

Hardy 50

Until quite recently, the builders of this bespoke motoryacht never dreamed of creating such a substantial craft. Have they gone too far, too fast? Or is this a player fit for the big league? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**

700hp diesels • 27 knots • from £740,000

Since taking over the reins at Norfolk-based boatbuilders Hardy Marine several years ago, Mark Funnell has pushed the company into an altogether different league.

What was already a range of fine-looking, solidly built, seaworthy craft has been leaping up in size, with the addition of a Commodore 36 and then a Commodore 42. But it hasn't stopped there.

Some discerning owners who could not find what they were looking for elsewhere, persuaded the yard to crack its half-century by designing what is best

described as a small motoryacht.

The owners in question, David and Kim Griffiths, run a successful sea-school based on an excellent level of 2:1 tuition, all-inclusive fine catering and hitherto, an Aqua-Star 48. But they wanted a boat that could provide an even more comfortable and versatile environment. The end result was the very first Hardy 50, *Lady Kimala*, which they kindly allowed us to test.

DESIGN & BUILD

As with all the larger Hardys, the design of the 50 is down to Andrew Wolstenholme.

Its round-bilge hull has a keen entry, to reduce slamming, but this pushes out purposefully so that there is still plenty of volume for the forward accommodation. There is a long, shallow keel, and a knuckle is incorporated above the chine in an attempt to knock back the unwanted spray that can always be a problem on this style of boat.

All this means that the vessel is capable of pushing up to speeds well into the mid-20s, although it is equally happy to sit back and play the traditional semi-displacement role—a neat trick for a trawler yacht.

The boat's handsome countenance is helped



by its length, which ensures that its bulk doesn't look out of proportion, and by its gunwale, which visually plays down the height of the superstructure.

The 50's flybridge sports a more conventional layout than that of the 42 (which has an island helm position), and can be accessed by easily-negotiated stairs leading up from the wheelhouse as well as from the aft deck.

Meanwhile, the interior makes full use of the boat's 16ft beam to provide something extra special. The open-plan wheelhouse can accommodate all the crew at once, the truly inviting saloon has superyacht pretensions and the aft master suite spans the full width of the hull.

The forward accommodation, in contrast, is something of a labyrinth of clever nooks and crannies. Besides a well appointed galley and an en-suite forecabin, there's a snug third cabin, a yacht-style chart area, a day toilet and a utility room.

It is hats-off to the builders for managing to combine an excellent level of finish with all the appropriate practical considerations. All the equipment on board is designed and built to be accessible, and most flat surfaces are bordered by nicely turned fiddles.

✓✓✓✓✓
A modern motoryacht with plenty of space and top-notch detailing.

ACCOMMODATION

There's a sliding door on each side of the wheelhouse, and they bring you straight to the business end of things: a serious helm station to port, complete with KAD suspension seats, offset by a comfortable dinette to starboard, with its seating facing predominantly forward.

On *Lady Kimala* this upper dinette has been designed so that it can be extended, and can cater for six people with the aid of some free-standing stools. This in turn has allowed the generous lower saloon area, aft, to be fully

given over to lounge-height settees rather than trying to combine relaxing with dining.

Hardy can vary the arrangement to suit a buyer, but we approve of this less formal approach. You can take your ease feeling as if you are on a considerably larger boat than you are, and yet you can still appreciate the view through the side windows.

The sideboard to port incorporates an entertainments centre and bar, and the attractive split-level countertop is bordered by practical fiddles.

Go down forward from the wheelhouse and you find the galley, which at first glance is not overly generous but is particularly well thought-out. Besides offering plenty of storage and uncluttered Corian countertop, it also features domestic-sized appliances, including two large sinks and a separate freezer.

If Kim needs more space when entertaining, she can commandeer the office-cum-chart table across the way, stowing any navigation gear in one of the convenient cupboards.

below The galley isn't large but is well designed. Stairs lead up to the flybridge from a split-level saloon. The yacht-style chart area forward is a neat touch.



below Dominating the very inviting saloon is a settee arrangement which allows the entire crew to lounge in comfort, after dining up opposite the helm.



Under the sole there are further storage bins, removable to give you access to the bilge.

A small lobby gives access to the small but perfectly usable third cabin, fitted out with a couple of bunks and a modicum of storage, and to a day toilet.

