

# BOAT REPORT

# FAIRLINE 41



From humble beginnings, Fairline have developed in two decades to become one of the front runners in the field of European quality motorboat producers. We took an exclusive first look at the replacement for their popular 40 foot model.

THE Fairline 41 marks a milestone for this successful British company in several respects. It finally replaces the last of the old-style Fairlines, the ever-popular 40, leaving a complete fleet of Olesinski-designed medium-to-deep vee hulled boats all capable of 25 knot-plus top speeds. At the same time, it is one of the first models coming out of the firm's new production facility at Weldon, a development that has more than doubled their capacity, and one largely funded by EEC grants. The European connection is particularly appropriate for a company exporting 70% of its output, and we also thought the timing right for us to take a closer look at the history of the marque before getting into the Boat Test proper.

## The Fairline story

Fairline was founded in 1963 by the father of Sam Newington, the present Chairman. Set in a picturesque location by the side of the River Nene at Oundle, the company originally comprised a marina and hire-boat fleet. By 1968 they had started building boats of their own, the earliest of these being the Fairline 19. Three years later, the highly successful 25 Fury was launched, of which 140 were built in all, and gradually the size of the range increased. The company weathered the storms of the oil-crises of the '70s, and in 1979 took the bold step of going public on the stockmarket. As such, for several years it was the only volume pleasure-boat producer in the UK with a public listing, and its annual reports were subject to close scrutiny by rivals and other members of the trade alike.

The UK recession of the early '80s, caused by high interest rates and an artificially strong pound produced more pressure on the firm, but they emerged from this perfectly poised to take advantage of the subsequent UK and European boom in motor boat sales.

Output and profits soared, from figures of £6.4m turnover and £0.4m profit in 1984, to £30m and £3.6m respectively by 1988. The company is currently building 500 boats per

# A NEW GENERATION



Photographs by William Payne

## BOAT REPORT

## FAIRLINE 41



Above: the saloon, with seating for eight in the lounge area aft. Note the small inspection hatches in the saloon sole for easy daily checking of the dipsticks and cooling water headers. Left: the master cabin in the bows. Above right: the interior helm, with chart table to port, and overhead console complete with a sensible cooling vent for the instruments.



year, from a workforce of 450 and reckons itself to be one of the two or three largest motor boat producers in Europe. The range currently spans 21-50ft, and the firm has a strong commitment to both ends of the market. Whilst small boats are harder to build profitably, Sam Newington believes it is vital to offer newcomers an entry-level British boat, and avoid them having to move to one of the imports to get afloat. In fact, if they could find the time to develop it, the company would like to add a trailable cruiser to their fleet, but that's another story. At the other end of the spectrum, Fairline have plans for a larger model to top their flagship 50, at present guardedly described as 60ft+, which is expected within 12-18 months.

The company's commitment to design excellence is underlined by the fact that all the models are now designed by Bernard Olesinski, generally acknowledged as the current leader in this field. At the same time, the importance of interior styling is keenly understood, with the result that the firm now employs a design staff of four graduates from the Coventry Polytechnic Department of Transport Design, under the close supervision

of the Chairman's wife, Briony Newington. The overall aim is to produce three to four new models every year, and to take the company to No. 1 in Europe, a goal that can only be to the benefit of the British boating industry as a whole, and the customer in particular.

## Design

The 41 reflects Olesinski's current thinking in hull form. The sections amidships have a deeper vee than he has used in the past, at 25°, to improve head sea performance, while the flat at the chine is reduced in width for the same purpose, to reduce slamming. The variable deadrise reduces markedly moving aft, being 19° at the transom. Three spray rails each side give the hull a better grip on the water, and ensure a dry ride.

The other noticeable feature of the underwater form is the propeller tunnels aft. You won't see these on the drawing, because in deference to the designer's wishes we have left them off, but we have taken a photograph of the boat out of the water to help you understand the principle. Tunnels are now appearing on many Olesinski designs, and

# BOAT REPORT

their purpose is threefold. They allow the engines to be mounted further aft, and lower in the boat, increasing accommodation space. They permit a shallower shaft angle, improving propulsion efficiency, and reducing the draught of the boat, and they give some extra measure of protection to the underwater gear. They can have a downside, requiring closer attention to the rudder design and positioning, but we will discuss this at greater length in the Handling and Performance section.

