

OCQUETEAU 685 & 615 CROISIERE

The latest range of pêche-promenades to reach English shores offer new levels of refinement. We sampled two in enclosed-wheelhouse form.

Built close to France's Atlantic coast, the Ocqueteau range of small boats is now being imported into the UK by Essex-based South Woodham Marine.

Although Ocqueteau also build open centre-console craft, their output centres on a line-up of midships-wheelhouse designs which double as fishing boats and cruisers in the pêche-promenade style.

While retaining a utilitarian approach to the genre, and without sacrificing any of the practicality of the boats' layout, the builders have refined and enlivened their traditionally basic fit-out to offer a more useful level of comfort.

The range extends from 18ft (5.4m) to 24ft (7.2m). We chose to look at two of the handiest models: the 685, an inboard diesel-powered 22-footer which has good facilities for weekending, and the 615, an outboard-powered trailable 20-footer which will at least allow you to 'camp' afloat in all weathers.

Design & layout

The boats featured here are Croisière models, with fully enclosed wheelhouses. The alternative Cordouan versions have open-backed wheelshelters and slightly more basic specifications.

Both models have much the same underlying hull shape, with a deep forefoot and keen underwater sections



forward which fill quickly above the chine. Both have a small keel, though this is substantially more pronounced in the case of the inboard-engined 685 to take the shaft and provide a landing for the shoe which protects and supports the underwater gear.

We particularly liked the sheer of the 685, with its distinctive whaleback line which helps to allow more headroom right outboard down below.

Handling & performance

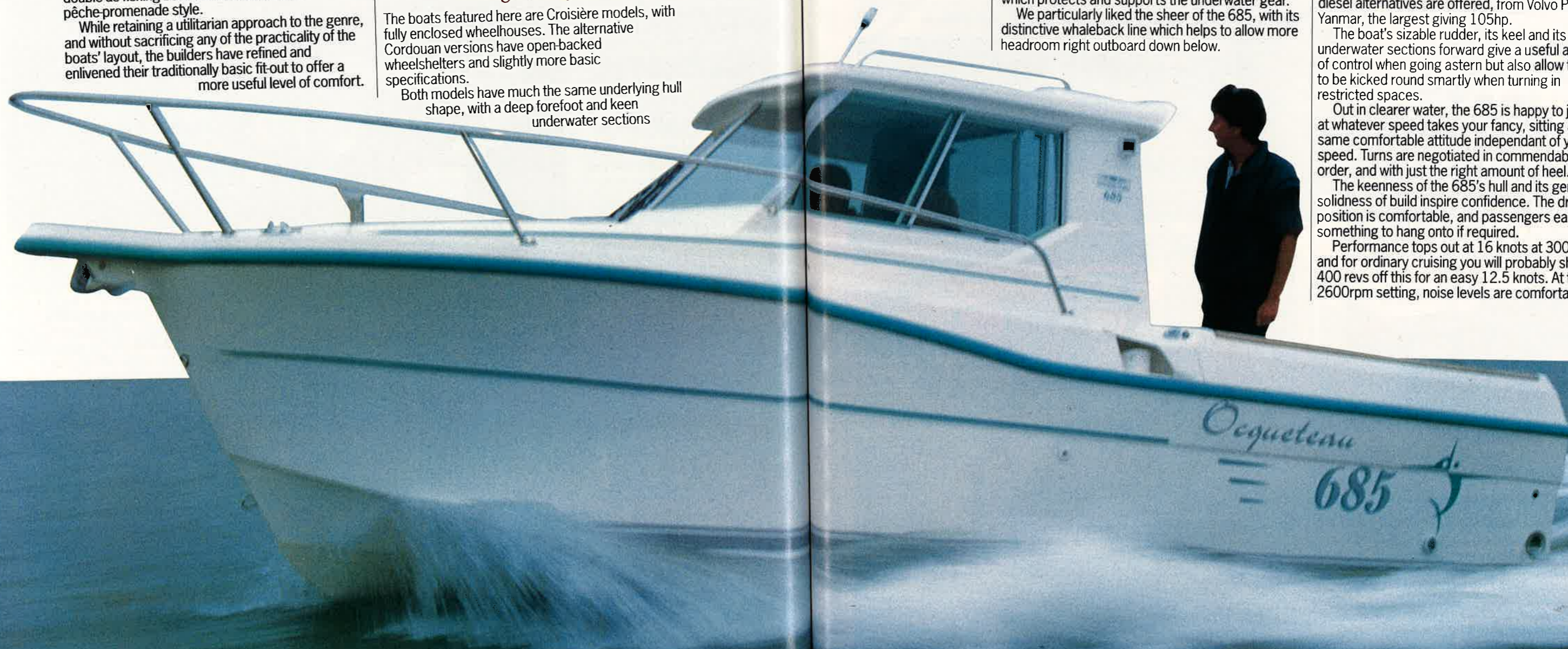
Our 685 test boat was fitted with an 82hp Lombardini four-cylinder diesel engine. A number of diesel alternatives are offered, from Volvo Penta and Yanmar, the largest giving 105hp.

