



16th October 2013

JEANNEAU SUN FAST 3600 – a day out in La Rochelle



The Story so far

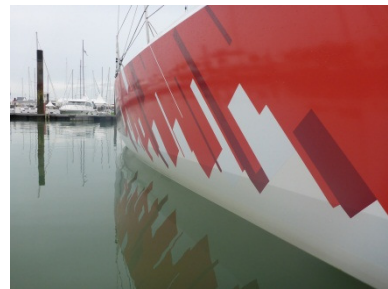
Sometime in 2008 in a modern boat production shed at Chantiers Jeanneau in the Vendee countryside, I stepped on board a boat that would re-ignite my passion for offshore short-handed yacht racing after an absence of many years – the Jeanneau Sun Fast 3200. This beautiful Daniel Andrieu designed yacht was everything I could wish it to be. As a previous Jeanneau One Design 35 owner I felt I was on familiar territory, and the boat left no room for excuses not to take the plunge. I bought the prototype – Hull No. 001.

The start of this love affair resulted in a string of four “Fastrak’s” – VI, VII, VIII & IX and participation in a number of inshore & offshore events including Round the Island Race, Cowes Week, Two Handed Round Britain & Ireland Race (2nd Overall), Two Handed North Sea 1000 Race (1st Overall), Round Ireland Race, the Fastnet Race and a variety of Solo Offshore Racing Club (2nd Overall), RORC and JOG events.

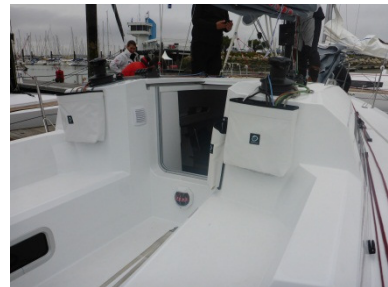
Moving on 5 years and I am hurtling down the A83 motorway to La Rochelle in France for another meeting with destiny! Daniel has drawn a new boat for Jeanneau in the Sun Fast 3600. A larger sister for the 3200 and, on paper, every bit as innovative. But she has a tough act to follow and is pitched in a busy market sector with plenty of competent competition. The 3600 looks great on paper but is she going to give me that instant Wow Factor in the flesh that seduced me to the 3200? I need not have worried, she did, and I have placed my order!

First Encounters

From the moment I set eyes on her in the dock the decision was made. She looks menacingly graceful with her hard hull knuckle, acute at the stern and projecting more softly all the way forward. The semi-circular transom profile, combined with a noticeable amount of rocker in the fore and aft sections, immediately suggest the 3600 has cured the 3200 Achilles heel – light airs sailing in less than 8 knots. The 3600 has a lower drag hull shape for the light stuff but lots of form stability with her wide beam which comes into play as the boat heels over in the breeze to rest on her chine. This combined with a high 44% ballast ratio and twin rudders gives the boat plenty of power and control when the breeze is up. No need for early reefing or an army of crew hiking out. With its relatively high freeboard, the hull guarantees a dry ride, just like her smaller sister, improved further by the hull chine also acting as a spray deflector.



The deck is equally as dazzling and beautiful in its simplicity. Corners which would normally be rounded, are squared off on the diagonal to give a stealth like appearance. The side decks are wide and flat with a moulded low profile toe rail, a superbly comfortable and successful feature carried over from the 3200. The cockpit is long, wide, flat and open at the back, but with seats and moulded coamings for comfort and protection at the front. With its “Open Class” feel it simply works!



Deck Gear & Layout

The position and purpose of every fitting has been carefully thought out. Form and function combined and executed superbly. Predominantly the deck gear is all by Harken and Spinlock, two proven performance orientated suppliers employed to great success on the 3200, so no need to change the magic formula in this department, only to improve it!

The prototype boat we are testing on this grey Autumnal October day has the twin tiller option just like the 3200. The twin wheel option may be preferred by the more cruising orientated buyer or for fully crewed campaigns, and both of these categories would probably also choose the optional German Mainsheet system with its two dedicated sheet winches. However the shorthanded brigade will almost certainly elect for twin tillers with the multiple purchase coarse and fine tune mainsheet

system. Either option comes with a floor mounted cockpit wide mainsheet traveller just in front of the helm position. All the primary controls are led forward to within easy reach of the helm station – fine tune, coarse tune, traveller, backstay adjuster. With the twin wheel option you get two angle adjustable foot pads to stand on, simplifying life when the boat is heeled. For the tiller option you get man-sized foot blocks positioned in just the right place.



