

BOAT TEST

Pilot 6

Specs

LENGTH, HULL	5.20 m, (17'1")
BEAM, MAX	2.20 m, (7'2")
DRAFT, HULL	0.30 m, (1')
MAX PERSONS	5 (at 75KG each)
WATER CATEGORY	C (coastal up to force 6 and 2m wave height)
WEIGHT (EXCL. ENGINE)	590KG
OUTBOARD MOTOR, MAX	90HP long shaft
PERFORMANCE	90HP – 32 knots max, 24 knots cruising 60HP – 27 knots max, 21 knots cruising
DESIGNER	Charles Broughton

STANDARD:

Stainless steel handrails & cuddy bridge
Steering system, non return
Navigation lights
Helm & co-pilot seats
Self draining deck, via twin deck drains
Boarding ladder
Stainless steel deck bollards & anchor roller
Bow eye
Clear non-slip internal moulded deck
Integral forward & aft seating with lockable storage
Starboard side steering and engine control console
Cuddy with flush fit, through screen hatch to foredeck
Foredeck self draining anchor & fender locker
Port and starboard hardwood capping rail inserts

EXTRAS:

Teak Effect Deck
Mooring Canopy
Cushion Set

Prices Retail inc. vat

(correct as of 1st December 2007)

Standard Boat	Only £7,850
Boat as tested	£15,749
Including Suzuki 90hp, GPS Chart Plotter & VHF DSC	
Standard Boat with Suzuki 60hp	£13,299
Braked Trailer, Brenderup/Thule 8118B	£1,905
Engine packages available with Honda, Mariner & Mercury	

Contact

Full details of availability, dealer locations etc from: www.westportmarine.co.uk

It is no surprise that the most popular size of boat for trailering to go angling is between 17ft and 19ft, so the new Pilot 6 fits right in there and offers a whole lot more boat than the Pilot 4 that the company started with. We got an exclusive first trial of the new boat on her home waters of Plymouth Sound where the boat showed a tremendous amount of promise for this up and coming boat builder.

Cuddy Buddy

With the famous British weather to combat, anglers unsurprisingly tend to prefer cuddy boats so they can duck out of the wind and rain on those treasured days off afloat. The inclusion of a cuddy on any boat, of course, limits the available open deck space and on some cuddy boats is more of a hindrance than a help. Things to watch for include; is there sufficient headroom? Is visibility impaired? - especially when heeling in a turn, and is there good access to the foredeck for anchoring and mooring.

On the Pilot these concerns have been carefully addressed and I am pleased to report that the cuddy is very roomy, has a really impressive amount of sitting space with headroom enough for folks over six-feet tall and plenty of locker space within the two, flowcoated interiors of the seats.

Between the cuddy lockers there is a space with lashing points where you could stow a porta-potti or a box, perhaps to keep your fish in. Either way it is a useful little space that can be utilised and with the lashing points, a bag or box will stay put. To increase access to the foredeck the seat over this space hinges out of the way, so it can then be used as standing room while working out through the forward hatch.

The visibility factor on the Pilot 6 has been well catered for, the windows are large and properly sealed and sealed so you have virtually uninterrupted vision through the cuddy but benefit from



No clutter in here!



There's plenty of deck space



The cuddy offers excellent all - round vision



The front hatch is handy



There's plenty of room to escape the wet stuff inside

the extra comfort and protection that it offers, both at rest and underway which, on the cold, crisp day we had was particularly noticeable.

Standing up at the wheel nipping along at a steady 21 knots (4000 rpm) the wind chill started to eat at my ears and face. As soon as I sat down at the wheel the wind was completely deflected and I thawed out.

The forward hatch is going to be slightly modified from the side hinged version on this first boat to a top hinge version with retaining straps for when it is open. Also, instead of the two dogs to hold it closed, the production version will be held closed by perimeter dogs on all four sides. The fears of an inward opening hatch are then nullified because any sea large enough to come through that would come through anything anyway.

On Deck

The access to the foredeck is excellent, there is plenty of elbow room for weighing anchor, and you can stand upright through the hatch, thanks to that lifting squab under the hatch. The deck furniture on the Pilot 6 is also of excellent quality and the bow is furnished with a stemhead roller and amidships cleat for anchoring, but is also given two further cleats for mooring. Many boats would save this extra cost and make do with just the one mooring facility. So far so good.

The very spacious deck, especially for a boat that is just 17 feet long, is just above the waterline, so the deck is fully self draining through flapped scuppers on each quarter. This is both an excellent safety feature and makes life easy when it comes to washing down. The wash water, or rain, just runs out astern with no need to pump it out of a bilge well or strumbox as so often is the case. Below deck the void is completely foam filled to provide both positive buoyancy and prevent moisture retention. It also helps to deaden the sound underfoot.

