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Tomahawk 25 USED BOAT TEST

Tomahawk 25



Hailing from the 70s, the Tomahawk still has plenty to offer today's sailor as Alison Molyneaux finds out...

When it was first launched in 1970 the Tomahawk was a seriously modern boat – one of the first where the designers were quite clearly using the advantages of glassfibre to produce shapes and deck layouts which would not have been possible with conventional materials.

The builder, Marcon, claimed that the Tomahawk combined performance with all the roominess and comfort a family boat requires. To find out whether this still holds true, more than 30 years on, we joined Peter Llewellyn aboard *Incmoon*, an immaculate, 1972 fin-keel Tomahawk.

Peter bought the boat in 1995 as part of a syndicate which originally had three owners, then went to four, though now there are two again. From *Incmoon's* base on the River Hamble, he has sailed to the West Country, Cherbourg and St Vaast among many others destinations, although time constraints have not made going further afield practical. He chose a Tomahawk because it's "a very roomy boat with plenty of headroom and it just looked right". He points out that if you know

what you're looking for, "A boat that looks good often sails well." He previously sailed dinghies, then the solid, but smaller, Arden 4 for 16-17 years – next he wanted another good sea boat.

As it is a shared boat it has been made easier for *Incmoon's* owners to justify the inevitable cost of gizmos such as Autohelm ST4000, Autohelm Bidata log/depth, wind instruments, GPS and Yeoman plotter, and *Incmoon* has also clearly been very well maintained.

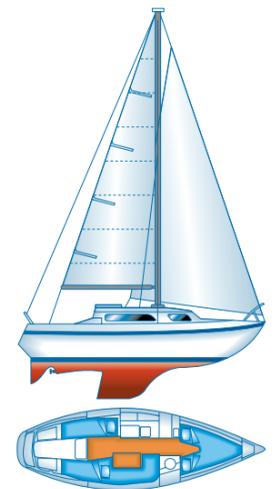
Over 300 Tomahawks were built, with roughly equal numbers of fin- and twin-keel versions (possibly slightly more of the latter). As well as proving a popular choice for sailing in home waters, many Tomahawks have ventured further afield. Association secretary David Collinson, for instance, spent much of last season cruising the Algarve having sailed his Tomahawk to Portugal, and even invited *IT* to do a test there. Other Tomahawks are known to have cruised extensively in the Med and there have even been Atlantic crossings.

The Tomahawk Owners' Association, of which Peter is commodore, is an active one and, although still in its infancy at three years old, has 45 members.

Specifications

LOA	7.7m	25ft 4in
LWL	6.1m	20ft 0in
Beam	2.6m	8ft 6in
Draught (fin keel)	1.4m	4ft 8in
Draught (twin keel)	0.9m	3ft 0in
Displacement	2,300kg	5,066lb
Ballast	1,000kg	2,200lb
Ballast ratio	43 per cent	
Sail area (main)	12.7m ²	137ft ²
(genoa)	21.3m ²	230ft ²

Built by Marine Construction, Woolston, Southampton
 Owners' Association www.tomahawk25.co.uk
 Contact Peter Llewellyn ☎ 01489 584608,
 Tabeel, 270 Warsash Road, Locks Heath,
 Southampton Email pjll@warsash26.freeserve.co.uk



Photos Rick Buettner



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What's she like below decks?

Accommodation & interior

By 1970s standards the Tomahawk offered a surprising amount of accommodation and stowage space for a 25-footer with good performance. Although Peter says "single- or two-handed it's very comfortable", he has also cruised with rather more on board, including a crew of four for four days sailing to Weymouth for the jazz festival, commenting that this is "fine as long as you get up in shifts and put all the sail bags on deck".

The fit-out is built on an internal floor moulding that runs up to the height of the seat backs. There are a number of arrangements – some Tomahawks were home built and later boats had a different arrangement with two settees in the saloon and a galley further aft.

All have a forecabin with a 1.8m (5ft 11in) long double/vee berth and stowage in two cave lockers above the foot of the berth, as well as some space beneath it. Unlike most later designs the forehatch is solid glassfibre, but windows each side of the forecabin provide adequate light.

The heads are in a separate compartment to starboard between the saloon and forecabin – *Incamoon* has no basin, but space to fit a fold-down one. Natural light is provided by the aft end of the forward coachroof window. *Incamoon* has a large shelf opposite the heads (a wash basin is fitted here on some other Tomahawks), and there's stowage beneath it. Also opposite the heads is a slim, full-height wet locker.

