan tragically lost his life in a tender accident the race was abandoned and she never returned to Cork, remaining laid up afloat at Ringsend, Dublin until what might be called the third phase of her life: renamed SIBYL OF CUMAE from 1950 with the remarkable Lita Clare "Jimmy" Edwards; eventually joined in ownership by Captain Ernest Frederick Nicolay, M.C., and later by renowned tunnelling engineer John V. Bartlett, C.B.E. The common thread was the Corps of Royal Engineers; Nicolay, Bartlett, and Lita's father (Brigadier-General Richard Fielding Edwards, Hon Secretary of the Royal Engineer Yacht Club 1900-1902) had been "Sappers" officers. In 1937 Lita Edwards had become only the second female recipient of the Board of Trade Yachtmaster Certificate, and the first woman to immediately use it as a professional yacht captain - in the Mediterranean.

SIBYL OF CUMAE's sailing base from 1950 into the early 1970s became fjord-like Loch Goil, one of the Firth of Clyde's beautiful salty arms into the Scottish West Highlands. Both Lita and SIBYL OF CUMAE are still well remembered there. Her cruising range extended from Brittany to the Baltic, returning to winter at the Ardroy, Lochgoilhead boatyard jointly owned by Lita and retired RNVR Commander Jorgen Svend Jensen.

SIBYL had retained more or less her original gaff cutter configuration for

ENSAY's tender, though not for 'dry sailing'.

Since the turn of the century Watson had been fully engaged in the design of Thomas Lipton's 1901 America's Cup challenger SHAMROCK II and huge steam yachts. So, it was to Fife of Fairlie that Clark turned for a boat to join the newly flourishing Clyde fleet of 36 Feet Linear Raters, rather than to Watson's protégée, Alfred Mylne, in business to his own account in Glasgow since 1897 and not best popular at the Watson office for it.

With Fife you got the whole package - design and build - and they built them quick. Fife's successful Solent-based 1901 36 Feet Linear Rater PICCOLO was reported by The Yachtsman magazine as built in only five weeks for Scotsman Captain J. Orr Ewing. PICCOLO's further description undoubtedly would be mirrored in the 1902 season's new Fife 36s, EILEEN IV, ENSAY and NYAMA, the latter built close to ENSAY's lines, again for Orr Ewing to race on the Solent:

"The best and most powerful type of small racing boat built at Fairlie since the famous 5-Rater RED LANCER... Planked fore and aft with yellow pine inside and mahogany outside... A considerable amount of interior space, simply but tastefully finished."

ENSAY was launched on 15th May 1902 and cost between £800 and £900. Her Norse name was after the small island in the Sound of Harris, Outer Hebrides - The Yachtsman quipped that the island's then population of 10 could hypothetically supply the crew required to race the boat. Her deck configuration included a large, deep cockpit and smaller removable hatch 'cockpits' forward.

ENSAY finished 2nd in the Clyde 36 Feet Linear Rating fleet in 1902 and 1903, in both seasons to Charles MacIver's (Cunard Line) Alfred Mylne-designed, McAlister of Dumbarton-built BARABEL, but Clark didn't commission her subsequently and she became mothballed at James Adam's yard, Gourrock. The phased introduction of the International Rule from 1906 potentially offered many more class bands than before, with the YRA deciding which Linear Rating classes would be allowed to race together with their selection of the available new Metric classes, and which wouldn't. Unfortunately, the 36 Linear Rater equivalent metric class, International 10-Metre, wasn't promoted by the YRA which explains why that class never achieved popularity in British waters.

However, a recently and beautifully built, fast yacht like ENSAY was always going to be an attractive prospect as a handicap racer. By spring 1908 ENSAY was in Cork Harbour, Ireland under the short-lived ownership of Arthur E. Nicholson, a director of Woodford, Bourne & Co. Ltd., Cork, high-end merchants in coffee, tea, wine and spirits. It was her next Cork Harbour owner from 1910, lawyer, local YRA Measurer, and member of a landed family established there since Elizabethan times, Atwell H. Allen, who changed the name to SIBYL after his 14-year-old daughter.

her first half century. It was inevitable that would change, particularly with so many inventive "Sapper" minds involved. In 1952 she was converted to a Bermudan sloop, and in 1956, with input from American wishbone rig specialist Frederic A. Fenger, to a very efficient Bermudan ketch with a large mizzen and wishbone main. The wishbone was eventually dispensed with and in 1968 Leitch of Tarbert supplied the efficient and easily handled fully battened ketch rig that old hands on the Clyde and south west coast of Ireland will remember for its then novelty.

At least two incidences are recorded of SIBYL's handiness, and Lita's helmsmanship. In 1970 the Clyde Cruising Club awarded Lita the Ferrier Trophy for Seamanship at a Club Event for beating in and out of the crowded anchorage each day during the Royal Cork YC's Bicentenary Regatta. And in 1976, when attending her last Royal Engineer YC event at Lymington having sailed there from West Cork, Lita and SIBYL sailed into and out of a berth at the Yacht Haven.

From the early 1970s SIBYL OF CUMAE's home mooring alternated between Loch Goil and increasingly Baltimore, West Cork, Ireland, where she wintered in Skinner's boat shed. After Lita Edwards' death in 1978 the boat would not return to the Clyde for 40 years.

Still owned by the existing partners, SIBYL OF CUMAE gravitated to the West Country of England where during the 1980s she was damaged in a storm. Surveyor and shipwright John Merrett and his wife Dorothy took over ownership and embarked on the complete 1985-1988 restoration detailed above. SIBYL then cruised the West Country became a regular at classic regattas there into her second century.

In current ownership since 2014, SIBYL OF CUMAE has comfortably clocked off significant sea miles, with a 2019 passage to Sweden to be added to her 2018 round-Britain and 2022 Fife Regatta adventures. No mean feats for a yacht conceived as a Clyde day racer. That William Fife knew a thing or two.