A pleasant surprise is the way the day toilet in turn leads on to a workshop-cum-utility room, complete with a bench, space for spares and tools, access to auxiliary equipment such as pumps and, in the case of our test boat, a washing machine and extra freezer. In amongst this little lot, the designers have still found space for a watertight door through to the engine room, completing an impressive bluewater cruising fit-out.

Lady Kimala's forward cabin has its double berth offset to port, which surrenders enough space to allow for plenty of standing room as well as a neat sofa. It's quite possible to have a central double or vee-berths if you prefer, and whichever arrangement you choose you won't find yourself short of stowage.

The en-suite is a comfortable size and smartly turned-out, with an attractive, round porcelain sink, but whilst it can boast an electric toilet it has no shower enclosure. The aft cabin's facilities, on the other hand, include a good-sized, semicircular shower stall.

There is more room generally in this master suite, and it hasn't been wasted; there is just the right balance between spaciousness, so you don't feel hemmed in, and the all-important stowage. Although the queen-size island bed is surrounded by a plethora of wardrobes, cupboards and drawers, not to mention a dressing table, there is still plenty of room to move around.

The cabin also benefits from plenty of natural light, with good-sized ports let into the coachroof, contributing to the same superyacht feel that you enjoy in the saloon.

✓✓✓✓✓
Ample space and great fit-out. Only the forward WC lets the side down.

EXTERIOR

A break in the guardrails and a step fashioned into the rubbing strake makes for easy boarding from alongside. The hull's relatively low freeboard at this point means you are not having to scale a formidable height of topside, although a set of solidly engineered boarding steps can be installed if required.

If you are moored stern-to, on the other hand, the optional crane (for launching the 10ft 6in mini-RIB chocked off across the coachroof) can be used to suspend the passerelle, which has been neatly designed to be part and parcel of the bathing platform.

The side decks are a minimum of 15in (38cm) wide. As the gunwales are topped off with substantial solid railings, up to a height of 3ft, the inboard handrails which are fitted seem superfluous.

Up at the sharp end, the chain locker is fully accessible through a watertight hatch set in a



above The aft master cabin has a queen-size berth with impressive space and stowage all around.



above Only one WC has a shower stall. The third cabin has twin bunks, the forward one an offset double.

pregnant portion of gunwale. The beefy hydraulic Vetus windlass is a horizontal design, complete with a 'drum end' for handling heavy kedge warps.

The rest of the deck hardware is equally seamanlike, with good-sized bitts located fore and aft and no fewer than three pairs of 12in (30cm) cleats for springs.

On aft-cabin craft there is often limited stowage at deck level, but space has been found for a reasonable lazaret at the stern. It needn't get bunged up with fenders, as these have their own baskets provided across the transom railings.

Besides the wide, easily negotiated internal staircase leading from the wheelhouse, there are couple of steps up from the aft deck to the flybridge.

Whilst bordered by a generous amount of deep-set seating, *Lady Kimala*'s flybridge has been left quite open. However, different arrangements can be specified, and there is space for a fridge and wet-bar. The voids within the seat bases offer plenty of storage.

The helm station feels well tucked in within the coaming, and two bucket seats make skippering both a comfortable and a companionable business. The co-pilot is well

below The no-nonsense inside helm station has suspension seats, banks of electronics and CCTV.





above The twin 700hp Caterpillar diesels are accessible via a walk-through door. **above** Practical features include a utility room and safe, wide side decks.



above A passerelle lifts out from the bathing platform. **above** The engine room vent is a design feature. **above** Fenders have dedicated aft-deck stowage.

able to help with navigation and watchkeeping, as there is space beside the electronics console for a paper chart or pilot book.

✓✓✓✓✓
Very easy to move around, with safe decks and hefty hardware.

The boat's sizeable mast can be lowered to reduce its air draught to 13ft 6in (4.1m).

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

The standard engine installation is two of Caterpillar's sophisticated but well-proven C12 diesels rated to 700hp, although alternatives are available if required.

For day-to-day checks, the main access to them is via the watertight door forward, onto a treadplate. For most eventualities, this is going to be good enough, although the saloon floor can be taken up in sections if needs be.

Indeed, if the worst comes to the worst and an engine needs to be craned out, the flybridge moulding is fabricated with a large removable panel; the builders seem to have all the bases covered.

