



Haber 660M

This 21-footer was developed from a sailing yacht. Does that limit its usefulness as a motor cruiser?

REPORT BY CARL RICHARDSON

If you thought the Haber 660M had a hint of traditional Dutch style to it, you would be off the scent. Surprisingly, it hails from the tongue-twisting town of Nowe Miasto Lubawski in northern Poland, a region of great lakes and rivers.

But if you thought you detected a hint of the sailboat in its design, you'd be dead right. The 'M' in its model designation stands for 'motorboat', distinguishing it from

the yacht which is its sibling.

And the yacht came first: it was launched back in 1989, whilst the motor cruiser came to be in 2001, based on the same hull but with a revised keel.

We took this distinctive 21-footer for a run along a very English stretch of the River Thames, to see whether it will succeed in appealing to those who go boating under power.

DESIGN & LAYOUT

The hull style is probably best described as a rounded-bilge double-ender.

An almost vertical prow falls into a full-length shallow keel which integrates the propeller shaft. A stainless steel rudder is virtually transom-hung, clinging to the last few inches of hull section.

Above the waterline, green topsides finished with rope fendering set into a teak frame underline the Haber's traditional bent, a little reminiscent of a baby Linszen Sturdy.

The pilotboat-style superstructure is most notable for an unusual overhang which, along with Perspex side extensions, offers a degree of shelter in the cockpit. Conversely, it could be argued that it rather intrudes into the space here.

Three circular portholes on each side look

highlights



TRADITIONAL LOOKS

The round-bilge hull features rope fendering and a pilotboat-style superstructure.



INTERIOR SPACE

The open-plan layout includes a double berth and a separate dinette, with ample headroom.

quite stylish, although their sunken design and angle of fitment means that they collect water — and duly disperse it into the cabin upon being opened.

On board there is much to remind you of the boat's roots. A canoe-like body shape tapers aft to form a textbook sailing boat cockpit, and the original tiller steering set-up is even still included as part of the standard specification. However, the raised helm station to starboard redresses the balance, and will be the normal seat for the motorboat skipper.

A solid teak-framed folding screen on the cabin roof serves as a higher mounting mount for the cockpit canopy which comes as standard, while allowing the helmsman a clear view forward.

Below decks, an open-plan layout finds ample room for a dinette converting to a smallish double berth to port, a galley and a toilet compartment to starboard, and a larger double berth which nestles under the forepeak. Headroom of around 6ft 3in is impressive for a boat of this size.

POWER OPTIONS

Currently, the only engine available with the 660M is a standard specification 25hp Vetus three-cylinder diesel.

decks

Teak-floored and self-draining, the cockpit can readily seat four or five adults, and makes for a sociable area. With the canopy up, you still get a decent amount of headroom; otherwise, the cabin-roof overhang affords a limited amount of shelter should conditions turn.

Easy to access, the non-slip side decks feature teak capping to the toerail and teak pads along the cockpit borders. Handrails mounted along the cabin roof are complemented by guardrails forward, making passage around the boat safe.

There are sets of 5in cleats at the bow and stern.



cockpit

Seating to port and starboard amounts to ample space for a crew of four.



helm The helm position is awkward, as the wheel sits under the cabin overhang, making it uncomfortable to get to, while the engine instrument panel is located under the console, making it near impossible to view while underway. The raised seat is of a good size and quality, but we feel it should be removable rather than fixed.

HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

On our late November test day, the Thames was in flood and flowing fast at around 4 knots.

We were moored bow-in, so manoeuvring out was a case of an uncultured blast astern to get us clear of the pontoons before the current got the better of us. The conditions meant that tickover made about 6 knots in one direction and stood us still in the other.

Once out in the stream, the boat quickly got into its stride, the engine digging in to rushing waters and returning around 3 knots at 2000rpm. Only a calm piece of backwater allowed us a brief glimpse of what things would be like in less current, with 900rpm delivering a peaceful 3.3 knots, perfect for lazy summer river cruising.