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Specification

CONSTRUCTION

- Double planked mahogany topsides
- Single planked cedar underbody
- Oak frame
- Lead ballast keel

- Teak laid deck on plywood substrate
- Mahogany superstructures

Specification

DECK LAYOUT, EQUIPMENT AND GROUND TACKLE

GENERAL

- 2 x Gibb 6CR chromed secondary winches on mahogany mounts

- Varnished covering boards, toerail/ bulwark and rail
- Stainless steel stanchions

FROM AFT

AFT DECK

- Stainless steel pushpit
- Chromed mushroom vent
- Chromed fairleads port and starboard at taffrail
- Raised varnished hatch to lazarette
- Teak and chrome mooring cleats port and starboard

SIDE DECKS

- Giles style Highfield runner levers port and starboard
- 4 x Headsail sheet wood blocks

COCKPIT

- Varnished coamings
- Raw teak grating sole
- Deep cockpit with seating below deck level
- Large starboard under seat locker for liferaft
- Smaller under seat locker for liferaft
- Traditional ship's wheel with stainless steel rim
- Binnacle and steering compass
- 2 x Gibb 9CR chromed primary winches

- 4 x Teak and chrome cleats on coamings exterior

- 4 x B&G repeaters over companionway
- Sprayhood

TRUNK CABIN

- 2 x Lemon squeezer style prism lights
- 2 x Varnished handrail port and starboard
- 6 x Opening ports

Mast position

FOREDECK

- Raised forehatch
- Simpson-Lawrence vertical electric anchor windlass
- Chain gipsy and warping drum
- Chocks to port for spinnaker pole
- Wood/ chromed mooring clear port and starboard
- 2 x Furlers (staysail and jib)

GROUND TACKLE

- 20 kg Delta bower anchor
- 35 lb Danforth anchor
- 35 lb Fisherman anchor
- 45 m of $\frac{3}{8}$ in / 9 mm Galvanised anchor chain

Specification

ACCOMMODATION AND DOMESTIC EQUIPMENT

GENERAL

- 2 x Steps down over engine box
- Teak and holly sole
- Varnished and painted bulkheads
- Varnished mahogany trim
- Carlin grab rails port and starboard

GALLEY TO STARBOARD

- 2 x Inset stainless steel sinks with covers
- Mixer tap
- Separate biofilter tap
- Flavel Vanessa 2 x burner hob with oven
- 1 x Opening port

QUARTER BERTH TO PORT

- Stowage outboard

CHART TABLE TO PORT

- Hinged extension
- Navigation instrumentation
- Engine Instrumentation
- Ship's isolator panel
- Top loading fridge under
- Flag Locker
- 1 x Opening port

SALOON

- Sideboard with drawer to starboard
- Trotter box under
- Drop leaf table to starboard
- Settees port and starboard

- Lockers and bookcases outboard port and starboard
- 4 x Deckhead lights
- 1 x Bulkhead light
- 1 x Bulkhead oil lamp

PASSAGE FORWARD

- 2 x Large hanging lockers to port
- 1 x Opening port

WC COMPARTMENT TO STARBOARD

- Jabsco manual toilet
- Inset plastic sink with hot and cold taps
- H&C
- Lockers
- 1 x Deckhead light
- 1 x Opening port

FORE CABIN

- Single berth to port
- Generous single berth to starboard
- Stowage under berths
- Door in bulkhead (watertight?)
- 1 x Deckhead light
- 2 x Bulkhead lights

FO'C'SLE

- Tool locker to port
- Chain locker
- Anchor stowage to starboard
- Sail stowage
- Forehatch in deckhead
- 1 x Deckhead light

Specification

RIG, SAILS AND CANVASWORK

- RIG
- 2 x Spreader alloy mast
 - 2 x Captive halyard winches
 - 2 x Arco 46 halyard winches
 - Spinnaker pole track and cup at leading edge
 - Alloy boom
 - Alloy spinnaker pole

- Mainsail (Hood 2012)
- Furling staysail (Hood 2012)
- Furling jib (Hood 2012)
- Asymmetric spinnaker (Westaway Oct 2022)

CANVASWORK

- Sprayhood
- Mainsail boom cover
- 3 x Hatch covers
- Steering wheel cover

SAILS

- Mainsail (SKB Falmouth 2020)

Specification

MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL AND TANKAGE

MECHANICAL

- Thornycroft 4 cyl 36 hp diesel (1989 - overhaul 2019)
- 1½ in Stainless steel propeller shaft
- Bronze 16 in 3 x fixed blade propeller in aperture
- Chain and wire steering linkage

ELECTRICAL

- Complete electrical refit by PR Systems, Plymouth
- Specifications TBC

TANKAGE

- Water: 100 L galvanised under accommodation sole
- Diesel: TBC

OTHER

- Eberspächer diesel heater

Specification

NAVIGATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

NAVIGATION

- B&G V7 Repeater
- Furuno GPS Navigator
- Panerai barometer

- Autohelm

COMMUNICATIONS

- Standard Horizon Eclipse VHF Radio

Specification

SAFETY

- Ocean Signal EPIRB
- 2 x Lifebelts

- with float lights

Specification

OTHER EQUIPMENT

- Custom mahogany boarding

- ladder by John McShea

Disclaimer

These particulars have been prepared from information provided by the vendors and are intended as a general guide. The purchaser should confirm details of concern to them by survey or engineers inspection. The purchaser should also ensure that the purchase contract properly reflects their concerns and specifies details on which they wish to rely.