The powerful cascade backstay comes down to a single point on the centreline of the transom and is attached to an extended mast crane. This feature provides better purchase for mast bend control and allows a larger mainsail roach with a semi “fat head” mainsail. The shrouds are swept back and taken out to the hull side for maximum support. The 19/20ths twin spreader deck stepped mast eliminates any inevitable leaks you get with keel stepped rigs, and comes with a carbon option. The test boat had the Axxon made carbon rig which looked to be very well engineered. Carbon mast with rod rigging or aluminium mast with Dyform rigging? The choice is yours. You will need deeper pockets for the carbon option and take a 3 or 4 point hit on the IRC rating. Carbon is lighter and stiffer and you may be able to exact the performance benefits with a competent crew round the cans, but shorthanded offshore maybe not? The Transquadra boys are going for metal. It is a predominantly downwind drag race across the Atlantic and they don’t expect the carbon performance gain to match the rating penalty in such conditions.

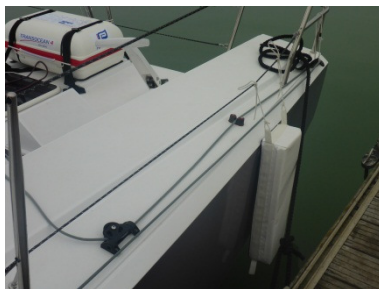


The balanced rig features a 105% jib and large roach mainsail with a fat headboard. The jib sheet car positions are controlled from the cockpit and a totally practical jib in hauler system with a powerful

purchase is included as standard. A Barton boom strut holds the boom up and works against the downward purchase of the double ended vang effectively.

We tested the boat with the extended fixed carbon prodder with asymmetric set up. The fully crewed round the cans boys will probably go for the conventional symmetric spinnaker set up with a pole. This comes with a shorter prodder for flying a Code 0 or heavy air asymmetric reachers. For shorthanded racing the longer bowsprit and asymmetric sails will be easier to handle and the lower resulting rating can be built back up by going for larger kites. The carbon sprit is very elegant. Purpose designed to fit the bow profile of the boat it simply looks like it is meant to be there. The spinnaker sheets are led aft before being taken forward through a turning block which enables sheeting from any of the four cockpit winches. There is a jammer on the side deck to lock off the sheet whilst switching winches or if the winch needs to be released for another job. The two coach roof mounted winches are the latest Harken Quattro versions with two different diameter drums to provide fast and faster gear ratios or more bits of string to be worked at the same time.

Compared to the 3200 the companionway design on the 3600 does not require a garage, so the cabin top is flat. This means that all the halyards and other rig controls run directly aft from the base of the mast doing away with a set of friction inducing lead blocks. The attention to detail of the deck is carried off with some simple but effective features such as turning fairleads incorporated into the base of the pulpit legs, providing good leads for the tack lines when sailing or the dock lines when at the berth. Stainless steel rings welded to the base of the shroud chain plates for tying off mooring spring lines.



There is a facility provided for the stowing of a canister the life raft at the aft end of the cockpit floor. Storage for deck gear and access to steering gear and autopilots is via an opening deck hatch in the middle of the cockpit floor aft. An anchor locker is provided in the bow, but we would expect the anchor kit to be stowed below decks when racing.

Keel & Rudders

The 2.13m deep "L" shaped keel profile looks identical to that of the 3200. The solid cast iron fin has a lead shoe at the bottom to provide an impressive 44% ballast ratio. This, combined with the high form stability of the hull will greatly enhance the all round performance of the boat, especially for the short handers.

Twin rudders are definitely the way to go for shorthanded sailing. They provide excellent grip when heeled over and quick broach recovery as the leeward rudder is always in the water, unlike a single rudder boat where it becomes totally airborne and useless. Compared to the 3200 the rudders are

further aft and the trailing edges are flush with the transom. This makes it a lot easier to deal with any weed issues.

Engine, Mechanicals & Electrics

As we cast off the dock lines and headed out to sea the 3 cylinder Yanmar 21hp Sail Drive effortlessly took us up to 7 knots very smoothly and without any fuss. A 2 bladed folding propeller comes as standard but the optional Gori folding propeller provides lower drag and increased motoring performance so tick the box and pay the price, it is worth it.

Jeanneau have worked hard to minimise the amount of commissioning and pre-race preparation required on the 3600. For example, unlike the 3200, this boat comes with a fairing piece around the sail drive leg unit and all the seacocks are the flush fit version, so no fairing of skin fittings required!

As standard you get a 50Ah engine battery and 120AH domestic. An extra 120AH domestic battery comes when you tick the shore power & battery charger option. Lighting throughout is LED, including the tri-colour at the masthead. Most buyers will expect and require more than this and will require a 2nd set of navigation lights for the higher categories of offshore racing. In the same vein, the standard factory supplied manual and electric bilge pumps will need to be supplemented by an additional manual pump operable totally below decks. We are pushing the factory to include both of these items on their options list.



