

BOAT REPORT

HARDY

SEA WINGS

285

The flagship of Hardy's sports-cruiser range gave us the perfect vehicle for testing OMC's entry into the diesel outdrive market.

HARDY'S flagship 285 Sea Wings model first appeared in public at the 1991 Earls Court Boat Show. Later that year, we had a first run at sea in a 285 powered by twin 205hp petrol outdrives, but recently had the opportunity of travelling to Norfolk-based Broadland Boat Centre to test another example equipped with a pair of OMC's new diesels, also rated at 205hp apiece.

Andrew Wolstenholme, responsible for the overall styling and lines, has created a variable-deadrise hull running from a medium to deep-vee 21° amidships to 15° at the transom. The latter is raked, with a good-sized, separately moulded GRP bathing platform finishing the stern quarters. Both in the wheelhouse and down below there is full standing headroom, but the superstructure of the 285 does not appear top-heavy.

Apart from the main hull and deck mouldings, Hardy use large, sophisticated mouldings on which to base the interior fit-out: one for the floorpan and another as a basis for the actual furnishings, both substantially stiffening the hull.

Exterior

The main run of sidedeck past the superstructure is 10in (25mm) wide and clear of obstructions,



with 8in spring cleats and 10in main cleats fore and aft mounted atop the moulded toe tail.

The guardrail could do with being higher, although the handrails to the cockpit coaming, at the point of entry to and from the sidedeck as well as along the main wheelhouse coachroof, are very adequate. There is plenty of flat, safe foredeck, complete with an electric windlass, a bow roller and a sectioned locker for fenders, chain and warps; fenders are also catered for by the purpose-designed transom moulding.

The after section of the cockpit is furnished with a U-settee, biased to starboard and allowing for a small set of steps up to the port sidedeck and a transom walk-through to the bathing platform, which has its own shower and locker.

A moulded table, stowed below, either makes a generous cockpit dinette or, when resting on smaller legs, acts as a sunbed. Limited stowage is provided under the seat-bases. Bulkier items can be swallowed by a lazaret, smaller ones by the lined cave locker set in the wheelhouse coaming, opposite the helm.

The helm station itself can seat three at a pinch, with the skipper to starboard and a perspex-covered chart area to port. The bench seat is adjustable fore and aft.

The layout is fine, the near-vertical fascia for electronics is excellent, and the storage tray adjacent to the throttles is commendable. However, the angle of the main instrument dash is rather too slight; switch legends can be read, but dials can only be observed if the driver is tight up to the wheel.

The single-lever throttles are OMC's latest, and we liked them enormously. They are smooth but sure in operation, and the power-trim buttons are mounted ready to hand on the plinth, although we had to search for the associated gauges.

Visibility is good, even with the full cockpit canopy in situ, with plenty of clear panels to the sides and astern. The landing for the main canopy, a stainless steel hoop on the wheelhouse top, can either be left extended with its own canvas infill or retracted as the weather dictates. A further large canvas sunroof can be opened in the wheelhouse coachroof.

Interior

The open-plan accommodation is accessed through a perspex hatch and half-door combination, and down three small steps. The cabin runs straight through in one, from the

OMC's diesel

Developed on the back of the Steyr-Daimler-Puch group, who were undertaking the design of a new generation of engines with electronically-controlled injection systems, the Cobra diesel is a 3.2lt six-cylinder unit rated for marine use to 205hp at 4300rpm. OMC have married it to their latest King Cobra drive system, swinging a prop of up to 17in diameter.

Fuel is introduced into the cylinder in a completely different manner; there is no injection pump, just individual two-stage injectors actuated by an electronically controlled camshaft. Sensors relay information to a computer in order to control the injection process. An LED display enables an owner to identify faults and OMC engineers can plug test gear in for more complicated diagnosis.

The two-stage injectors squirt a small amount of fuel into the cylinder just before it completes its compression stroke at top dead centre (TDC), initiating the firing, with the rest sprayed in at TDC itself. In this manner, practically all the metered fuel is injected at the top of the power stroke, rather than in the conventional way with a fair amount of fuel introduced prior to TDC, which is normally associated with diesel 'knock' as the engine works against itself.

A one-piece block and cylinder head casting eliminates gasket problems, saves weight and gives more uniform cooling results. The block is cast iron and the crankcase, joined to it but isolated by vibration-damping high-torsion rubber, is of aluminium alloy, helping the outdrive package to weigh in at a very modest 968lb (440kg).

Far left and above: Hardy use a large, sophisticated moulding as a basis for their interior fit-out. There is an elegant horseshoe-shaped dinette forward, and more seating aft of the galley which converts into a double berth. Visibility from the cockpit is good, even with the full canopy in place. Near left: the twin OMC Cobras are tidily installed, and their innovative construction means they weigh very little more than their petrol equivalents.



elegant horseshoe-shaped forward dinette to a secondary seating area under the cockpit.

The latter makes into a 6ft 3in x 4ft (1.91m x 1.22m) double and, once curtained off from the rest of the accommodation, becomes a tidy cabin. It has its own full-headroom dressing area and a hanging locker, the bottom of which is furnished with a removable canvas stowage bag.

The main electrical panel is here, including the battery-isolators and mains breakers (a 240V ring main and immersion are listed as an extra), adjacent to a bookshelf. An opening port to the cockpit provides light and ventilation.

Back in the main cabin, the large and comfortably upholstered dinette drops to form a further double, 6ft (1.83m) in diameter. The seat-backs carry a shelf area outboard, and a single locker. Storage is also provided beneath the seat-bases, although these are not lined, dropping straight onto the painted hull sides.

