



Boat Test Report

Series 522

Anglia Afloat

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YOUR REGION'S ONLY BOATING MAGAZINE

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PICNIC TIME: Anchor your Orkney or ground it.

After a day, we're ready to settle down with Doris

Andrew Pinder casts off with his family in the Orkney 522, a serious little boat you can beach, take to sea, perhaps even camp aboard. Ted, 9, steered most of the way and Robbie, 12, took the best pictures

Orkneys have been popular small workboats with fishermen, harbour authorities, sailing clubs and the like for years, establishing a strong reputation for quality, durability and seaworthiness. It is precisely these qualities that also give them appeal to families looking for

a safe, fun way to get afloat. And in a time of recession, the very reasonable price tag is another attractive feature.

To put theory to the test, I headed for the picturesque River Deben in Suffolk, accompanied by wife Rachel and sons Robbie (aged 12) and Ted (aged 9). We were to be lent an Orkney 522 for the weekend by Andrew Nunn, Director of

Seamark Nunn of Felixstowe, one of the longest established boating businesses in the UK.

In handing over the boat to us, there was very little that Andrew needed to explain – except perhaps her name. “As she is a day boat we decided to christen her Doris”, he said with a grin. So filled with the spirit of ‘Anything you can do I can do better’ the



ABOVE: Rachel with Ted in the cuddy – and now you can exit through a windscreen hatch (below)

family climbed aboard and we headed off down river.

The renowned features of these boats were immediately apparent; she simply 'felt right'. It was not long before I handed over the helm to Ted. Although he is far more used to wind power and a tiller, he soon learnt not to over-compensate with the steering, and settled down behind the wheel like he had been doing it all his life.

At 17ft 1in (5.22m) the Orkney 522 is the middle boat in the Series 2 dayboat range, with plenty of space on board for the average family. The wide, deep, self-draining cockpit that is an ideal platform for fishermen is also a very secure area for simply lazing about and enjoying the sun.

Our boat had grab rails running down either coaming, which are an optional extra, but very convenient when it comes to moving about in any sort of sea.

There are two large waterproof lockers that double as seats for the helmsman and navigator, providing ample stowage space for a day trip. All the controls are arranged tidily and logically in one small console, which in our case included a Garmin multi-function chart plotter and fish-finder (again an optional accessory). Underneath the console there is more generous stowage, although in this case not watertight. Finally there is a forward stowage compartment, and an open well in the bow for anchor, etc.

By now we were nearing an area known

as 'The Rocks' – a popular picnic spot on a small sandy beach underneath a wooded river cliff. Normally we would anchor off and then row ashore in an inflatable dinghy. Today, however, there was no such hassle.

The Orkney 522 has a draft of less than half a metre, which meant we were able to gently nudge right up to the beach (taking care of course to raise the outboard engine – a simple one-touch-of-a-button operation with its built-in power tilt). In only a couple of minutes the picnic was unpacked, and most of us did not even have damp feet (apart from Robbie, of course, who always has to get himself as wet as possible).

Looking back as we munched our sandwiches I could not help noticing that the Orkney 522 has very clean, simple lines that are easy on the eye.

After lunch, the adults wanted to lie back and snooze in the warming sun. But it was not to be. The boys craved speed. We had shown that the Orkney was safe, but was she fun? Robbie was at the helm as we cleared the moorings by Ramsholt Inn and headed for the long clear stretch between the marshes. As he eased the throttle forward, Doris immediately responded, lifting on to a plane. She had a surprising turn of speed!

The design brief behind Orkney's Series 2 boats was to maintain the class's lines and sea-going abilities, but at the same time to improve its performance at speed. This has been achieved by keeping the classic V-shaped bow, but flattening the underwater profile aft to facilitate planing.

So even with a relatively low powered engine (50 H.P. – the maximum specified), speeds of up to 26 knots are possible. Seamark Nunn recommend the Honda 50 outboard, which we found to be clean, quiet and very fuel efficient. (Apparently it even has a PC computer interface for diagnostics and testing.)

Fuel for the engine is stored in two 25 litre removable plastic tanks, easily accessible through a hatch in the cockpit floor. That gives the standard Orkney 522 a cruising range of up to 6 ½ hours (although admittedly you do have to swap the fuel line over manually, half way through). Navigators looking to increase the range further can opt for a third plastic tank in the bows.

Pointing out to Robbie that we were getting tired of his Jeremy Clarkson impersonation, I decided that it was time to put to sea.

I glanced across at Rachel – she who had once famously been sick on a river ferry. Gone was her usual smile, and in its place a ►