## Accommodation

The layout of the 41 is conventional aft-cockpit, flying bridge format, providing berths for six people, in two private cabins, each with en-suite toilets, plus the saloon.

Looking at the accommodation in more detail, the saloon has a three-person settee to port, with a larger, five-person settee opposite. A movable table can face either way. Forward to port is a cocktail cabinet and fridge, with a useful worktop area. To starboard, up two steps, is the helm position. There is room for two people to sit here, with a good view forward and all-round, but we were surprised at how little knee-room there was. The driver has slightly more space, but the navigator is distinctly cramped. The engine instrument layout in front of the helmsman is excellent, as is the positioning of the ready-use switches. Navigation equipment is mounted overhead, which is fine for the VHF, but less appropriate for the echo-sounder and radar. The navigator has a good chart area ahead of him, with a hinged perspex cover, and also has the main electrical switch panel down by his ankles. This is comprehensive and well-designed, but the left-hinged perspex door makes it awkward

to reach the controls.

Four steps down lead to the galley to port. This is a spacious and well thought out area, with a pleasant 'stone' effect worktop. A double sink with mixer tap is let into this, together with a rubbish bin to the right. There is good cupboard space under the worktop, plus a big fridge with a door panel that matches the ash or teak woodwork. The microwave oven is well-sited, as are the separate three-burner hob, oven and grill. Plate and cup stowages are located outboard, but we were surprised not to find any drawers.

Opposite the galley is the guest cabin, with two single berths. Headroom is 6ft over most of the area, but decreases at the head of the berths where they run under the helm position above. A large full-height hanging locker, plus smaller lockers and drawers take care of stowage. A door leads to the en-suite toilet, which can also be reached from the lobby. The toilet is a roomy compartment, with a good-sized moulded sink, shower and WC. We were pleased to see the hinged GRP seat that covers the WC when not in use.

Forward again is the master cabin. This contains a large central double berth, and another en-suite toilet. Stowage consists of two hanging lockers, drawers under the berth, and lockers and shelves outboard. A hatch in the sole gives good access to the sea-cocks for the toilets, and it was good to see the hull here painted out to keep it clean and dry. A surprisingly narrow door leads to the toilet. Inside, you find a roomy compartment, with similar appointments to its partner.

Overall, the interior finish is good. Teak or ash joinery is offset by pleasant vinyl linings and attractive upholstery. We were particularly



# FAIRLINE 41

## Fairline 41

**Engines:** Twin Caterpillar 3208TA diesels, 375hp at 2800rpm, 10,400cc V8. Twin Disc MG507 1.5:1 gearboxes, 22in x 22in 4-blade Aquafoil props (or: Twin Volvo TAMD 71 diesels, 357hp at 2500rpm, 6730cc, 6-cyl, 2:1 boxes, 25x32 props).

**Conditions:** Wind SW 2-3, sea slight. **Load:** 40% fuel, 80% water, 3 crew.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	Sound levels dB(A)			
							saloon	main cab	ckpt	fly bdg
1500	10.8	5.8	26.4	1.86	596	3.5	72	69	82	69
1750	13.1	8.6	38.2	1.52	487	5.0	73	75	84	70
2000	17.3	11.0	50.0	1.57	503	5.5	73	79	85	71
2250	21.3	16.4	74.6	1.30	416	6.0	76	81	89	74
2500	25.1	23.3	106.0	1.08	345	5.5	78	83	93	77
2750	27.5	34.3	156.0	0.81	257	5.0	82	80	94	79

