



Mini marvel

The latest angling boat to emerge from the moulds of Westport Marine is the smallest of its Pilot trio, the Pilot 3. **Dave Lewis** takes a look...

There is something about open angling boats that makes me want to buy one. It happens every time I test such a vessel.

Undoubtedly this style of craft would serve most of my offshore angling requirements. Here in South Wales that invariably means launching from a beach and then fishing within a mile of the nearest coastline and often little more than casting range from adjacent rocks.

The older I get, the more I find I appreciate the simple things in life. While there are significant advantages in owning an all singing, all dancing, state-of-the-art angling boat bristling with ancillary equipment and stunning electronics, running such a boat properly requires a significant investment in time, effort and, of course, money.

What, I often argue to myself, could be more pleasurable than after slipping your boat single-handed from its trailer, cruising sedately out to your favourite marks at a sensible, spine sympathetic speed or even, if the mood so takes you, trolling a few lures along the rock edges for bass using a pair of wooden oars?

Do I really need a cuddy, colour chart plotter/GPS, spare engine and so on?

Quality workmanship

The Pilot 3 is exactly this sort of boat, featuring a lovely simulated clinker hull that reflects the high quality of workmanship I have come to recognise as typical of Westport Marine.

A moulded keel starts at the bow and provides directional stability while underway, though it flattens off towards the stern to improve top-end performance.

Inboard, the one-piece cockpit moulding features seating forward and aft, with a fixed thwart amidships that I noted could easily be removed if required to fully maximise available deck space.

Heaps of dry locker stowage is provided, an obvious essential aboard a small, open boat such



TEST AND PRICE INFO

The cost for a basic Pilot 3 hull is a very affordable £2,995 including VAT.

All fixtures and fittings mentioned in the review, including oars, are standard.

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as this. In addition to a decent sized anchor locker, the bow moulding also incorporates a spacious general stowage locker. The transom seat opens to reveal ample space to stow a couple of fuel tanks, plus a few other bits and pieces in a separate compartment.

Inboard freeboard is very good, though onboard safety is enhanced by the addition of stainless gunnel rails as standard. I was particularly pleased to note that the gunnels fall almost vertically to the deck, something that I feel is very important aboard a purpose-built angling boat yet something many

similar boats I see fail to address. The deck itself is self-draining while underway, following removal of a standard plastic bung aft, and includes a reasonably effective non-slip finish.

Vital statistics

The Pilot 3 is based on a typical Norwegian fjord boat, which is reflected in its long, sleek appearance. In Norway such boats are often used to travel relatively long distances in relatively sheltered water and frequently they are used under oar, for

example when fishing very close to shallow, rocky shorelines.

In short, this is exactly the requirements of many British sea anglers who fish harbours, estuaries, rugged western shorelines and sheltered coves.

The overall length of the Pilot 3 is 4.45 metres and she sports a 1.48m beam, while the bare hull displaces an easily manageable 180kg, which is just shy of 400lb in old money.

Rated at CE Category D, which means designed for "voyages on sheltered waterways where wind Force 4 and significant wave height

of 0.5m may be experienced," this boat is clearly perfect for the sort of applications we have discussed so far.

Her classification plate also states she is suitable for carrying three persons, but from an angling perspective I would say this is a single or two-person boat; fishing with three aboard would be pushing things.

In terms of power rating, the hull is suitable for use with outboard engines up to and including a

maximum of 10hp and rated for speeds up to 15 knots. The test boat was fitted with a 10hp

Honda four-stroke, which as smoothly as I have come to expect from this top name.

Wooden oars stowed in captive rowlocks serve as the auxiliary means of propulsion, an added safety feature should your engine fail.

On the water

I got to trial the Pilot 3 in Plymouth

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There is ample stowage space under the transom seat

An ideal vessel for fishing in estuaries and harbours

Sound, Devon, which is exactly the sort of area this boat would be perfect for fishing.

I enjoy tiller steering aboard small boats, though the set-up aboard the boat I tested meant I had to use my left hand, which I found somewhat awkward as I prefer to operate the tiller/throttle with my right hand. Of course, this is entirely an individual preference that can be decided upon at the purchase stage. I do suggest you try before you buy to establish which is more comfortable for you.

Out on the water the Pilot 3 performed exactly as I suspected

and hoped she would. The little Honda pushed us along at more than enough speed, and while conditions within the sheltered waters inside of The Sound did not in any way test the hull, the passing wakes from numerous other vessels indicated that given a brisk to choppy sea, driven at a steady speed the hull would cut through the waves cleanly.

Lateral stability was good, especially considering the boat's minimal beam.

Under oar power she rowed superbly, again a direct reflection on her proven Nordic pedigree. **SA**