



## BOAT REPORT

# BOUNTY 24

Take a Falcon 23 superstructure, add a purpose-designed hull from Andrew Wolstenholme, and you have the makings of a brand new river boat from the Norfolk yard of Bounty Boats.

NEW purpose-designed river boats have until recently been a rare commodity on our waterways. However the last couple of years have seen a refreshing reversal of this trend, with several all-new craft in the 20ft-30ft range, and some good revamps of older models.

One designer who has been making a name for himself in this steady but unglamorous market is Andrew Wolstenholme. Based in Wroxham, at the heart of the Norfolk Broads boatbuilding and hiring industry, he is ideally placed to develop his ideas. The latest, the Bounty 24, is the result of an intriguing marriage of companies and designs.

Bounty Boats are one of the older-established Norfolk yards, with a long tradition of building good-quality craft for their own and other people's hire fleets. The company was recently acquired by another local (but much younger) firm, Falcon Sportsboats, started nine years ago by two ex-employees of Broom Boats.

Falcon have built up a steady reputation with their 22ft, 23ft and 27ft sports cruisers, and were looking for extra production capacity and to broaden their product base. The first result of the merger was an all-new 24ft river cruiser, suitable for private or hire fleet use.

## Design

The deck moulding of the Falcon 23 made an excellent basis for the proposed layout, but the company did not want to go the often-used but rarely-satisfactory route of putting this on a planing hull. Doing so invariably produces a boat with poor handling at river speeds, and a high wash-making factor. Instead they approached Wolstenholme to design them a hull for the river.

The resulting form has deep sections forward, to give good load-carrying ability. It then runs up to a flowing afterbody, with the shallowest of immersed transoms and rounded quarters, to give the smoothest possible flow of water away from the hull. The makers optimistically call this a 'low-wash' even 'no-wash' hull, but the designer prefers to describe it as a correctly-designed river boat, giving the minimum of wash for a vessel of this length and carrying-capacity.

A deep keel runs the full length of the hull, giving good directional stability and excellent protection to the rudder and prop, with a strong skeg carrying the lower bearing of the former, and protecting the latter from contact with debris or the bottom. The transom bathing platform is moulded integrally with the hull, allowing the underwater form to run an extra 18in (450mm) aft, further improving the flow of water.

Above the waterline, the Bounty is a stylish craft, satisfying the owner or hirer who wants to

look right-up-to-the-minute on the river. The reverse transom is attractive but practical, with rounded quarters and substantial rubber fendering protecting those vulnerable points.

The topsides are tall, and it is a long jump down from the foredeck to the lockside, not helped by the reverse tumblehome from gunwale to deck edge. Also, the forward sections have a pronounced flare, which could cause the gunwale to catch up on the edge of an emptying lock. However, if you are to achieve 6ft (1.82m) headroom in the cabin of a boat of this length, yet still maintain a low profile, some compromises have to be accepted, and we think that in practice crew will often opt to board via the easily-reached bathing platform.

The first two 24s have been bought by Swancraft of Wargrave, to add to their hire fleet of electric boats. They were looking for craft able to carry up to eight people for the day, with an enclosed toilet and a cabin suitable for changing in. At the same time, they wanted a boat that could be hired for a weekend break by a family. The Bounty filled both these requirements, yet at a competitive price, and with an easily-operated and maintained inboard diesel.

## Exterior

The existing cockpit layout of the Falcon 23 proved itself ideally suited for river use. The two inward-facing bench seats on the lower level aft will take two people each, or three at a squeeze, yet still give a reasonable view of the river. On the upper level, the double helm seat and inward-facing double seat to port give a superb position for four people to socialise, again with good views all around.

The substantial windscreen gives good protection from the wind, though we found the top of the frame was right in the middle of our vision when sitting down. A quickly-erected two-piece canopy splits at the stainless steel goalpost mast, which hinges down for passage under the lowest of bridges. A socket in the floor of the aft cockpit takes the table from down below, while the helm seat hinges forward to reveal a large top-loading fridge/freezer. This is a space-effective solution to the problem of locating this bulky item, but assumes that you don't drink and drive at the same time.