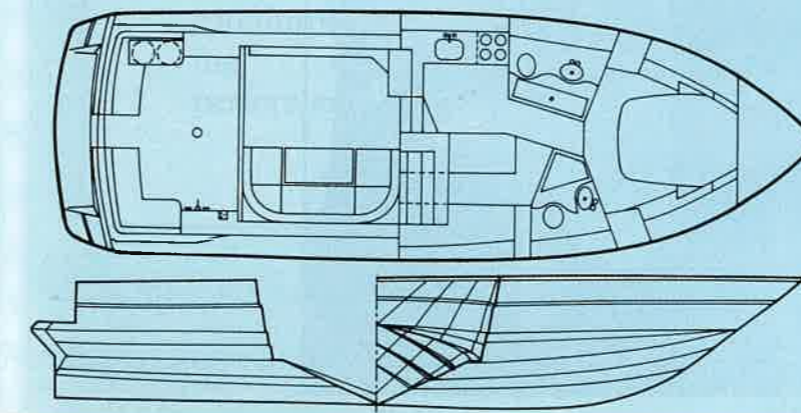
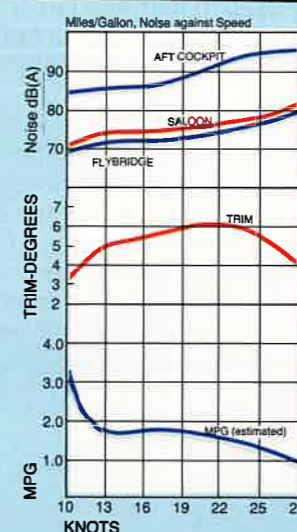
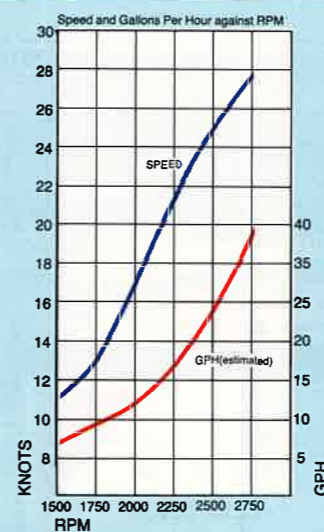
**Acceleration:** 0-20 knots 14.2 secs.

<b>LOA</b>	44ft 3in (13.50m)	<b>Fuel</b>	2x160gal (1450lt)
<b>Hull length</b>	42ft 8in (13.00m)	<b>Water</b>	130gal (590lt)
<b>Beam</b>	13ft 8in (4.17m)	<b>Price:</b>	ex VAT (basic)
<b>Draught</b>	3ft 3in (1.00m)	2 x Caterpillar 3280	£133,700
<b>Displacement</b>	11 tons	2 x Volvo TAMD 71	£137,650

**Builder:**  
Fairline Boats plc,  
Oundle, PE8 5PA.  
Tel: 0832 73661

**Suppliers:**  
BA Peters Ltd,  
Chichester Yacht Basin,  
Sussex. Tel: 0243 511381.

AH Moody Ltd,  
Swanwick,  
Southampton.  
Tel: 0489 885000.



taken by the polished stainless steel trim round the window frames. Very Italian, very chic, and also practical — condensation from the glass eventually discolours and stains the usual aluminium frames.

## Exterior

Moving out of the saloon, through the normal large patio-type doors, you reach the spacious cockpit. 10ft x 7ft (3x2m), this is half protected by the overhang of the flying bridge above. Cushioned seating runs across the transom and round the sides. Lockers under this take gas-bottles and warps. A large walk-through transom door gives access to the integral bathing platform, which also carries six fender stowages.

A good-sized hatch on gas struts gives access to the lazarette. In here there is a fair amount of stowage space for a deflated dinghy and its outboard. There is also room for the calorifier, and the optional central heating and generator. A box gives good protection to the rudder stocks and steering gear, while allowing easy access for inspection. So often we find this gear exposed, and vulnerable to becoming jammed. We were less impressed with some of the glasswork and metal fittings down here, but this may have been due to this being the first boat off the production line.

