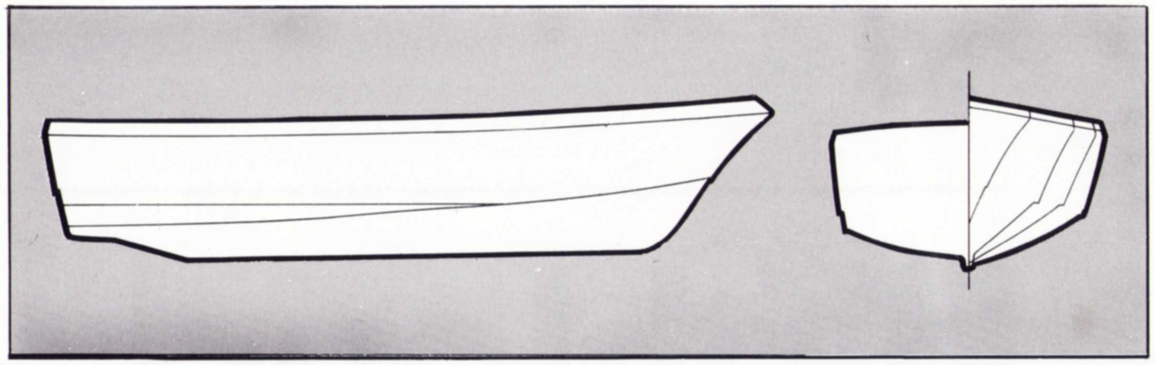
Highland Admiral





BOAT REPORT

boat report
Motor Boat and Yachting

Highland Admiral

For:

Extremely spacious accommodation
Good deck space
Many speed and engine variations
Tough construction
Spacious galley

Against:

Difficult access to saloon table
Cramped forward toilet compartment
Lack of upper deck seating
Inadequate fuel system

OUR trials of the Highland Admiral were delayed by the aftermath of the lorry drivers' strike. This caused delays in materials reaching the builders, Orcantic, who are based in the Orkney Islands. We also had to go to the builders to try the boat, but this was in some ways an advantage, as we were able to get to know the boat during the delivery passage of the first of a number built for Caley Cruisers' hire fleet based at Inverness on the Caledonian Canal.

We took the boat from Scapa harbour on Scapa Flow in the Orkneys, across the Pentland Firth and down the Moray Firth to the start of the Canal at Inverness. We also negotiated a number of locks on the canal and finally had a run on Loch Ness to round off an interesting and eventful trip. The weather ranged from calm and sun to a windy run in a beam sea at night when the waves rolled across the North Sea from Denmark, building up to decidedly unfriendly proportions by the time they reached us. Our total run spanned some 20 or more hours of motoring and two nights aboard.

Due to fuel system difficulties with the boat we used, we were unable to take our usual series of fuel consumption, noise trim and speed readings. The problem is explained in the engine section.

There are a number of different versions of the basic boat — and special versions can be built to order, but most of our time was spent aboard the charter version, which is also available for private buyers, with only a shorter period aboard the luxury boat that was displayed at the 1979 Earls Court Boat Show.

As usual we were looking for the virtues of high quality building, comfort and economy and additionally we were interested to see how this, the first pleasure craft from a previously commercial builder, would measure up to the competition of Far Eastern built American trawler yachts.

Hull Form

Basically a hard chine hull, there is a considerable amount of arc built into the bottom turning into a well rounded form at the transom, but divided from the topside by a prominent chine lip. The hull is a fairly classic semi-planing form, but the beam is greater than most of the semi-planing boats available today, giving a higher speed potential, if perhaps detracting slightly from her ultimate seagoing abilities. The narrower hulls, pilot boats for instance, have to go out in all weathers, however, but the private owner will be picking his weather more carefully and will be content to slow down in rough waters, when the boat should be perfectly comfortable.

