

When it comes to compatible yacht clubs and classes, there are few better than the RORC and Class40.

Conceived by eminent French round the world sailor and journalist Patrice Carpentier, who then with a small team created its rule back in 2004, the Class40 ticks most boxes. It is a high performance, but not ultra-high tech, offshore race boat that can be raced either fully crewed (ie four-five up) or shorthanded, and suits professional sailors falling between the Figaro and IMOCA 60, while also being very attainable for serious amateurs.

Such is the success of this box rule yacht that 157 examples now exist, making it by far the most successful 40 footer ever. A record 53 Class40s set off singlehanded from St Malo on November's Route du Rhum bound for Guadeloupe, including entries from South Africa, Germany, Italy, USA, Japan, Sweden and Switzerland, with the majority of course coming from France. There was also a strong British contingent including Jack Trigger on Tony Lawson's revitalised *Concise 8* and even a trio of potential race winners in Phil Sharp on *Imerys Clean Energy*, Sam Goodchild on *Narcos* and Miranda Merron on *Campagne de France*.

Unsurprisingly, given how suitable they are, Class40s are becoming an ever-growing feature of RORC races. Ten competed within their own class in the Sevenstar Round Britain and Ireland and 26 in the last Rolex Fastnet Race. The link between Class and Club is being galvanised still further in 2019 with the Caribbean 600, Fastnet and Cowes-Cherbourg all now part of the official Class40 calendar.

One of the most successful high level Corinthian Class40 campaigns is that of France's Catherine Pourre, winner of the Caribbean 600.

Having sailed dinghies in her teens, Pourre went on to have a high-flying career reaching the top echelons of management in several large French companies. However she has also always dreamed of offshore racing.

In 2008, she finally bit the bullet and bought her first boat, a First 40, which she had hoped to both race under IRC and cruise with her family. Ultimately only the former came true, but it confirmed her passion for offshore racing. After just two years she felt she'd progressed enough to acquire her first Class40.

"I have always been interested in offshore racing,"

Pourre explains. "The First 40 was fun, but not my thing. I wanted to go abroad, cross oceans, do things which weren't possible at the time, because I was still an executive in a big company and couldn't take 20 days off in a row to cross the Atlantic."

The Class40's annual calendar includes transatlantic races, but an initial attraction for Pourre was there being others, like Les Sables-Horta-Les Sables, that allowed you to get the full 'Atlantic experience', while being short enough so you could still have a full time job.

In 2010 she bought what was then the top Class40, a Guillaume Verdier-designed Tyker 40 that had just come first in the Route du Rhum in the hands of former Mini Transat winner Thomas Ruyant.

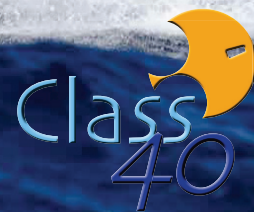
Of her first steps in her inaugural Class40, she says: "At the beginning I only did shorter races to learn how to race this type of boat. I found they are very, very safe. I would not want to cross the Atlantic in a typical cruiser-racer, but I was very happy in my Class40. Everything is heavier and stronger on board and you have good autopilots."

One of the few downsides of new generation Class40s is that

Class forte

by James Boyd

Wet ride on Eirendil, Catherine Pourre's Mach 40.3 Class40. Photo: RORC/Tim Wright





Enthusiastic Class40 owner, Catherine Pourre. Photo: Billy Black

they are not good upwind, however their pace off the wind more than compensates. As an example, in the last Rolex Fastnet Race Pourre finished in 3 days, 10 hours while the Class40 winner managed 3 day, 3 hours, some 16 hours faster than the top First 40 on the water – not so surprising given that the Class40 weighs in at 4.5 tonnes, around half that of the Beneteau. "It is not the best boat for this type of race, but it is still faster," says Pourre. "It is very well adapted to the type of long coastal races where you can do more than 500 miles in a reasonably short time."

She freely admits that, since owning her Class40, it has developed into something between passion and obsession and she keeps it about as well maintained and current as possible. "I am constantly improving it, whatever the cost! If you do a lot of miles, there are a lot of consumables."

To this end, in 2013 Pourre also rearranged her business life. She is no longer a full time executive, but still sits on several boards (and is Treasurer of the Class40 Association): "Now I have my own schedule, so I can cross the Atlantic or do the Transat Jacques Vabre. Since then I have been doing two Atlantic crossings per year."

In 2015 she also replaced her first Class40 *Eärwen* with her present boat, the state-of-the-art Sam Manuard-designed Mach 40.3, *Eärndil*. "I realised that I want to be in the front, so it is part of the game," Pourre admits. "I always want to be going at 100% and if you race, you want a boat that is not out-classed by the others."

The latest generation boats have ever fatter bows and increased buoyancy forward, although the Class40 rule was written to prevent the scow-bows that feature on the latest Mini designs.

