

— Boat Report —

ORKNEY ORKADIAN 20

The cruiser version of a rugged angling boat now comes with the option of diesel outdrive power. Proving its versatility, it was trailed to Brittany for our test.



Orkney Boats' carefully explored foray into the pocket-cruiser market, with hulls of around 20ft and 23ft, builds on their established strength of producing well mannered and forgiving boats for professional fishermen and leisure anglers alike.

Having tried the short-wheelhouse, outboard-powered Day Angler 19+ version of the smaller hull last year (see MBM Sep 95 p94), with assuredly favourable results, we gladly took up the builders' invitation to test the outdrive-powered cruiser version, the Orkadian.

As a welcome bonus, it gave us an excuse to make an exploratory trailboating and gastronomic visit to the Golfe de Morbihan, on the southern coast of Brittany in France (watch out for a full report in our next What Sportsboat & Trailboat supplement).

Design

The hull, with its distinctive simulated-clinker topsides, is from the drawing board of Arthur Mursell, best known in connection with TT Boat Designs and the Nelson range. It is designed with a view to allowing reasonable speeds to be maintained in poor conditions.

The forward sections have been kept fine for comfort in head seas, but then pan out around a soft chine to give a moderate deadrise and associated lift over the after sections, for all the benefits of semi-displacement performance.



We do not recommend trying to swing a cat in the toilet compartment (above), but the Orkadian's wheelshelter (below) offers two comfortable swivel seats and full standing headroom. The cabin (bottom) is smartly finished with fabric panels and protective teak trim.

The bottom sections also incorporate a useful run of protective central keel, which promotes directional stability, as well as two short bilge keels.

Exterior

The self-draining cockpit, which is of a good depth and extends the full beam of the boat, runs cleanly through into the wheelshelter, which offers full standing headroom and two swivelling single seats.

The chunky enginebox encroaches a fair way into the open cockpit area, but being moulded with slight fiddles it can make a useful picnic table when not doubling as an additional seat.

At the helm, the vertical stainless steel wheel and the coaming-mounted throttle are comfortably positioned whether you are sitting or standing. There is room on the console for engine gauges and ready-use switches, together with a combined log/sounder display head. Additional instruments might be best bracket-mounted opposite, on the fiddled console in front of the crew seat.

A wealth of practical storage space is incorporated. The moulded seat plinths provide a useful amount (as an option, a fridge can be installed in the port one), bins are moulded-in along the coaming on both sides, and there are lockers across the transom, one of which houses the battery switch.

A framed canopy with roll-up sides covering the full cockpit is available as an option, as is a wheelhouse dropback, which may be less bulky.

Out on the 7in (18cm) wide side decks, there are handrails running along the wheelhouse top and coachroof, a comforting toe-in and a moulded non-slip finish. As you move around, the Orkadian remains very stable for a craft of this size.

Deck hardware includes a pair of 8in (20cm) cleats aft, 6in (15cm) ones amidships and a single 10in (25cm) cleat on the foredeck. This is capable of handling the anchor warp, for which there is a good-sized locker.

Interior

A removable wooden hatch (which tucks out of harm's way beside the passenger seat) and a double folding door give easy access to the cabin.

The interior is smartly finished with fabric panels, and there is conservative use of teak trim in the areas which benefit from some extra protection. In the galley area near the opening there is full standing headroom; otherwise you have to stoop a little as you move about, although there is plenty of sitting headroom around the dinette.

The teak table for the dinette, which can be stowed away in the toilet compartment, acts as the infill to make a 5ft 10in x 5ft 0in (1.80m x 1.52m) berth. The seat base moulding is fashioned with the usual lockers, as well as a pair of inset mini cave compartments secured by removable wooden slats.

Outboard of the seats are runs of fiddled shelving. Above these are a couple of ports, with the main ventilation coming from an opening deckhead hatch.

The galley moulding incorporates a two-burner gas hob and a single stainless steel sink with just a manual faucet; the removable 3gal (14lt) water tank is situated adjacent to the helm. Outboard of the hob is a modicum of stowage moulded into the galley surface, and beneath this there is a reasonable-sized locker.