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GALLERY









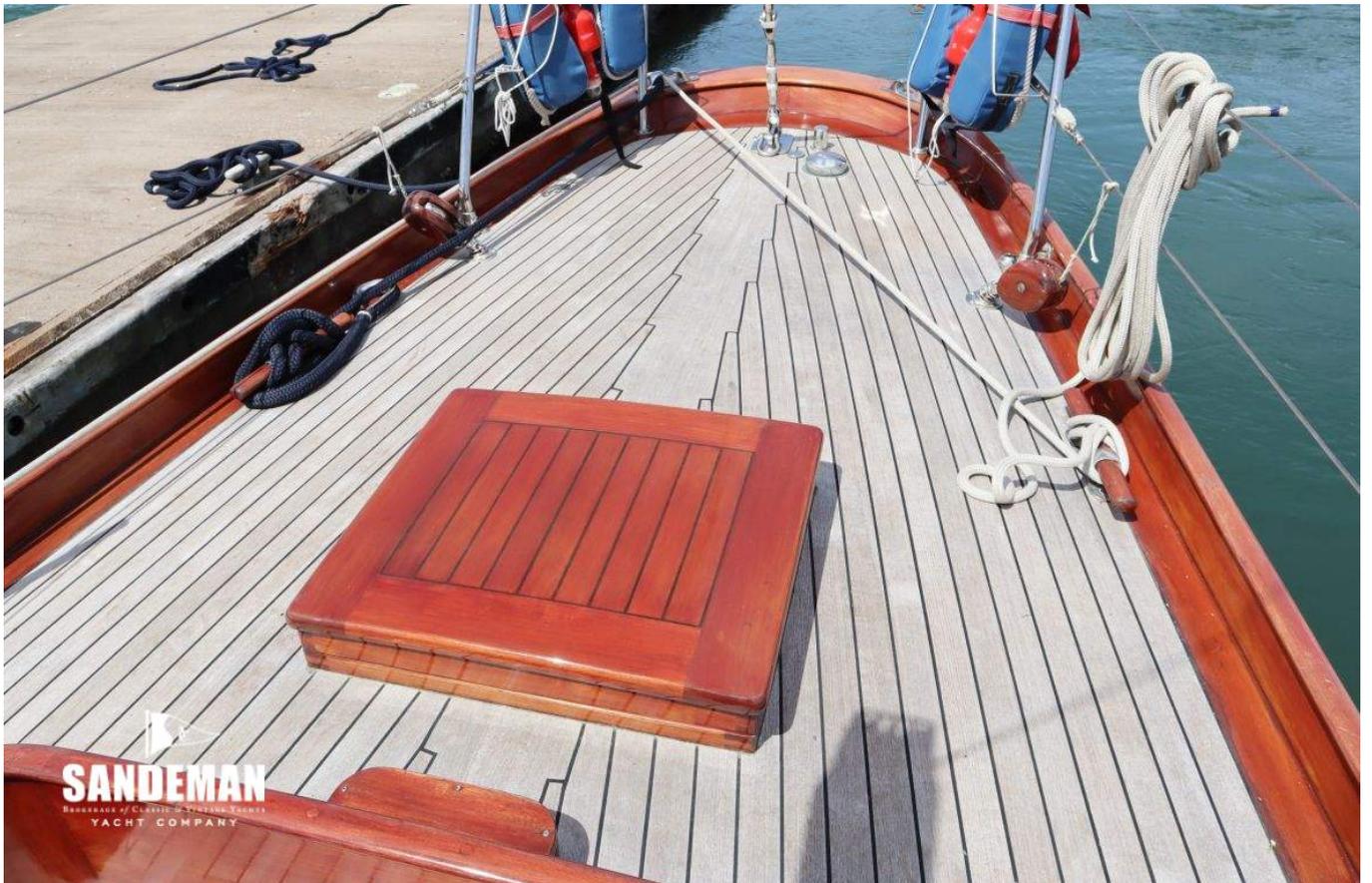


















