

# Rhēa 850

BOAT REPORT

RHĒA 850



**MOTOR BOATS TESTED**

“It offers practical facets while pushing the comfort factor”

**FACT FILE**  
Rhēa 850  
LOA: 31ft 2in (9.5m)  
PRICE: From £109,550  
TOP SPEED: 22.4 knots

## With traditional looks and a keen eye on build quality, Rhēa's 850 is a guaranteed success story

REPORT BY MARK TURLEY

**T**he French love their pêche promenades, they even have a special term for it, its called pêche pro... oh. Anyway they just love the central wheelhouse, simple shaftdrives and manageable walkaround decks – it's the knockabout, bit-of-this, bit-of-that end of boating (which has well and truly spread to these shores as well), and there's no shortage of boats on offer, most of which look pretty similar and come covered in shiny gelcoat. Rhēa, however, has cut

itself a rather tastier-looking niche, with a traditional edge in terms of looks and an eye on build quality. This, their 28ft (mid-range) 850 model was launched last year and has been an immediate success, offering all those practical facets while pushing the comfort factor.

### Design & build

The Rhēas stand out first and foremost because of their interesting, somewhat traditional lines. The topsides incorporate tumblehome – or barrel-like

curvature – as they tuck in towards the transom, while the clean shear running at bulwark level and fishing boat stem give them a substantial seaman-like air. This, however, is a boat that, as well as looking the part, has the build quality to match right through. There's tidy woodwork and chunky fittings through to the mouldings themselves, which are as solid as they come. In addition, anywhere that is likely to get knocked is capped with a wear strip, such as round the transom gate.

Underwater, things take on a more modern slant, with the single prop tucked into a tunnel enclave so that the engine is low and all but level in the boat. This also ensures the cockpit sole can be kept flush, the deck taking on some extra camber to give the required height to the engine space (as opposed to an intrusive engine box). A deep fin-like skeg protects the stern gear and gives some of the best astern manoeuvrability we've experienced in a boat of this type. Furthermore, the combination of protective skeg and deep forefoot means that the hull can readily take the ground.

Back on the creature comfort side, there are loads of places to plonk yourself: in the huge cockpit sheltering, in the wheelhouse with your nose outside of the door, or on the foredeck area having ambled along the safe sidedecks. The wheelhouse doubles as both a saloon and a galley, and the view out is excellent irrespective of where you may choose to sit, the fore part of the dinette settee hinging over to make a double co-pilot seat.

The dinette table drops to supplement the separate fore-cabin with its angled double berth, which is an awkward shape, as only around half of it pushes out to more than 6ft (1.83m) in length). A nicely finished toilet compartment with shower completes the accommodation.

### Accommodation

The roof overhangs – including the side ones, which they might not have bothered about – are extremely useful, as they tend to shade the wheelhouse windows from too much sun, while also allowing the doors to remain open in a shower.

### Accommodation

Practical all-purpose wheelhouse. Smart yet robust finish

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adequate size and finished in the same manner as the rest of the accommodation, inasmuch as GRP does not overtly feature. There is useful storage, here too.



The impressive galley includes a gas hob and oven



Good viz from a simple but effective helm station



Angled berth means a section is short on length



Masses of windows mean there is fun, space and a great view for all the family, at rest or when underway



Neat teak fold-away seats colour the deep, safe cockpit



### Exterior

The 'moulded' length gives the boat its '850' designation, onto which there is a further metre to add once the optional bathing platform and the stemhead fitting are added. It's easy to do without the platform, at least for boarding, as when moored the easiest route is over the gunwale onto the sidedeck. Handholds abound and moving about is no problem.

The cockpit comes ready fitted with deep, slatted, hinge-down seats and this is simply a great spot – for fishing, eating, letting the kids roam safely... you name it. Plus the wheelhouse overhang offers useful protection and landing for a canopy. Indeed, the deckhead clearance is substantial – not quite 7ft (2.13m) – and the whole structure is strong enough to take sunbathers or stow cumbersome items – perhaps canoes to entertain the kids.

