



BOAT REPORT

BIRCHWOOD TS37 SUPERSPORTS

A comfortable and good-looking cruiser, the sports variant of Birchwood's popular 37-footer is both practical and a joy to drive. The two-cabin Supersport boasts an open cockpit, extended flybridge, and sporty acceleration for a boat of its size

In an age of mass production and conformity, Birchwood still manage to make boats which are easily identifiable as Birchwoods. The distinctive hull, with its bluff rounded stem and the double-scalloped effect of the topsides, gives the range an instant identity. Below the waterline, Birchwood go for a shallow ($12\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ deadrise) vee with slightly rounded chines and a deepish keel.

The TS37 Supersports' hull design is borrowed from the 'standard' TS37, which we tested in January 1986. We commented then on the boat's high standard of finish, and are pleased to report that the same care and attention has been lavished on the Supersports. Some other manufacturers would do well to look at the way Birchwood manage to protect all hidden woodwork and interior glassfibre surfaces.

The major difference between the standard and Supersports versions of the TS37 is the aft cabin - or lack of it in the case of the Supersports. This means that the Supersports' main cabin is right forward, the guest cabin is amidships where the standard TS37 has a galley, and the galley is to port, where the standard TS37 has a dinette.

The Supersports' master cabin is smaller than the standard craft's aft stateroom. Nevertheless, it has a good-sized drawer under the large oval double bed, lockers each side and a small hanging wardrobe. There's 6ft (1.83m) of headroom and plenty of light from the skylight over the bed. The mirror over the bed-head hinges away for access to the chain locker in the forepeak, and we were pleased to see that the hatch was well sealed.

Each shower/WC compartment is compact, but has a full 6ft 1in (1.85m) of headroom. When showering, a curtain keeps the rest of the compartment dry. One shower/WC is ensuite to the master stateroom. The other has two doors (each with a lock) one opening into the central passageway and the other into the midships guest cabin.

The midships cabin houses two single berths, each 2ft (0.61m) wide. The inboard berth is only 5ft 10in (1.78m) long, the other is full length. The foot end of each berth extends back under the helm position, but there is a generous 6ft 3in (1.90m) of headroom and a hanging locker at the 'dressing' end. More storage room can be found under the bunks, though we'd prefer to be able▶



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to reach this without having to disturb the bedding.

Opposite, to port, is the small but well-planned and fully-equipped galley. There's an inset sink and drainer, three-burner gas hob, electric refrigerator and small oven/grill mounted at eye level, leaving plenty of room for utensils and supplies. An electric fan and an opening portlight provide adequate ventilation.

Up three steps, and you're in the saloon. The helm position is to starboard, with a wide bench seat adjustable fore and aft. The helm and engine controls are well positioned, as is the full range of instruments including a rudder position indicator. Forward vision from the interior helm position is slightly restricted by the high bows, fat screen pillars and the sturdy wipers on each of the three screens.

Along the starboard side of the saloon is a sideboard/bar, with three lockers and storage for bottles and glasses. To port, on a raised platform, is an L-shaped settee with two drawers under. The settee pulls out to make a double berth 7ft 2in (2.2m) long. We didn't like the table, which seemed flimsy and awkward to erect and quite out of keeping with the good workmanship of the rest of the boat; a redesign is on the drawing board.

The self-draining cockpit is reached through a sliding glass double door. At each quarter are

seats with lockers underneath, leaving room for steps each side. Without the high aft cabin of its sister, the Supersports is a very easy boat to get aboard. A ladder (with sensible handrails) over the transom leads to the bathing platform. There is good stowage for fenders on the transom, a much more sensible place than on the pulpit where they block the helmsman's view and involve a long walk for the crew.

The flybridge is longer than the standard TS37's. We had some misgivings about the vertical ladder which leads from the cockpit, through a small hatch in the roof, to the flybridge. Carrying our test gear up to the outside helm position was far from easy, and in normal use we fear it will prove near-impossible to take trays of refreshments up the ladder. The standard TS37 has a much more practical curved staircase.