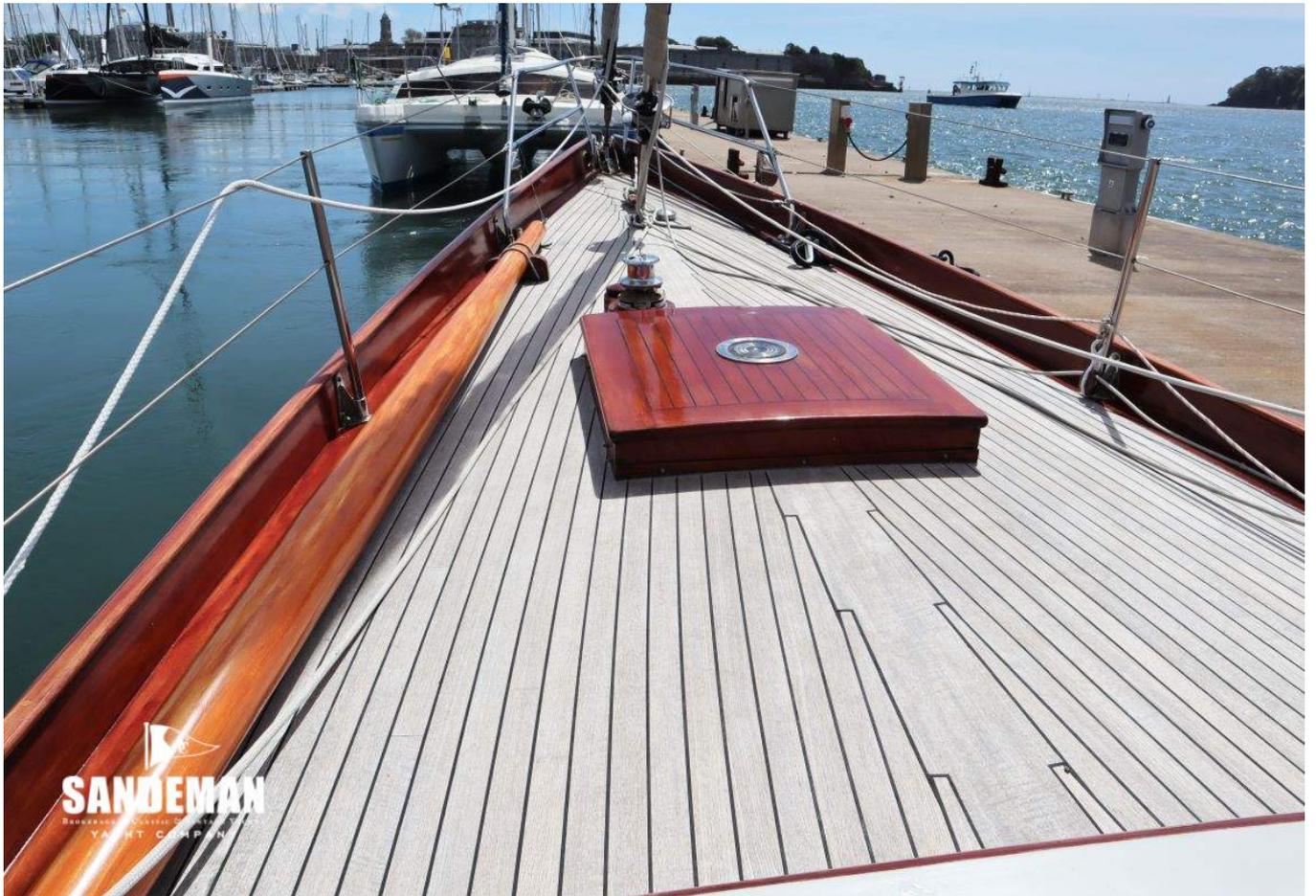

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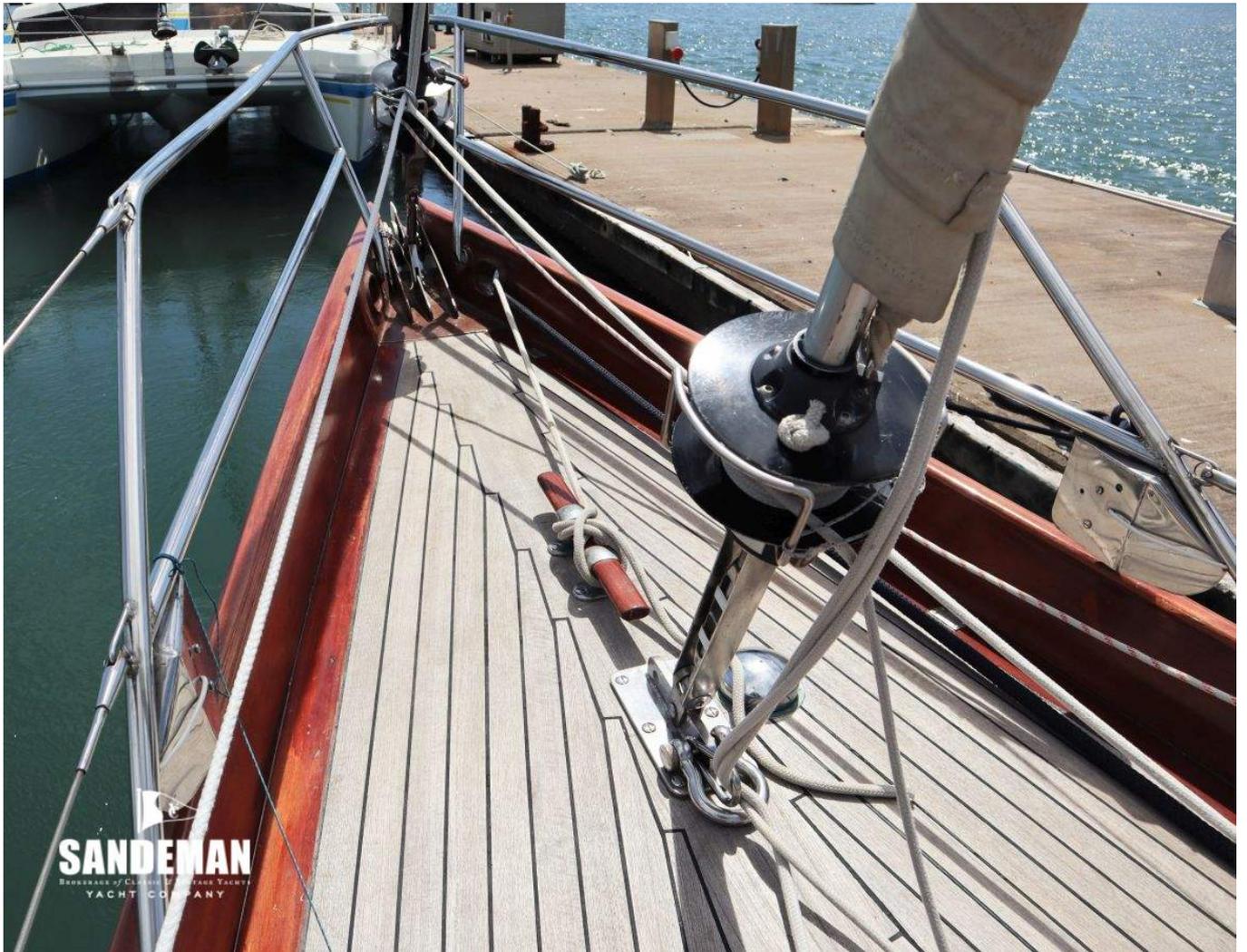