The deep coaming is finished in a solid iroko

taffrail and thoughtfully sports some small fiddled cave lockers for dropping in bits you don't want to go flying when you put them down. There is also access to the steering gear, plus a properly finished lazarette area.

Wandering forward along the 12in (30cm) sidedecks you are inclined to perch on the coachroof or set a cheek on the taffrail, as the boat's whole 28ft feels there to be used – with something solid always there to lean on.

Mooring hardware is, as you would expect, all well up to the job. We especially liked the fact that the cleats for the sternlines were far forward,

### Exterior

Generous cockpit, safe and easy to move about in



Deep, wide decks and tall coamings mean total access around the boat

### Engine options & access

The engine line-up is comprehensive to say the least, with both single and twin configurations available, from 200-440hp. And they are not just from one stable, with Nanni, Volvo and Yanmar represented. Our test boat had a single 315hp Yanmar fitted – a good all round choice, allowing you to explore, but with sufficient oomph to get you back home at 20 knots.

Access to the engine compartment is gained from two points, the main one being through a large lifting section of the cockpit sole – ably helped and supported on a pair of gas-struts – plus a hatch from the rear of the wheelhouse

Stowage is not a problem

that gets you easier access to the front of the engine. With just the single unit

down here there is loads of room to get right round, while items like the raw water strainer and primary fuel filter are readily accessible. Bins are provided outboard for storage, with the fuel tank itself located on the other side of the forward bulkhead. Large voids can often spell trouble in

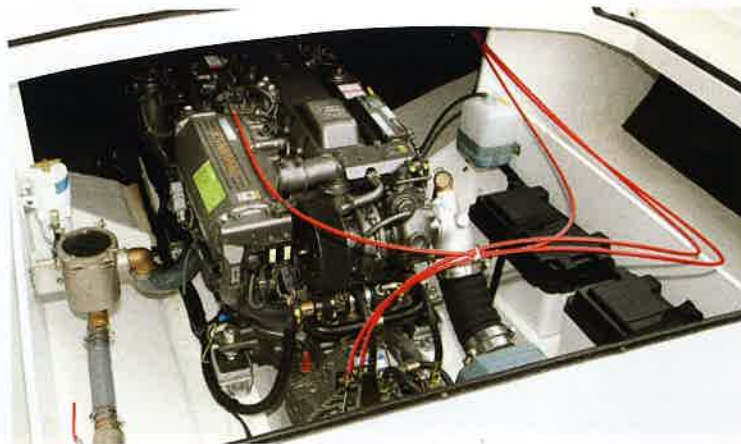
### Engine options & access

Plenty of engine options and excellent access



### Performance & handling

Boats often have a certain speed where they feel most comfortable – any more or less and they feel off-key. The first thing in the 850's favour is that it is happy at any setting between 3 and 22 knots. However, if you want to select an all-round



A single engine installation really opens up the bay. Soundproofing works well

cruising speed, then a straight 3000rpm gives a shade under 20 knots and an even, steady ride. Moreover, stick the helm over at this speed and you get a level, easy turn without a hint of the hull wanting to heel. Skipper and crew sit well too, with an excellent view and plenty to steady yourself against. There is also a range of doors and windows to open so the wheelhouse doesn't get muggy. Meanwhile, a touch of spray flicks up on occasions, but this does not appear to be a wet hull.

However, perhaps the best bit is the Rhéa's slow speed manners, and if you are into creek-hopping and pottering then you're in for a treat. This is one

### Performance & handling

Superb slow speed handling plus strong cruising ability



of the steadiest single-engined craft we've driven in a long while: the boat moves when you say, otherwise staying put. As for going astern, it steers as well going backwards as forwards.

### Specification & value

The Rhéa is a clear cut above the usual pêche promenade jobs (from the likes of Bénétteau and Jeanneau) and this is reflected in the price. However, it is not hard to see where the money has been spent; everything from the mouldings to the fitout is given the heavyweight treatment, and you feel this is a boat that is going to look just as good in ten years as it did the day you first took delivery.