On the flybridge is a double seat for the midships helmsman with the navigator to port, and a smaller double seat to starboard. The flybridge sports a very low tubular radar arch.

On deck, there's plenty of room to move about this boat. A good non-slip surface with a lip round the gunwale, sensible 29in-high (0.74m) guardrails, and plenty of hand-holds makes for a good safe deck layout, although it would be better still if the guardrail continued another couple of feet aft. The Bruce-type anchor is supplied as stan-

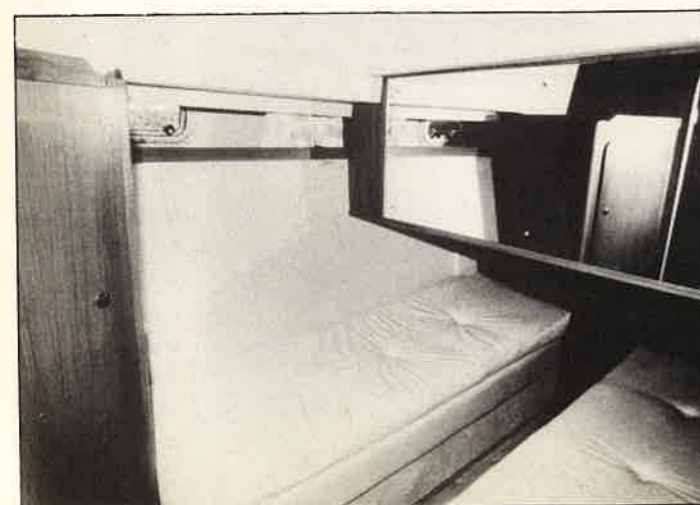
dard with a useful twelve fathoms (22m) of chain, a manual winch (our test boat had the optional electric windlass), and three sturdy cleats each side.

The test boat was fitted with the middle of the three engine options, twin BMW 636 diesels giving 360hp; BMW 530s (300hp) or Volvo Penta TAMD41s (400hp) are also available. Now that BMW's marine engine operation has been acquired by Mercruiser, the diesels (made in Italy by VM) are being supplied under the Mercruiser Bluewater banner.

The engine compartment is reached through a hatch in the cockpit and, although headroom is limited, access to the inboard side of each engine is excellent. The outboard sides can easily be reached by lifting the saloon floorboards. This means rolling back the carpet, but as the edges are well bound this should not cause undue wear. Installation is neat, with everything well clipped and neatly run — our impression was of a remarkably uncluttered engine compartment.

Although we met little in the way of rough seas during our test, we would have no reason to

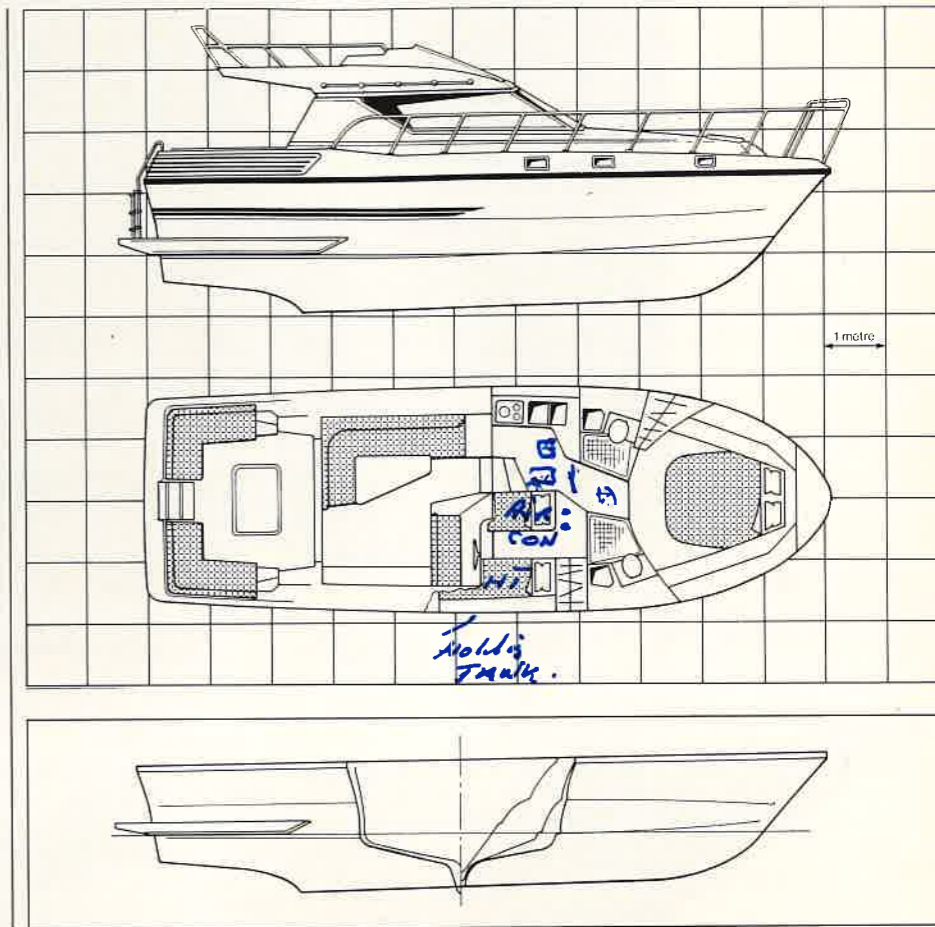
Clockwise from top left: the interior helm — forward vision is slightly restricted by the fat screen pillars; the saloon with bar; the well-planned galley; and the midships cabin.



