



***Boat Test Report***

Pilot House 25

Sea Angler

*Written by Dave Lewis*

# ONE HELL OF A SEA BOAT

The Orkney Pilothouse 25 is the ideal vessel to steam many miles offshore to fish distant wrecks and reefs





Words and photography  
by **Dave Lewis**

IT SOUNDED LIKE A GREAT TRIP, A JOLLY jaunt, starting with a short flight across the channel to Alderney, followed by dinner at a swanky restaurant and a night in a rather smart hotel. Next morning, following a leisurely cholesterol-enriched feast of a breakfast, we would head off for the run back across the English Channel to the mainland aboard a new Orkney Pilothouse 25.

Of course, I'd attempt to pass it off as work. Things were going well, and when I arrived for my flight from Southampton Airport, the Aurigny check-in clerk offered to put me, free of charge, on an earlier flight. Only 21 minutes later I was in the air, heading south over the Isle of Wight and, 'apparently', arrived over Alderney 45 minutes later.

I say apparently because the island was invisible, due to a dense covering of fog. The pilot said he needed at least a 500m ceiling to make a safe landing, and the airport was reporting visibility no more than 350m; we had no option but to fly back to Southampton.

Early the next morning the fog had cleared and I was back in the airport. Everything went to plan and we touched down on Alderney a little after 9.30am. With no check-in bags, I walked straight through the diminutive airport terminal, jumped into a cab and was at Braye Harbour in nine minutes, where I stepped aboard the water taxi for the short run out to Alderney. Barely 15 minutes after disembarking the aircraft, I was standing aboard the Orkney Pilothouse 25 and helping prepare for the 60-mile ride across the channel to Lymington in Hampshire.

Of course, I had to hear about the truly magnificent meal I had missed out on; apparently, the freshly caught turbot was exceptional, as was the accompanying wine. At least I had been welcomed aboard with a decent cup of hot coffee.

## WORKMANSHIP

Orkney Boats, based in Arundel, West Sussex, has been producing fine angling boats for many years. My long association with the company goes back to the mid-1980s when I became the proud owner of an immaculate Orkney Strikeline 16+.

Over the years, Orkney has introduced various models, most of which have been designed with the sea angler in mind. Orkney's boats have ranged from an open 13ft dinghy to state-of-the-art cabin cruisers, and I have tested most of them.

Based on my experiences, I can honestly say that when it comes to quality of workmanship and overall finish, you will not find better than Orkney, which rightly prides itself in offering its customers the very best of traditional British craftsmanship. The all-new Orkney Pilothouse 25 is the perfect example; she is stunning and extremely stylish, a classic day cruiser that, with her smart, dark, navy blue hull and silver grey topside will turn heads at any marina.

Certainly, you can immediately see that since the idea of this boat was first conceived and then designed by Arthur Mursell, of TT Boat Designs, the requirements of serious offshore anglers have been fully taken into consideration.

## SPACIOUS

With an overall length of 24ft 8in and a 9ft 2in beam, this vessel has an RCD Category B rating. She displaces 6,834lb, while drawing a minimum of 1ft 7in. Powered by a Yanmar 220hp ZT370 duo prop sterndrive, she has a maximum speed of 27 knots and a mile-consuming cruising speed of 17 knots. A range of other engine options from various manufacturers is also available.

Substantially built and feature loaded, key points of interest include a spacious and especially light and airy wheelhouse, a comfortable twin berth cabin with enclosed toilet compartment, and a well-appointed galley featuring a twin-burner gas stove and sink with pressurised cold water supplied via a 22-gallon tank. Alloy framed, toughened glass recessed and tinted windows ensure excellent all-round visibility.

The cockpit is extremely spacious, fully self-draining and, as standard, features a moulded, non-slip surface. A full-width engine hatch, with gas strut stays fitted to the lid, provides easy access to the engine bay. I would suggest she would be ideal for fishing two to three anglers, four should be considered a practical maximum. Walkways to either side of the pilothouse provide access to the bow and, of course, you get all necessary deck hardware provided as standard. Everything fitted aboard this boat is of the highest quality.

