

Boat Report

PRINCESS 420

A second-generation 410, Marine Projects' new 42-footer packs in the accommodation with a sociable layout and impresses out on the water with well-behaved performance.





Clockwise from left: the master cabin is lit by spotlights, opening ports and a round hatch: The open-plan saloon has plenty of seating and a bar unit. A smart worktop and eye-height lockers make for a practical galley. Good visibility from the interior helm is helped by demisters. The master WC has a separate cylindrical shower cubicle.



Having made its debut at last September's Southampton Boat Show, the Princess 420 is the replacement for the 410, and one of the last in the Marine Projects range to get the second-generation Bernard Olesinski look, both above and below the waterline.

Design

Olesinski's accommodation-packing variable-deadrise hull has parallel-sided tunnels sculpted into the bottom to keep shaft angle, and thus engine height, to a minimum. The underwater sections work through from 24.5° amidships to 18° at the transom.

The transom incorporates the bathing platform, with a pleasing amount of curvature running both up and across the waterline to give a more interesting shape to the blunt end of things. To add more contrast to what can be slab-sides of white gelcoat, the topsides have been convexed slightly and given a couple of subtle knuckle lines to break them up.

Three sets of sprayrails run between 50% and 75% of the underwater length, the chine flats being toed-in for extra spray-deflecting qualities.

Features of the superstructure follow trends pioneered elsewhere: an exaggerated run to the flybridge overhang, to give more space up top and better shelter for the cockpit, a two-tier



configuration to the saloon window line and a stairwell (rather than the now passé ladder) offering a more user-friendly way up top from the cockpit.

Exterior

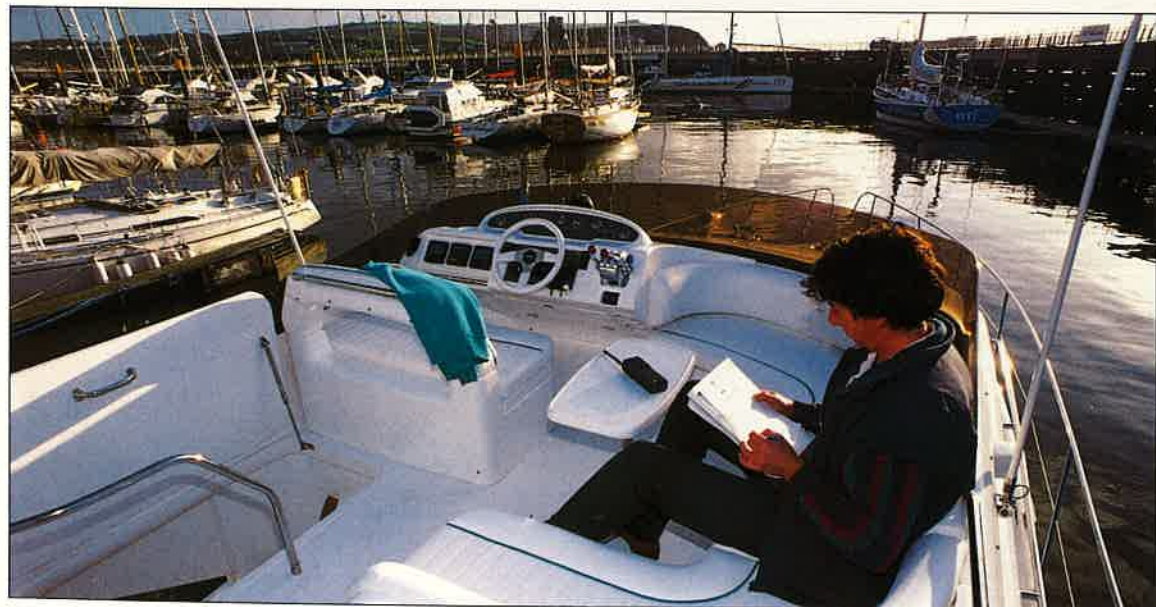
Having sorted out the hoary old chestnut of access to and from the flybridge, surely it is time for designers and builders to readdress the problem of boarding on anything other than stern-to moorings, passerelle granted? On the 420 this is not hugely difficult, with the topsides to the break of the cockpit not being too high to scramble over, but it is a longish step onto the bathing platform past the return in the topside if you want to enter through the transom door. This would be greatly eased either by cutting back on the bulk of topside moulding, or simply by pushing out a tread's width of platform to the full beam of the vessel.

