

Seaward Talisman 49

There's never before been a Seaward as big as this, but the builders have a sound pedigree, having built Nelsons for a similar market. Can their own-label offering compete with these in style and seakeeping, and can it possibly justify its price tag? **REPORT BY MARK TURLEY**



Seaward Marine have built themselves an enviable reputation for tough, purposeful boats, but not everyone will associate their name with large vessels. The Seaward range starts with a 23-footer, and until recently peaked at 35ft.

But taking shape in their new boatyard on the Isle of Wight has been something altogether larger, now unveiled to the world in the shape of the Talisman 49.

If this jump in size and complexity appears to be something of a gamble, it isn't. Over the years, at their original yard in Jersey, the company built an impressive array of Nelson motoryachts and commercial craft.

Indeed, far from this 49 being merely a scaled-up 23, it would be truer to say that the 23 was a scaled-down version of other projects: a more compact package benefiting from the same high build quality.

David Howell knew this all too well. When he wanted a roomier replacement for a Nelson-based boat that Seaward had completed for him 10 years ago, he didn't hesitate to have the same outfit build it for him.

And when he invited us to appraise the boat, we didn't hesitate to jump aboard.

DESIGN & BUILD

The hull and superstructure were designed by Murray Cormack & Associates, a firm of naval architects noted for their semi-displacement craft, while the hull and deck mouldings were turned out by Halmatic, a company with a serious reputation for producing tough boats for tough jobs.

The hull's seaworthiness is beyond question, and it is already cherished for pilot boats; Brixham Pilots' next vessel will be another Talisman. Besides the trademark keel and tight, round-bilge form, it is noteworthy for its wide beam, just the job for a space-hungry, leisure-orientated interior.

The general arrangement of the accommodation is by TT Boat Designs, and Seaward have done a good job of honing the fit-out for the leisure market.

The layout can largely be customised to a buyer's requirements, and the Howells have opted for a truly spacious two-cabin arrangement: one forward and one aft, each with an en-suite WC. This leaves the lower midships area (where a third cabin could be incorporated) free for a huge dinette, opposite a spacious galley.

In contrast to some less beamy semi-displacement boats of this size, where you can end up with a something of a corridor, the wheelhouse/saloon has plenty of space in which to relax and entertain. The helm station is also extremely comfortable, equipped with two suspension-type seats.

Throughout the boat, the joinery is solid and subtle, and finished just as well where you can't see it as it is where you can.

Perhaps the pièce de résistance, however, is the raised aft deck, where another excellent

helm station has been designed and moulded, along with a convivial cockpit-style seating arrangement which, as well as keeping everyone well inboard, allows good access to the surrounding decks.

ACCOMMODATION

An easily descended sets of steps lead down from the aft deck to the wheelhouse/saloon, which, even with three feet given away to the side decks, feels very wide.

Although fitted-out in heavyweight solid teak, it manages to strike a balance between the traditional and the modern. This is helped by the way the joinery is subtly detailed, and also by the fact that there is plenty of natural light, courtesy of an array of overhead hatches as well as sizable windows.

There is plenty of space for a generous settee arrangement to port, plus a further two-seater incorporated into the sideboard arrangement opposite. The forwardmost end of this, near the helm, has been sized to double as a chart table or a cocktail bar, depending upon the time of day. A flat-screen television hinges up out of a second peninsula.

The helm station boasts a pair of fully adjustable suspension seats, and this is more than just a sop to any would-be navigator: the carefully thought-out console has space for two of just about every piece of electronics you might want to muster, plus further room to put bits and pieces down securely without them going flying.

We particularly liked the warning light panel, which gives the status of almost every piece of kit on board, and the consideration given to preventing the windscreen from fogging up; never mind blowers, the screen can be integrally heated as an option.

A couple of steps down forward is the all-electric galley, powered by a 7.5kVA generator housed in the engineroom. The surfaces are of Avonite, and the joinery perfectly finished. Across the way is a comfortable six-seater dinette, with cupboards outboard and lockers underneath.

The day toilet, just forward, also serves as an en-suite to the forecabin. It has a nice mix of easy-clean mouldings and joinery, and is not a bad size, with useful storage, but has no separate shower area.

The cabin itself is very well proportioned with plenty of standing room and a vee-berth forward. Stowage is adequate, although we were a bit disappointed by the small size of the hanging locker; guests might have to ask the guv'nor whether they can pop their dinner jacket in one of the aft cabin's more commodious wardrobes.

There is no such premium on space in the aft cabin, where the central double berth is something approaching king-size, and surrounded by a range of cupboards, hanging lockers and dressing tables. There is plenty of



A well-tried hull married with a very spacious layout.



above The aft cabin's central double berth is of domestic size and shape, with stowage all around.



above The forward cabin's WC lacks a shower stall, but the compartment itself is well-proportioned.

space for the optional washer/dryer to boot. The aft en-suite is just a bit larger than the forward one, which has allowed a shower stall to be incorporated on one side. Like its counterpart, it is equipped with an electric toilet, there being separate holding tanks fitted for sewage and 'grey' sink and shower water.



