

BOATS IN BRIEF FLYING FOX HORIZON



OVER the past year we have had plenty of experience of Outhill Boatbuilders' Flying Fox dory range. We used one of their 17ft offset-console craft as one of our workhorses during last season's successful run of Try-A-Boat events, and a brand new example was presented at Earls Court to the winner of the competition run in conjunction with this scheme.

We tried totting up the number of people who had been out on our original boat, and concluded that the figure ran into thousands, with a good few hundred hours put on the twin Mariner 40 outboards. Apart from a serious service on the latter, and tidying the odd scratch or two on the hull, it is a testimony to the substantial build of both the craft and the RNLI 'recon' engines that everything is fit for a further season's hard use.

So we were well placed to try Outhill's new 14ft Horizon centre-console runabout, fitted in this case with one of the new Force 40hp engines. And, clambering aboard the little Horizon, it was obvious that it shared the solid build of the larger boats, using the same sealed underdeck foam buoyancy.

With a centre console, and even with just 14ft to play with, there is plenty of cockpit space. The cockpit is self-draining, although we felt it might benefit from some modifications as a couple of pints of water seemed to be permanently slopping about, even once we were up and running.

The helm console is fitted with a small but

useful screen, bordered by a sturdy frame-cum-grabrail. On the safety side we were also impressed by the paint-type non-slip finish to the deck areas — although bare feet beware! The double helm seat with its reversible bolster houses the battery and a separate 5gal (22lt) fuel tank; a top-up can could also find a niche here or beneath the second seat locker ahead of the console.

With two-up, the Force 40hp (which comes with power trim and tilt) gave the Horizon a top speed of 24.5 knots when trimmed out a little, although the boat seemed to ride best with the trim tucked back in. At these revs, 4900rpm, our meter showed a consumption of exactly 4gph (18lph). Dropping to 20 knots at 4100rpm, it indicated around 2½gph (12lph).

A noise reading at the helm gave 87dB(A) at this latter speed — not hugely intrusive but loud enough. The Force range of engines are marketed on their simplicity and get-on-the-water value for money, so although they benefit from the reliability of electronic ignition it is still a matter of mixing your 50:1 two-stroke fuel as the 40 is not oil-injected. Nor does it have a through-prop exhaust, which means it is smokier than most.

The package handled responsively enough. Admittedly not overpowered, when we put the Horizon through the hardest of turns it came through tight but still in a safe, comfortable, family-friendly upright manner.



Loa 14ft 0in (4.26m).
Beam 6ft 4in (1.93m).
Weight 660lb (300kg).
Power longshaft outboards from 10hp to 60hp.
Price £3400 ex VAT for the boat alone; £5783 for a special-offer package with a 40hp ELPT Force outboard and Hallmark Coasler trailer.
Enquiries Outhill Boatbuilders, Henley Road, Outhill, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7DU. Tel: 0527 853798.