Lady Kimala's installation has the coolers and header tanks situated towards the front of the blocks, but the idea is to shift these to the sides in future boats to give more space against the forward bulkhead. We think there

is already enough room here for servicing, and if filling in the sides of the engines leaves less room outboard (where the main fuel tanks are), it is hard to see the benefit.

Engine-mounted service items such as the filters can be handed for easier access in any case, and the raw-water strainers and primary fuel filters, located aft, are readily got at.

The engine room can also house a generator mighty enough to cope with the power-thirst

of whatever on-board equipment you have specified. An 8kVA Vetus unit is the standard fitment.

✓✓✓✓✓
Proven diesels, robust engineering and reasonable access.

from concept to commissioning: the genesis of the Hardy 50

David and Kim Griffiths not only bought the first Hardy 50, but played a big role in setting its specification and layout.



To replace my Aqua-Star 45, I wanted a slightly larger vessel that had the same seakeeping qualities, would be easy for two people to manage and could cruise for at least 300 miles at a comfortable 18 knots. I also wanted the ability to store a dinghy on deck, and easy access to the engine room.

At the Southampton Boat Show in September 2002 I admired the Hardy Commodore 42, but it was clearly too small. I asked the managing director, Mark Funnell, whether the company had ever considered building anything bigger, and he told me there was a draft drawing of a 50-footer.

I travelled to the factory to meet Mark and Andrew Wolstenholme, the designer, and found that the proposed boat met many of my needs. A second set of drawings was produced, and these came

closer to my requirements, so I placed an order in January 2003.

Regular discussions with Mark and his team continued while construction started, and we began to flesh out the specification. They were extremely flexible and were always prepared to listen to my ideas and work them into the design.

I was keen to have walk-in access to the engine room, and a third toilet compartment so that each cabin had its own facilities, and we worked out how these aims could be achieved. We identified how we were going to install the 800gal fuel tanks which I had requested, and I was even able to get involved in the design of cleats and fairleads, even though steelwork is the only part of the manufacture which is subcontracted.

By July the hull plug was complete, by

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Our test day threw up nothing much more than a Force 5, and only limited seas, all of which this 25-tonne Hardy rather turned its nose up at.

David Griffiths, who is no stranger to rough weather, tells us he is entirely confident in how the boat handles itself, and we certainly could not find anything that looked like upsetting it. A slight push on the stern in a following sea, required a tad of correction, and that's about it.

The hull gobbles up the horsepower quite gamely, staying rock-steady as you power up through the 20s. The top speed we attained was a shade over 26 knots with full tanks and a relatively fouled bottom; David usually logs 27 knots.

On the other side of the coin, this readiness to shoulder 1400hp means the boat is pretty thirsty for fuel, compared with a more efficient vee-hulled planing boat. That's why David specified larger than standard fuel capacity, at 800gal, which is divided between two engineroom tanks and a reserve one.

Of course you can rein in consumption by modifying your speed, and this is one

advantage of this type of hull. You can cruise equally comfortably at speeds below 20 knots as you can above it.

Twin Disc EC300 MGX gearboxes have been fitted to this installation, allowing the skipper to select a sort of trolling mode for manoeuvring. This obviates the clunk and inevitable hefty push that comes with twin 700hp engines, even when just engaging tickover.

The variable slip on the clutches, controlled over the first third of the throttle levers' movement, allow much finer tuning for close-quarters work, as well as helping you stay within river speed limits without continuously having to shuffle in and out of gear.

From the flybridge helm visibility is 360°, and down in the truly cosseted wheelhouse the large screen and side windows offer a great view. However the dead astern sector is all but fully obliterated, which is why the Griffiths have had closed-circuit television installed, with the camera facing back across the transom and the screen smack in front of the wheel. A flick of a switch and the engineroom can be checked too.



above Our test boat's flybridge seating is sociable.

The rest of the console is equally serious, with plenty of room for whole banks of electronics plus a Sestrel compass. Even so, everything is within arm's-length of one very comfortable suspension seat or the other.

✓✓✓✓✓
Clean handling and comfortable at any speed, but fuel-thirsty.



above From beefy windlass to chunky bitts, the deck hardware is seamanlike.

October the first hull had been moulded and by December the engine installation was completed. In January 2004 the superstructure was moulded, and by May it was attached to the hull.

By the middle of the year we were finalising the layout. The interior was mocked up in hardboard for Mark and I to discuss, and Geoff, the shipwright, would often be asked to rework the mock-up while Mark and I were in the local pub having lunch!

