



HARDY 27

BOAT REPORT

Hardy's traditional line has a new flagship. We caught up with the single-diesel four-berth version earlier this year.

WITH the aesthetics of a smart yet purposeful workboat, rather than the out-and-out sportiness of the Sea Wings range, the Hardy 27 launched at last year's Southampton Boat Show joined the Norfolk boatbuilders' more traditional range of motor cruisers, from 18ft (5.5m) upwards.

The 274 we tested is a four-berth, single-engine model. A two-berther with the option of single or twin installations is known as the 272.

Design

Somewhat unusually for a craft of this size, designer Colin Mudie has opted for shaftdrive rather than outdrive power, so it is a cockpit clear

The large sliding sunroof allows the 27 to be driven standing up, as well as from the double bench seat.



of obstructions which opens into what can be specified as a fully enclosed wheelhouse. Depending upon engine requirements, the hull can also be modified, allowing for a reduced depth of keel as power and speed increase, from pretty well full displacement to planing style.

Single and twin installations are available. In the latter case conventional shafts are needed, and the midships sleeping area is lost, but by using a vee-drive arrangement on single-engine boats the whole powertrain can be installed further aft, allowing greater space below.

The hull is medium-vee, with a fine entry forward running into a chine at the water line and a pleasing rake and flair at the bow.

Exterior

The self-draining cockpit opens into the wheelhouse by way of the main access and a run of folding half-height doors. Aft of these is a rear-facing settee.

Further seating is down to individual choice: Hardy supply either a hinge-down bench across the transom or a seat locker arrangement as options. The latter would have the advantage of increasing available storage, which is otherwise extremely limited. A false bottom to the main settee, which is left merely as an access to the forward part of the engine compartment, would also help matters.

When not in use, the full-headheight canopy tucks neatly up inside a slot in the wheelhouse overhang. The sides of the wheelhouse (finished with a good weight of teak trim, as are many other areas of the vessel) extend aft to offer extra lateral protection immediately aft of the main pilot area, but the canopy and frame need tailoring, with less angle to its rear panel, because sitting space towards the transom is cramped.

Steps fashioned into the coaming mouldings allow easy progress up to the 8.5in (22cm) side decks, but again are not used as they might have been for much-needed stowage.

There is a grabrail at the break of the superstructure and a handrail to the cabin top, and it was satisfying to see a similar fitting on the lower coachroof. The very full height of toerail is topped with two-strand stanchion and wire guardrails, and the moulding becomes greater on its run forward, giving a safe well to the flat of foredeck.

This raised arrangement, right towards the bow, also provides a landing for the bow-roller and manual windlass (not fitted as standard), and for a chain locker-cum-gas bottle locker below. Mooring hardware is adequate, with 10in (25cm) cleats fore, aft and amidships and a couple of fender beackets aft, where there would otherwise be nothing on which to bend them.

The transom has no bathing platform, although a walk-through is provided in the topside moulding to starboard and a short boarding ladder could be fixed here if required.

Interior

Headroom is never less than 6ft 3in (1.9m) throughout the boat, so the wheelhouse has plentiful standing headroom. It contains only the helm position, with a comfortably upholstered double bench seat biased to port and just enough room for a couple of crewmembers to

stand and chat without too much of a squeeze. Opening side windows and a large sliding sunroof make for a light, breezy shelter in good weather.

There is limited storage under the seat but, again, that is about it. Some regrouping of the ready-use switches and engine instruments would allow the angled fascia to be put to better use, although the Navico log and depth sounder (fitted as extras) are easy to view mounted on the overhead panel. Whilst there is room for additional electronics, setting up a chart for perusal is going to be finicky.

A bow thruster had been fitted to our test boat and the controls for this fell readily to hand. We felt the trim tab controls should be moved to the horizontal surface, adjacent to the wheel, rather than located on the vertical.

Although at a lower level, the main cabin opens fully into the wheelhouse so everyone can stay in contact. For safe movement, we were pleased to see handholds and the use of non-slip on the stair treads. To starboard is a moulded galley area with a fridge, a twin-burner hob, grill and oven, a large stainless steel sink with hot and cold pressurised water, and a reasonable amount of stowage. There is an opening side port and a coachroof deck hatch in the cabin for ventilation.

Forward lies a good-sized vee-dinette, whose teak table can also be used in the cockpit. A sliding infill quickly allows the conversion of the dinette into a 6ft 6in x 5ft 0in (2.0m x 1.52m) double berth, and this good length is beneficial because the mattress narrows considerably at its foot. Seat lockers on each side are painted out and clear of the bilge, and there is an adequately sized hanging locker. The wide shelves fashioned by the seat-backs will also have to be utilised for storage.

