



PILOT 3

Simon Everett puts this sporty 14-footer to the test, and discovers she's more than capable of taking three anglers fishing for the day!

Small boats are terribly useful, so much so that many owners of bigger boats have them. They are easy to store, easy to tow, easy to launch and easy to use. The problem is not many builders bother with small boats, which leaves a bit of gap in the market for anyone who is prepared to put their time and effort into creating a useful dinghy.

Westport Marine have done just that and built a completely new design of a large dinghy in the Pilot 3. It is a very handy size at 14 feet and has not been given too much beam purposely, so as to make her easy to row, something that is all too often overlooked in this age of internal combustion motive power for everything.

The Ideal Start

A dinghy is the most useful of boats for running around harbours, estuaries and exploring creeks. Given the weather they are perfectly capable of going out too. I used to fish the Eddystone from my 10ft dinghy when I was a lad, a dinghy is how many people start their boating and learn their seamanship.

Why a dinghy? Well a small boat is a very versatile craft. It is at home on lakes, large rivers such as the Severn, Thames or Trent as it is on sheltered waters with salt in them. A small boat teaches you a lot about the sea and how to be considerate to others when you are in a bigger boat. Too many people forget the consequence of their wash on a small boat when they are out in a bigger one. Having been in a small boat you know what it is like to be on the receiving end.

A dinghy will also give you access to water that a bigger boat cannot, nibbling up shallow creeks for flounder, bass and mullet, or working the shallows over a rocky reef. A dinghy has a lot going for it and it is suitable for teaching the children about how to handle a boat which, in turn, teaches them self-reliance and self-confidence. It is very satisfying to be rowed by your youngest and see how they are in charge of the boat, putting it where they want.

Completely New Design

So, what do you get for your money? The Pilot 3 has been designed from the ground up by Charles Broughton.

He decided that there had been little in the way of dinghy offerings recently and that it was a sector of the boating industry that could take a few new boats. The Pilot 3 has the benefit of a full deck liner, making the entire boat double skinned, so the interior of the boat is totally smooth with no rough edges. Many dinghies are only single skinned where the back of the laminate is on show, or just flow coated over. Building the boat in this way does add a bit of weight, but it also gives the boat added rigidity and the void between the skins provides the buoyancy should the boat become swamped.

Charles has given a lot of thought to this boat. The hull is of simulated clinker to give her a classic look and to add strength without adding weight. The clinker panels provide stiffness but also help to control the water flow up the side of the hull. There is a fine keel with a sacrificial, nylon, keel strip for protection when beaching the boat. The keel helps when you are rowing, and gives the boat more grip on the water when turning under power. It is also a very strong backbone to the boat, giving the same strengthening longitudinally



as a keel hog on a bigger boat. The 10hp motor fitted is the largest the boat is rated for and she went very well with it returning 15-knots with the two of us and some gear aboard. If you wanted to save a little money then an 8hp motor would give virtually the same performance and be a bit lighter on both the transom and your wallet.

The beam is carried well forward with the bow fined off but given plenty of freeboard to take waves in its stride. We had the curling wash from the Harbour Police launch, which passed within 50m of us, while we were casting some lures in the hope of a late bass, yet the little boat rode the steep sided wash happily and dryly. I was expecting a bit of slop, especially as I was sat right in the bow at the time. The boat lifted easily and remained well above the water throughout this impromptu 'test', bringing her through with flying colours. She rode very well under power and remained nicely trimmed with the engine running flat out, the hull providing plenty of lift with its flattened round bilge section aft.

Extreme Testing!

Putting the boat into hard turns is not what a dinghy is all about, but the Pilot 3 is a safe little boat despite her livelier nature due to the limited beam for rowing. She goes about her business very sedately and when I turned to the oars to see how she rowed I was pleasantly surprised as to how well she could row. I would have liked a slightly higher foot brace than the one moulded in, this would be a simple modification to

the mould but would make rowing much more efficient with more to brace against while you lean into the blades against a tide or wind.

The standard oars are bolted into the rowlocks for security, a practical feature incorporated from the designers own fishing experiences. The captive oars allow one to drop them to tend a rod if trolling with the oars without fear of losing one or both overboard. It is simply a matter of undoing the bolt if you prefer to be able to feather the blades as you row.

The bow on this pre-production boat wasn't fitted with a fairlead of any description, but the production boats will be. There are four, proper 4-inch cleats with two aft and two either side of the bow, they are properly through bolted with large washers. The bow has a covered anchor and chain locker large enough for a boat of this size. A folding 5lb anchor, 2m of chain and 50m of warp were easily housed, a longer warp could be easily accommodated.

Plenty Of Stowage

The forward seat is atop the forward locker, which is large enough to take a spare fuel can along with ropes, fenders and a bailer. It is quite deep and deceptively roomy and could take quite a bit more gear with careful stowage. The amidships thwart has a couple of moulded recesses, one each end. These are meant for small items to stop them from rolling off the thwart, such as lures, bait tubs or weights when you are fishing. Below the thwart are lashing points where a coolbox

Performance/ Specifications

Length	4.45m
Beam	1.48m
Dry Weight	180kg
Max Passengers	3 (at average of 75kg each)
Max Power	10hp
Performance	10hp = 15 knots 5hp = 7 knots

Standard Equipment

Oars, towing eye, anchor locker, hull drain, four cleats, handrails.



or tacklebox could be lashed into place out of the way by hooking bungy straps into the padeyes. Other fittings were Scotty rod holders and a Scotty all round white light on a mast to comply with the collision regulations for boats of under 7m. Overall she is very well specified and the full liner sets her apart from most of the other offerings in this sector, she is a very nicely built dinghy.

The aft locker is separated into compartments by a bulkhead to take the fuel tank in a dedicated footing on the port side and leaving a great deal of room in the remainder of the main section. The separate starboard section can be used for your safety bag and spares kit. For a 14-foot boat there really is a great deal of useful stowage without impacting on the deck space available. The locker lids sit onto foam or rubber strips that prevent any rattling and gelcoat to gelcoat contact, a neat touch on a small boat. The gunwale rails are rounded making them both comfortable and strong, a radius is always stronger than an angle. There is a heavy-duty rubbing strip right around the boat to help fend off knocks and cover the deck to hull join. With the stainless steel handrails along the gunwale and other fittings the boat is very well finished and is a creditable little boat for anyone wanting a practical little picnic boat, fishing boat or runabout.

There's plenty of room up the bow to fish.



Price

As tested with Honda BF10 SHU and Indespension roller trailer £5,584 inc vat.
 • Pilot3/8hp/trailer package £5,334 inc vat
 • Pilot3/5hp/trailer package £4,495 inc vat
 • Pilot3 Boat Only: £2,945 inc vat

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