There is a choice of keels depending on the use of the boat and the choice of engines. We tried both the outdrive version with its shallow keel and the conventional shaft boat with the deeper keel. See the Handling section for further comment.

boat report
Motor Boat and Yachting

Above water the freeboard is high and the topsides are given an attractive flare throughout their length. The chine lip and a spray deflection lip parallel to the waterline do a good job of stopping water being thrown right up the hull.

The superstructure is concentrated forward of amidships with the wheelhouse/saloon being topped by the outside steering position. The low after coachroof is unobtrusive and its effective height is broken by the recessed line that takes the stanchions for the deck rails.

There is a pleasing blend of curves and straight lines in hull and superstructure and the overall result is a very attractive and solid looking boat with a seagoing air.

Construction

Orcantic are builders of a range of tough work and fishing boats. They are used to moulding craft for arduous duties and their experience has been carried over to the Highland Admiral.

There are two ways of getting a strong hull; building up the skin thickness or building in a network of stringers and frames. Orcantic have chosen the latter method — as they do for all their fishing craft — and the skin is supported by a number of foam-cored frames and longitudinals at close centres as well as by the structural bulkheads and floors in the bilge. The deck and superstructure have balsa cores in strategic areas and solid backing in fixing areas.

We saw hulls and superstructures being moulded in Orkney where it is clear that the finish is not just skin deep; the craftmanship extends also to the hidden areas.

Interior fitting out can be in timber to choice, with the prototype having teak and teak ply joinery, but the charter boats are finished in laminate covered ply trimmed with iroko. The use of the laminate is not out of place even for a private craft, and the durability and lower price of iroko would be an advantage.

Windows and other proprietary fittings are of good quality and perhaps the only disappointing feature was the interior vinyl lining in the saloon. There were some raw edges and lapped joins that looked out of place. The suspended panels on the deckhead however were well made, but more thought should be put into the stuck-on lining.

Engines

The choice of engines is such as to make the mention of a standard version an impossibility. The prototype boat was fitted with a single 97hp Thornycroft diesel, mounted athwartships right aft and driving a conventional shaft via a hydraulic pump and motor. The boat that we delivered to Caley Cruisers was fitted with two Volva Penta Aquamatic AQD21A/280 diesel outdrive units, each delivering 64hp. Other versions could be fitted with single or twin engines mounted conventionally under the wheelhouse floor, giving speeds up to about 20 knots.

We will concentrate on the outdrive version. The engines look lost in the huge engine space under the after deck. There is good access to all parts, although there is a shelf fitted over the steering gear and engine control changeover gear that makes reaching parts of the port engine a little awkward.

Fuel for the outdrive engines comes from a single tank in the space under the wheelhouse floor, but it was supplied to the engines by a single pipe, teed where it divided to each engine. We recommend that twin engine boats always have twin tanks if possible and at the very least there should be twin feeds, and this was borne out when it was found that the supply to the starboard engine, farthest from the tank, was not sufficient for constant running at cruising revolutions. Fuel starvation caused erratic running, stopping and a constant loss of power, but we understand that all future boats will at least have twin lines and most will have