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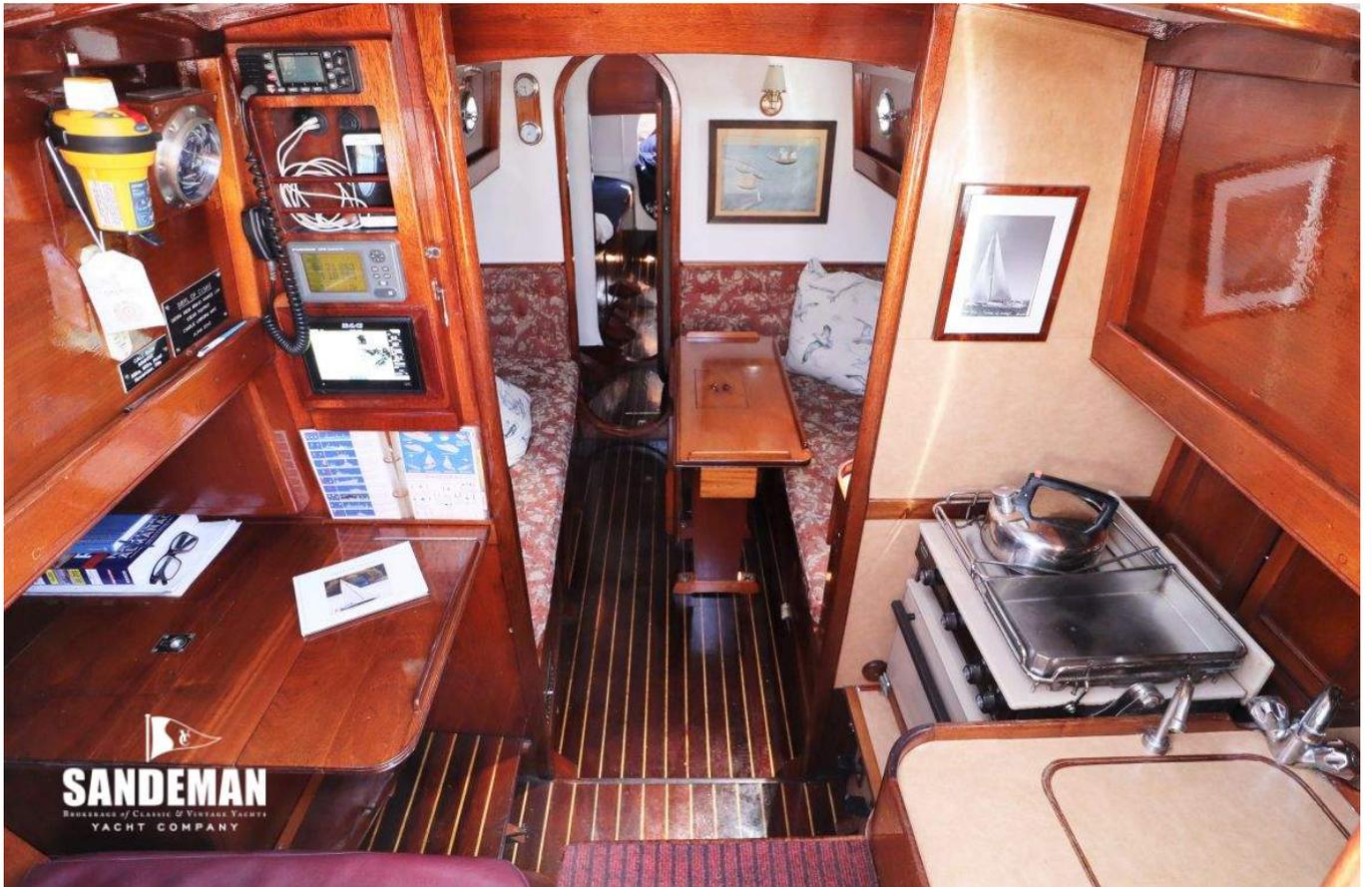