As a standard boat we like the fact that items such as the excellent all-round cockpit seating or that wonderful stemhead come ready fitted. But there are some surprise options on the list that

### Specification & value

Premium price, but it's clear where the money's gone.



need to be looked at. These days shore power comes on pretty much anything that floats, while £2546 for a bathing platform seems a rather painful addition to us.

## Verdict

If you want wholly practical – in terms of use and fitout – but have an aversion to rough and ready, then we would recommend a close look at the 850. It's large enough to go places, small enough to jump on and good fun to use, not to mention great looking.

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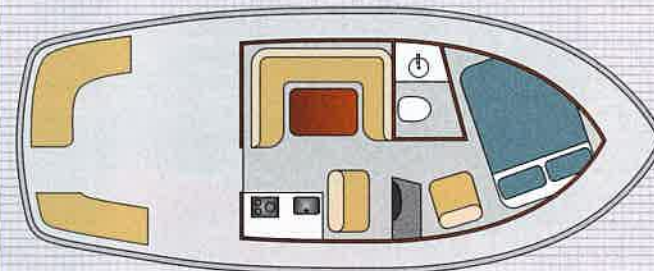
## Rhēa 850 technical data

### specifications

BUILD	GRP
RCD	B
LENGTH OVERALL	31ft 2in (9.50m)
HULL LENGTH	27ft 10in (8.50m)
BEAM	10ft 10in (3.30m)
DRAUGHT	2ft 9in (0.85m)
AIR DRAUGHT (without mast)	8ft 2in (2.50m)
DISPLACEMENT	4.5 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	120gal (550lt)
WATER CAPACITY	44gal (200lt)

### key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	12in (30cm)
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in (1.93m)
FORE CABIN BERTH	6ft 4in x 5ft 7in (1.93 x 1.70m)



### performance

Engines	single Yanmar 6LYA 315hp diesel
Configuration	6cyl, 5.2lt, 315hp at 3300rpm
Conditions	wind NW/ly Force 3, sea slight
Load	fuel 90%, water 30%, crew 2

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
2200	11.3	4.1	19	2.76	265	79
2600	14.8	6.5	30	2.28	219	80
2800	16.8	7.9	36	2.13	204	82
3000	19.3	10.2	46	1.89	181	83
3350	22.4	14.5	66	1.54	148	85

Range figures quoted above are in miles based on standard fuel tanks and include a 20% margin. GPH & MPG refer to imperial gallons. These figures may vary due to weather conditions, air, water, engine temperature, crew numbers, hull fouling, fuel quality and other issues. Noise readings are in dB(A) and were taken in the wheelhouse.

### prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
With 315hp Yanmar diesel	£113,428
DELIVERY & COMMISSIONING	£3419
BATHING PLATFORM	£2546
ELECTRIC WINDLASS	£STD
BOW THRUSTER	£3792
SHORE POWER incl charger	£722
TRIM TABS	£862
PROP INSPECTION HATCH	£861

BOAT AS TESTED £132,116

Enquiries:  
North Sea Maritime  
Tel: 01702 584821.  
www.northseamaritime.com

### the rivals



**RODMAN 870**  
From £82,000  
More sedan than wheelhouse, this Spanish manufacturer builds a practical boat. Shaft drive with saloon and galley, plus a separate fore cabin. Tel: 01243 511381, www.seasportmarine.com



**VIKI 285 PILOT**  
From £90,000  
Latest addition to this Turkish builder's line-up with walkaround pilothouse, good sized cockpit and second outside helm. Tel: 01932 243722, www.vikingmarin.com



**SB OFFSHORE 27DC**  
From £95,800  
Sturdily built, shaft drive wheelhouse boat from Finland. All-purpose wheelhouse, walkaround decks and two cabins. Tel: 01202 700702, www.wessexmarine.com