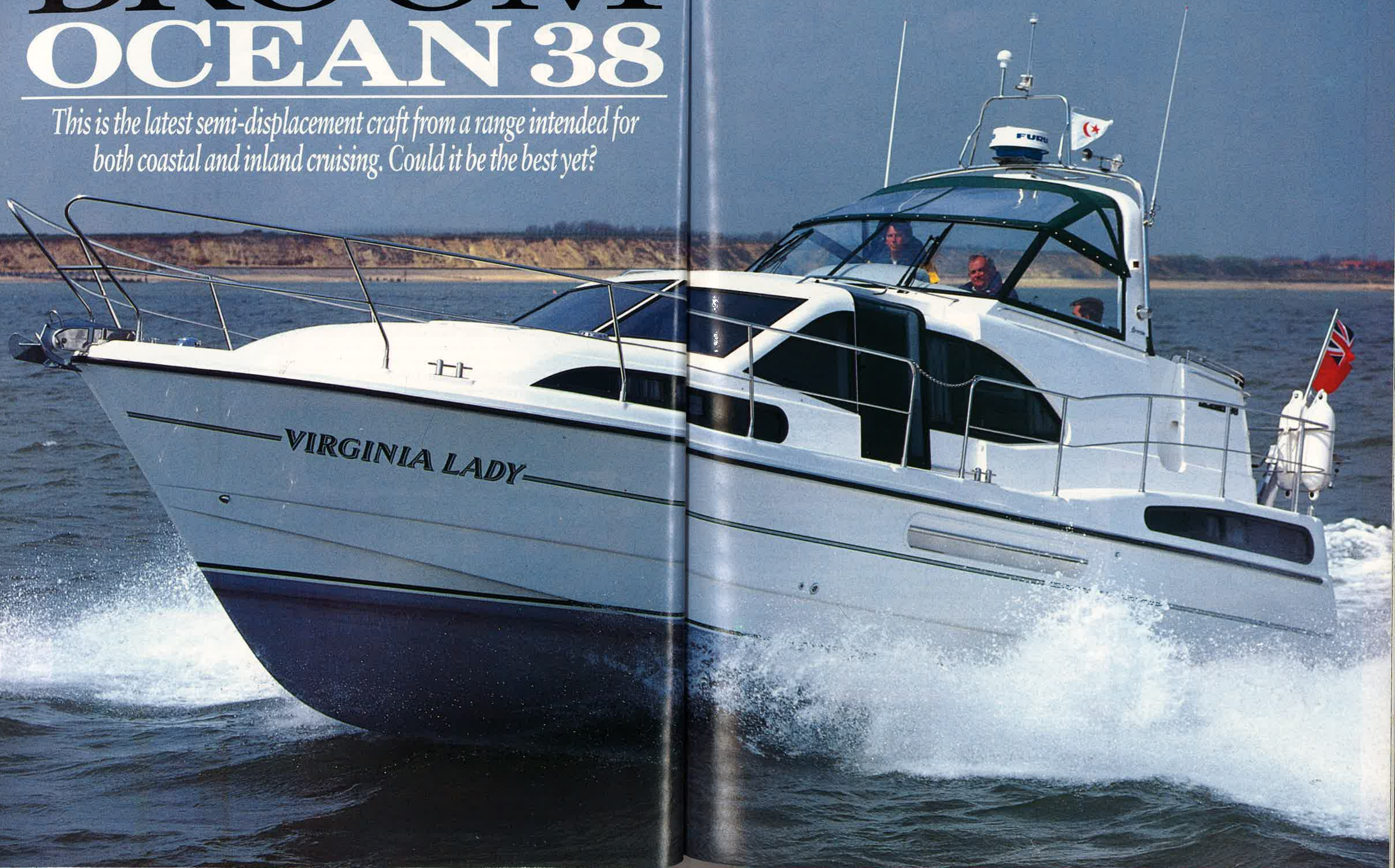


Boat Report

BROOM OCEAN 38

This is the latest semi-displacement craft from a range intended for both coastal and inland cruising. Could it be the best yet?





Launched at the London Boat Show in January, this latest addition to a quality range aims to bridge the gap between C J Broom's seagoing Offshore designs and the existing Ocean models, which are designed for slower cruising.

The versatile Ocean 38 is, in effect, a welcome resurrection of the hugely successful semi-displacement Broom Continental, Crown and Ocean 37 models, the last of which was built in the mid-1980s, with a hull and level of performance which are intended to be at equally at home at sea



and on inland waters. The lower air draught of the aft-deck steering position also assists the same aim.

We tested both aspects thoroughly, thanks to MBM readers Pat and George Mackin loaning us their boat prior to its handover, and thanks to the blustery trip off Great Yarmouth that preceded a rather more sedate cruise up the River Yare to Broom's yard at Brundall.

