



Boat Test Report

Pilothouse 20 MKII

Boat Angler

Written by Dave Lewis



Tempted? You will be...

Julian Lewis Jones gets a new boat - an Orkney Pilot House 20 Mark II. She's fresh out of the boatyard and he's going to use her for exploring further out on the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel

She looked as pretty as a picture, moored alongside her berth at Itchenor in Chichester Harbour, and I could see from the glazed look in Julian's eyes that it was love at first sight.

I admit it was I who had orchestrated the meeting that had subjected him to such cruel temptation in the first place, and yes, I can only confess that I even egged him on a tad when first he raised the subject of upgrading

Bafta Bach II, but ultimately Julian Lewis Jones is his own man and nobody actually made him get another new boat: in the end it was his choice.

And things had all started out so innocently. For some time Julian had been considering investing in some upmarket electronics for Bafta Bach II, so when I told him I was visiting Raymarine's impressive Hampshire headquarters he jumped at the chance to tag

along and grab the opportunity to be able to assess the company's entire current range.

The trouble was that first I was booked to go on a sea trial of Orkney's new Pilot House 20 MkII, and that's where things started to go wrong! I'll let Julian take up the story...



Falling for the Orkney

When I drove down to Sussex with Dave I really had no intention of buying a new boat, I simply went along for the ride and the chance to check out some new electronics, writes *Julian Lewis Jones*.

I suppose the first thing that drew me to the Pilot House 20 MkII was her traditional lines. I love the simulated clinker hull style and Orkney has managed to preserve the flowing lines of this classic hull design. Closer inspection quickly revealed that the build quality and overall finish of the boat were truly superb, and it wasn't long before I found myself starting to weigh up the options of upgrading.

I loved the amount of space that is available in the cockpit, and I could see that at just under 20ft in length here was a boat aboard which three or even four of us could fish in comfort. It was hard to imagine that she was actually smaller in overall length than my existing boat; she certainly looked to be far more spacious. The self-draining deck, the excellent height of the inboard freeboard and the amount of secure locker stowage space only helped to confirm the plan that was quickly forming in my mind.

The one thing I wasn't happy about with my previous boat was that being an inboard diesel she really wasn't a boat that could be transported easily on a trailer. The more I have got involved in small-boat angling the more the freedom of being able to haul my boat out on to a trailer and tow her wherever I wanted has started to appeal to me.

Here in south-west Wales we have excellent ferry links to Ireland, and I'd love to be able to take her across the Irish Sea a couple of times a year. I've always wanted to travel up to Scotland to catch a skate, and what better way to do it than aboard my own boat? Each year we have a family holiday in France, and often I've fantasised about taking my own boat.

Obviously the vast majority of my fishing will take place here in Wales, so nothing is easier than having a decent-sized boat kept in a marina ready and waiting for immediate use as soon as the weather and work commitments allow, and I could see the Pilot House would allow me to benefit from the best of both worlds.

The Pilot House 20 MkII we looked at was powered by a 70hp Suzuki outboard, and I could see that here was a boat with which I could actually live out my dreams and, provided I had a decent trailer, fish wherever I liked. I liked lots of the features Orkney has incorporated

"By the time we returned to Itchenor my mind was made up, Bafta Bach III was on her way"

within the design of this boat, particularly the fuel tank stowage system. This consists of a flush-mounted locker located centrally within the cockpit floor, which is the perfect size to hold three large standard fuel tanks.

When empty I can easily take them home and refill them at my leisure, avoiding the often high cost of fuel at many marinas.

By the time I stepped into the cabin my mind was chugging through the various options for upgrading, and if there were doubts still lingering, then a quick scan around the interior quickly dispelled them. I'm 6ft 2in tall, yet there was heaps of headroom for me to stand fully upright, plus the forward vee-berth was large enough for me to crash in comfort. I loved the neat cooker/sink arrangement to port, while I

found the helmsman's position to starboard was ideally laid out with excellent all-round visibility.

It was a blustery day, yet the Orkney handled beautifully; I'd almost forgotten how much easier an outboard powered boat was to handle compared to a shaft driven. We didn't actually get out into the eastern Solent, but conditions within Chichester's vast harbour were such that I was left with no doubts about her offshore capabilities. During our sea trials we recorded a top speed well in excess of 20 knots, which is more than enough to quickly transport me out to the prolific sharking grounds of south-west Wales. Unfortunately we only had time for a relatively short sea trial, but by the time we returned to Itchenor my mind was made up, Bafta Bach III was on her way! **SA**



There is loads of storage space



The cockpit has a forward vee berth

Subtle changes have improved this boat

The Orkney Pilot House 20 is a familiar friend because I once had one on extended loan that I used to keep at Penarth Marina.

The Mark I version I had was a truly superb angling boat, and I enjoyed many successful days fishing aboard her, but this latest Mk II version is even better.

For example, Orkney has made subtle changes to the shape of the bow and stern, which have improved her overall sea-keeping qualities

Now, as standard you get extra stowage lockers, a smart foredeck hatch for increased cabin lighting and extra ventilation.

The galley arrangement, stainless steel fixtures and fittings, tough D-section rubber fendering running fore and aft and Orkney's new custom electrical

switch/fuse panel are all provided fitted as standard.

Overall length is 19ft 6in and she sports a substantial 7ft 10in beam, and certainly looks bigger than she is. She tips the scales at 1,800lb, that's 820kg, so obviously you'll need a decent trailer and a suitable vehicle to tow her from port to port, but provided you meet these criteria, this truly is an extremely versatile angling boat offering geographic versatility along with serious offshore potential.

As I write this at the end of February I have heard that Julian's Bafta Bach III has just popped out of the mould at Orkney's factory in Arundel, West Sussex, and I look forward to telling you all about the adventures we have been planning for the coming months.



The test boat had a 70hp outboard



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