The helm position itself is well-equipped and neatly laid out. The single-lever engine control to starboard falls easily to hand when you are standing up, which is when you are likely to be doing most manoeuvring, though it is a long stretch forward when you are seated.

A neat panel of ready-use switches is located to the left of the wheel, with a mimic panel up to the standard of the best offshore craft showing the status of bilge pump, water pump and navigation lights.

On the right-hand side of the wheel is a bank of press-button breakers protecting all the circuits in the boat, while ahead is the engine instrument panel. This contains five warning lights for oil level, oil pressure, temperature, alternator and heater, plus a very small rev-counter and buttons for engine stop, engine start and heater. Ahead of the instruments is a large chart area, with a hinged perspex cover, while over to port, ahead of the passengers, is a useful tray with an

all-round lip that will take loose items such as cameras and binoculars.

One criticism we did have of the cockpit is the lack of locker space. The area under the helmsman's seat is taken up by the fridge, while the area under the aft seats has been left clear to allow removal of the side engine hatches. Since the centre hatch is sufficient for most routine checks, we would have thought removable boxes could have been installed here, but otherwise the layout works extremely well.

The only way onto the side decks is by stepping on the aft cushions, though the coaming has a well-placed teak tread. The decks themselves are just about adequate for a boat of this size, 4-6in (100-150mm) wide, and with a raised gunwale lip. Guardrails start amidships, but reaching this point would be a precarious operation with the canopy up, as the inboard rail is down by your knee. The moulded non-slip on the decks should have been continued over the cabin top. The foredeck is a good size, with a large hatch in it. The left hand side of this is taken up by a 10lb (4.5kg) gas cylinder, but there is room on the right for ropes and an anchor.

## Interior

A double-hinged teak door gives access to the cabin. At least the aft end of this has full standing headroom, even if this decreases forward. The step down doubles as a small locker, though a hinged lid rather than a front-opening door would have been an easier way of opening this. On your left is a compact galley, made very neatly from a one-piece GRP moulding, featuring a two-burner hob and grill, with a stainless steel sink alongside. Hot and cold pressurised water is supplied via an engine-heated calorifier. A fiddled lid covers the galley when not in use, or serves as a worktop. Stowage is limited to a locker underneath and a narrow shelf outboard.

Opposite is the shower/toilet compartment, with enough room in here for most people to manoeuvre. We were surprised to find a Lavac WC fitted. This vacuum unit has not often made the move from sailing craft to motorboats, but is reliable in operation if the crew understand how it works. A holding tank is standard.

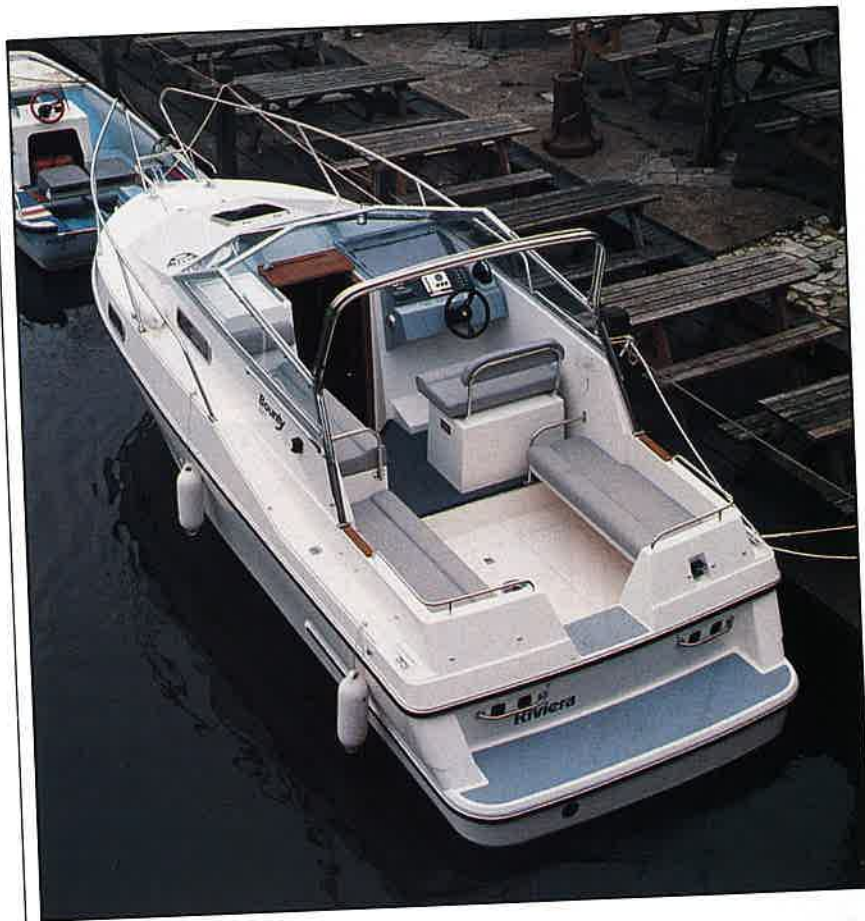
Forward is the U-shaped settee, which converts to a double berth. Limited storage space is provided under the berths in moulded trays, with further shallow trays under shelves outboard port and starboard. A half-height hanging locker is located at the aft end of the settee.