Design

Along with many of the recent Broom models, the Ocean 38 is the responsibility of naval architect Andrew Wolstenholme.

Although seen as replacing the 37, it is in fact an all-new design, and its styling more closely resembles that of the slightly smaller 345 Offshore, with its soft window lines and cockpit-style enclosed aft deck. However, whereas the latter has a medium-to-deep-vee hull, the 38 has a semi-displacement form, giving steadier straight-line handling at slow speeds but still the required lift to cruise in a seaway at around 20 knots.

A deep forefoot and wave-cleaving vee run into an impressive depth of keel, sufficient to protect the propeller(s) and rudder(s) whether the boat is in single- or twin-engine format. The keel section is kept relatively thin, to prevent the adverse handling characteristics which result from the hull planing on the bottom of it.

From the forefoot, the rest of the underwater profile draws upwards as it runs aft, so that the tight sections forward pan out to give a medium deadrise of 17.5° at amidships and only 5° at the transom. This gives plenty of lift, thereby steadying the trim angle when the boat is up and running.

To reduce the chances of spray coming back inboard, which is often a problem for semi-displacement craft, a slight toe-in is introduced on the forward chine-flats, although this peters out by

Above: the saloon features a comfortable U-settee to starboard and a sideboard to port. Below left: at a lower level, the galley has good stowage and natural light. Below: there are two WCs, and a single separate shower. Right (top to bottom): in the forward guest cabin are broad vee-berths. The steps down from the aft deck have non-slip treads. One toilet compartment is en-suite to the aft master cabin. Fenced off from the all-round decks, the aft deck feels more like a cockpit. The Ocean 38's single helm station can be battened down to create a snug wheelshelter.



about amidships. Considering there are no sprayrials inboard of this chine, just a deep knuckle on the topsides, the ride is commendably dry.

The knuckle does much to give the topsides some shape, and removes any slab-sidedness. In fact the soft overall profile of the superstructure moulding blends extremely well with the curved window lines.

We also like the way the integrated bathing platform has been tucked well into the body of the transom, reducing the possibility of catching it as you depart from lock walls and wharves.

Exterior

The ease and safety of boarding is always a prime concern when a boat is earmarked for inland cruising. In this instance it is a simple matter, helped by the break in the side deck guardrail not being too high above pontoon level, and by a helpful step let into the topside in the form of the engineroom vents. To ensure the GRP does not suffer unduly, there are rubber wear strips here, and indeed throughout the boat wherever pedestrian traffic is heaviest.

The side decks are an excellent 12in (30cm) wide, and bordered with a chunky toerail as well as by the guardrail with its solid mid-level bar. A handrail runs along the upper coachroof, and again this is handy when boarding.

The same width of deck extends right around the raised aft-deck 'cockpit'. This makes it easy to tend to mooring duties and get to the bathing platform, while keeping the entertaining area free of ropes, fenders and the like. There are mountings for four fenders across the transom guardrail.

Positively secured side doors give access to the aft deck itself, which has a good safe feel to it, given that you are never standing or sitting on the edge of the boat. The U-shaped seating running around the aft rim has gas and general storage lockers within its bases, and a table can be rigged for al-fresco dining.

Further forward, the skipper and his mate have their own adjustable swivelling bucket seats.

The helm itself is neatly laid out, with two clear tiers of instrumentation and a panel of ready-use switches over to starboard, ahead of the throttles. Both these and the angled wheel are of a good height, whether the driver is sitting or standing. The screen is served by a pair of two-speed pantograph wipers.

The co-pilot has a half-sized chart area directly in front of him, and access to the 'big-box' electronics set in a console ahead of this, which can be locked behind a protective cover when not in use.

We liked the large tray area moulded into the console just in front of the skipper, to take sunglasses, binoculars and the like. Set within the coaming by his side is a shelf and a small storage area, while a similar scallop in the port coaming allows the lifebuoy cradle to be tucked out of the way.

As with previous Oceans, the helm area can be battened down to create a snug wheelshelter, by erecting a canopy between the high screen and the GRP cockpit hoop. The rest of the cockpit can be enclosed using a readily folded pram-hood which simply drops down out of the way around the rear settee when not required.

There is no interior helm on the 38, but to our mind this arrangement works very well. Along with the more hands-on feel that exterior helming gives,



you get good visibility and full or partial shelter as the situation warrants, and yet there is no encroaching on the interior space.

The GRP goalpost mast hinges down to reduce the boat's air draught to 10ft 6in (3.20m) for low bridges on the river.