A ladder leads up to the large flying bridge. Up here there is an L-shaped lounge aft, a double helm seat amidships, and a further single seat to port. These latter have hinging backrests which allow you to face forward or aft, but prove a deceptive hand-hold if you grab them when moving about. The problem is not helped by a cylindrical cushion on the backrest that rotates if you grab it — locking both of these would be beneficial. We were pleased to see the rounded edge to the front console — so often these have sharp corners just where your knees will catch them in rough seas or when going over a wake. We also liked the glove box to port, and the locker under the helm.

The side-decks are a good width, but with only an averagely-effective moulded non-slip, though this does continue over the coachroof. Guard rails are 2ft 6in (0.75m) high, of generous tubing, but these still flexed when we leant on them. Substantial cleats, forward, midships and aft take care of mooring, with a good-sized foredeck locker for the anchor chain, plus warps.

## Engines

Three engine options are offered with the 41: 306hp Volvo TAMD61s, 358hp 71s, or 375hp Caterpillar 320s. Our test figures were taken with the Cat option, but we also ran some numbers on a boat with 71s in it for comparative purposes.

In all cases, the engines are mounted under the saloon, with access via hatches in the sole. ▶

# BOAT REPORT

◀ A manhole size hatch allows you to climb down between the engines, but space is limited, and we were concerned that the first things you stand on are the fuel filters. Large bronze inlet water strainers are mounted forward, together with a fuel change-over system on the bulkhead. Getting to the stern-glands would be distinctly tricky, particularly the starboard one. For routine checking, smaller hand-sized hatches in the sole give access to the dip-sticks and cooling water headers.

The electrical systems consist of an ac ring main, with shorepower or optional generator, plus two 12V circuits, one with a single 175Ah battery for starboard engine start, and the other with two 200Ah batteries for port engine start and domestics.

Bilge pumps consist of three automatic electric units in separate watertight compartments, together with a manual back-up mounted in the cockpit.

## Handling and performance

Top speeds with either of the larger engine options were almost exactly the same, at 28 knots. Acceleration certainly favoured the Cats, with 0-20 knots taking a creditable 14.2 seconds, whereas the Volvos only managed 20.5 seconds. We were unable to measure fuel consumption on our tests, but our previous figures, confirmed by the maker's data would indicate 34.3gph at maximum speed, equating to 0.81mpg, and giving a range of 257 miles. Dropping back to 21 knots produces figures of 16.4, 1.3 and 416 respectively. Comparative values for the Volvos would be 0.88mpg and 282 miles at full speed. Noise levels we only measured with the Cats, and they revealed a noisy cockpit at top speed with 94dB(A). Inside the saloon,

matters improved considerably to 82dB(A). Up on the flying bridge there were no problems, with a maximum 79dB(A).

We were unable to find any serious weather to test the improved sea-keeping claims, but owner Peter Hayes, with 90 hours on the engines already and 1070 miles on the clock, confirms that this is a boat for all seasons. Having previously run a 40 for six years, he should be well-placed to comment.

We were less happy though with the boat's steering. Turns at full speed could induce the rudders to stall, with the only way to recover the situation being to back off the throttles and regain steerage way. The symptoms are: you put the wheel over at speed, and the boat starts to turn and heel. Part way through, it stops turning. Turning the wheel has no effect, as the rudders are now working in a completely unpredictable water flow, and the only solution is to back off the throttles and start again.

On the first boat we tested this occurred in both directions. The second boat however turned perfectly to port, but not to starboard, which would indicate that some of the problem may lay with the way the rudders are set up on individual vessels. On high speed craft, particularly with tunnels in the hull, the correct toe-in of the rudders is critical, and is an area that will need watching carefully. Another alternative would be to make the rudders slightly deeper, putting a larger area in the prop-flow, making them more effective. Neither is an insolvable problem.

## Conclusion

Fairline have a justified reputation throughout Europe for well-built, well-finished and good value boats, and the 41 continues the tradition. The deeper vee hull sections will give even better sea-keeping, and provided the steering set-up is watched carefully, this will be a worthy bearer of the family name. ■



The business end of things, showing the propeller tunnels.