The boat's sizable rudder, its keel and its acute underwater sections forward give a useful amount of control when going astern but also allow the hull to be kicked round smartly when turning in restricted spaces.

Out in clearer water, the 685 is happy to jog along at whatever speed takes your fancy, sitting at the same comfortable attitude independent of your speed. Turns are negotiated in commendably short order, and with just the right amount of heel.

The keenness of the 685's hull and its general solidness of build inspire confidence. The driving position is comfortable, and passengers easily find something to hang onto if required.

Performance tops out at 16 knots at 3000rpm, and for ordinary cruising you will probably shave 400 revs off this for an easy 12.5 knots. At this 2600rpm setting, noise levels are comfortable at



82dB(A) in the wheelhouse, and so will be your fuel consumption, which we estimate at a little over 2gph (9gph).

Easing off further, 2000rpm gives 8.5 knots, while 1500rpm allows you to poodle along at 5.5 knots where speed restrictions apply.

The 615 is available with a choice of Honda four-stroke petrol outboards up to 90hp, and can also be supplied without its engine. The boat we tried had a 75hp unit, which felt just about right for this style of boat.

Top speed with this was 23.5 knots, whilst cruising comfortably at 5000rpm gave 19 knots. But it hardly seems to matter where you set the throttle: the hull lifts its skirts gently to plane at 13 knots and an easy 4000rpm.

Once up and running, the boat turns relatively flat and stays well mannered and dry. At slower speeds, the slight run of keel helps to keep it on track and puts paid to any wanderlust without continuous recourse to the wheel.

Unfortunately our test day could provide little

685

Helm



From the two bucket seats at the helm you enjoy a clear view through all but 360°, although the two-part screen has only a single wiper as standard. The skipper's seat is adjustable, but his mate's is not.

The angled console sports a wooden wheel, which is always a boon. There is room to fit other instruments besides the engine gauges here, and also an overhead fascia.

Stowage is provided within the seat plinth, and outboard by way of a cave locker set in the coaming.

Cockpit & decks

The cockpit measures about 7ft 0in (2.13m) square, and is clear of obstructions apart from the small enginebox.

The transom has a full height gate to starboard, but a bathing platform is a non-standard fitment, keeping the overall length of the boat down. A small hatch within the transom moulding gives access to the rudder stock, so that the boat can be tiller-steered from the cockpit if required.

The coamings are finished with wooden taffrails, a sensible idea on a boat intended for sports-fishing, as it reduces the wear and scuffing of the GRP.

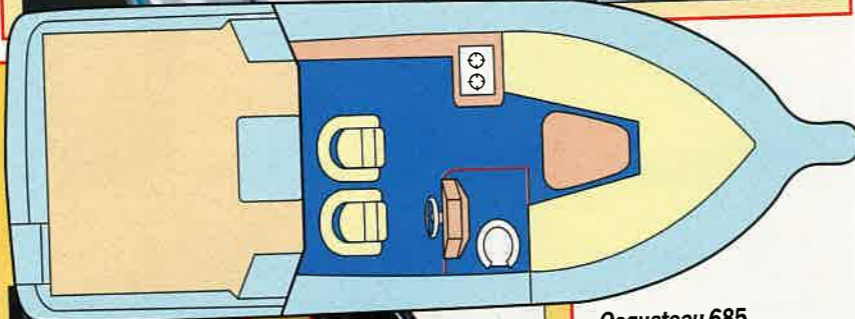


For bulk stowage and cleaning gear there are well-finished hatches let into the deck on each side of the central enginebox hatch, housing the battery and water tank.

Wide treads moulded into the inside of the cockpit coaming give easy access to the 7in (18cm) side decks. Handholds along the wheelhouse top and guardrails that run well aft provide plenty of security as you move forward, while all deck areas have a good depth of moulded non-slip.

Up at the bow is a protruding anchor platform, and a deck locker with room for the chain and a couple of fenders.

Mooring hardware comprises a pair of 9in (23cm) cleats fore and aft, but there is nothing apart from the guardrail stanchions to tie springs to.



Ocqueteau 685



Engine compartment

The single diesel engine is easily reached, with the aid of a hinged hatch in the cockpit sole and a couple of other access points built into the helm seat plinth.

The cockpit hatch gives onto the rear portion of the engine as well as the shaft log, raw-water strainer and fuel/water separator. Also down here is the fuel tank, with stop-cock, and an electric bilge pump recessed down into the keel moulding.

Wheelhouse & galley

Interior trim is livelier than you will find on most pêche-promenades. The sole of the walk-through wheelhouse and forecabin are of teak and holly-faced ply, whilst the joinery and bulkheads up to waist height are largely finished in teak, lending a touch of warmth and as well as durability.

The patio door arrangement opens the port side of the wheelhouse into the cockpit. Adjacent to this door is the galley, with its paraffin hob and stainless

steel sink with pressurised cold water, while to starboard is the two-seat helm position, all with unrestricted standing headroom.

On our test boat the hob appeared to be rather too close to the overhead return of coaming, and the builders' brochure suggests the layout has since been changed, reducing the space afforded to the galley and make the accommodation more open-plan.