Plenty of comfort in most areas, with all mod cons laid on.

U-shaped seat and split table arrangement works hugely well, drawing the whole crew outside as much as possible.

Lack of stowage can be a problem on aft-cabin boats, as they lack a lazaret, but on the Talisman the voids in the settee moulding are augmented by the helm seat plinths, which have large, easy-to-access cave lockers; the port one is even big enough to take a deflated dinghy, so there's no need for unsightly davits.

The helmsman's position is also to port. Both he and his co-pilot have individual seats, and there's a further single one across the way. Lifting squabs in the seat-bases make it easy to stand and lean back if preferred.

Several fiddled trays are moulded into the

EXTERIOR

The aft deck is not always the most attractive area of this kind of boat. Here, it is not only functional but positively inviting. The

below The inside helm has space for two of everything, and the VHF handset's cord is self-parking.



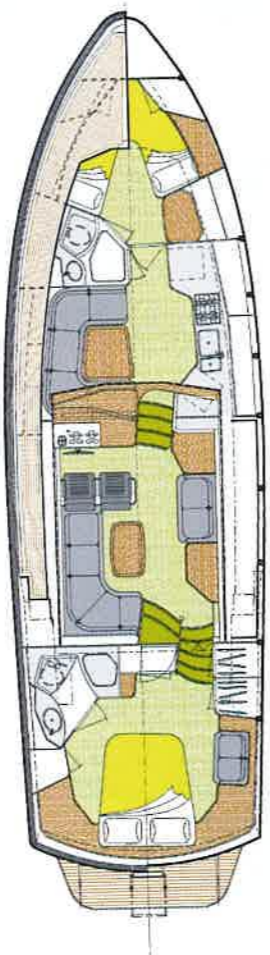
above The wheelhouse/saloon feels wide and spacious, with a generous settee behind the helm seats.



above To port is a further two-seater settee and sideboards, one housing a flat-screen television.



above The six-seater lower dinette has stowage around and under it.
below The all-electric galley is resplendent in lush joinery and Avonite.





above The saloon sole has 6in of soundproofing.

automatically shuts engines, fans and vents down before setting off the main extinguisher. Cleverly, the boat is fitted with two calorifiers rather than one big one, so that if one breaks down you can carry on cruising and enjoy hot water from the other. The same goes for the battery-charging facilities.

✓✓✓✓✓
Easy and safe access, with everything well thought-out.

Seaward have taken great pains to contain noise, and the saloon sole is no less than 6in (15cm) deep.

PERFORMANCE & HANDLING

Any hull that earns its keep as a pilot boat has to show two traits in spades: comfortable seakeeping, at a speed that will cover the ground, and steady yet responsive handling in close-quarter situations.

The Talisman hull is acknowledged as being at the top of the heap on both counts. Our relatively mild test day out of Dartmouth, in an untidy easterly, could do nothing to dent its reputation.

At full tilt we recorded just shy of 25 knots, across a shortish, lumpy sea, without a moment's hesitation from the hull and without a squeak or murmur from the weighty fit-out.

There was plenty of spray flying about, for sure, but that is par for the course. If you feel it creeping back aboard, it is no great hardship to drive from down below, where the view remains excellent, with a clear line-of sight right across the bows.

Indeed it is quite noticeable, compared with other semi-displacement designs, how flat the Talisman hull appears to run, with little bow-up trim helping to maintain visibility.

This might also help in terms of efficiency. Our fuel figures gave an average of around

0.7mpg across a wide band of cruising revs (1600-2000rpm, or 14-21 knots), which is not bad at all for such a heavy boat, with half tanks and a full cruising inventory.

For most of the time, David Howell expects to run at 1900rpm, allowing him to maintain 19-20 knots under most conditions. Neither will he be bothered by much noise, as sound levels in the wheelhouse barely ran above 76dB(A), which is low in anybody's book.

The engines have been set to give a harbour speed of 6 knots with both in tickover, and this also ensures that manoeuvring on them is deft rather than punchy. Nor is the hull much affected by windage; with a keel and a deep forefoot maintaining directional stability, there is plenty of it in the water.

Conversely, a turn of the wheel and you are spinning practically in the boat's own length, without bothering to touch the engine controls.

Our only criticism is that it would be nice to be able to keep the companionway door open when we were tucked in at the interior helm;

the boat's penchant for pushing around spray means that you can find yourself here a fair bit.

✓✓✓✓✓
Responsive handling plus a respectable turn of speed.

console area, so there is plenty of room to put down pilot books, binoculars and so on.

Moving about is a crewman's dream, as the side decks are 18in (45cm) wide, and run right around the rear of the aft seating. On our test boat all deck areas, including the coachroof, were finished in solid teak, and there are grabrails running the whole length of the superstructure.

Mooring hardware comprises 14in (35cm) cleats forward and aft, along with two sets of slightly smaller ones amidships.

This sort of boat tends to be quite wet, so the chain locker has no deck opening; it is accessed via a watertight hatch in the forecabin.

