

# SOVEREIGN 34 QUARTERDECK

*When is a flybridge not a flybridge? When it's a quarterdeck. The first all-new Sovereign adds a novel exterior design to its comfortable fit-out.*

The Sovereign name first appeared with an aft-cabin/wheelhouse craft based on a modified Freeman 27 hull (see MBM Sep 91 p56), which is still available although soon to be replaced by a 28. In contrast, the 34 Quarterdeck is an all-new boat, a joint development by two well-known Broads names, Bounty Boats and Norfolk Yacht Agency.

We first came across this single-engined, twin-helm river and Broads cruiser at the Nottingham Boat Show in May. It is a clever marriage between practical fit-out (based on the companies' long experience of building to hirefleet sturdiness) and a much higher standard of luxury, all within a very different semi-flybridge design concept.

## Design

The underwater sections run in from the chine to a full-length keel moulding which gently increases in depth to ensure the fullest protection of the sterngear. A steel shoe extending beneath the prop supports the bottom rudder bearing.

The forward sections quickly fill, to give maximum internal volume, the stern sections pinching in slightly but remaining full to the waterline. Furthermore the topside quarters, otherwise vulnerable to jetty snagging, follow hireboat practice

in being heavily rounded. A bathing platform, benefiting from similarly curvaceous extremities, is available as an extra.

The 34's superstructure earns its Quarterdeck soubriquet by featuring a rather different configuration at the stern. Whereas most aft-cabin boats have their raised exterior helm stretched across the whole beam, this one keeps it tighter. As a result, there is still plenty of room for everyone to sit or lounge here, but the crew can walk right around the superstructure on one deck level.

## Exterior

The quarterdeck has a roomy bench for two (or three at a squeeze) at the helm, with standing room on the small deck area adjacent to it and a lounging area behind. Fitted to our test boat was the optional hoop which provides a landing for the canopy. With its backdrop infill, this makes a snug wheelhouse.

At the helm itself is a good-sized vertical wheel, at a height that allows comfortable steering whether you are sitting or standing. The console moulding towards the fold-down screen has been kept mainly flat, although thoughtfully tweaked to allow it to drain, with just a small angled fascia for the engine panel and the odd further instrument head or two.



**Above and left: cruising on the River Trent in the Sovereign 34. The quarterdeck concept offers a flybridge-style second helm over the aft cabin, but one which is limited in width to leave a deck area extending right around the boat on one level. The normal access to the accommodation is through the sliding door to port, and the side decks and foredeck are kept clear of obstructions.**

This mini-flybridge is accessed either via a companionway from the saloon or via the deck walkaround, there being a sliding doorway from the saloon amidships to port.

The side decks, 11in (28cm) wide, give onto a workable foredeck and a slightly broader run across the stern. Expected to receive plenty of use, they have been kept clear of obstructions, with the generous 10in (15cm) cleats tucked along the toerail forward, midships and aft. There are good-height guardrails all round, with a solid intermediate rail to make sure junior crew are protected too. A break across the stern gives onto a transom ladder, and the stanchions themselves are fabricated with fender beackets.

In the aft area of deck you find two storage lockers, one vented to house a pair of 32lb (10kg) gas bottles and the other for general stowage. A

foredeck locker also would have been an advantage. A useful design detail is the lip moulded into the vertical face of the superstructure above the side ports, meaning that rainwater draining off the coachroof is channelled away from open windows.

## Interior

The usual way into the accommodation is through the sliding doorway to port. The secondary access is a companionway from the quarterdeck aft, a removable affair which manifests itself from part of the seating. Once you are battened down for the evening, the appropriate part of the settee returns to normal in place of the angled ladder, reducing the amount of space taken up by this route.

Immediately forward of the side door is the interior helm position which takes up only a small





Above: the forward cabin, like the aft master suite, features a vanity unit in the sleeping area. Below: although set at a lower level than the saloon seating, the galley remains open and well lit, and very much a part of the social area.



6ft 6in x 5ft 0in (2.0m x 1.5m) berth, extends the boat's full 12ft (3.65m) beam, with a reasonable sized toilet/shower compartment tucked into its starboard quarter and the sink incorporated in a vanity unit within the sleeping area itself. There is plenty of cupboard and drawer storage, all well finished and varnished out, with additional bulk stowage beneath the bunk-base. A panel gives access to the after bulkhead for maintenance to the steering gear and holding tanks.