We were pleased to find that a good portion of the side windows will slide open; given the otherwise enclosed nature of the wheelhouse, it is important to obtain a decent breeze on a sunny day.



Forward accommodation

Forward, there is an offset vee-seating arrangement and a round table instead of the common vee-berth. With no infill the berth is 3ft 6in (1.07m) wide, but dropping the table makes it as wide as it is long at around 6ft 0in (1.83m). Painted-out voids within the moulded seat-bases offer a useful amount of stowage, and there is plenty of headroom, plus a small hatch in the moulded deckhead.

A separate compartment tucked in beneath the helm console can house either a seat-toilet or a chemical one. Again there is adequate legroom and headroom to make use of the facilities.



OCQUETEAU 685



BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

DIMENSIONS

LOA

22ft 8in (6.90m)

BEAM

8ft 0in (2.45m)

DRAUGHT

2ft 3in (0.70m)

DISPLACEMENT

1.6 tonnes

FUEL CAPACITY

29gal (130lt)

WATER CAPACITY

11gal (50lt)

ENGINE

Lombardini LDW 2004MT

4cyl 2.07lt diesel

82hp at 3000rpm

PRICE

£24,899 ex VAT as tested

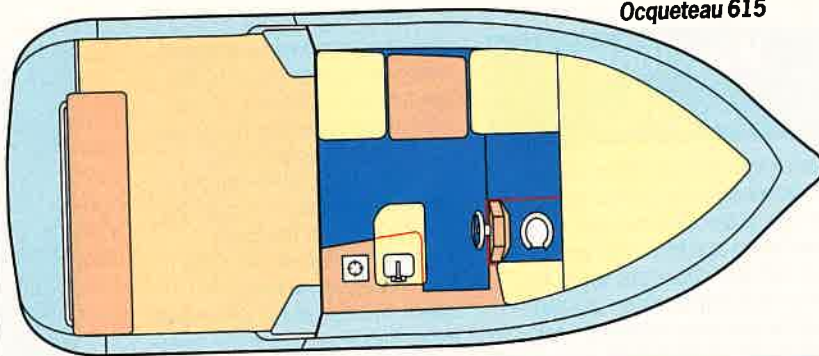
BUILDERS/SUPPLIERS

see overleaf

han a gentle, rather moisture-laden East breeze, so gauging the rough-water abilities of either boat was impossible.

Conclusions

yle of craft well represented by the 685 has always appealed to us, as it is an awful lot rather well. It offers protection from the elements, and plenty of space to do as you please coupled with the reliability and economy of



inboard diesel power, and it is equally at home on rivers or coastal cruising.

Where this particular make and model scores highly is the way it offers a cosier level of fit-out and more solidness of build than many, while still keeping things unfussy.

Its smaller sister the 615 is also a roomy, likeable vessel, ideal for coastal and inland overnighting, perhaps from the back of a trailer.

615

OCQUETEAU 615



BUILD

glass-reinforced plastic

DIMENSIONS

LOA

20ft 2in (6.15m)

BEAM

8ft 0in (2.45m)

DRAUGHT

1ft 4in (0.40m)

DISPLACEMENT

1650lb (750kg) excluding engine

FUEL CAPACITY

20gal (90lt)

WATER CAPACITY

removable jerrycan

ENGINE

75hp Honda four-stroke petrol outboard

PRICE

from £10,091 ex VAT excluding engine; £14,829 as tested

SUPPLIERS

South Woodham Marine Ltd, 35 Hullbridge Road, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex CM3 5NG. Tel: 01245 324241.

BUILDERS

Ocqueteau, 60 Boulevard du Maréchal Juin, 44100 Nantes, France. Tel: (33) 2 40 46 50 60.

Cockpit & decks

utward appearance the 615 looks like a slightly scaled-down version of the 685, and to an extent this is true. It too benefits a functional cockpit, with armings topped off with a teak wooden taffrail, and practical decks, easy to walk along with a handrail-topped bulwark outboard and a handrail along the coachroof.

Up at the bow there is a deck locker and, for making-off the associated anchor warp, a good-sized T-bollard.

Stowage is plentiful in the self-draining cockpit:



apart from the athwartships bench locker there is a large hatch in the sole, which also gives access to the fuel tank, filter and stopcock.

The transom is cleverly



designed to provide both an outboard well and an integrally moulded bathing platform. There is a gate to port for access, and the coaming is finished with a set of railings.



Accommodation

In comparison with the 685, the 615's main loss is that it has no separate toilet compartment: a portable loo is tucked away within the base of the vee-berths, in what is more a cuddly than a cabin.

The layout of the wheelhouse is also different. There is a one-to-one dinette to port, which drops to form a small extra berth, while the galley, with its manual-faucet sink, paraffin hob and cupboard, is hidden in the



plinth of the helm seat to starboard.

All of this works well, and does not feel pinched. There remains 6ft 2in (1.89m) headroom in the



wheelhouse, whilst the forward berth measures 6ft 4in (1.93m) by 5ft 8in (1.73m).

The helm console has plenty of space for any additional instrumentation besides the engine panel and ready-use switches, which include a single wiper and electric bilge pump.