A second double berth is found in a cabin under the cockpit, reached through a curtained doorway to port. This is definitely only an occasional or children's berth, big enough for two adults but with limited headroom and storage.

The interior finish is extremely good, with a moulded GRP inner lining for the overhead, and neatly tailored cushions and carpeting.

## Performance and handling

Power on the 24 can be chosen from Volvo, Perkins or Vetus diesels, from 20-30hp. Our test boat had the 20hp Vetus M3.10, based on the Mitsubishi block and fitted with the new Borg Warner mechanical gearbox.



The engine is mounted under the cockpit, and access via the hatches is excellent. The same applies to the standard of engineering, with plenty of room to get to all service points plus the twin batteries. Fuel lines in copper are well clipped, with a filter and shut-off valve on the forward bulkhead, and armoured reinforced tails to the flexibly-mounted engine. A Rule 1000 bilge pump is fitted in the keel sump. Sound insulation is fitted under the hatches, which also have neoprene seals, but there is none on the bulkheads, and no silencer in the exhaust line.

The Bounty handled admirably. The engine and gear control was light and precise, the steering likewise. The 2:1 reduction ratio gave excellent steering power, and once you have mastered the paddlewheel effect the boat can be positioned well in a lock, with the keel giving a good grip on the water. On the river the boat tracked a good straight line for its length and beam.

The top speed we recorded with our radar gun was 7.7mph at 3300rpm, but a comfortable cruising speed was 6mph at 2300. At this speed the noise level was an acceptable 75dB(A) at the helm, but in the aft seats this became an intrusive 83dB(A). We would hope the addition of a silencer would improve this.

And the wake? Well, we can report that it is acceptable but not exceptional. Even at 6mph you would have to slow down for rowing skiffs or moored boats, and at no point did it completely disappear. For a short, wide boat this is not surprising, but the makers believe that it can be reduced, possibly by trimming the boat slightly by the bow.

We cannot comment on this, but did not find the performance a problem. The Bounty is a well-built, good-value boat, ideal for river use, for weekends or longer cruises. □

## Bounty 24

- Loa** 24ft 0in (7.32m).
- Beam** 8ft 6in (2.59m).
- Draught** 2ft 2in (0.76m).
- Height** 6ft 9in (2.05m) to top of screen.
- Displacement** 2.4 tonnes.
- Fuel capacity** 25gal (114lt).
- Water capacity** 40gal (185lt).
- Engine** 20-30hp Perkins, Volvo or Vetus.
- Price** £25,445 ex VAT.
- Builder** Bounty Boats, Riverside Estate, Brundall, Norwich NR13 5PW. Tel: 0603 712070.
- Supplier** Swancraft, St George & Dragon Boathouse, Henley Road, Wargrave, Berkshire RG10 8HY. Tel: 0734 402677.