



— Boat Report —

CAPRIOLE 27

Falcon Sports Boats' river cruising version of their well established 27ft coastal sportscruiser offers a much modified low-wash hull and some interesting layout ideas. And it has a little sister, a revised model of what used to be called the Bounty 24.

Falcon Sports Boats have been established for many years, producing family-sized sportscruisers popular for coastal and offshore use and at the same time versions designed for the river. In some cases, the latter have used different hulls, suitable for low-speed use, or modified deck layouts.

The riverboat version of the Falcon 24 was previously known as the Bounty 24, but the company have now brought out a revised version of this, and a new 27, under the Capriole name. We tried both the new boats on the River Thames last summer, courtesy of dealers Val Wyatt Marine.

Design

The 27 uses the superstructure and deck moulding of the seagoing Falcon 27 (see MBM Jun 89 p50), but has a new riverboat hull. Designed by Andrew Woistenholme, this features his low-wash form, with rounded bilges and a gentle run-up to the transom, to reduce resistance and wavemaking at slower



speeds. In its standard form with a Volvo Penta MD22 diesel, this should produce 8-10 knots, making it also suitable for estuary trips.

The layout gives a 50:50 split between cockpit and cabin. The former has seating for up to nine people, making it ideal for the largest river parties, while the latter provides two double berths, in the saloon and an aft cabin.

Exterior

At the transom, the integral moulded bathing platform has room for four fender stowages, plus a hinged boarding ladder for anyone who can find a

clean enough stretch of river to swim in. A door to starboard leads into the cockpit.

An L-shaped settee to port has room for six people to sit around a table. Neatly designed, with moulded-in holders that will take glasses and cans, but only narrow bottles, this table drops to form the infill for a sunlounger, or an emergency berth. Two legs make it stable, while a clever stowage keeps it out of the way against the cockpit side.

Forward are a single passenger seat to port and a double helm seat to starboard, both comfortable, with deep cushions, side supports and angled footrests. The helmsman faces a simple dash, with engine instruments, six ready-use switches and ten

press-button breakers. The single-lever engine control is by his right hand, and a shallow tray with a perspex cover takes folded maps.

The substantial stainless steel goalpost mast carries the canopy, and hinges down to reduce the air draught to 7ft 5in (2.25m).

Moulded steps, with teak treads to help you keep your footing, lead up to the side decks. These are a good width for a boat of this size, with a raised gunwale lip and outboard guardrails running most of their length. The moulded non-slip continues over the coachroof, though we did notice that the deck flexes when you walk over it.

Mooring is catered for by 6in (150mm) aluminium

cleats forward and aft, while smaller ones each side will take springs or fenders. On the foredeck, a false anchor hatch is moulded closed, though it could be made to open for a boat that is going to do regular estuary work.

Interior

An impressive sliding door, of tinted perspex set in an aluminium frame, leads down three steps into the attractive saloon, given an open, welcoming feel by its ash joinery.

The galley is divided between both sides of the saloon. To starboard is a double gas hob, a

Capriole 24

We first reported on this boat as the Bounty 24 (see MBM Jun 91 p56). The latest version incorporates some detail modifications, but the basic layout is unchanged.

The split-level cockpit provides room for six to eight people to socialise, while down below are two double berths, a toilet, and galley, making this an ideal boat for either day-trips or river cruising.

Standard power comes from a 30hp Volvo Penta 2030 diesel, with the option of the 40hp, giving a measured maximum of 7.3 knots on our test. However, a more

realistic cruising speed for this riverboat would be 4.4 knots (5mph), which it achieved at a comfortable 1500rpm. What little noise there was came mainly from the water burbling up behind the boat.

Since our brief test, Falcon have embarked on further detail changes to the deck moulding, including removing the step in the side decks, modifying the bathing platform and improving the access through the transom door. You will be able to see the finished results at the London Boat Show.



Loa 24ft 5in (7.43m).
Beam 8ft 3in (2.52m).
Draught 2ft 6in (0.76m).
Air draught 7ft 0in (2.13m) with the mast down.
Fuel capacity 40gal (180lt).
Water capacity 30gal (140lt).
Engine 30hp or 40hp Volvo Penta 2030 diesel.
Price from £29,990 ex VAT.



Capriole 27

Loa 26ft 8in (8.13m).
Beam 9ft 8in (2.95m).
Draught 3ft 0in (0.91m).
Air draught 8ft 9in (2.67m) with the mast up; 7ft 5in (2.25m) with the mast down.
Fuel capacity 40gal (180lt).
Water capacity 45gal (200lt).
Engine 50hp or 60hp Volvo Penta MD22 diesel.
Price from £39,990 ex VAT.
Builders Falcon Sports Boats, Griffin Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 0SL.
Tel: 01603 35516.
Suppliers Val Wyatt Marine, Wargrave-on-Thames, Berkshire RG10 8DY.
Tel: 01734 403211.



good-size sink and an optional gas oven, plus cave locker and crockery stowage. Opposite is a large worktop area, plus locker, drawer and bottle stowage. This format may seem unusual but in practice it works well, and makes the best use of the available space. Headroom is 6ft (1.82m).

In the bow is an equally unusual pentagonal settee, with room for up to six people around a table which drops to form the infill for a double berth.

Aft to port a WC with a toilet, a small corner sink and locker, and a grating allowing you to shower. There is 5ft 10in (1.78m) headroom, and the finish is a practical moulded GRP.

Opposite to starboard is the door to the aft cabin. Here you have an athwartships double berth, a small dressing table, a fold-down seat and a limited amount of stowage. Headroom is 5ft 11in (1.80m) over the entrance area, reducing to about 2ft (0.6m) over the berth, although a raised section under the helm seat increases this to 3ft (0.9m). A hatch into the cockpit provides light, ventilation and the escape route that is obligatory under new river regulations.

Performance and handling

Power comes from an inboard diesel, either a 50hp Volvo MD22 or the 60hp version of the same engine, mounted under the cockpit.

A central hinged hatch gives excellent access,

but could do with a stay to keep it open. Twin engine cooling water inlets and strainers are fitted, either side of the keel, minimising the risk of blockage — a legacy of the company's hirecruiser background. Batteries are stowed in boxes port and starboard, and soundproofing is provided by neat PVC-faced foam on the hatch and under the sole.

Out on the river, the 27 proved easy and accommodating to handle. Its well set-up engine control, light steering and large rudder made it simple to manoeuvre in tight areas yet ensured it tracked a straight course underway.

Setting the throttle at 1250rpm gave an easy cruising 4.5mph, while at 1500rpm we recorded 5.3mph. At both speeds, wash was hardly noticeable, but you would want to push on through 6mph only on wide open sections of the river. Just to check the 27's estuarial pretensions, we gave it quick burst up to the claimed 8-knot maximum.

Noise levels in the cockpit and cabin were a moderate 68dB(A) and 64dB(A) respectively at 5mph. By 7mph, the cockpit was a comparatively noisy 80dB(A).

Conclusions

The Capriole 27 adds up to an excellent addition to the mid-range river cruiser market, a market that is still underserved by good new boats. □



Above: the galley area straddles the beam of the 27 just aft of the pentagonal settee and table, with its worktop and most of its stowage to port. Left: the helm and passenger seats are comfortable and well supported, and the goalpost mast hinges down to reduce the air draught for low bridges.