

Atlantis 20

When first invited to visit Atlantis Marine, in Guernsey, it seemed a long way to go just to have a look at an open 20ft boat, but when the preliminary spec sheets and a couple of pictures arrived Irving Stewart's curiosity was aroused.



What could be so special about a pretty conventional and basically very rudimentary open boat? How could it possibly differ from the myriad of other centre console boats built by a host of international manufacturers? The answers to these and other questioned were answered almost within minutes of landing on a dull and rather uninviting day in Guernsey.

AT FIRST SIGHT

The Atlantis 20, at first glance, is simplicity itself. With the engine set on a gill bracket the entire interior space of the craft is available. This is a beamy boat fitted with a well positioned centre console incorporating a simple 'suicide' seat in front of the screen.

The console provides not only mounting for the controls and instruments (and real protection from the elements) but a cavernous dry stowage area of nearly twelve cubic feet! The windscreen is surrounded by a very strong stainless steel frame and, on the test boat, a custom made 'bimini' fabricated in equally robust tubing.

Behind the console there's a double helm seat mounted on a fixed base with flip over back rest and further dry stowage beneath. At the stern a simple cross transom bench seat offers space for at least three 'bums', access to the control cables beneath, stowage and a location for the emergency manual bilge pump.

In front of the console there's simply space! The deck moulding incorporates a step of about 4", set about five feet back from the bows, which increases the deck area in the bows. All the deck is moulded in a non-slip surface and finished in a light grey which contrasts with the white of the hull.

The test boat was fitted with twin pulpit bow rails extending back to the console and then low hull side grab rails running to the stern. All Atlantis boats are fitted with hydraulic steering and the test boat boasted a 200hp Ficht Evinrude two-stroke on the gill bracket.

THE DIFFERENCE

However, it's what you don't see that singles this boat out from the vast majority of similar sized boats in evidence in most marinas!

During construction the chassis, as a complete foam filled unit, is wet laminated into the hull and overlaid. Then the deck/interior moulding, which is a solid structure in its own right, is then dropped onto



The Atlantis' chassis

CHECK OUT THE CONSTRUCTION

The Atlantis 20 is built from distinct units during construction.

1. The hull is laid in 17oz + a similar overlay on the keel.
2. The deck moulding is laid in 8oz and incorporates coremat.
3. An internal chassis is laid in 6oz, foam filled and bonded to the hull using another 6oz bonding.
4. The console is laid up to a similar weight as the deck.
5. The engine mounting 'bracket' is in fact an aluminium box which protrudes some 26" from the transom and fabricated from 6&8mm marine alloy.
6. The transom is probably the singularly over engineered component comprising no less than three 18mm laminates plus bonding ending up at well over 70mm thick!

the hull/chassis and similarly bonded into place. Finally, the hull to deck joint is bolted together and covered by the rubbing strip.

Once cured the structure is immensely strong; indeed it appears to be dramatically over engineered but we shall soon discover the reason for this!

All control cables are fitted under the deck, as is the centre mounted fuel tank, whilst any other 'mechanics' are located under the transom seat moulding. The gill bracket locates the engine some 26" astern of the transom and provides additional planing surface.

Okay. So we've looked over the boat and discovered it's intrinsically a simple layout offering uncluttered deck space, a well positioned helm and an easy to walk round deck. In essence it's a boat that can be all things to all men, whether they be fishermen, divers, water-skiers or simply requiring a fast, safe taxi between the islands.

TESTING WATERS

The test day was certainly not auspicious! Under a threatening sky, but in relatively gentle wind, we ventured out of St. Peters port and headed for Herm Island a few miles away. The crystal clear sea appeared calm and all looked well with the world. The brand new big Evinrude Ficht was gently humming to itself waiting for an opportunity to flex its untried muscles.

CHECK OUT THESE RESULTS

Due to its strength of build, handling, performance and outright seagoing ability the Atlantis 20 scored 78.5% in our tests. This rates it the highest score of 2005 to date and third ever highest recorded score next to the Scorpion 8.1m at 78.8% set in 2004.



But this was Guernsey, and within a hundred meters of the harbour mouth we were airborne. Where the sea had come from I just couldn't imagine! For the next couple of miles we 'enjoyed' the sort of ride that big RIB owners seek out merely to justify their craft.

