



## BOAT REPORT

# ATLANTA 32

In its extended form, this revamp of Atlanta Boats' narrow-beam 24-footer becomes a spacious family cruiser.



Photographs by Emrhys Barrell



**Above left:** the centre cockpit, an obvious focal point and entertaining area, has a fully-enclosing canopy. **Below left:** underway, response to the helm and all-round vision is excellent. **Above:** forward, the galley and dinette are divided from the vee-berth by a half-height bulkhead. **Above right:** there is comfortable seating for up to eight in the cockpit, with well-placed handholds easing access to the narrow side decks.

ATLANTA Boats have built up a justifiably good reputation over the years for their well-built, value-for-money inland cruisers. When we tested the narrow-beam Atlanta 24 (see MBM Jul 88), we commented on the high standard of finish it achieved in its class. Now the company has launched a larger model, the 32, also aimed at use on rivers and the narrow canals.

The 32 was designed by the simple expedient of extending the hull mould of the 24, giving a long centre cockpit and allowing an extra cabin to be added aft. Thus you end up with six berths — four forward in the saloon and the forward cabin, and two aft — with separate toilet compartments at each end of the boat. Power is provided by an outboard, giving good manoeuvrability and a simple and cheap installation.

One of Atlanta's dealers is Walton Marine, and it was to their Upton Marina branch on the River Severn that we travelled for our test in August.

Boats built with the 6ft 10in (2.1m) beam restraint of Britain's narrow canals will always have a boxy form, but the Atlanta achieves a respectably attractive line nonetheless. Two lower rubbing strakes help in this respect, while also protecting the hull in locks. The finish of both hull and deck is good, with styling stripes adding to the effect.

The focal point of the boat is the centre cockpit. This is an attractive and comfortable area, with ample room for all the crew plus a couple of guests. Bucket seats port and starboard cater for the helmsman and mate, though they would be a tight fit for anyone more amply upholstered than our bony tester.



The driver to port faces a nice wooden-spoked wheel but an almost bare dash, with just four flimsy (and unmarked) plastic flick-switches and an engine stop/start button grouped in one corner. The single-lever Morse engine control is well placed on the right of the console. The view is good all around, with forward vision helped by a single wiper, and the screens fold down for negotiating low bridges.

Behind are bench seats port and starboard, with room for three people on each. The coaming here is high enough to give a good feeling of security, but low enough for a good view out and for easy access to the side decks, which is helped by well-placed handrails forward and aft. The upholstery is an attractive shade of blue, and includes padded coaming sides all round. Lifting up the side seats reveals voluminous storage space, with as much again under hinged hatches in the sole. The bottom of the centreline locker lifts to reveal a Rule 1000 automatic bilge pump. The finish in these lockers is painted wood, though it could have been smoother.

The forward cabin is reached through a hinged teak door and down two steps, with a lifting hatch above. On your right is a large, full-height hanging locker, well finished inside though with its door shielded by the open cabin door.

To port is the toilet compartment. This is only just big enough, with a small corner sink and with the Porta Potti sited in the shower tray. The entrance sill is also too high, more so than is necessary to keep the shower water in.

The cabin itself has 6ft 1in (1.85m) headroom at



its aft end, reducing to 5ft 11in (1.80m) and 5ft 9in (1.75m) as you move forward.

The galley, a good size at 6ft long, is located to starboard and is made from a one-piece GRP moulding. The sink and drainer are aft, adjacent to a Flavel two-burner hob and oven, with a worktop forward. Lookers are located underneath, though again the finish inside these is basic and occasionally rough.

Good-sized windows are fitted on both sides of the saloon, with two large opening sections, one above the galley. Hot water to sink and toilets is supplied by a Paloma gas heater, located on the aft bulkhead, and with its piping neatly boxed in.

Opposite the galley is a C-shaped dinette and table, which pulls out to form a double berth. A fridge is sited under the aft end, with a locker and drawer forward and another locker outboard.

At the forward end of the cabin, divided off by a half-height bulkhead, are two vee-berths, with an infill for a double but with an overall length of only 5ft 9in (1.75m). A neat cave locker, with sliding perspex doors, is mounted in the forward bulkhead over the foot of the berths.

Finish throughout the interior is in teak, with attractive upholstery and neat removable overhead panels in simulated suede. The woodwork could have benefited from another coat of varnish, as it looked flat and cold, while there were more scratches and pencil marks than we would have expected.

A second door from the cockpit leads to the aft cabin. This again has 6ft 1in (1.85m) headroom at its forward end, reducing to 5ft 11in (1.80m) aft. The toilet compartment to port and hanging locker to starboard match their counterparts forward.

