



Boat Test Report

Series 522

SeaAngler

Written by Mel Russ

My kind of boat

You know if it's an Orkney it's got to be good, says Dave Lewis. This latest one is not just good, it's a classic



For 40 years Orkney Boats has been producing high quality fishing vessels at its factory in Arundel, West Sussex, and you'll visit few harbours in the British Isles and not see at least one example of the extensive Orkney line-up sitting pretty at her moorings.

The fact that an Orkney is the boat of choice for many commercial fishermen should be proof enough for any recreational angler that these are extremely well built, seaworthy vessels.

My association with Orkney Boats goes back 25 years. In the mid-1980s I purchased the first of several Orkney Strikeline 16+ hulls, aboard which I enjoyed many of the most memorable

fishing days of my life.

Since then I have spent a considerable amount of time aboard many examples of the boats Orkney has produced, with one notable exception - the Orkney 522. So I jumped at the chance when I was offered the opportunity to fly up to Edinburgh for a day and spend a few hours aboard a 522 in the Firth of the Forth, courtesy of Queensferry-based Bosun's Locker.

The Orkney 522 is one of a

range of Series 2 hulls that were conceived by TT Boat Designs, a company with an enviable reputation for building solid workboats such as pilot cutters.

The introduction of the Series 2 saw Orkney largely move away from its traditional displacement and semi-displacement hulls, although the company does still produce them.

The result was a hull that was similar in length to the older range but featured more beam and a

larger, more rounded bow for better seakeeping and stability - a boat suitable for use with a larger engine and consequently capable of greater speeds.

Step aboard

The Orkney 522 has an overall length of 5.20 metres, with a 2m beam, and displaces 545kg. She is rated for use with outboard engines up to a maximum of 50hp, and speeds up to a maximum of 26 knots. She conforms to the

requirements of CE Category C.

As you will see from the pictures, the basic design of the 522 is that of an open cuddy, pretty much perfect for the requirements of most sea anglers fishing around the coast of the British Isles.

Step aboard the boat and very quickly you will see that her designers, too, know what features sea anglers require and have duly provided them.

Access to the bow to work the

anchor is via the usual top-hinged hatch, which is large enough for an adult to comfortably work the anchor warp through.

This manoeuvre is made still slicker by having a hinged section within the seating at the forward end of the cuddy. This, when raised, provides the easiest possible access to the bow from within the safety of the cuddy.

I noted that the open anchor well, sunk within the bow, is especially large, perfect for safely

containing a decent sized anchor plus the necessary chain and warp while skipping between marks.

Headroom beneath the cuddy is good, and so is all-round visibility, thanks to spacious windows that are cut oversized and bonded in place for maximum strength.

Steering is to starboard, with no feedback push-pull steering fitted as standard.

A decent sized console incorporates a useful, though not watertight, stowage locker. ■



WHERE TO BUY

The cost of an Orkney 522 water-ready package, as tested, from Bosun's Locker is a very realistic £19,994.99.

This includes a genuine Orkney 522 multi-roller road trailer designed specifically for this boat, plus a cockpit cover. The standard hull colour is white, with an option for mid-blue.

For more information on the Orkney 522 or any of the other boats manufactured by Orkney visit its website: www.orkneyboatsltd.co.uk

To contact Bosun's Locker, tel: 0131 331 4496
Web: www.bosuns.co.uk
Email: boats@bosuns.co.uk

Below, left to right: Locker amidships for fuel storage; access to the bow via a hinged hatch; stowage lockers; inside the cuddy



I am on record as stating I do not like fixed seating aboard small open cuddy boats - I'd rather have the option to retain the maximum amount of open deck space, and in any case I prefer to stand while steering, especially at speed.

Aboard the Orkney 522 I found a pair of fixed seats that are essentially waterproof GRP tackle boxes - genuinely useful stowage compartments that would swallow the contents of the largest tackle seat box, and then some. Yes, were I to purchase a 522 for myself, I'd leave these in place.

Inboard freeboard is excellent, with gunnels that fall vertically to the main deck, perfect for safely bracing yourself against while fishing in a sloppy sea.

The self-draining deck contains a large locker located amidships, designed specifically for stowing standard-sized fuel tanks.

This is the ideal scenario, as not only does it ensure that heavy fuel tanks are stowed perfectly along the boat's centre line for maximum lateral stability, but also that the centre of gravity is kept as low as possible.

I found the battery in a separate compartment within the transom, again mounted along the vessel's centre line. This is perfect in safety

terms - I have never been totally comfortable with having fuel tanks and batteries side by side within the same, small compartment.

The same hatch also provides access to a fixed in-line fuel filter, a worthwhile addition aboard any boat. Stowage lockers, perfect for bait and sundries, are located within each quarter, and all the necessary deck hardware is provided fitted as standard.

On the water

Stepping aboard the Orkney 522 for my sea trial, it did not take me long to confirm that the overall build quality and finish of this boat is exceptional.

Over the years I've tested many small fishing boats, many of them built to a very high standard, but none have been more attractive to the eye than an Orkney.

The people at Orkney really go the extra mile to ensure that each and every boat that leaves the factory is perfectly turned out, and such is the quality of the product that, given a modicum of care and attention, the boats still look amazing after many years of regular service.

This is one reason why second-hand Orkney fishing boats hold their value so well and are so much

in demand by sea anglers.

During the all too brief time I spent playing about aboard the 522 in the Firth of Forth, I came to the conclusion that this was yet another classic Orkney hull.

Sadly, sea conditions were far from ideal for testing anything like the maximum sea-keeping qualities of such a boat, but a swift tide opposing a fair wind, combined with the steep wake from passing vessels, gave me a taste of just what she is capable of.

The test boat was fitted with a 50hp Honda DF50TL, which, as you would expect of Honda, performed impeccably, and easily delivered her maximum design speed of 26 knots with two adults on board.

If you were intending to regularly run large distances I would suggest you choose the 50hp engine option, which I estimate would provide a comfortable, economical cruising speed in the region of 15-16 knots when fully laden for a day's fishing.

If, like many anglers, you rarely venture more than four or five miles from your marina berth or launch site then why not save yourself some money and choose a cheaper, lighter and even more economical 30-40hp engine? You could invest the saved cash in

some sexy on-board electronics.

During my trial I drove the 522 hard through a series of tight turns, and I was impressed with the way she maintained her lateral stability while tracking true, without a hint of cavitation.

Following the test, Richard Hay, Orkney's MD, explained that the gunnels of the 522 incorporated longitudinal buoyancy strakes, which are located midway between the deck and the gunnels.

The primary objective of these is to ensure the hull floats upright even when fully swamped, part of the CE certification, but in addition they serve to stiffen the hull. Positive buoyancy in this location means that when the boat is driven hard in the tightest of turns, listing is kept to a minimum.

To sum up, I am happy to admit that I really do like the Orkney 522 - it's my kind of boat.

Often I find myself reminiscing about my days fishing aboard my beloved Orkney Strikeliners. While these are no longer in production I feel the 533, albeit a bigger boat, would be the perfect vessel for me to tow to the various beaches and concrete launch sites throughout South Wales that were once the starting point for so many memorable adventures. **SA**



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SINCE 1973*

www.orkneyboats.co.uk