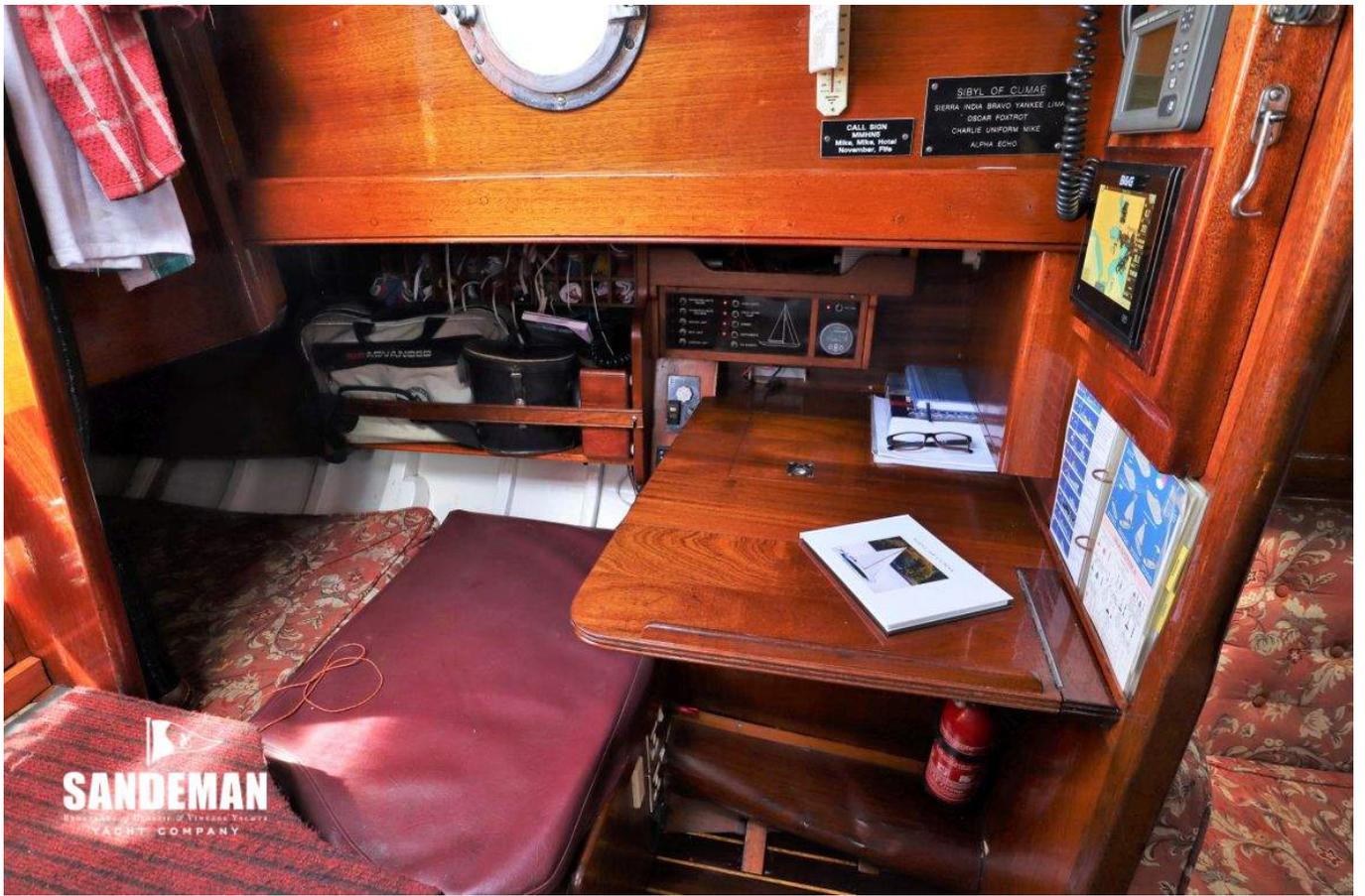

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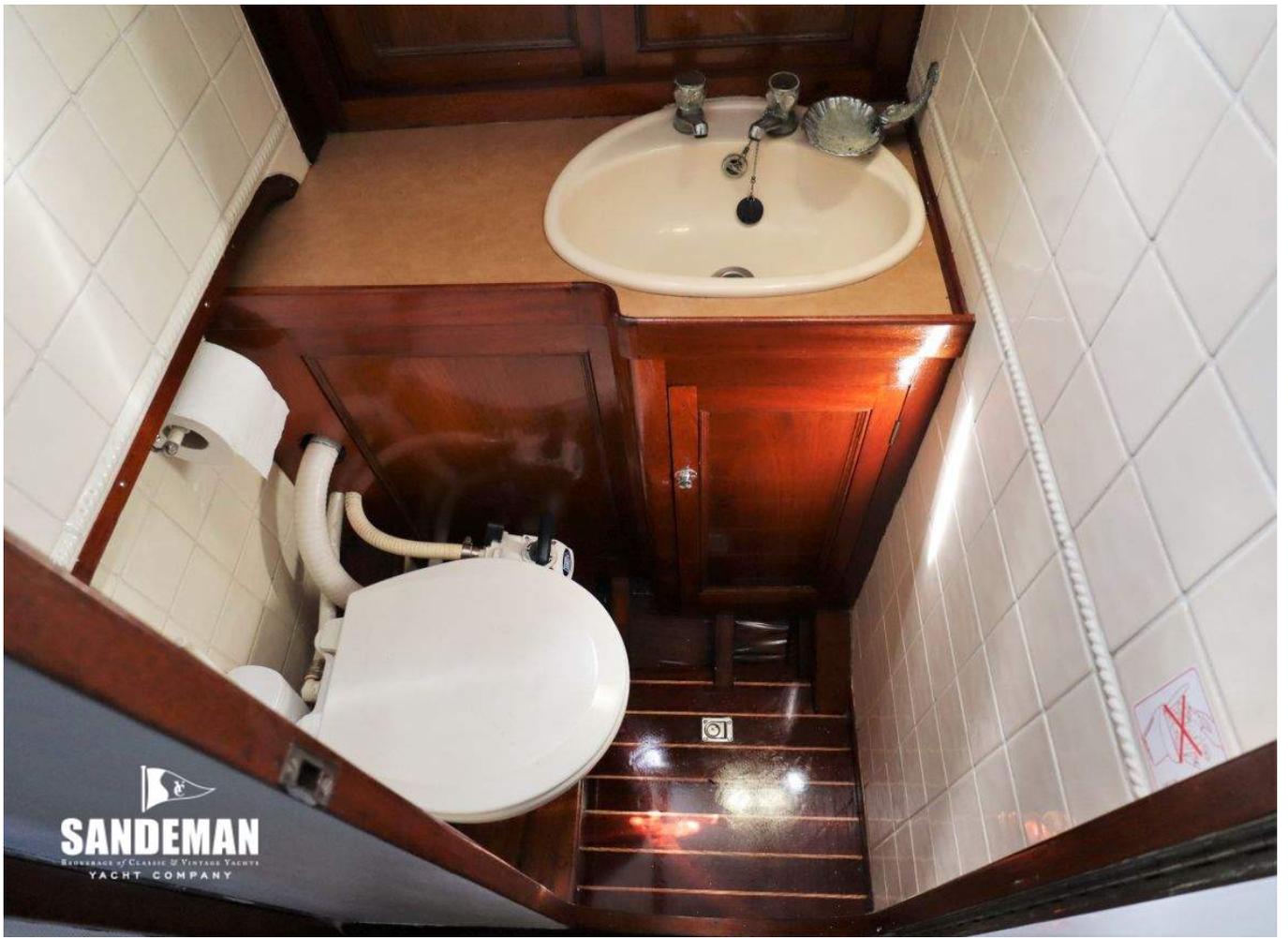