In general, the boat is safe and easy to move around on. A couple of wide steps lead up from the generous cockpit to the 9.5in (24cm) wide side decks. The guardrails run back to these steps, and immediately to hand is the start of the grabrail which extends right along the side of the flybridge. The coachroof at the bow is flat enough to work on confidently, with moulded non-slip everywhere.

As ever, it would have been nice to see the fairly cavernous foredeck locker split between chain and other storage. The ground tackle is handled by a Lewmar vertical windlass, and mooring ropes are accommodated by usefully proportioned 10in (25cm) cleats forward, midships and aft.

The latter are hidden under coaming hatches which hinge out on gas struts to reveal not just the cleat but an associated rope bin — all rather neat. The starboard one also houses the manual bilge pump, whose handle, and the manifold which allows it to service any of the three pick-up points, is in the adjacent side-seat locker in the cockpit. Additional bulk storage is provided by the main transom bench, for fenders and the like, while lockers set within the superstructure coamings offer further space, house the gas bottles and give access to the fuel cocks.

Set in the cockpit sole are two gas-strut supported hatches, the smaller one opening to the engine compartment and the larger one to the useful-sized lazaret. This is finished with a moulded tray, keeping gear clear of the bilge, offering a landing for auxiliaries such as a generator, perhaps,



Princess 420

Engines twin Volvo Penta TAMD 63P diesels, 370hp at 2800rpm, 6cyl, 5.46lt.

Conditions wind SW Force 3, sea slight. **Load** fuel 50%, water 100%, crew 2.

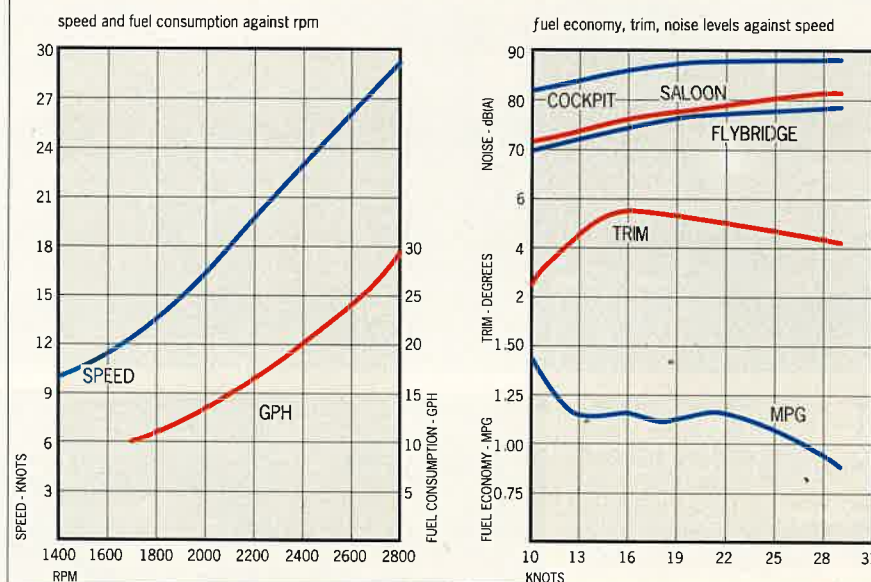
							sound levels dB(A)			
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	saloon	fwd cab	ckpt	flybg
1400	10.1	—	—	—	—	2.5	72	69	82	71
1700	12.1	10.3	47	1.17	280	4.5	74	71	81.5	72
2000	16.0	13.4	62	1.19	286	5.5	75	74	85	74.5
2200	19.3	17.2	78	1.12	267	4.5	76.5	77	87	77
2400	22.7	19.4	88	1.17	280	4.5	79	78	88	77
2600	25.8	24.0	109	1.08	259	4.0	79.5	79	88.5	78
2800	29.1	33.9	154	0.86	206	4.0	80.5	80	89	79

Acceleration 0-20 knots, 10.9sec

(* allows 20% margin)

Loa	42ft 10in (13.05m)	Displacement (dry)	10.5 tonnes
Hull length	41ft 9in (12.72m)	Fuel capacity	300gal (1360lt)
Beam	13ft 8in (4.17m)	Water capacity	107gal (486lt)
Draught	3ft 3in (1.00m)		

Price £175,350 ex VAT as tested



and protecting the sterngear from loose items of equipment. There are multiple access points to the hull and to the automatic Rule 1000 bilge pump, and the steering gear too is easily got at.