The whole deck on the prototype boat was moulded with a very efficient non-slip pattern. The chequering diamonds having cleanly defined edges, which must have taken an age to cut into the plug for the mould. Another option is to have a teak effect covering for the deck. It would like very nice against the blue hull but is completely unnecessary. There s the possibility of specifying a fishbox being fitted into the deck at

the time of build, and the aft locker could be turned into a bait tank if you wanted.

The aft seating is set back in each quarter and curves forward around the engine well. This doesn't eat into the deck space particularly as the most used part of the deck is maximised. The gunwale is generous with hardwood cappings and stainless quarter rails, which on the test boat had been fitted with clamp-on rod holders. A sensible option, of course, more permanent rod fixtures could easily be fitted instead as could racks below the gunwale against the bulwarks.

The deck space is the surprising thing on the Pilot 6. When compared to other boats on the market there is more space than on some bigger offerings, giving the impression that she is bigger than her 17 feet. The design of the Pilot 6 has made maximum use of the cockpit space by keeping the foredeck deliberately short, just large enough for a rope locker and mooring furniture and keeping the cuddy well forward too. To help with seakeeping the bow is very full to provide as much buoyancy lift as possible, in the manner of traditional workboats, but the cuddy has been given some modern lines to keep her looking fresh and updated.

At The Helm

The seating at the cuddy for helm and passenger is the usual moulded bucket seats on pedestals, however Westport Marine have selected seats with large pedestals and good sized mounting plates. Made of aluminium, the pedestals are strong but reduce weight over those with powder coated steel supports. The seats themselves are nothing special, but suffice and do the job.

The helm console is a bit basic if truth be told, a moulding supported on stainless legs houses the electrics and serves as a mounting point for the wheel. I think a bit more attention to the console could be worthwhile as there is plenty of airspace above it to provide stowage for things such as notebooks, charts, binoculars, handheld VHF and GPS for backup and even the flare pack. There is even room below to shorten the legs and deepen the moulding. The actual presentation is neat and well rigged, just look at the witches hat used to conduit the control cables and wiring through the gunwale for the motor. Attention to detail like this costs virtually nothing, but



How much storage do you need?



The helm is neat and tidy

keeps the boat neat and tidy. The rigging of all the wiring was particularly well executed.

Atop the coachroof there is a stainless steel A-frame carrying the navigation lights and the various antennae for the GPS and VHF. This A-frame is solidly supported right through the roof moulding as the side upright handrails are part and parcel of the A-frame. The supports come right down to the gunwale at the side of the cuddy, making it particularly rigid and doubling as useful hand holds in just the right place.

The Hull Performance

The hull form is actually very simple, the best ideas often are. Not too hard in the chine, mild deadrise and fine bow combine to produce a hull that is stable, easy to drive onto the plane and doesn't roll like a barrel on the drift. It is similar in shape to her sister Pilot 4, the trade off for this is a reduction in top speed due to the extra wetted area, but the 31 knots we attained at the top whack of 6000rpm, is a very respectable speed for a fishing boat. Cruising at two thirds revs, which is 4000 rpm, is very much more economical, kinder on the engine and still pushed her along at 21 knots. In practical terms, that is still a very useful speed, a trip to the Eddystone is only 45 minutes steam from Plymouth. A faster boat might shave five minutes off that, but at what cost in fuel and comfort? This isn't racing where every second counts – just head off ten minutes earlier!

Her handling is very comfortable, she is a very easy boat to drive and shows no poor traits when running on the plane. The hull isn't designed for tight power turns at speed and so turning too tight merely results in a bit of skating, the answer is to simply be a bit more sensible and either ease off a bit, or take a slightly wider turn. It isn't something that would actually show up in normal boating. Slow speed manoeuvring is easy too, she responds to small throttle inputs and a gentle hand on the wheel is all that is needed.

Conclusion

The Pilot is a very well thought, practical little boat with plenty of room, good protection and a sensible price. She isn't just a fishing boat either, people who like bird watching, diving and just messing about in boats visiting places for a picnic will find her a very handy boat that is easily trailered as she is well within the towing weight of most standard saloon cars, but funnily enough is of heavier layup than some of her rivals. Charles Broughton, Westport Marines founder and the designer of the Pilot boats tows her around the place behind a Mondeo estate. You don't get much more standard than that. With a slightly smaller engine the price is even more attractive.



Quality fittings are used throughout



Her sleek design is a real winner