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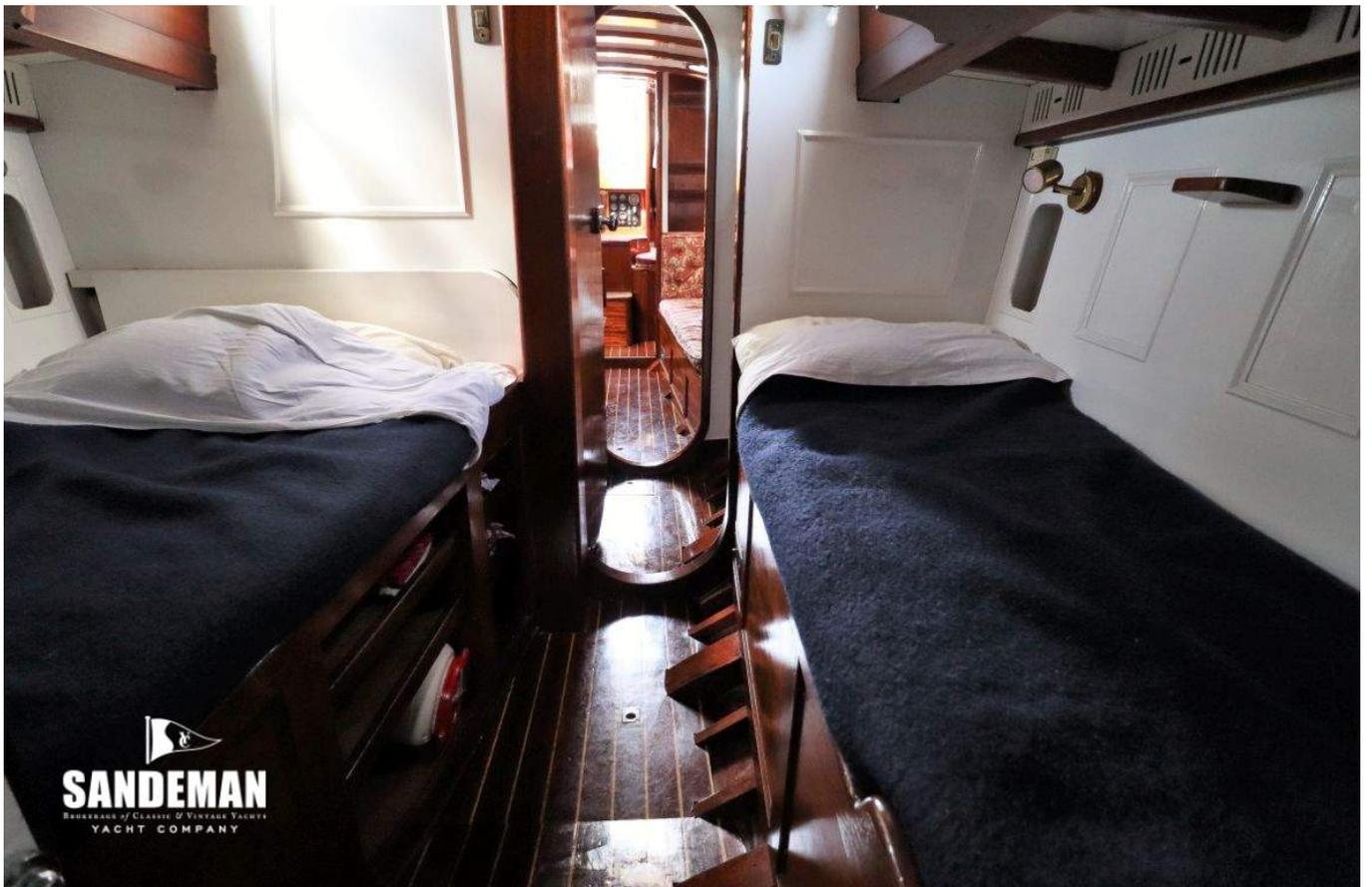


