



Boat Test Report

Pilothouse 20 mkII

Sea Angler Magazine

Written by Dave Lewis

Pride of the fleet

Orkney Boats have launched a new 20-footer, the Pilot House 20, that follows a long line of great angling craft. Dave Lewis gets to test the pride of the fleet



The Pilot House 20 can be towed by a medium-powered 4x4



THE PILOT HOUSE 20 has been developed from the very popular Day Angler 19+, though the company, based in Sussex, say this new hull boasts more beam along the waterline spray chines, which provides even greater stability without a significant increase in wetted surface.

Orkney also say the resulting shape, combined with a moderate beam/length ratio, results in a dry, comfortable ride in rough seas without sacrificing traditional vice-free handling, stability at rest, easy motion while drifting or at anchor, along with the ability to perform well with small engines.

Bold claims, even for one of the UK's longest established angling boat manufac-



The new Orkney is perfect for inshore and offshore angling

turers, but as luck would have it on this occasion I was going to get the opportunity to see exactly how this boat would perform.

The Pilot House 20 has an overall length of 19ft 6in and with a 7ft 10in beam, the hull weighs in at 1800lb. She has been designed for use with either outboard engines, up to a maximum of 80hp, which the brochure claims produce a top speed of 23 knots, or a diesel sterndrive unit up to 120hp, which will also produce a top speed of 23 knots. The test boat was fitted with maximum rated Mercruiser 4 cylinder D1.7 LDTI 120hp diesel engine.

As is so characteristic with most Orkney boats, the Pilot House 20 has been built along what can best be described as tradi-

tional lines but using the latest manufacturing materials and build techniques.

The cabin, or Pilot House, is spacious, fully enclosed and practically designed. You'll find a twin v-berth forward with plenty of dry locker stowage space and an area with a hinged lid ahead of the steering console that has been designed to take a toilet, available as an optional extra.

The hull, deck and ancillary mouldings are all constructed in hand lay up GRP. Isophthalic resin is used in the hull, which is stiffened below the waterline by bonded in bulkheads and longitudinal stringers.

GRP modules, which are bonded, form cabin and cockpit into the hull to increase rigidity. The one-piece deck moulding

utilises complex core stiffening, and is both bonded and mechanically fastened to the hull. The Orkney Pilot House 20 conforms to CE Category C.

The main wheelhouse features steering to starboard, and has been nicely designed to ensure the helmsman enjoys great all-round visibility, along with easy access to the navigation instruments that can be located at strategic positions on a spacious console.

There is additional stowage space beneath the helmsman's seat, as well as an area designed to accept a fire extinguisher, a safety feature that should always be close at hand. A co-pilot seat has been fitted to port and this can be easily removed to reveal a space for a portable single burner stove. ➤

Tested: Orkney Pilot House 20



Orkney's are great sea boats. The Pilot House 20 offers generous space for three anglers to fit in comfort

A turn around the deck

The self-draining cockpit offers enough space for three anglers to fish in comfort, though, as is usually the case, the ideal number would be two. On the day I got to try the Pilot House 20 there were four of us aboard and provided we were organised we could fish in comfort.

There is a good amount of inboard free-board and the spacious deck features a non-slip finish as standard. Beneath the main deck, you'll find a 30-gallon stainless steel fuel tank and a couple of useful stowage lockers with hinged lids. There is a separate underfloor battery locker. The quality of workmanship and finish is up to the usual Orkney high standard.

Moulded steps give access to broad walkways leading around either side of the cabin to the foredeck. Once forward a stainless pulpit rail and grab handles, leading over the cabin roof, give you a feeling of safety.

A spacious anchor locker is provided to stow anchor, chain and warp, and all necessary deck hardware is provided as standard. You also get a full set of navigation lights, electric switch panel, manual fire extinguisher and single windscreen wiper as starboard.

You might like to have a second wiper fitted to give full forward vision in poor weather and sea conditions.

Facing the weather

I got to try the boat in Milford Haven, on a wet and windy day, which was so typical of the weather last summer. The test boat was fitted with the 1.7l 120hp inboard Mercruiser option, which I soon discovered provided excellent close-quarters manoeuvring capabilities so typical of a stern drive.

As we headed down The Haven towards the open sea at St Ann's Head, conditions at first were reasonable and we were able to run at close to top speed. With just a slight sea, the ride was comfortable and the sound proofing provided within the engine compartment was found to be good, though you must appreciate that a big diesel engine does make some degree of noise, although you do have the option to have a quieter four-stroke fitted.

As we moved into open water and started to encounter more wind, we hit the first of the groundswell rolling. Top speed is quoted as being 23 knots, with a cruising speed of 15 knots, but given the increasingly testing sea conditions, we progressively throttled back to maintain a smooth, slam-free ride.

As mentioned there were four of us aboard, but with the benefit of trim tabs the helmsman was able to maintain a stable ride and get the best from the boat.

At the entrance to Milford Haven we found conditions weren't anything like as bad as we had anticipated and, while we were not able to run at cruising speed, we could still maintain a comfortable ride and get as far as the mid-channel rocks where we wanted to fish.

Despite the sea conditions the boat remained very stable, although we had to ensure anglers and kit were spread about the boat evenly.

The high sides in the cockpit provided comfortable support to brace ourselves against while fishing, and I quickly realised that the Pilot House 20 is well-suited for either fishing at anchor or on the drift... in just the sort of changing weather conditions that is so typical of the British Isles ●

Three reasons to buy



1 The foredeck has a big anchor well that holds all the ground tackle



2 Luxury! A place to cook, brew tea and wash up



3 Where the skipper sits. Spacious, good forward vision and angle space for all the electronics

FACT FILE

- The Pilot House 20, outboard engine model, excluding engine, is £15,933, rising to £28,952 for a diesel sterndrive model, fitted with a 120hp Mercruiser, as tested.

She can be towed provided you have a suitable vehicle. Orkney can provide a 1500kg capacity four-wheel braked trailer, complete with winch and lights for £3,290.

- For more information on the Orkney Pilot House 20 and other boats in the Orkney range, or possibly to arrange a sea trial, contact Orkney Boats Ltd, 1 Ford Lane Business Park, Ford, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 0UZ, tel: 01243 551456, fax: 01243 551914. www.orkneyboatsltd.co.uk



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