Outboard of the lazaret are the water tanks, with accessible inspection plates, and the batteries, which are similarly simple to check or remove.

The stairwell to the flybridge is easy to climb, finished with teak inserts and provided with plenty of handrails. A large access hatch is incorporated in it, to batten down the cockpit area in inclement weather.

The flybridge overhang provides a sunbed area, and the main seating area up here is a sociable U-settee to starboard, in the style of an open Mediterranean sportscruiser, with a mini-table.

The adjacent helm station to port seats two, with the actual driving position biased amidships. Anyone longer-limbed than our 6ft 1in (1.85m) technical editor might find the legroom a bit of a squeeze, as the seat is not adjustable. The helm layout works well, with enough space to have the engine instrumentation and main repeaters conveniently close but not too cluttered, although somewhere to tuck a folded chart would not go amiss. Standard electronics include an Autohelm log, depth and autopilot, together with a Shipmate dual-station VHF.

Interior

A set of double sliding doors concertina to starboard to open almost the whole width of the saloon to the cockpit, making for a generous open-plan entertaining area.

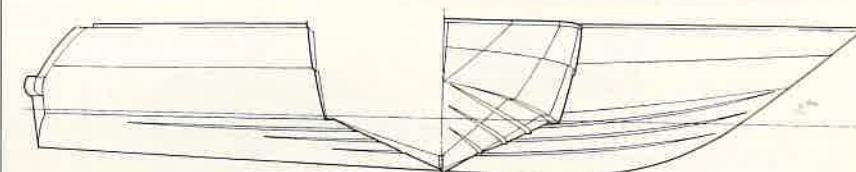
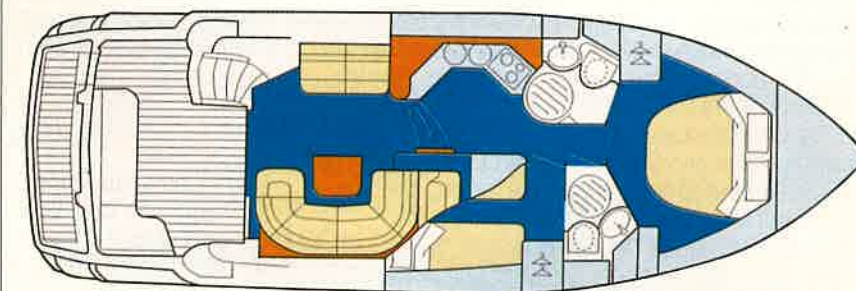
To further facilitate the dispensing of hospitality there is a bar unit immediately to port complete with a fridge and storage for bottles and glasses. The

joinery here, as throughout the 420, is finished in a warm and well-executed burr maple veneer. The matching table can be set out to dine six in comfort around the main U-settee, or hinged in half and lowered to form a coffee table.

Opposite is a further settee, the base of which can be used in conjunction with the main unit to form a double berth. Storage bins beneath the seat-bases are a useful size, and readily accessible, although an extra rub-over with some sandpaper and a lick of varnish over the plywood would not go amiss.

Those blessed with larger feet may find the couple of steps up to the twin-seat helm rather tight — a bit unnecessary given the width of the stairs down to the galley — but visibility from the driving position is good, even with the bow right up. The helm seat is adjustable, offering plenty of legroom, and storage within its base. And, full marks to the

Above: ladders are passé. The latest Princesses have followed sensible current trends by incorporating a stairwell up to the flybridge. Below left: up top is a sociable U-settee arrangement alongside the helm position.



manufacturers, right across the windscreen are a number of demister outlets.

The main engine instrument fascia is craftily sculpted down into the console rather than sitting pod-like on top, and the smart wooden wheel is flanked by ready-use switches, with the main electrics panel easy to view inboard of these. Adjacent to this is space for a radar, in a most useful position for both the skipper and the navigator.

The throttles fall to the skipper's right hand, with trim tab controls in the same run of console. On the navigator's side is a chart area complete with a pair of moulded 'bits' trays. Further electronics, including the log, echo sounder and VHF, are relegated to an overhead position, but proved easier to view than we had expected.

Down forward is the good-sized galley. The gold of the burr maple-finished cupboards is complemented by the paler gold of the functional but smart Avonite worktop. The surface incorporates twin stainless steel sinks and a built-in three-burner gas hob, whose smoked glass cover hinges and clips back out of the way. There is an extractor fan just above, plus an opening port.