The midships sleeping area, measuring 6ft 2in x 3ft 10in (1.89m x 1.19m), has lifting panels beneath its mattress giving access to the stainless steel water tank and bilge. This compartment is lost on twin-engined boats, in which case the 27 clearly becomes a two-berther because none of the cockpit seating can be jiggled to sleep anyone further.

Completing the accommodation is a separate moulded toilet compartment of just about reasonable proportions, with a shower, a pump-out toilet and a useful amount of stowage. A frosted-glass opening port provides ventilation here.

The whole interior is built up on a series of mouldings incorporated into the hull structure, for strength and modular building. The added benefit for the owner is that gelcoat surfaces make it easy to keep clean.

Engines

The four-berth 274 model has three single-diesel options, from 59hp to 130hp, all from Volvo Penta. Our test boat had the final intermediate installation of a TMD31 rated at 100hp.

On the two-berth 272, Hardy offer a choice of three twin installations, up to a pair of these four-cylinder TMD31s or a couple of single straight-shaft options using this engine or Yanmar's 75hp unit. But why a buyer would want to sacrifice the sleeping space to accommodate just a single engine, when the vee-gearbox

facility exists, is open to question.

Battery switches, the well-secured battery box itself and the raw-water strainer are all accessible through the midships seat locker. To get at the rest of the engine, the calorifier, the steering gear and the fuel tank, as well as the associated stopcock and separator, the rear portion of the cockpit has to be raised. This is not difficult, as a large electric ram does the work, but a small hatch nearby would be handy for disconnecting should the power fail; still, it is just possible to squeeze in via the seat locker.

An automatic submersible pump services the bilge, and everything is tidy and easy to get at, but some further thought is needed as to how to utilise some of the space for cockpit stowage.

Performance and handling

Two Vetus bow thruster models are listed as options, our boat having the smaller 1.5kW unit. This adds a further £1870 ex VAT to the price, but when manoeuvring short-handed from the confines of a wheelhouse it makes a handy difference.

When an opening is provided to a wheelhouse, the temptation is to drive standing up, especially while pottering. To this end, a slight reduction in the height of the seat plinth would help, because the ship's-style wheel and throttle were only just within fingertip reach.

Fitted with the single 100hp diesel, our test boat was built with its full keel, which gave plenty of directional stability both at displacement speeds and as the bow lifted.

At full throttle we measured 11.5 knots, but the tachometer showed only 3600rpm so there was still a couple of hundred revs in the engine, which should give a knot or two more. At 3000rpm we got only half a knot more than the 7½ knots achieved at 2500rpm (around the hull speed of this 27-footer).

Expect consumption to be around 2.2gph (10lph) for speeds in the region of 8 knots, giving 3.6mpg and a dry tank range of around 180 miles. This will increase to 4.8gph (22lph) for maximum rpm, equating to 2.4mpg and a dry tank range of 120 miles.

Cruising, with the wheelhouse opened up, noise levels were easy on the ear at 77dB(A) in the cockpit, 82dB(A) at the helm. At full throttle these figures jumped up, to 87dB(A) under shelter and 84dB(A) in the cockpit.

Visibility was good all round, and a slight application of tab bought the bow down to give a leveller ride than might have been expected at 9½ knots and 3400rpm. We pushed around an untidy but hardly taxing Solent at this speed, the 27 easing through the wakes of ferries and pilot boats without concern.

Conclusions

Just last month, we published a letter from a reader asking why smaller displacement-style boats are no longer produced, so it is good to see the 27 entering the market, especially with its shaftdrive arrangement. Hardy have pitched the fitout at a sensible but comfortable jump-aboard-and-go level. There were some minor niggles and further stowage must be a priority for a boat that looks to go places, but then the boat we were testing was only the second off the line. □

Hardy 27

Loa 27ft 2in (8.27m)

Beam 9ft 4in (2.85m)

Draught 2ft 11in (0.90m)

Air draught 8ft 6in (2.60m)

Displacement 3.3tons

Fuel 50gal (227lt)

Water 26gal (118lt)

Price from £35,353 ex VAT with single 59hp diesel Volvo, to £49,782 with twin 100hp Volvos; £37,617 for the standard boat as tested with a single 100hp.

Suppliers Birchwood Boats Solent Ltd, Vespasian Road, Bitterne Manor, Southampton, Hampshire SO2 4AY. Tel: 0703 224252.

Builders Hardy Marine Ltd, Gaymers Way Industrial Estate, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 0AN. Tel: 0692 500091.