change our earlier verdict on the seakeeping of Birchwood's 37ft hull. She was generally a pleasant boat to handle, proving responsive throughout her speed range.

The top speed of 23 knots, with full tanks and three crew aboard, is respectable rather than startling. Our previous test on the standard TS37 with similar engines recorded a 25 knot maximum speed, but with the engines running at 200rpm over their quoted maximum. On this test we didn't quite manage that, perhaps because we had new engines and full tanks. The acceleration, around ten seconds for 0-20 knots, verges on impressive for a comfortable cruising boat of this size. This is partly due to the shallow-vee hull which enables the boat to get on the plane early; the penalty being a slightly harder ride than one finds with deeper-vee hull configurations.

In conclusion, we feel that Birchwood have produced a versatile and well-mannered boat with no major drawbacks and a lot to commend it. In particular the attention to detail and standard of workmanship gives it an edge over many of its competitors in the popular 35-40ft cruiser sector of the market. Whether you choose the Supersports or standard version is likely to be a matter of personal preference. Performance, with the same hull and engines, is near identical; both versions come with an impressive range of standard equipment. For extended cruising you'd probably choose the slightly dearer standard TS37, with more accommodation. But for boating in good weather the Supersports' extra outside space gives it the edge. □



TECHNICAL DATA

Dimensions

L.o.a	39ft 2in (11.9m)
L.w.l	32ft 2in (9.8m)
Hull length	37ft (11.3m)
Beam	12ft 5in (3.8m)
Draught	3ft (0.91m)
Air draught	14ft (4.3m)
Displacement	6.6 ton
Fuel capacity	220 gallons (1000lt)
Water capacity	100 gallons (455lt)

Accommodation

Double cabin forward, twin berth midships cabin, galley, two toilet/shower compartments, saloon.

Engines

Twin BMW (now Mercruiser) 636 turbocharged diesel engines, driving 20 x 18 1/2 in (508 x 470mm) propellers through Hurth 2:1 reduction gearboxes and conventional shafts.

Capacity	3590cc
Cylinders	6
Max bhp	180
Max rpm	3800

Performance

Top speed 23.0 knots (full tanks, three crew)
Cruising speed 18-20 knots.

Construction

Hand laid chopped strand mat and woven rovings in female moulds.

Deck reinforced with balsa core.

Price
£84,300 ex VAT.

Builder

Birchwood Boat International Ltd, Common Road, Huthwaite, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts NG17 2JU. Tel: 0623 515133.

Supplier

Birchwood Boats Solent Ltd, Vespasian Road, Southampton. Tel: 0703 224252.

Designer

E. Andrews (1987).