A non-standard fitment on our test boat was the outer stainless steel cockpit arch carrying the bulk of the antennas, which can more quickly be dropped to give an air draught of 12ft 4in (3.76m) without the need to fiddle with the canopy enclosure.

You simply remove a couple of thumb-bolts and lower it onto the rear seat to rest on its built-in stand.

Forward, the standard ground tackle comprises 90ft (27m) of chain and anchor handled by a manual windlass, which seems odd given the boat's otherwise extremely high standard of fit-out and equipment. Most owners will opt to pay extra for an electric unit.

On a boat like this it is important that cleats are of adequate size and well located, and the builders have found the mark by fitting tallish 11in (28cm) bitt-type bar cleats, which leave you plenty of room to work your way around the 'knitting'. There are three on the foredeck, and further pairs amidships and at the quarters.

Interior

The saloon has two companionways. The one leading down four steps from the aft deck benefits from Broom's customary attention to detail in having its wooden steps inset with Treadmaster non-slip, and in having a grabhandle overhead, just where you need it. A shorter stairwell, doubling as a locker and a spare seat, leads down from the port deck via a sliding door.

The main saloon area, at the upper level, has a comfortable U-shaped sofa and a run of sideboard, which includes a dedicated bar locker. Down a further few steps, a separate U-dinette lies smack opposite the galley. Headroom is around 6ft 2in (1.88m) through most of the accommodation.

Our test boat was fitted-out in ash rather than the customary mahogany, but even with the darker

wood, we suspect, the Ocean 38's low window-line and its plethora of ports and hatches should make for a light and airy boat. Those seated in the saloon enjoy an excellent view out.

The dinette seating incorporates lined lockers, although in this case the aftermost portion was taken up by an encapsulated 4kVA generator set. There is a small bookshelf outboard.

The galley is well appointed and thoughtfully laid-out, with plenty of cupboard space and a reasonable amount of work surface, even though the two-and-a-half-bowl sink and three-burner hob take up a fair amount of the space. The fridge is big enough to incorporate a small freezer compartment. Beneath the hob is a built-in oven with a separate grill, while overhead is a crockery rack and extractor fan; there is an opening section

of window for further ventilation.

The sole in this area is finished in a teak and holly flooring, an obviously sensible alternative to carpet where food is being prepared. Hatches allow access to the seacocks as standard, and on our test boat to a holding tank; George intends to use the boat for exactly the purpose for which it was designed, a mixture of sea and inland cruising.

The forecabin sports a wide vee-berth which remains quite broad right down to the shared feet area, the mattress widths being around 2ft 7in (0.79m) wide by 6ft 2in (1.88m) long. There is a good-sized hanging locker, drawers set in the bunk sides and an additional bulk storage area forward of these, whilst the mirrored hatch in the forward bulkhead gives access to the chain locker.

Between this guest cabin and the galley is a toilet compartment, kept reasonably small because it does not include a shower. In fact the two sleeping cabins share a separate shower compartment aft, whilst the aft cabin also has an en-suite toilet and basin.

All three ablution areas are mostly moulded, including the sink and work surfaces, with upper bulkhead areas finished in a matching Formica. Vents are fitted to the deckheads to supplement opening ports, and there is reasonable if not particularly commodious stowage. Both toilets are of the manual variety as standard, although with a holding tank it is advisable to have an electric unit fitted back aft, as the pipe run to the tank is quite long.

On our test boat the lobby leading to the master cabin had been slightly altered, with the communal doorway into the shower compartment done away with so as to create a wet-locker for oilskins and coats. This means the only way in for guests is through the aft master cabin, but, as George points out, this is rarely going to be a problem.

The main cabin itself is extremely spacious, sporting a 4ft 10in x 6ft 4in (1.47m x 1.93m) central berth flanked by two almost identical sweeps of cupboards and hanging lockers. The cupboards are a little on the shallow side, but there are useful deep boot-lockers set either side of the berth. Twin hatches let into

the transom allow in plenty of light.

A hinged portion of the bunk-base allows access to the water tank, and more importantly the steering gear. To comply with the latest European Union build standards, an emergency tiller arm is located here as well, while all boats leaving the Broom yard are Boat Safety Scheme-certified.

Engines

With the mixed type of cruising he has in mind, George has opted for twin Volvo Penta TAMD 41P engines, which gives him up to 400hp on tap, for speeds of around 20 knots. If all you require is purely displacement performance, at which the hull will be just as happy, a slight modification to the keel while the hull is being moulded allows for the installation of a single naturally-aspirated 135hp Perkins Sabre.

Access to day-to-day service points is via a number of well-finished bordered hatches in the saloon sole, while the main fuel/water separators, fuel valves and shaft logs can be reached by hinging up the aft stairs.