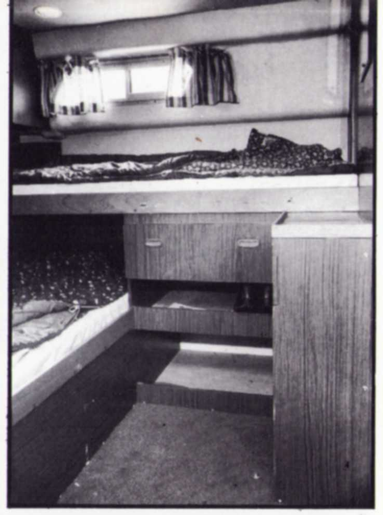


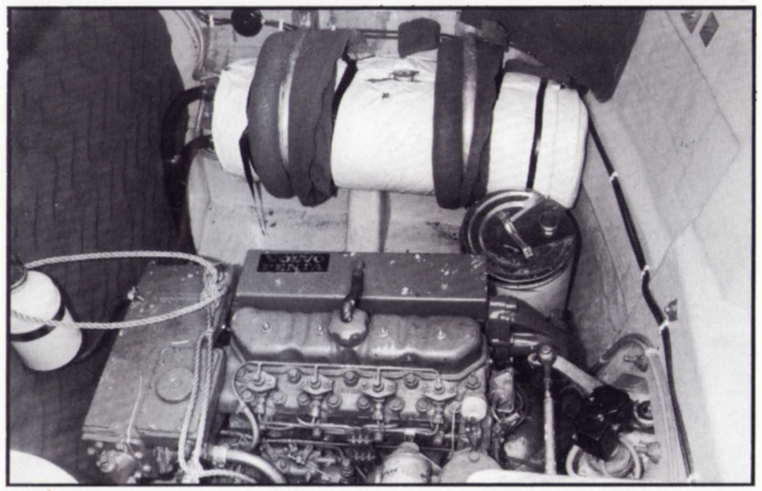




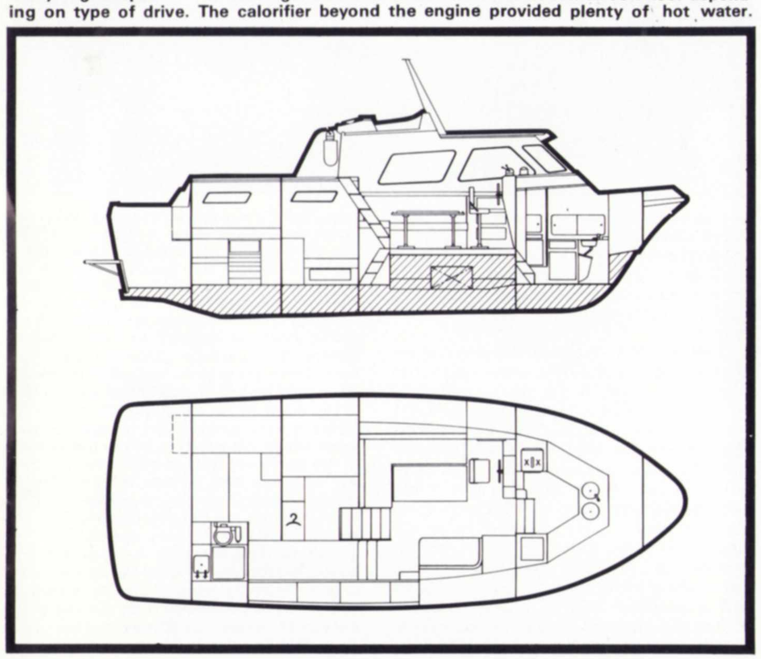
Top, light refreshments being prepared under way. The charter version of the boat has the galley in the saloon, to the right of the picture, but the luxury boat has her galley forward through the companionway. There is plenty of room in the saloon for lounging and ventilation is adequate with sliding windows as well as Tannoy vents. Centre, the spacious galley on the luxury boat. The cooker is tucked away to the left and could be better positioned somewhere in the acres of worktop, but otherwise the layout is very good. There is some controversy about the position of the galley right in the bows as motion might be severe in any sort of a sea. Above, the well braced pulpit is made from large diameter stainless steel tube, as are the stanchions. Note the special bow roller to keep the chain off the glassfibre. The foredeck is small but adequate. Sidedecks are amply wide and guard rails sufficiently high. Grabrails, however, should be extended further aft past the outside helm position. The boat is seen here at Caley Cruisers, at Inverness.







Top left, the lower steering position in the charter version shows the new console moulding common to all the boats. There is good visibility even though the young navigator has to stand on the seats to see out. Top right, the aftermost of the two cabins, showing the twin berths and part of the extensive stowage. This, the charter version has a not unattractive laminate finish in place of timber. Above, one side of the spacious engine room. There are many engine options with the engines here or under the wheelhouse/saloon floor depending on type of drive. The calorifier beyond the engine provided plenty of hot water.



twin tanks, situated in the wings of the engine space.