Interior

Coming from a 3200 the interior of the 3600 can only be awesome! The use of wood has been minimised and replaced with mouldings for an “easy clean” interior and practical for lugging wet sails around the place. The oak trimmings lighten up the interior nicely and, unlike the 3200, there is an inner lining on the cabin head in the saloon to give a more “finished” feel. To save weight this liner does form part of the deck structure. The cushions are covered in a practical waterproof Sunbrella material rather than the PVC of the 3200.

The interior layout is similar to the 3200 but makes good use of the extra space with a wider cabin sole and wider opening to the forepeak which is much better for sail stowage when racing. There is a proper full size saloon table with folding leaves for apres race entertainment and comfort when cruising. The geometry of the saloon seat backrests will be improved from the prototype to allow more usable width.

A large chart table with useful sized semi-bulkhead improves the possibilities for computer displays and the excellent sculptured 3200 navigators' seat is retained, in fact doubled with the same seat on the opposite side next to the galley. The galley is not huge but it is functional and does the job with plenty of stowage and an option for a 12v fridge and hot water. Pressurised cold water is standard as is also a sea water foot pump.

The mirror image aft cabins are huge. Each cabin has a full sized double berth, an opening port into the cockpit and canvas storage bags. At the front of the boat there is a sea toilet, sink with running water and the rest is empty, as the 3200, for sail stowage. Overhead there are two opening deck hatches both big enough to drop sails through when required.



Sailing & Performance

I have saved the best until last! Quite simply the boat is joy to sail. Although we did not have the hoped for strong winds to put the boat through her paces, we had enough with 7 to 8 knots and then increasing up to maximum of 15 knots. Upwind the steering was light as a feather but with just enough feel played back to the helm. The twin rudders ensured good tracking. The close sheeting and efficient in-haulers makes this a more close winded boat than the 3200 and 7 to 7.5 knots upwind was no trouble at all. One grumble with solo sailing in mind was the distance between the helm position and the primary winch and the lack of facility to cross-sheet the jib. The composite tillers have subsequently been re-designed to be 5cm longer and the grab bar geometry modified which address the first grumble, and the Jeanneau design team have assured us they will provide for cross-sheeting.

One thing very noticeable whilst the wind was at the lighter end of the spectrum was that this boat does not drag its stern and leaves an unfussy wake. Relative to the 3200 the 3600 will not be so sticky in the very light. As the breeze built the boat just went faster!



Off the wind we popped the A2, a borrowed sail form an M34 which actually seemed to fit very well. In 15 knots of breeze, and heating up for speed, 11 knots was not a problem, and bearing off down to 145/150 true wind angle 9 to 10 knots of speed was easy. We tried a few broaches just to see

what would happen. Actually getting the boat to broach was not easy, but when she did it was all non-dramatic and fairly sedate. With the leeward rudder remaining firmly planted in the water the broach recovery was quick and the boat was soon back on its feet again.

The previous day during sail trials, Erik Stromberg from Jeanneau says the boat was just planted on 16 knots for as long as you like in 25 knots of breeze.

We flunked a couple of gybes but that was more due to the fact we had a crew of solo sailors on board, not used to team work!! However we deduced that gybing round the outside was much easier than going inside. Maybe a longer sprit should be an option for the solo sailor with no crew to help walk the clew around the forestay?

The 3600 will clearly just eat the miles. It just begs to be pushed offshore as her powerful yet stable hull form will take all the power you can give her and translate this into forward motion. The deck layout was equally suited to fully crewed or shorthanded sailing, and the boat will respond positively to correct trimming to give a most satisfying ride.

Summary

The 3600 is a worthy addition to the Sun Fast range and can only enhance the on going desirability of the 3200 in the process. It has successfully taken all the best features of the 3200, blended in a number of neat upgrades and covered all the bases with respect to fantastic all round performance, offshore & inshore, fully crewed and shorthanded, racing and even comfortable performance cruising.

This boat provides the complete rounded package better than her competitors and she will undoubtedly be one of Jeanneau's many success stories. The Jeanneau team behind this project are justifiably proud of their new boat, and many of them, interestingly, were involved with the former Jeanneau Advanced Technologies division responsible for high profile projects such as Philippe Poupon's "Fleury Michon" round the world race yachts.



Written by NIGEL COLLEY, owner of Sun Fast 3200 "Fastrak IX" Hull No. 144

**Sea Ventures UK Ltd
+44 (0)2380 455 333
nigel@seaventures.co.uk**