For more major servicing, the carpet needs to be rolled up so that the whole sole can be taken up piecemeal. This allows better access to the outboard side of the engines, which are tight to the fuel tanks tucked in the wings, but not too much so.

The only place to stand, and for that matter the only place you may need to stand, is to the head of the compartment, where there is good access to the belts, alternators and pumps on the engines, as well as to the other auxiliaries on the bulkhead. The battery box runs between the engines.

The installation appears as tidily executed as the rest of the boat, with wires and cables safely run in trunking and pipework routed clear of any working area. The wing tanks are covered in eggbox-type foam insulation, the deckhead panels in a more effective loaded-plastic foam.

To fit within the restricted width of the keel, the two electric bilge pumps fitted are by necessity on the small side. Although there is also a hefty manual unit situated beneath one of the engine hatches, it might be better to add a larger automatic unit pump in the compartment itself, where there is more room.

Handling & performance

For our sea trip, the conditions could not have been more perfect to test the 38. A good Force 4 running up the Yarmouth Roads, against a south-running tide, created a 3ft-4ft chop with fairly frequent larger troughs.

However, if we thought this would really start to tax the hull's ride comfort, we were delighted to be well wide of the mark. The boat made short work of everything it encountered on the nose, to give an exceptionally smooth ride, with the screen and canvas infill keeping us snug and dry from the little spray that found its way aboard. With the throttles set at 3500rpm, for smack-on 20 knots, we could have been on a millpond.

When we turned around to run in the opposite direction, with the seaway, the 38's manner turned from good-natured to nothing short of placid. And at lesser speeds the hull would perch happily wherever you set her, giving 14 knots at 3000rpm for instance, with the bow lifting easily and the hull taking on a comfortable, natural trim without the need for tabs (which had not been fitted to our test boat).

Full-power turns were executed in extremely tight order, in less than a couple of boat lengths, with the craft all but perfectly upright. Flat-out, in these far from settled conditions, we clocked just under 23 knots on our radar gun.

Sound levels were reasonable, especially given that most passagemaking will be done with the crew comfortably ensconced in the aft deck.

Once we reduced speed to meander our way back through Great Yarmouth and into the Broads, it was just a matter of keeping the revs a shade over tickover, the boat being happy to maintain these speeds without continuous flicking in and out of gear.

Low-speed handling was equally predictable and well-mannered, with its fuller, deeper underwater body dissuading the 38 from being too windborne, while ensuring good directional stability. It was a relaxed time for the helmsman, with the steering light but still positive at both high and low speeds, and noise levels dropping right off.

Conclusions

To design and build a boat which can fulfil the dual roles of comfortable inland cruiser and fast seagoing passagemaker is no easy task, and many attempts fall between two stools rather than bridging the gap successfully between them. With the Ocean 38, however, Broom have done an excellent job of both.

Add the sound building and engineering practices that the company stand for, together with a most usable layout, and it seems inevitable to us that this will be one of their most successful models. □



Builders

C J Broom & Sons Ltd,
Brundall, Norwich,
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Tel: 01603 712334.

Suppliers

Harleyford Marine Ltd,
Harleyford Estate, Henley
Road, Marlow,
Buckinghamshire SL7 2DX.
Tel: 01628 471361.

Above: the integrated bathing platform is tucked well into the transom.

Below: hatches in the carpeted saloon sole give access to basic engine servicing points, and lifting a section of the teak and holly flooring beside the galley on our test boat reveals a holding tank.



Broom Ocean 38

Engines twin Volvo Penta TAMD41P diesels, 200hp at 3900rpm, 6cyl, 3.6lt.

Conditions wind SW Force 4, sea moderate.

Load fuel 60%, water 100%, crew 3.

								sound levels dB(A)		
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim		saloon	aftcab	aftdck
1000	4.8	—	—	—	—	1.0		64	68	62
1500	7.8	2.2	10	3.54	567	2.5		72	74	69
2000	8.5	4.0	18	2.13	340	3.5		77	81	72
2500	9.3	6.2	28	1.50	240	4.0		78	84	74
3000	14.2	9.9	45	1.43	229	5.5		80	85	78
3500	20.0	15.4	70	1.30	208	5.5		84	89	81
3900	22.8	20.0	90	1.14	182	5.5		84	90	82

(*estimated, allowing 20% margin)

Price from £127,900 ex VAT; £151,000 as tested

Loa
38ft 6in (11.74m)

Hull length
36ft 9in (11.20m)

Beam
13ft 0in (3.96m)

Draught
3ft 6in (1.06m)

Air draught
10ft 6in (3.20m)
to top of screen

Displacement
10 tonnes

Fuel capacity
200gal (908lt)

Water capacity
100gal (454lt)