Forward of the saloon, at a lower level, is the galley. This is still very much part of the social area, but with any clutter remaining hidden from those taking it easy on the settees. Bounty will customise, within reasonable bounds, but on our test boat the U-shaped arrangement had tiled work surfaces, and a three-burner hob and built-in oven adjacent to a sink and drainer. Outboard was a handy array of small perspex-fronted cupboards, and beneath the work surface a useful mixture of variously sized cupboards and drawers, as well as a fridge with a small icebox. A run of shelves is also incorporated in the half-bulkhead between the galley and saloon.

Opposite is a second toilet/shower compartment, this time with its own sink unit, making it more of a day cloakroom than the master suite's set-up. The compartment is part-moulded, with some neat design detail, for example endeavouring to keep the towel rail and looroll-holder out of the shower's firing line.

The forward cabin also has its own vanity unit, apart from which it is the usual vee-berth layout. The Sovereign's very full beam makes this bigger than usual, even without the optional infill, each berth measuring 6ft 2in x 2ft 4in (1.89m x 0.71m).

Storage here is by way of a good hanging locker with shelves built-in behind, a number of cave lockers outboard of the bunks and easily accessed voids beneath the mattresses. However, some drawers like those in the aft cabin would have given better dedicated stowage for clothes.

Throughout the accommodation, the joinery is finished in what is actually a Formica pseudo-wood cladding finished with chestnut trim — hard to tell from the real thing but easier to keep clean. There is generous headroom everywhere, and air and natural light abound, with every compartment having a vent or opening port, usually both. The galley can be fitted with an optional extractor, whilst the saloon sports two skylight-type hatches in the deckhead.

## Engine

The standard engine, as fitted to our test boat, is the Japanese Kubota-based Nanni 4190, a naturally-aspirated 4cyl diesel producing 43hp. There are three listed alternatives from Nanni, up to 62hp, and Bounty will also quote for similarly sized units in the Perkins and Volvo Penta ranges.

Access is through a large, stainless steel banded hatch in the saloon sole, which gives plenty of room to work on both day-to-day and major servicing. The battery switches, fuel shut-off and pre-filter are all located adjacent to the hatch.

Bearing in mind the likelihood of river debris, weed and silt blocking the raw-water strainer, we were pleased to find a belt-and-braces approach to the installation. Bounty Boats have installed a twin cooling water inlet and filter system, from each side of the keel line.

On our test boat, the only equipment that might prove difficult to inspect is the battery boxes, lying



outboard. The builders assure us that a second smaller hatch is to be dropped in on future craft to remedy this.

Towards the front end of the compartment lies the 80gal (364lt) stainless steel tank, to the rear the accumulator and freshwater pump. Beneath the engine, to avoid oil spills disappearing into the keel void, is a moulded drip tray. The bilge here is serviced by a floatswitch-activated Rule 1000 submersible pump, and there is another forward.

## Handling and performance

Both helm positions are pleasant to drive from, and from the interior one you get reasonable vision astern through the access door to the quarterdeck.

The steering system itself is hydraulic, making it light to handle. Slow-speed manoeuvring is positive and predictable, a three-bladed prop and a good-sized rudder giving some throw without jeopardising control when going astern, although there is scope for fitting a bow thruster if required.

Winding up the Nanni to its full 2800rpm brought the 34 up to its hull speed of about 8 knots without fuss, the indirect injection on this neat little diesel creating commendably little smoke. Dropping back to 2200rpm still bought 7 knots, and 1800 turned in just under 6; for river cruising at the 5mph mark, we tickled along at a lazy 1400rpm.

## Conclusions

A rather different and very useful addition to the inland market, the Sovereign 34 couples an easily lived-in, roomy and well proportioned interior with a very practical superstructure arrangement, allowing for a superior mode of river cruising.

The standard of finish is pitched just right, for plenty of usage but in a comfortable manner, and all this is achieved using build practices which allow easy maintenance.

Above: natural light and air abound throughout the interior. Below: attention to detail includes the sheltering of towels and toilet rolls in the forward day-cloakroom.

## Sovereign 34 Quarterdeck

Loa 34ft 0in (10.39m).  
Beam 12ft 4in (3.77m).  
Draught 2ft 6in (0.76m).  
Air draught 8ft 6in (2.60m).  
Displacement 6.6 tons.  
Fuel capacity 80gal (364lt).  
Water capacity 100gal (454lt).  
Engine single 43hp Nanni 4190 diesel.  
Price £64,950 ex VAT.  
Distributors Norfolk Yacht Agency, Yareside Gardens, Brundall, Norfolk NR13 5PY.  
Tel: 0603 713434.  
Builders Bounty Boats, Riverside Estate, Brundall, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 5PW.  
Tel: 0603 712070.