## PRACTICAL

I particularly liked the extended cockpit overhang, a practical feature that allows the wheelhouse doors to remain open during inclement weather without the wheelhouse interior getting wet, while it also ▶



The Orkney Pilothouse 25 will turn heads at any marina

provides shade on days when this is required.

Yet another feature of note is an opening door midway in the transom, which falls flat, and from which extends a stainless steel boarding ladder. This clever arrangement allows you to keep well clear of the stern drive.

The Orkney Pilothouse 25 is available with a range of optional extras. Anglers will be most interested in the Day Angler Package. This includes a 12v saltwater deck-wash pump in the cockpit, stainless steel side rails on cockpit coamings, stainless steel rod holders within the cockpit coamings, rod racks, a bait preparation station incorporating a sink, chopping board, tackle drawer and stowage cupboard, and an all-important aerated livebait well.

Those of you looking for extra style might want to consider the Valiant Package. This offers a choice of hull colours, stanchions and guard wires, a Lewmar anchor windlass, bow thrusters, premium upholstery, synthetic teak and holly laminate flooring, light oak-faced cabin table and double berth conversion with infill cushion, sea toilet in lieu of the standard chemical toilet, a hot water system and shower.

It also includes a premium helm console pack, Raymarine 9in hybrid touch multi-function display and GPS, Icom DSC/VHF and aerial, deluxe galley package comprising an upgrade to light oak galley unit with Corian type worktop, twin gas burner stove, stainless sink and front opening 12v refrigerator.

### COMFORTABLE

Weather conditions for our crossing were set to be fine, too fine, when you factor in that I was meant to be assessing the boat's sea-keeping qualities. A light chop would have been nice, but I was pleased it was going to be a smooth ride; I've experienced the alternative in a relatively small boat on several occasions, and it's not much fun.

Luckily, we had chosen Alderney as a destination, and during a high set of spring tides. Anyone who knows the truly treacherous waters that surround this small island will know that just outside of the stone breakwater that protects Braye Harbour, you enter a testing tide race. This is where we headed to get some memorable action shots of the boat.

The Orkney Pilothouse 25 features a modified V hull, a design intended to provide a dry, comfortable ride, and this was very quickly demonstrated as I watched the review boat effortlessly punch her way through the short, steep, stopping waves within the race. I noted that all spray was thrown cleanly to either side, the hull demonstrating that it did exactly what was intended. I watched as she was pushed through these testing conditions at various speeds and at various points of steering, and was hugely impressed.

### CONFIDENT

When later I got the chance to switch places from our camera boat and experience the

## EXCELLENT CRAFTSMANSHIP...

Extending the stainless steel boarding ladder



The spacious, light and airy wheelhouse



Power is from a Yanmar 220hp ZT370 engine



The enclosed toilet and shower



There is plenty of room for an array of electronics



ride for myself, my initial impressions were immediately endorsed. This is one hell of a sea boat, the ideal vessel to steam many miles offshore to fish distant wrecks and reefs, confident in the knowledge that should the weather deteriorate, as we all know it frequently does, then you will be able to run home in both comfort and safety.

As anticipated, the run across the channel was smooth and largely uneventful. Running at 3,100rpm, the Yanmar engine produced 21 knots, and, given the excellent conditions, we maintained this throughout in order to complete the voyage in around three hours. A more realistic, fuel-sipping cruising speed, though, would be around 17 knots. An increase in revs to 3,600rpm delivered 23 knots, and even at such speeds we were able to sit inside the wheelhouse with the door closed and chat away without excessive engine noise.

Even so, Orkney is apparently not happy

and intends to further improve the sound proofing within the engine compartment. Likewise, I did not detect any of the frustrating and highly irritating rattles that usually accompany most new boats when pushed hard. ■



*BUILT IN BRITAIN  
SINCE 1973*

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