At a leisurely cruising speed the Atlantis was thrown about in every conceivable way, but its builder appeared totally composed. A little more throttle and the boat simply took the bit between its teeth and took off. For the remainder of the trip we spent more time

in the air than in the water, but the clever engine location ensured that the prop was rarely winding air - despite the acute angles and altitude the hull was achieving.

Once in the 'shelter' of Herm we did our time trials in what at first appeared to be calm flat water in 'The River', a channel between two small islands. In fact the tide in 'The River' was running at up to 12mph and the sea was boiling. Apparently you can water-ski here with the tow boat standing still!

In consideration to the new engine we didn't use full revs but nevertheless it was obvious that this hull was more than capable of speeds far in excess of those achieved during the tests - 60mph is well within its design parameter with this gutsy engine!

After a similar journey home, but 'enhanced' by rain, we took the opportunity to relax a little before going out the following morning to attempt some pictures. We used a virtually identical camera boat fitted with a

Mercury 150, which proved to be enormous fun. Despite only going a few metres outside the harbour the pictures show just how unkind the seas can be around Guernsey.

PATRICK'S IDEAS PAID OFF

There's no doubt that Patrick Wheeler has designed and built an incredibly tough and quick craft well able to perform in utterly appalling conditions for extended periods. The Atlantis 20 is light and precise to handle, absolutely reassuring to be aboard and remarkably sure footed. The ride, ►►



The Open Cabin version of the Atlantis 20



Atlantis 20 Open Cabin

» even in heavy seas, is relatively soft and there's absolutely no flexing of the hull or creaks or groans from the structure.

The hull provides terrific lift whilst the wide pronounced chines ensure that the bow simply won't bury itself even when driven into huge seas. We returned from some 20 miles at sea without even any spray on the deck!

This boat must appeal to those seeking a truly quick bomb proof multi role boat for use in seriously adverse conditions. Indeed it's unlikely that many popular mass produced 'recreational' craft, including numerous popular RIBs, would survive even for a short time in our test conditions without structural damage. The cost of this boat is remarkably low for what you get. The only remaining question must be whether today's demand

for style will override common sense in buyer's minds.

If you're looking for a 'big little' boat to use frequently, and pass on to your grandchildren, this has to be high on the shopping list. As Patrick told us, "Of course it got a warranty - if you can break it simply bring it back!"

Out sincere thanks are due to Patrick of Atlantis Marine for building the boats and setting up the test. Mr. Andy Renouf, the

Patrick Wheeler, the boat's designer, has always been into boats. He had a small dinghy when he was eight and learned to sail at ten. His family also had a cruiser which they all enjoyed. He then progressed into powerboats and both raced and water-skied in the waters surrounding Guernsey.

He was determined to design and build 'a serious bit of kit' that would appeal equally to fishermen, divers, water-skiers and families offering speed, safety and space. The craft would have to contend with the almost unique combination of horrendous sea conditions around the Channel Islands. The Atlantis 20 is the result.

Patrick started building about three years ago having designed and prototyped the boat. His concept was to provide a boat with plenty of interior space, high safe sides and a good performance on reasonable sized engines. In addition, the craft had to contend with the weird and mixed seas around Guernsey.

To date Atlantis has built about fourteen boats of which four have been in ring deck format.

owner of Looney Tunes, and Dan Slimm, the owner of Hamu, for bravely lending us their boats. Bob Prigent of Shoreline for 'volunteering' to drive the camera boat. Garmin, Silva and Aquapac for our test gear and Helly Hansen for keeping us warm and rain proof. ■

FACT FILE

SPECIFICATION

Atlantis 20
Standard boat ready for engine: £8,500 ex VAT
With 20hp Evinrude Ficht and electronics as tested: £24,830 ex VAT

OTHER BOATS TO CONSIDER

- 6.8m Cheetah Cat Fisher
- 6.8m Ribcraft RIB
- Bonwitco Fast Fisherman 600

WHO TO TALK TO

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 Guernsey
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TEST FIGURES

	PLANING	CRUISING	OPTIMUM	MAXIMUM
Speed	15mph	22mph	35mph	45.2mph
RPM	2,500	3,000	4,000	4,500
Run1	0 - plane: 3.81s	0 - cruise: 5.17s	0 - optimum: 9.58s	0 - max: 41.50s
Run2	0 - plane: 3.68s	0 - cruise: 4.96s	0 - optimum: 8.01s	0 - max: 45.20s