A double berth athwartships across the aft end has a lift-out centre section, allowing it to be used as a settee during the day, and three deep lockers underneath, which go straight down to the GRP inside of the hull. The shelf across the aft end of the cabin, under the window, provides extra storage space but should have a fiddled edge to stop things falling off. All three windows slide, giving excellent ventilation.

Behind the backrest of the berth are three doors set into the transom. The starboard one gives access to the locker for the outboard fuel tank, the centre one to the engine itself, and the port one to a locker with two batteries in it.

Curiously, the doors themselves are fitted with Chubb security locks, needing a special key to open them, which we would have thought an undesirable situation in an emergency. Also, the battery switches are located in the engine compartment, whereas we would have thought somewhere more obvious would have been better. All three doors have rubber seals around them, with fireproof panels, and the lockers are vented through the transom, but even so we are not totally happy at the thought of fuel tanks being carried through a living area.

Access to the front of the engine is adequate through the locker door, but getting to the propeller is practically impossible, even from outside, due to the high transom. A simple solution would have been to fit a small boarding platform each side of the transom, which would allow you to stand at water level, and would additionally give some protection to the engine.

The side decks are 4in (100mm) wide, with a raised gunwale lip which has strategically placed

fender eyes set into it. Well-placed inboard handrails on the cabin top assist when you are moving forward, though the rail aft of the windscreen runs right above the vent for the water heater below.

Unfortunately, as with so many boats, little thought has been given to handholds when the canopy is erected; canvas straps would at least give you something to grab hold of. The canopy itself gives good protection, and has removable panels, but stowing the stainless steel hoops out of the way when the cover is down is not easy.

The foredeck is small but adequate, with a low split pulpit around it. A small locker will take a mooring line, and there are good 7in (175mm) cleats. A neat moulding set into the brow of the cabin forward takes the steaming light, with an adjustable tunnel light alongside it, but the horn on top would be vulnerable to a stray rope. The cabin tops are just shiny gelcoat, and should have some sort of non-slip in case you need to stand on them. Rubber fendering protects the gunwale, though the corner piece at the transom is a sharp one and would be vulnerable to knocks.

Various makes and models of outboard are offered by different dealers. Walton Marine recommend the 15hp Honda four-stroke petrol unit for canal and normal river use, with the option of a 35hp Honda or a 30hp Suzuki if you are regularly travelling on rivers with stronger currents and feel you need extra power in reserve. Our test boat was fitted with the 15hp unit, and in practice we would feel this to be sufficient for nearly all applications.

When Honda introduced the 15, they responded to requests from customers and boatbuilders for an engine that would be suitable for remote installations, and fitted an electric start. Alas, they did not complete the process, and left the choke and low-oil warning light mounted on the engine, so for the first start of the day you still have to climb back through the aft cabin to set the choke, and release it once the engine has warmed up. They also leave the dealer to devise his own stop/start button on the dash.

The engine runs like a dream. Quiet, smooth, with no hesitation at tickover and no tendency to stall, it is the perfect engine for river and canal use. Its power is more than sufficient for the Atlanta, pushing it to the legal limit for most rivers (and the sensible maximum for the hull) of around 6-7 knots. Beyond that, you are just making waves.

Manoeuvring in the marina is made easy by the smooth, positive response, with plenty of stopping power in reverse gear. With its bluff profile and shallow draught, the Atlanta is always going to be affected by the wind, but the directional thrust of the outboard, whether in ahead and astern, makes matters as simple as they can be. Noise levels in the cockpit at cruising speed are excellent, and there is the minimum of vibration.

So, the 32 lives up to the Atlanta family tradition. You get a lot of space for your money, and a very practical, well thought-out family cruiser. Some of the finish could be improved, but this is still a well fitted-out craft for its type, and we were on one of the earliest examples of the model. Remember also that the price is for Walton Marine's ready-to-cruise package, including lines, fenders, anchor, fire-extinguishers, gas bottle and antifouling. □

## Atlanta 32

**Loa** 32ft 5in (9.88m).  
**Beam** 6ft 10in (2.08m).  
**Draught** 1ft 2in (0.35m).  
**Air draught** 7ft 8in (2.34m) with the screen up; 5ft 8in (1.73m) with the screen down.  
**Weight** 1.8 tonnes without engine.  
**Price** £22,510 ex VAT.  
**Builders** Atlanta Boats, Burnley Road, Harle Syke, Burnley, Lancashire BB10 2HG.  
**Tel:** 0282 23484.  
**Suppliers** Walton Marine, Upton Marina, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire, WR80 PBO.  
**Tel:** 0684 593111.