Nonetheless the new bows and beamy hull shapes of recent Class40s allow them to surf easily and they are weapons off the breeze. "Even upwind, compared to the heavier boat, you go one knot faster," continues Pourre. "Reaching, you can spend three hours averaging 16-17 knots – it is exhilarating, you can really feel the speed through the waves. The Class40 24 hour record is just under 400 miles, but while fast, these boats are very safe." Class40s also stack up well in terms of speed versus price.

Pourre says she never enjoyed the constant logistical struggle of maintaining a relatively large crew. In contrast she typically sails her Class40 doublehanded or fully crewed, the extra stability coming from the powerful, beamy hull shape and movable water ballast. She doesn't sail solo as she is the first to admit she isn't experienced enough alone to deal with problems, should they arise on board, and so doesn't feel the need to expose herself to such risk. "It is good enough when we are two on board for 20 days...being alone would be like punishment!"

Having a top programme allows her to cherry pick her crew, but rather than sailing with rock stars she prefers talented crew who are on the ascent. Their knowledge benefits her, while the opportunity for them to sail on board gives their careers a boost. "I have always sailed with very good people, but who are not very well known. This has been part of the success," she says. Most recently they have included Benoit Hochart, a Mini turned Figaro sailor and Italian architect Pietro Luciani.

In the autumn *Eärndil* was having some work done to bring her up to the latest spec, transferring the lead weight correctors from inside her hull to the keel and replacing the fixed rudders with kick-up versions. Over the winter Pourre was set to do the RORC Transatlantic Race before going to defend her title in the Caribbean 600 and then taking part in Le Défi Atlantique, the Class40's return race to La Rochelle. At the time of writing, Pourre knew of 15 of the Route du Rhum Class40s being shipped back while the remaining 40 or so were making other plans that might include the Caribbean 600.

In 2019 she plans once again to do the Les Sables-Horta-Les Sables, as well as the Rolex Fastnet Race, rounding off the year with the two-handed Transat Jacques Vabre from Le Havre to Brazil. She even has 2020 tentatively scheduled, taking the boat up the eastern coast of the US to compete in the Atlantic Cup and then up the Saint Lawrence River to race in the fully crewed Quebec-St Malo back to France. And wherever possible she says, she will shoehorn RORC racing in between.



Eärndil claims the Class40 prize in the RORC Caribbean 600
Photo: RORC/Arthur Daniel

Continued from page 43

Bluffers Guide to Class 40

The original concept for the Class40 was for a cruiser-racer, something which early production built models certainly were, although subsequent ones are orientated solely towards racing.

While several production builders were prevalent for the class' first decade – notably Akilaria with their Tunisian-built Marc Lombard designs and Structures with their Groupe Finot-



Sam Manuard-designed Mach 40.3. Photo: Christophe Breschi



Guillaume Verdier-designed Tizh 40. Photo: Jean-Marie List



Marc Lombard-designed Ljfi 40. Photo: Christophe Launay

designed Pogogs, built to a price, all recent launches have been semi-custom and constructed to the highest quality. Today most prolific are the Sam Manuard-designed Mach 40.3s built by JPS Production in La Trinité-sur-Mer, but there are also Owen Clarke's Cape 40, the Marc Lombard-designed Lift 40 and the Guillaume Verdier-designed Tizh 40.

While stock Class40s are built to go transatlantic, examples have also raced around the world in two runnings of the Global Ocean Race with another Class40 round the world race in the pipeline. For these, the boats require minor modifications, such as the addition of an extra watertight bulkhead, to bring them up to OSR Cat 0.

Britain has enjoyed success in this French-dominated class. Class40s first participated in the Route du Rhum in 2006, when Jersey-based former Mini sailor Phil Sharp won. Sharp continues to compete in the class as he gets an IMOCA 60 campaign together. He completely dominated the Class40's 2017 Championship, never finishing off the podium across seven races. He was similarly leading the 2018 Championship going into the Route du Rhum.

Essential Class40 rules

- LOA < 12.19m (ex rudders and bowsprits, etc)
- Beam < 4.5m
- Draft < 8m
- Average freeboard > 1.08m
- Minimum displacement 4500kg
- Water ballast 750lt each side
- Sail hoist < 19m above water
- Fixed keel and < 2 movable appendages (eg twin rudders or single rudder and trim tab)
- Fixed non-adjustable forestay
- Fixed mast base
- Masts which rotate or cant are banned along with deck spreaders
- Eight sails inc main, solent, < 52sqm heavy jib, storm jib and storm trysail (unless main has a 70% deep reef)
- There are girth measurements on the mainsail and jibs
- Two sails and heavy weather jib can be made of any material
- Main and solent < 115sqm
- Carbon battens/pockets forbidden
- Four permanently installed solid berths
- Two portlights in coachroof
- Permanently installed head
- < 40lt fixed water tanks < 0.5m from centreline
- 2x watertight bulkheads fitted
- Forbidden materials - carbon fibre, aramid, honeycomb cores, any fibre with tensile strength of > 3800 MPa
- 3D milling of keel and rudder stock is forbidden
- Carbon fibre with a modulus of > 245GPa is forbidden for mast, boom, spinnaker pole and bowsprit
- Steel rod rigging only
- Lithium ion batteries prohibited
- Only one halyard lock permitted