Opposite is the toilet compartment, which has an opening port and offers just sufficient legroom but

leaves no room for the luxury of an extra basin or any stowage. A portable toilet is supplied as standard, although a pump-out alternative is available.

Engines

The chunky moulded enginebox is well clamped down and insulated, in an endeavour to limit the intrusiveness of the inherently noisy 78hp Volvo Penta TMD22 4cyl diesel fitted on our test boat. Petrol outboard power is the other option.

For daily checks, it is simply a matter of lifting up the top hatch. For more major servicing, and to inspect the fuel/water separator, you have to unclamp the whole box and slide it forward. And if you need to delve into the drive area, you remove the lid of the false middle transom locker.

The fuel cut-off is on top of the tank ahead of the enginebox, and accessed through a separate deck hatch. A manual bilge pump is located on the transom bulkhead, and the battery beneath the removable companionway step.

Like the rest of the boat, the mechanical installation appears solidly engineered and tidily executed.

Handling & performance

On the Atlantic neck of the Brittany coast, the Golfe de Morbihan is a natural harbour, some four times larger than Poole, set within a large protective bay. However, the tidal range here induces more than its fair share of challenging sea states, especially around the narrow entrance when the wind is against the tide, throwing up short, peaked and confused waves in abundance.

Unconcerned, the Orkadian pushed over and through these in her semi-displacement mode at around 13 knots when pulling 4000rpm. Its solid build enabled it to take the odd knock against the hull without complaint, while keeping up a stable ride no matter how you put it across the waves.

There was plenty of water thrown about, and a measure of it was blown back aboard. But the wheelhouse offers excellent protection; we found very little spray finding its way back into the cockpit (which is self-draining anyway), and the wipers do a good job of clearing the screens.

Once past the unruly sloop around the harbour entrance we applied more throttle, bringing the boat just shy of her flat-out 4500rpm to run at 16.5 knots, giving a smooth ride with a clean, orderly sweep through the harder turns. Our test boat was fitted with trim tabs, and a touch of these helped drop the bow to counteract the not inconsiderable weight of the diesel outdrive installation (note that we were also laden with a crew of three, a cruising inventory and a full fuel tank).

By way of comparison, our previous test of the boat's sister model, the Day Angler 19+, with just a 50hp outboard on the transom, gave us a maximum of 21 knots and a cruising speed of 16 knots. Bearing in mind the extra weight of a cruiser, we would expect similar performance from the Orkadian when fitted with its maximum outboard rating of 75hp.

That extra petrol performance would obviously come at a price in terms of economy, however, whereas the diesel in our test boat's enginebox should draw little more than a frugal 2.5gph (11lph) at 4000rpm.

Back within the shelter of the gulf, we dropped down into displacement mode to admire the scenery. A 3000rpm setting gave around 7 knots, the boat tracking obediently with little recourse to the wheel.

At these revs, noise levels were relatively unobtrusive, at 83dB(A) within the wheelhouse shelter. In cruising mode at 4000rpm they pushed up to 88dB(A), which is quite high enough, this being a trait of Volvo's TMD22 rather than evidence of any short-cuts taken by the builders.

Conclusions

The Orkadian 20 is a smart, handsome little boat which offers great fun and versatility in true get-in-and-go style, whether you are out for just the day or weekend. And, of course, its trailable size and weight give you the added dimension of being able to cruise further afield if desired.

The boat's layout and proportions work well, and it shares all the practical features and robustness of its fishing-orientated sisters. With a choice of outdrive or outboard power offered, it is a most welcome entry into an underpopulated sector of the market.



Above: for daily engine checks it is simply a matter of lifting the hatch over the chunky moulded enginebox. Below: at play in Brittany's Golfe de Morbihan, with the sides of the optional framed cockpit canopy in their rolled-up position.

Orkney Orkadian 20

Loa 19ft 7in (5.97m).
Beam 7ft 7in (2.30m).
Draught 2ft 2in (0.66m).
Displacement 2000lb (910kg).
Fuel capacity 30gal (135lt).
Water capacity 3gal (13lt).
Engine single 78hp Volvo Penta TMD22 diesel.
Price £23,160 ex VAT.
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