Electrics and plumbing were well fitted and clipped, with master switches for the batteries situated in the engine compartment. There is a calorifier for hot water run off the starboard engine and mounted in the engine space. The wiring and fuses are accessible from the wheelhouse and there is a changeover switch to parallel the batteries for engine starting should one become flattened. Normally, one battery starts the engines, the other is for domestic lighting. The switching is done in the engine room and the charging pattern avoids the use of blocking diodes.

Accommodation

The two versions of the Highland Admiral differ only in the forward part of the accommodation and the saloon. The cruiser version has the galley right forward in the bows, laid out in a vee form with plenty of working space and stowage. There are double sinks at the apex of the vee and the stove and fridge aft. The cooker position is rather awkward as it is tucked away in a corner, but on the whole, the galley is big enough for a boat twice the length. The forward positioning makes for space, but there might be problems with the pitching of the boat in a rough sea.

The charter version has a double cabin forward with a small toilet compartment fitted into the after port corner, below the steering console.

The saloons of the two versions differ in that the charter boat has a galley in the saloon to starboard where there is a small settee in the other boat. On the port side there is an L-shaped settee that converts to a double berth, but the deep steps into the saloon makes it difficult to get behind the table at the aft end and the helmsman's seat at the other end has to be negotiated, which is also awkward. The builders are looking at this problem for future craft.

Three steps down to the after end of the accommodation and you come to two double cabins opening off a passageway. These cabins are remarkable for their space and headroom and have a double berth in the forward one and two overlapping singles aft. There is plenty of stowage and the volume of the cabins is such that there is little trouble from condensation even with the laminate finish of the charter boat.

At the end of the passageway outside the after cabins is the toilet and shower; plenty of headroom again and fitted with a sea toilet and a basin as well as a shower fitment supplied from the calorifier or a gas water heater.

The sleeping cabins are excellent, and the six that can sleep in the cruiser version will be very comfortable, apart from a lack of seating at the saloon table. In common with many other craft, the Highland Admiral needs a couple of stools or other loose seats to accommodate comfortably all the diners at one sitting.

The layout of this boat is one that will suit very well for extended cruising for four. There is enough space in the boat for people to move about without tripping over each other and the excellent headroom and the light and airy saloon make for comfortable boating. We have slight reservations about the forward galley positioning, but this will only be a real problem with the higher speed versions of the boat.

boat report
Motor Boat and Yachting

Deck layout

As the superstructure extends well forward, the foredeck is small, but there is room for an anchor winch and stowage as well as for line handling. The sloping bow to the rubbing band means that the bow roller has to be an immense structure to lead the chain clear of the glassfibre, but at least it means that the fitting is man enough to accommodate a good-sized chain and to keep it in the right place.

Sidedecks are wide and well protected by the high guardrails, and there are grabrails on the coachroof. Another pair are needed however along the sides of the superstructure in the way of the steering position.

The after deck proper is again a comfortable size and there is access to the bathing platform. Two steps lead up to the steering position and the deck on top of the after coachroof. This space is well protected by the solid topped rail.

Fuel and water fillers and the connection for the shore power line are neatly recessed into the after ends of the superstructure and the cabin side respectivly.

The outside steering position and the deck over the after coachroof are ideal for motoring in good weather, but there is a need for seating in the form of deck boxes as there is nothing to sit on apart from the rail, and this can be dangerous.

Handling

In common with all boats of high freeboard, the Highland Admiral tends to wander to the wind at slow speed. The deep keel version is slightly better in this respect than the shallow keel outdrive boat, but constant helm movements are necessary to hold a straight course. The slightly faster twin outdrive version steered well when both engines were at cruising speed, but when we had to slow with engine trouble, the wander built up, augmented by the heavy beam and quartering seas encountered in the Moray Firth.