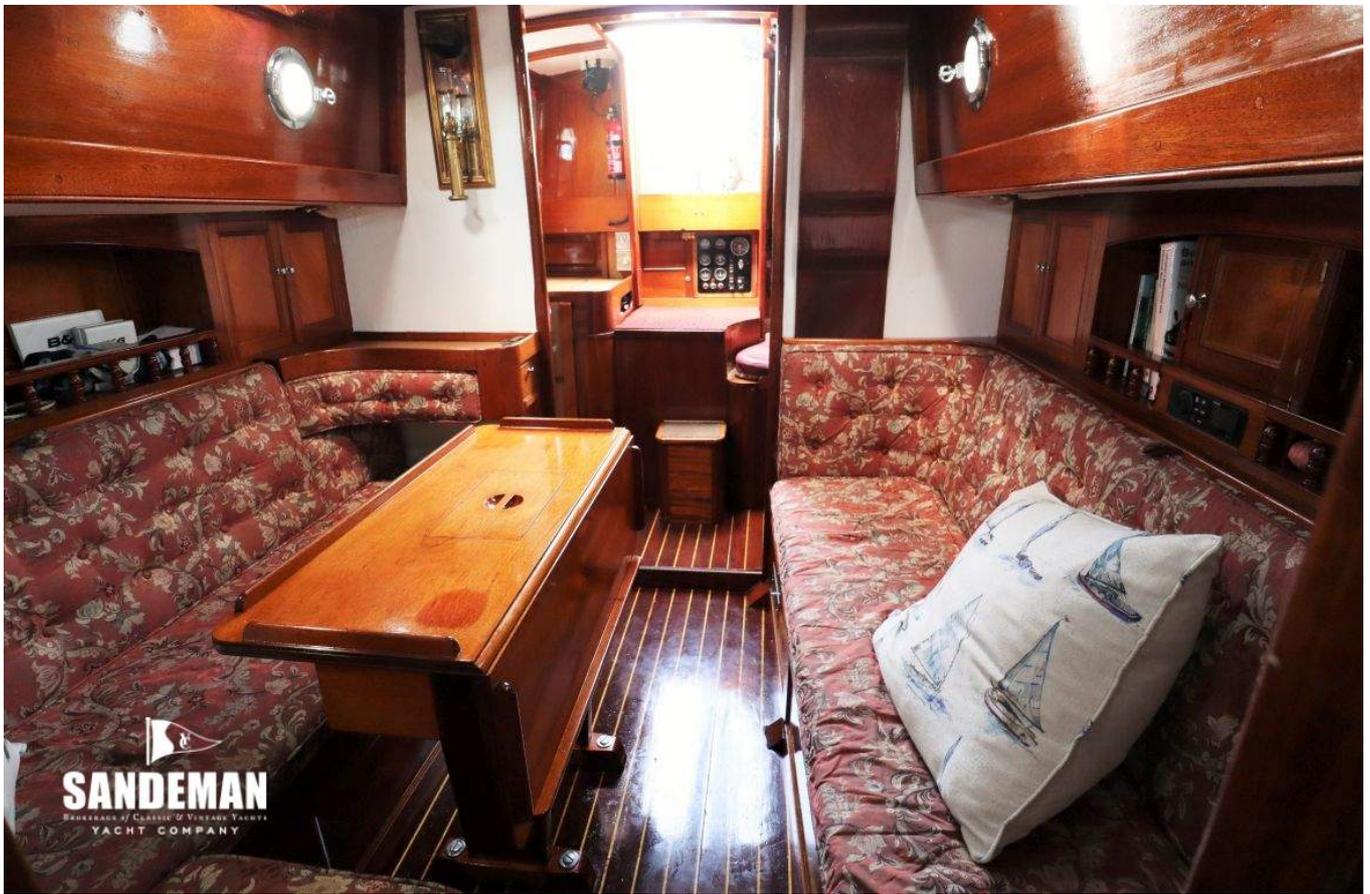




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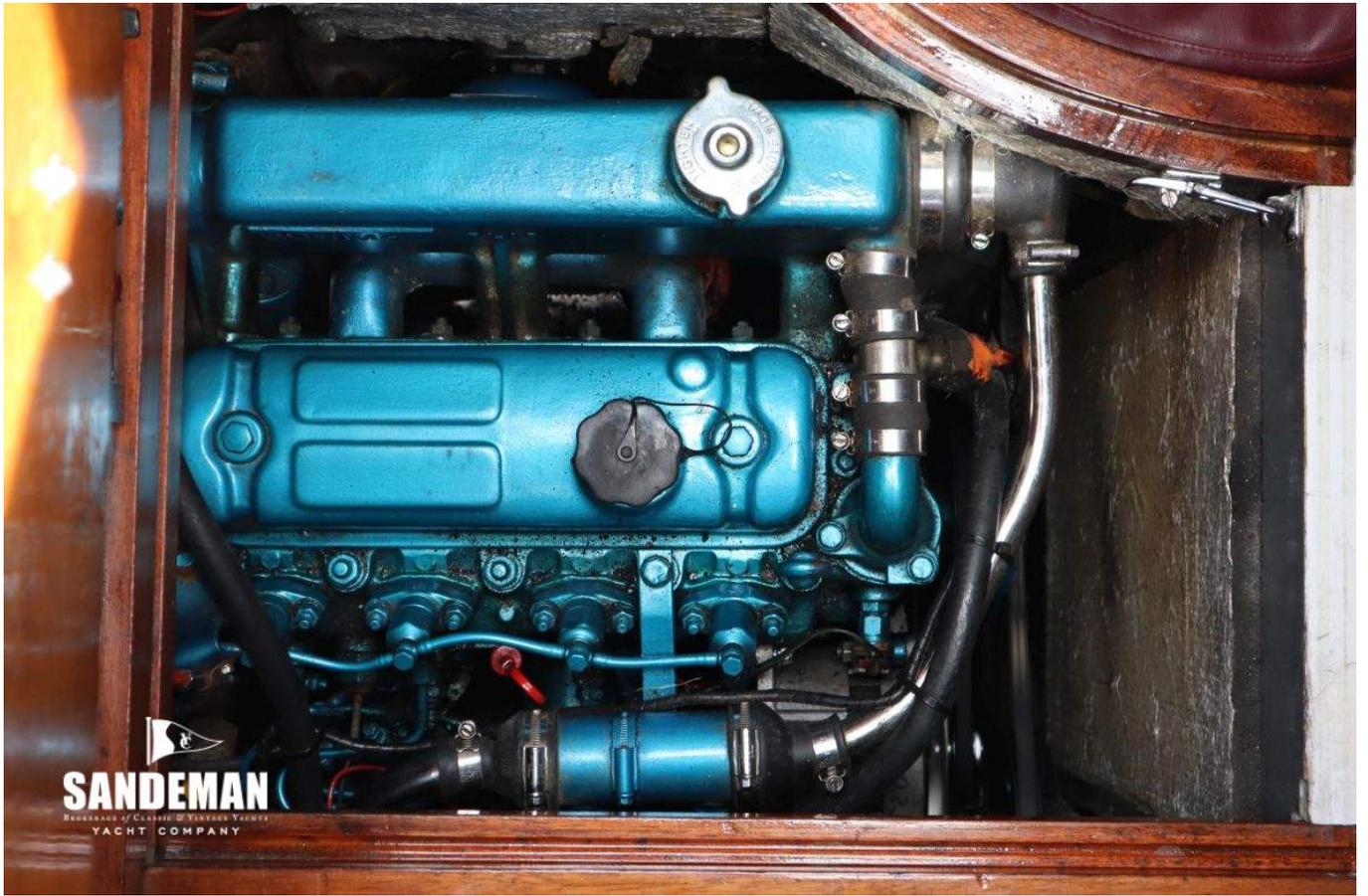




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BASEBOARDS OF CLASSIC & MODERN YACHTS
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REPAIRERS OF CLASSIC & VINTAGE YACHTS
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ENSAY
Clyde 36-footer

Photo by ROBERTSON, Gourock



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