✓✓✓✓✓
Very practical decks with an eminently sociable seating area.

ENGINE OPTIONS & ACCESS

A buyer can specify his preferred engines, as long as they'll fit. But you shouldn't be too conservative in your choice, or you will waste the hull's potential as a fast, go-anytime cruiser.

Our test boat was fitted with a pair of Caterpillar's electronically-controlled C12 units rated to 710hp apiece, which proved an

admirable match for the 22-tonne hull without crowding out the engineroom.

Access is via a hefty, 6in (15cm) thick, gas-strut supported hatch in the saloon sole. You can easily jump down onto the treadplate by way of a handily located battery box.

Moving about, and getting to the outboard side of the engines, is helped by the fact that there are no tanks in the wings (they are integral, running along the keel) and that the drivetrains are protected by metal covers. All service items, both on and off the engines, are easy and safe to check.

All the engineering down here is virtually typhoon-proof, with two sets of primary fuel/water filters for each engine, and raw-water strainers that are located straight over their through-hull fittings, so any flotsam can be riddled clear with the minimum of fuss.

All items that require a seacock have been run back to the engineroom, keeping the risk of flooding contained, and the seacocks themselves are on sensors, alerting the skipper if any of them is inadvertently closed. There is also a fire-fighting control system that

below The aft deck helm moulding incorporates space to lay down pilot books and charts. All the engineering is typhoon-proof and readily accessible.



below The aft deck's welcoming seating and split table layout is surrounded by walkaround decks.



SPECIFICATION & VALUE

Seawards are not cheap. Nor should they be, as the quality of materials and bespoke labour is clear to see.

Therefore, you have to be prepared to dig deeper than you would for something a little bit more off-the-shelf. As a benchmark, a proprietary 50ft flybridge boat comes in at around £500,000, while the custom-built Talisman 49 carries a 50% premium.

The problem in assessing how well a fully customised boat stacks up against its rivals in terms of value and specification is that little if anything can be described as 'standard'.

However, we asked Seaward for a guide price that would cover most necessities — including items such as heating, but not all-over teak decking and comprehensive electronics — and it came to £763,750.

That is a lot of money, but if you want a boat of this stature, which will take you just

about anywhere in elegance and comfort, then you surely won't be disappointed.

✓✓✓✓✓
It's expensive. That's what you pay for quality custom-building.

Verdict

This is not a boat for chasing the sun, or for posing alongside performance vessels. It is about giving owners something ultra-special in terms of seakeeping and comfort. Short of an aircraft carrier, we can't think of another boat that gives its skipper such an air of confidence in going to sea.

The really clever part is that, for all the belt-and-braces engineering, the builders have kept an eye on the detail. Even the humble handrail is of sculpted-oval section. And, this being a bespoke boat, there is barely an item that can't be changed to suit your particular needs.

The result is that you are not only in a seaworthy vessel but in the luxury zone at the same time.

Of course, this kind of quality doesn't come cheap. There are bigger, flashier boats on the market for the same money, but we doubt there are many better.

MBM RATING

9/10



Seaward Talisman 49 technical data



specifications

BUILD	glass-reinforced plastic
RCD	design category A
LENGTH OVERALL	52ft 8in (16.06m)
HULL LENGTH	48ft 10in (14.88m)
BEAM	15ft 0in (4.64m)
DRAUGHT	4ft 6in (1.37m)
DISPLACEMENT	22 tonnes
FUEL CAPACITY	800gal (3632lt)
WATER CAPACITY	250gal (1132lt)

key dimensions

WIDTH OF SIDE DECKS	1ft 6in
HEADROOM IN SALOON	6ft 6in
HEADROOM IN AFT CABIN	6ft 2in
AFT CABIN BERTH	5ft 3in x 6ft 8in
FORECABIN BERTHS	twin, 6ft 4in x 2ft 6in

performance

engines twin Caterpillar C12 diesels.
configuration 6cyl, 12.0lt, 710hp at 2300rpm.
conditions wind southeasterly Force 4, sea moderate.
load fuel 60%, water 50%, crew 5.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	noise
1000	9.5	4.8	22	1.98	1267	66
1200	10.6	8.8	40	1.20	771	71
1400	11.5	13.2	60	0.87	558	71
1600	14.4	21.1	96	0.68	43	70
1800	17.6	25.1	114	0.70	449	73
2000	21.0	30.8	140	0.68	437	75
2300	24.4	48.4	220	0.50	320	79

Range figures above are in miles, with 20% margin. Noise figures are in dB(A), recorded in the saloon.

prices

STANDARD BOAT	inc VAT
with twin 710hp Caterpillar C12s	£763,750
TEAK AFT DECKING	standard
HEATING	standard
7.5 kVA GENERATOR	standard
BOW-THRUSTER	POA
HEATED SCREEN	POA
BOAT AS TESTED	£813,100

ENQUIRIES

Seaward Marine, Prospect Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 7AD. Tel: 01983 280333. www.seawardboat.com

the rivals



AQUASTAR OCEAN-STAR 47

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