

# BOAT REPORT

# SPIRIT 3000



LEICESTERSHIRE-BASED Roger Clark Marine are having a busy time this year, with plans to completely up-date their four-year-old range, introducing a new line-up of 22ft, 24ft, 27ft and 31ft models. The majority of these will be available at the Southampton Boat Show, but the first — the 31ft Spirit 3000 — was drawing considerable attention during its Earls Court debut appearance.

We wasted no time in booking a test as soon as the boat went back in the water, and the chosen day revealed blustery conditions for our run from Lymington to Yarmouth and back.

## Design

The 3000 is an eight-berth fast cruiser, whose huge split-level cockpit would beckon any incumbent occupant below into the sunshine. Thoughtful design reduces the apparent height of the coachroof and raised helm position, whilst giving full interior headroom over the majority of the boat. The hull is medium to deep-vee in form: a deadrise amidships of 24° flattens to 20° at the transom; this is still appreciable — so the effective planing area is increased by twin spray rails and a wide chine flat.

## Accommodation

When aiming for eight available berths on a 31ft boat, the interior might easily have resembled a dormitory. However, the in-house design team have cleverly achieved four sleeping areas, all with a modicum of privacy.

Starting at the bow, we find a U-shaped settee arrangement — which can be curtained off from the main cabin — around a white ash table; this can drop to form a double berth or be used in the cockpit. Light and ventilation is provided by a foredeck hatch, whilst there is plenty of stowage in large, well-finished under-seat lockers, and deep shelves outboard of the cushion backs.

Moving aft into the spacious main cabin, the dinette to port is cleverly arranged. In the



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The main cabin, featuring light materials and open design



normal way, it provides seating for four—leaving the central cabin area clear of obstructions—but by extending both table and aft bench seat out from the side panelling, a further couple can be wined and dined. In this extended position, the table can then be dropped to form a large double berth. Outboard of the dinette are three lined cave lockers, a perspex-fronted drinks cabinet, and a stereo radio/cassette. Clothes and bedding can be stowed in the large seat lockers.

The U-shaped galley opposite the main dinette is light and spacious, with ash-faced units and plenty of fiddled formica work surfaces. Both the three-burner gas hob, grill and oven unit, and the single sink with drainer are from the smart, enamelled Optimus range. A hot and cold water system is fed—via a pressure pump—from a 45gal (198lt) aluminium tank beneath the cabin sole. An Engel refrigerator, stowage for pots and pans, cutlery draws and a dry stores locker can all be found beneath the work surfaces; a fire extinguisher is also provided. Twin cupboards outboard of the sink complete the galley.

Natural light and ventilation for the main cabin area is provided by two large, opening ports either side, whilst the deckhead

throughout is well served with flush-mounted mini spotlights. These add to the opulent air created by a comfortable, colour co-ordinated interior, featuring extensive use of white ash joinery, thick pile carpeting, together with padded side and head linings. A hatch in the cabin sole gives access to a Rule 450 bilge pump, a sea-cock for the toilet discharge and the domestic water pressure pump.

Aft of the galley is the toilet compartment; this is a one piece moulding, which although faced with attractive marble-effect formica, has only the smallest of basins—fitted with a shower attachment—and lacks stowage. The manufacturers pointed out that the moulding is to be substantially changed on subsequent boats to accommodate a larger sink, cupboard and a shelf.

With most outdrive boats of this size, the builders manage to squeeze an extra double berth under the cockpit. But Roger Clark Marine have gone one better and fitted a double berth either side of a central dressing area. Both aft cabins can be curtained off from the main cabin, and from each other for added privacy. Headroom and stowage is limited within the sleeping compartments—fuel tanks take up all the available space beneath

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The galley continues the theme



the berths. However, a good-size hanging locker—with the fuel shut-off and change-over valves beneath—and room under a low seat in the central passageway provide some storage. Two fixed side windows and an opening port into the cockpit provide light and ventilation for each compartment.

Back into the main cabin, comprehensive 12V dc and 240V ac circuit breaker switchboards are located adjacent to the companionway on the port side—the treads of which hinge to provide stowage beneath. The 3000 comes equipped with a 240V ac ring main, immersion heater and battery charger as standard.

## Exterior

Starting at the sharp end of things again; the foredeck is superbly equipped with a Lofrans electric vertical windlass, bow roller, Bruce anchor and 75ft (23m) of chain all coming as standard items. A large locker complete with decent-sized hatch easily accommodates the chain, warps and a couple of fenders. Pairs of 10in cleats are located at the bow, midships and astern; numerous fender eyes complete the mooring hardware. While the foredeck of

our boat was adequately equipped with handholds and guardrails, the latter didn't extend far enough aft for complete safety. The manufacturers have again been quick to spot this, and are extending the guardrails back to the radar arch to ensure full security when moving along the wide sidedecks.