On early boats, such as *Incamoon*, there's a dinette to starboard, which converts to a 1.88m (6ft 2in) long double berth with the table lowered. There's also a 2m (6ft 6in) long quarter berth to port, and one to starboard that is effectively an extension of the dinette – the combined length is almost 3m (10ft) long.

Incamoon has a folding, forward-facing, half-Admiralty-size chart table at the head of the port quarter berth, although many Tomahawks have other arrangements or don't

have a chart table and owners use the saloon table. There's book shelving outboard of the chart table and plenty of stowage under the bunks. The navigator sits at the forward end of the port quarter berth, but the table must be lowered for the berth to be used. There's also a book shelf to starboard above the seat backs.

The galley, forward of the port quarter berth and chart table, is very good for a boat this size. There's plenty of stowage, with sliding door lockers above, cup racks and plate stowage, plus further lockers under the cooker and sink. There is also a sizeable, well-insulated coolbox under one of the berths. Some Tomahawks were built to take gimballed cookers with an oven (with a different galley moulding); others had a two-burner gas cooker with grill, again gimballed.

Headroom is more generous than that of many of the Tomahawk's contemporaries – there's a minimum of 156cm (5ft 2in) in the heads, 164cm (5ft 5in) in the forecabin, and a full 182cm (6ft) in the main saloon.

In general, Tomahawks were well built and few problems have developed. However, as with any older boat, there are some known areas that should be checked out.

The internal moulding is part of the structure and you need to check it's properly bonded to the hull. *Incamoon's* owners found she sailed better on one tack than the other and discovered this to be the source of the problem, so *Incamoon's* floor pan was cut out, rebounded and beefed up. Peter says that, to be on the safe side, even star crazing on the sole should be checked for movement.

A few boats have had problems with the glassfibre of the rudder coming adrift from the rudder stock. The trouble here is that although the rudder stock is marine grade, the tangs welded to it were mild steel. The problem starts if water ingress reaches the mild steel parts, which corrode and eventually – if the problem is ignored – there's a risk of the rudder stock rotating within the rudder. The Owners' Association can help with advice on how to deal with this.

Under the mast step there's a plywood plate to spread loads – this has been found to have softened on some boats. *Incamoon* has a new custom-made, stainless-steel plate with blocks attached to lead lines aft.



Above: The forecabin offers two vee berths of just under 6ft, which can be converted to a double with an infill board between the berths



Below: *Incamoon* has a folding chart table at the head of the port quarter berth. A Yeoman plotter is mounted on a board that fits on top of the table and VHF and other instruments are mounted outboard for easy use



Above: In *Incamoon's* saloon, the galley runs along the port side opposite a U-shaped dinette, which can be converted to a double berth. Some Tomahawks have space for a cooker with oven beneath

Right: Engine instruments and the electrical switch panel are mounted on a board beneath the bridgedeck, while engine access is via two hatches in the step moulding between the two quarter berths

Far right: The galley offers good stowage, a useable worktop over the sink and a two-burner cooker, though some other Tomahawks also sport an oven

"*Incamoon's* galley, forward of the port quarter berth and chart table, is very good for a boat this size" Alison Molyneux



How does she perform at sea?

On deck & under way

On deck *Incmoon* appears to be in very good condition. Peter says, "We polish it, but don't do much more," although they have, for example, also replaced the wooden cockpit locker lids. At 188cm (6ft 2in) long, and only slightly less in width, the cockpit is large enough to comfortably cruise with a crew of four in the cockpit, if someone is happy to sit behind the tiller at the aft end. The high coamings are narrow to maximise space in the cockpit itself. The cockpit sole is lined with a board covered in Treadmaster. The cockpit drains from around the rudder stock – an arrangement which has proved effective.

has sailed *Incmoon* are the top end of a Force 7, in which the boat behaved predictably well. There seems no doubt that the Tomahawk is easy to handle, especially if it is well set up like *Incmoon*. As Peter says, "With two of us and the Autohelm we can fly a spinnaker in reasonable conditions."