The electrical installation seemed painfully slow, but the boat was launched in September. She floated to her expected waterline exactly as Andrew had predicted, and sea trials went smoothly.

After rushing to install furniture, lay carpets and commission the electrical and electronic systems prior to the Southampton Boat Show, she was returned to Lowestoft to

be completed in a less hurried environment, and was finally handed over to us in November 2004.

We have had the inevitable teething problems, but nothing serious, and Hardy Marine have always been very responsive and quick to deal with the issues. Meanwhile, *Lady Kimala* has already demonstrated that she has both the seakeeping abilities and the range for our planned cruises to the Baltic and the Mediterranean.

David Griffiths

Lady Kimala is going into service with the Mercator Maritime sea school. For details contact Mercator Maritime, 2nd Floor, 30 Penners Gardens, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6JW. Tel: 020 8399 9789. www.mercatormaritime.co.uk



SPECIFICATION & VALUE

Compare this Hardy with similarly sized 'production' vessels and it comes across as pretty expensive, with a price tag of well over £700,000. A Fairline 50 is going to set you back £100,000 less, for example, even when fully kitted-out. Even some specialist builders, such as Sea Ranger, can build an impressive craft and still leave you with change.

However, the impressive Atlantic 50 or a Grand Banks of this size will command a similar price tag once fully specified, even if you're not quite comparing like with like; Hardy have neatly cleaved out a niche in the market by anglicising the boxy traditional trawler yacht.

In keeping with the league they have moved into, there is also a no-holds-barred feel to their engineering. A central hydraulic system operates items such as the mast, windlass, bow-thruster and crane, so there is no need for susceptible electric motors.

Quite what comes as standard, and where you start to edge into the extras list, is something of a grey area. This is a bespoke boat, and there is quite a bit of room to manoeuvre when it comes to gear and fit-out.

That said, you can expect the quoted price to include teak decking, a generator, a bow-thruster and heating, which rivals' prices might not.

✓✓✓✓✓
Pricey but bespoke, and you can see where the money is going.

Verdict

Moving up into the larger end of the market for cruising boats can be a risky business. The builders need to be able to crank up a gear in terms of fit-out, and if they can't shake off their small-boat mentality they will soon get found out.

Excitingly, Hardy have proved they are up to it, both in terms of detailed design and finesse of finish.

The flagship 50 errs away from the super high-gloss feel that is the norm on boats of this size, but this is part of its appeal. It is finely fitted-out, but without forgetting the practical necessities of going afloat.

It's a rare example of a blue-water cruising vessel for motorboating enthusiasts, as distinct from sailing folk and gin-palace owners.

MBM RATING

9/10



Hardy 50 technical data



specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category A
LENGTH OVERALL	52ft 10in (16.13m)
HULL LENGTH	49ft 0in (14.94m)
BEAM	16ft 0in (4.88m)
DRAUGHT	4ft 5in (1.34m)
AIR DRAUGHT (with mast down)	13ft 6in (4.10m)
DISPLACEMENT	25 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	725gal (3300lt)
WATER CAPACITY	150gal (680lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	1ft 3in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 4in
AFT-CABIN BERTH	6ft 6in x 5ft 6in

performance

engines twin Caterpillar C12 diesels
configuration 6cyl, 12.0lt, 700hp at 2300rpm
conditions wind southeasterly Force 4-5, sea slight
load fuel 90%, water 80%, crew 3

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1000	8.5	7.2	33	1.18	755	73
1400	11.8	19.4	88	0.61	389	73
1800	18.6	32.6	148	0.57	365	77
2000	21.7	39.6	180	0.55	350	80
2200	24.8	48.8	222	0.51	325	81
2300	26.2	59.4	270	0.44	282	82

Range figures above are in miles (based on 800gal capacity), with a 20% margin.
 Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the wheelhouse.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with 700hp Caterpillar C12 diesels	£740,000
BOW-THRUSTER	standard
8kVA GENERATOR	standard
HEATING	standard
TEAK DECKING	standard
HYDRAULIC MAST	POA
DECK CRANE	£9,000
AIR-CONDITIONING	£25,000

BOAT AS TESTED about £800,000

ENQUIRIES Hardy Marine Ltd, Gayners Way Industrial Estate, North Walsham, Norfolk NR28 0AN. Tel: 01692 408700.
www.hardy-marine.co.uk

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