Boarding the Spirit 3000 from the pontoon is easily and safely achieved; freeboard to the sidedecks is low, while the radar arch and sturdy seat backs give adequate handholds. The lower aft section of the cockpit features a well-upholstered bench seat for eight. Forward, the raised helm position has two adjustable bucket seats either side of a centre console—fitted with a perspex chart protector and drink holders—and a further aft facing seat, to allow the skipper some company. The steering position is comfortable and well sheltered behind a sturdy tinted glass and stainless steel framed windscreen; two wipers are supplied as standard. Full engine instrumentation, power trim and tilt controls, a Navico log and echo sounder—fitted as standard—and the compass are set into a stepped moulding behind the padded wheel, while single-lever throttles are to port of the driver. Below these are the trim tab controls, ▶

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◀ which were rather lost amongst several other navigation light, bilge pump, blower and wiper switches. The cockpit is topped off with a substantial radar arch which houses both navigation and courtesy lights, as well as lending support to the two-part canopy and windowed side screens.

Access to the bathing platform is via a transom door let into the port side of the cockpit. The platform is full-width, with lockers either side for gas bottles and deck gear.

## Engines

All engine options — both Mercruiser and Volvo — come as twin installations; this first boat off the production line is fitted with the most powerful option — petrol Volvo AQ211/290s, developing 211hp apiece. These actually tend to price the boat towards the lower end of the 3000 range, being only £2,500 more than the least expensive Volvo installation, which has a price tag of £38,725 ex VAT for twin 146hp petrols. The fitting of turbo diesel power really alters the cost more considerably; with AQAD41/290 200hp units the Spirit is priced just over £50,000 ex VAT. The Duoprop option that our test boat was fitted with costs an extra £500 per engine.

Having unclipped and removed the transom bench seats, the lower section of the cockpit lifts in four sections, giving excellent access to the whole engine compartment. The engines themselves are strongly mounted, with all wiring and control cables secured and run clear of potential hazards. The fuel lines are equipped with good sized filters/water separators mounted on the forward bulkhead for ease of inspection. Annealed copper fuel lines connect to flexible braided stainless steel pipes around the more vulnerable engine areas. Power steering is driven off the

starboard engine, whilst the port heats a water calorifier.

At the forward end of the compartment, no fewer than six 75Ah batteries are securely mounted in vented boxes, with the isolators easily to hand. Separate starting batteries for both engines, and further pairs for the refrigerator and domestic supply are all kept topped up in the marina by a mains charger. The compartment is separated completely from the rest of the vessel and is serviced by both an electric bilge pump — connected to a sonic switch, and a Whale Gusher manual unit. Three automatic fire extinguishers are provided. While the 3000 wasn't noisy, levels in the cockpit could be further reduced by insulating the hatches.

## Handling and performance

The Force 5 blowing up the Channel into the Solent caused an awkward wind against tide chop that would have dragged many craft of this length off the plane, but the 3000 handled the conditions admirably. Even the short, beam seas caused few problems for the boat; careful use of trim tabs ensured a stable ride and good tracking characteristics. The power steering made the Spirit both responsive and light to handle, even in testing conditions.

Performance figures were excellent, even though the starboard engine was over-revving, while the port unit revs were down; neither engine was completely producing its best. We obtained a top speed of 32 knots (although an extra knot or two should be obtainable with the engines running at full power). This gave a consumption figure of 2.3 miles per gallon, indicating a maximum range of just under 400 miles on full tanks — the Spirit's 170 gallon capacity being way above average for this size boat. Throttling back to 23 knots improved these figures to 2.7 mpg and a generous range of 450 miles. Standing start acceleration time is equally competent, attaining 25 knots in the region of 12 seconds.

## Conclusions

Even though the test conditions weren't exactly conducive to the fun and sun layout of the 3000, the boat gave an excellent account of itself — sea-keeping and general performance could not be faulted. At just under 32ft, the Spirit can wine, dine and sleep the whole family plus friends in stylish comfort. The standard boat comes exceptionally well-equipped and with the few design points concerning the toilet compartment and guardrails already rectified, the Spirit 3000 is a good start and an impressive flagship for the new range. ■

<b>LOA</b>	<b>31ft 8in (9.65m)</b>
<b>Beam</b>	<b>10ft 9in (3.28m)</b>
<b>Draught</b>	<b>2ft 10in (0.86m)</b>
<b>Displacement</b>	<b>3.25 tons</b>
<b>Fuel</b>	<b>170 gal (750lt)</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>45 gal (198lt)</b>
<b>Power</b>	<b>2 × Volvo 211hp</b>
<b>Price</b>	<b>£41,350 ex VAT</b>

**Bulldozer:** Roger Clark (Marine) Ltd, 1a Cutters Close, Narborough, Leics. LE9 5FY. Tel: 0533 848350.

**Boat supplied by:** Harry Kitchener Marine Ltd, Priory Marina, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9RL. Tel: 0234 51931.