Under power

When new, Tomahawks were fitted with various inboard engines, both diesel and petrol, although all but a very few of these are likely to have been changed by now. *Incmoon* has a 9hp Yanmar 1GM diesel driving a two-bladed prop, an



One reef in the mainsail, sprayhood up and *Incmoon* makes good windward progress

There are two cockpit lockers of a reasonable size – the slightly smaller one to port includes the gas locker, which has been built in with a separate drain overboard and metal piping. This is also where spare fuel cans are kept. The tiller comes halfway across the cockpit, but is low enough to easily climb over.

The side decks are not especially narrow for a boat of this size, and positioning the genoa car tracks on the coamings has saved on side-deck space, as well as leaving things relatively uncluttered underfoot. There's a moulded toerail and adequate grabrails as far forward as the mast. The foredeck has anchor locker access and plenty of space to work.

To update the deck layout *Incmoon's* owners have added Lewmar clutches on the coachroof, turning blocks at the base of the mast, so that the lines could be led aft to the cockpit, and a pair of secondary winches. They also would like to add single-line reefing, again led aft, in the future. The original bottom-action type primary winches have been replaced by No 16 single-speed self-tailers, and the bridgedeck-mounted mainsheet track is easy to reach from the helm, making sail trimming easy. Other additions include a Windex and U-bolts for safety lines. The Tomahawk has a stout masthead rig with cap shrouds and forward and aft lowers.

Under sail

We thoroughly enjoyed sailing *Incmoon* – she proved responsive, accelerated well and felt stable but retained the fun of a small boat under sail.

We were lucky in having a Force 3-5 for our test, which offered perfect conditions for the Tomahawk to excel in. Closehailed, with one of three reefs tucked in, we made a consistent 4.5-5kn in 15-20kn of apparent wind. Bearing away and easing the sheets we kept up a similar speed, and would have been able to make more had we let the reef out. There was good feel in the helm, which was well-balanced at all times, inspiring confidence in the boat's abilities.

Incmoon has an unusually good suit of sails – genoa, working jib, blade and storm jib. The working jib is two years old and the mainsail just one year old. Peter explained that they had wanted a fully-battened main, but found the mast wouldn't take the appropriate cars. *Incmoon* also had a cruising chute, but they found it too large to get on well with, so it was replaced with a new spinnaker from Lucas Sails.

The strongest conditions in which Peter

arrangement that is ideal for a boat of this size. *Incmoon* handled well overall under power and manoeuvring should not be any more of a problem than with many modern small boats.

Incmoon has a 6 gal fuel tank in the transom, but some Tomahawks have them in different positions – for instance, under the cockpit sole. Engine access is via two hatches in the companionway step moulding, so there's good access over the top of the engine. Peter would also like to cut an access point to enable the engine to be hand-started. The entire companionway steps' moulding can be removed for more major work and a moulded hatch in the forward part of the cockpit sole gives access to the stern gland, gearbox and battery.

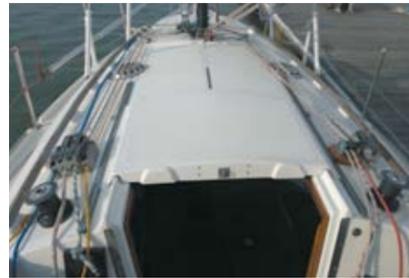


Verdict

An attractive and good value small cruiser that performs well, especially in fin-keel form. The Tomahawk is fun to sail but also offers surprisingly generous accommodation

FOR
Headroom and accommodation
Fin-keel performance
Value for money

AGAINST
Narrow coamings



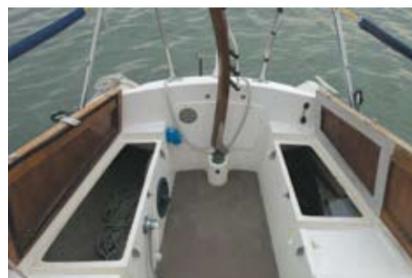
Above: The sail control lines are handled on either side of the companionway, seen here without the sprayhood fitted

Left: The mast step carries turning blocks to lead halyards and reefing lines aft

Below: Instruments are mounted on the forward cockpit bulkhead opposite the steering compass



"With two of us and the Autohelm we can fly a spinnaker in reasonable conditions"
Peter Llewellyn, *Incmoon's* owner



Above: The roomy cockpit offers good locker space

Left: Engine controls and bilge pump are to hand by the tiller

Right: The anchor well, with removable lid, is of sensible size

Main: *Incmoon* enjoying a windward romp with sprayhood up to protect the crew. Placing the chain plates on the coach coamings has kept the side decks clear