The galley features a covered, four-burner gas hob and SMEV oven/grill, and also a built-in top-loading fridge and adequate stowage. Although this area is close to the main hatch, it would benefit from forced extraction.

A semi-circular toilet-cum-shower is found opposite. This is fully moulded, and adequate in size, with plenty of dry storage. A pleasing attempt has been made to hide most of the sea-toilet plumbing, and the unit itself has its own seat cover for use when you are showering.

A hatch in the saloon sole gives access to the sea-cocks and shower pump, while further screwed-down plywood inserts allow better inspection of the entire bilge.

Engine options

Power options on the 285 are varied, from twin 205hp petrols through to single and paired diesels, the most potent of which are the new 205hp OMC Cobra 3.2lt units.

Access to the compartment is through a single large hatch in the aft portion of the cockpit, ably supported by gas struts. A fully enclosed and vented battery box forward doubles as a handy step or seat when checking service points.

These are readily to hand, except for the water/fuel separators and stopcocks which would be better placed towards the front bulkhead rather than at the transom. An appropriate-sized fire extinguisher is already mounted here, but we were less happy about the siting of the automatic bilge pumps under the engines, where access is severely restricted.

Outboard are the stainless steel fuel tanks, with a total capacity of 100gal (455lt). These are covered in a single-layer foam insulation, as is the access hatch. The compartment is painted out, and the installation tidy.

Handling and performance

For our initial sea trials on the petrol-engined boat, we had journeyed out of Harwich into the North Sea, and even then encountered only low-swell waves topped off by the wash of port service craft. The most precipitous of these failed to tax the 285, which steered evenly through them from any angle, our only slight criticism being a lively response to the helm.

For trials on the OMC diesel version, we could do no more than run up and down a short

de-restricted portion of the Broads, near the parkland-like Brundall Bay Marina where the Hardy dealership is situated.

Interestingly, both power installations turned in the same top speed of 33 knots, the light OMC diesels adding only marginally to the vessel's overall weight compared to V6 petrols of the same 205hp rating. The 285 was quickly up on the plane, albeit with a high trim angle until right over the hump. Once there, the diesels were happy to keep the boat nudging along at a useful 18-knot speed.

The accompanying data panel gives the full story of speed and consumption. At a nominal 25-knot cruising figure, fuel burn was in the order of 10gph (45lph), giving an economical 2.5mpg. Even allowing for a 25% safety factor, the boat's cruising range nudges up to a more useful 170 miles, compared to the limiting figure of 120 miles for twin petrols. Bear in mind that these figures were gathered with only the barest of cruising inventory aboard.

Smoke is always a concern with diesels but the OMC unit is among the cleanest we have seen, especially as the Cobra has the benefit of fuel-efficient direct injection. OMC put this success down to precise metering and timing, coupled with extremely high injection pressures for better atomisation of the sprayed fuel.

Noise levels are rather more difficult to compare, but our test diesels were not noticeably noisy — a smooth rumble rather than anything too grating.

We have no qualms about the engines' responsiveness either. The aftercooled turbo came in at 2100rpm, and we accelerated quickly up to 20 knots in 9sec dead.

Conclusions

At a shade over 30ft overall, the largest of the Sea Wings range is a roomy, likeable four-berther with a useful and well-mannered turn of speed, which makes it a sound choice for OMC's diesel entry into the sports-cruiser market. Overall finish is good and, whilst these boats are more refined than the original Hardy range, nothing has been sacrificed in terms of build and fit-out.

OMC have taken their time to enter the diesel fray, but the wait was worthwhile. The longevity and reliability of the Cobra units have yet to be proven, but on first inspection they look an exciting innovation. In terms of power and technology, they offer a lot in a lightweight, compact package.

Hardy Sea Wings 285

Loa 30ft 10in (9.40m).

Hull length 28ft 5in (8.69m).

Beam 11ft 0in (3.35m).

Draught 3ft 2in (0.97m) with drives down.

Displacement 4.25 tons dry.

Fuel capacity 100gal (455l).

Water capacity 27gal (121lt).

Price from £54,935 ex VAT

with twin Volvo 205hp petrols.

£79,995 as tested with twin

OMC Cobra 205hp diesels.

Builders Hardy Marine Ltd,

Gaymers Way, North Walsham,

Norfolk NR28 0AN.

Tel: 0692 406483.

Suppliers Broadland Boat

Centre, Brundall Bay Marina,

Brundall, Norwich NR13 5PN.

Tel: 0603 716606.

Engine suppliers OMC (UK)

Ltd, 8 Harrowden Road,

Northampton NN4 0PD.

Tel: 0604 765131.

OMC Cobra diesel test figures

Boat: Hardy Sea Wings 285. **Conditions:** calm. **Load:** fuel 25%, water 50%, crew 3.

rpm	knots	gph*	lph*	mpg*	range	sound levels dB(A)	
						ckpt	sln
2000	—	3.4	15.6	—	—	79	74
2500	10.4	6.6	30.2	1.56	156	83	78
2800	18.0	7.5	34.0	2.41	241	84	79
3000	22.3	9.2	42.2	2.42	242	84	80
3200	25.3	10.3	46.8	2.45	245	85	81
3500	26.0	12.7	58.0	2.04	204	86	81
3800	28.1	14.2	64.4	1.97	197	87	82
4150	33.0	18.5	84.4	1.78	178	87	82

*Consumption figures are for both engines, and were measured by a fuel meter.

Acceleration: 0-20 knots, 9.0sec.