A neat but versatile Panasonic Dimension 4 combined oven/grill/microwave can be run either from the mains ring supplied as standard or from a generator. At eye height is a run of lockers, some of them segmented for crockery, and beneath the countertop are larger cupboards. A large fridge with a freezer box is also sited here.

Further forward are the doors to the two sleeping cabins, each of which has en-suite facilities.

Both toilet compartments are fully moulded, which sometimes means stark white gel, but not here. The moulded basins and surrounds match the colour scheme of the rest of the accommodation, and a self-pattern within the gel surface relieves the bulkheads. The electric toilets, which feed into a holding tank located beneath the midships guest cabin, are neatly encapsulated with their associated plumbing within their mouldings, so as to be almost out of view. Both compartments have showers, the master cabin's being a smart cylindrical cubicle, and benefit from vents and opening ports.

The master cabin in the bow has a central double berth measuring 6ft 2in x 5ft 0in (1.89m x 1.52m), bordered by shelves and a pair of mini dressing tables. Above these are sets of shallow but useful lockers. A couple of large drawers are located towards the foot of the bed, a general storage bin through to the hull right forward, and two full-height cupboards, one a hanging locker and the other shelved. There are a couple of opening ports, plus a round deck hatch, and full standing headroom over the after portion of the cabin, albeit a less than the 6ft 5in (1.95m) in the saloon.

The second sleeping cabin, amidships, is furnished with two 6ft 0in x 2ft 4in (1.83m x 0.71m) berths separated by a small table locker. There is just about sitting headroom against a padded headboard. Clothes storage is by way of a combined hanging locker and shelf unit outboard; bulkier items will find a home in the lined locker beneath the inboard berth, which also gives access to the holding tank.

Engines

The engines installed in our test boat were a pair of Volvo Penta's slimmed-down TAMD 63Ps, rated at 370hp apiece. The only listed alternative to these

is a pair of 355hp 3116TA Caterpillars.

For all but the most serious of servicing, access to the engine compartment is via the secondary hatch in the cockpit sole. This drops you down right to the rear, allowing an immediate check on the raw-water filters and fuel/water separators. Also easily accessible are the stern glands — in fact they are a bit too accessible for safety, given that the shafts turn immediately adjacent to the step down from the hatch, and we would advocate a set of guards here.

There is sufficient room along a narrow walkway between the engines to get to the front of the compartment. Here, there is plenty of room past the calorifier to work at the front of the motors and to get at the primary fuel filters to the port one. Any other work outboard is hindered significantly by the wing fuel tanks, which would make spanner-wielding tricky even though most of the saloon sole does lift up.

Eggbox-type noise insulation covers the deckhead and, we are pleased to say, the tanks as well. The engineroom bilge, like the lazaret and the forward accommodation, is serviced by both an automatic 1000 Rule submersible and the manual pump located in the cockpit.

Handling and performance

Remember December's gales? We managed to sneak a day between fronts to carry out a short, sharp trial out from Plymouth. And whilst there was little white water in evidence, the gale-induced swell remained, and occasionally had our photoboot disappearing from sight.

Tucking the 420's nose down a touch, we motored straight over it at a comfortable cruising 2400rpm, just an easy canter, with no bangs and crashes from below. During radar gun trials back in the Sound, these revs gave us just under 23 knots.

Turning 90° to the seas allowed us to open right up before banking through the quartering sea and running downhill and back through the breakwater, clipping along at a full-throttle 29 knots. The boat was very well behaved; you just point it, add a touch of trim as required (the tabs allow a useful 4° alteration), and enjoy the ride.

At our 23-knot cruising revs, fuel consumption hovered around the 20gph (88lph) mark, equating to 1.17mpg. With the generous tank capacity of 300gal (1360lt), this gives an above-average range of approaching 300 miles.

Noise levels at these revs were reasonable through the accommodation, with the doors shut, but the cockpit suffered to the tune of 88dB(A). Fortunately guests and crew have a roomy flybridge to retreat to.

Conclusions

In addition to the Princess 420 we have tested the 42ft offerings from both Fairline and Sealine over the past nine months, in the shape of the Squadron 43 (MBM May 94 p98) and the 420 Statesman (MBM Sep 94 p34) respectively, and this very different trio serve to demonstrate the increasing breadth of styling offered by British boatbuilders as we move through the 1990s.

Marine Projects' contribution is arguably the most conservative of the trio, but no less useful for that. It offers an extremely sociable layout and a well thought-out interior fit-out, making it a boat you will almost feel obliged to use. □

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