Manoeuvring here, the slightly springy hydraulic steering still enabled the hull to turn easily and sharply. Going astern, we found the Haber responded more readily when treated to gentle revs at first; once the direction was set, more power could be added.

Back in the main channel, the large section of keel beneath made its presence felt. Though hydraulic, the steering, coupled with the rudder design, gives the impression that you are really guiding the boat, pulling it onto your chosen course.

Unable to test the Haber 660M in tidal waters ourselves, we interrogated Ken Murgatroyd, an ex-Royal Marine and a Yachtmaster, who took the boat out of Poole Harbour and along the coast to Swanage on a recent demonstration weekend in a Force 5.

"First and foremost I see the boat as a good harbour or river boat, happy to purr along all day with a crew of four," he told us. "However, taking it out into coastal water presented no problems.

"In head, beam or following seas, the ride was stable enough and certainly comfortable, with a very buoyant feel to it. I would liken it to a de-rigged sailboat, only with a bit more power.

"I found the best cruising speed to be around 2000rpm, bringing up around 7 knots. Any more and you are only increasing noise and reducing economy for very little gain in speed."



engineroom

A hatch just aft of the companionway allows quick and easy general-purpose access to the engine. For more serious matters, you can open up a raised hatch in the cockpit sole, held in place by four bolts requiring an Allen key.

The bay itself is tidy and well engineered, offering good access to service items and the fuel pre-filter. The good-sized water strainer is to be found in a separate locker behind the helm.

accommodation

Moving down from the cockpit into the cabin is easy, by way of a large sliding hatch and a wide companionway.

Although the boat's outside styling says pilothouse, once inside the feeling is more reminiscent of a deck saloon. Light oak cabinetry, good headroom and plenty of window area combine to give the accommodation a spacious feel. The standard-fit Webasto heating makes the boat eminently usable.

Storage is well catered for with several lined cabinets. A large locker behind the dinette can be converted into a coolbox, as an optional extra.



dinette Up to four people can sit here, and the space converts easily down to what is just about a double berth.



galley A two-burner hob and sink to starboard are augmented by a fair amount of stowage.



forward berth This double is separated from the dinette by a backrest that can be removed to enlarge the cushioned area. A stainless steel centre pole makes for a useful grab handle.

specifications

BUILD	glass reinforced plastic
RCD	design category C
LENGTH OVERALL	21ft 11in (6.60m)
BEAM	8ft 4in (2.50m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 0in (0.60m)
AIR DRAUGHT	6ft 10in (2.05m)
DISPLACEMENT	1.4 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	15gal (68lt)
WATER CAPACITY	25gal (114lt)
ENGINE	single 25hp Vetus diesel
BUILDERS	Yacht Service, 13-300 Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, ul Piastowska 7A, Poland.
SUPPLIERS	Val Wyatt Marine, Willow Marina, Willow Lane, Wargrave-on-Thames, Berkshire RG10 8LH. Tel: 0118 940 3211. www.valwyattmarine.co.uk
PRICE	£34,950 inc VAT as tested

conclusions

LAYOUT

A sensibly designed interior offers excellent headroom and a good amount of space, with the benefit of a separate dinette besides the forward berth.

The helm station needs a little more thought, but the solutions should be relatively straightforward, such as mounting the engine instruments atop or cutting down a section of the cabin-top overhang.

BUILD

With plenty of solid wood joinery both inside and out, and all bilge areas painted out, the level of finish is good.

PERFORMANCE

Besides its potential as a riverboat, this appears to be a steady cruiser with comfortable coastal abilities.

MBM verdict

The Haber 660M is worthy of consideration by those looking to switch from sail to power without losing all the feel, for those with river or harbour moorings but no need for speed, and for trailboaters.

Its style will appeal to those looking for something a little different, without having to pay a premium for that individuality. The only part that doesn't work is the helm station, and we are informed by the agents that this is being redesigned.

Interior space is plentiful for a craft of this size, and the standard specification laid on by the UK importers, including central heating and hot water, means that you have an instantly usable boat.