Visibility from the outside steering position is excellent, even though you have to stand on tip toe to see the stemhead, and the small amount of spray that is thrown up in rough conditions stays well away from the helmsman. Down below, the wheel is well forward and it takes a little getting used to to steer accurately from here when you come off the upper wheel. Visibility is good however — even astern — and only the extreme beam of the craft means that you have to go up top when coming alongside to starboard. The sliding side windows allow you to stick your head out if you need to, and the charter version had the welcome addition of a hatch over the lower helm position so that you can stick your head out through the coachroof if the fancy takes you. The upper position is so good though that only cold or rain will send you below.

Even on only one engine, the outdrive boat was easy to berth, but if you are careless the rubber fenders round the gunwale and topsides will take the sting out of most manoeuvres.

We were impressed with the comfortable motion of the boat in a beam and quartering sea and feel that, in her semi-planning version, the Highland Admiral will be an excellent sea boat, capable of comfortable passages.

Conclusion

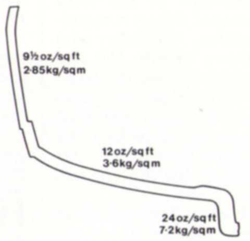
The design and construction of the prototype Highland Admiral were underwritten by the Highlands and Islands Development Board of Scotland to assist in a job creation scheme in the Highlands. From there, the boat is going to become the flagship of Caley Cruisers' hire and charter fleet, but we believe that there will be a ready market for the boat right across the motor cruiser world, both in this country and abroad. There is masses of room within the ample proportions of the hull and the accommodation is well planned and has the space and comfort needed for family cruising. The multiple speed permutations and the readiness of the builders to alter the details of the accommodation to suit the purchaser should suit the owner who wants something out of the ordinary.

Standards of construction are good and the heritage of a range of commercial craft ensures that the boat will be tough and long lasting. Later boats will no doubt overcome the fuel problems we discovered on the first of the charter boats and it will be interesting to see which of the engine variations will be the most popular. We think that a pair of good sized diesels, driving conventional shafts, will make the Highland Admiral a fast, comfortable and seaworthy cruiser.

Technical data

Dimensions

L.o.a.	35ft (10.70m)
Beam	12ft 6in (3.81m)
Draught	4ft (1.22m)
Displacement	15,680lb (7112kg)
Fuel capacity	110 gal (500lt)
Water capacity	99gal (450lt)
No. of berths	6 (2 single, 2 doubles) plus 2 single in charter version



Engines

2 Volvo Penta Aquamatic AQD21A/280 diesel outdrives — options available include hydraulic and conventional shaft drive engines, single or twin.

Capacity

No. cylinders	4
Max rpm	4500
Max hp	64hp

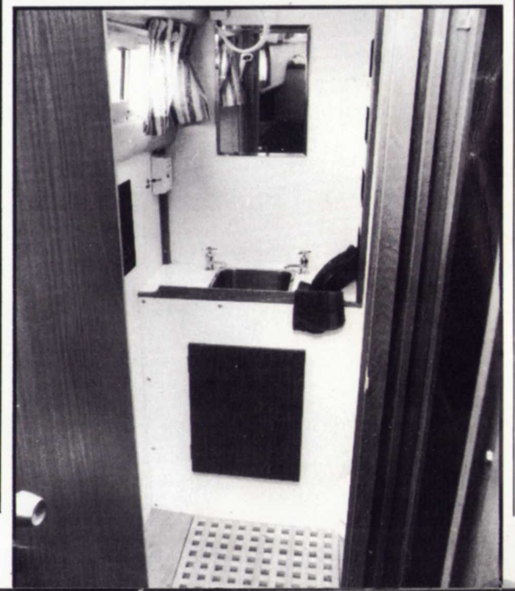
Hull and Deck

Material	Polyester resin with chopped strand mat reinforcement in female moulds. Balsa core in deck and superstructure.
Colour	Hull, white. Superstructure, white. Some options available.

Price	£32,975 ex VAT (cruiser version). Approx. £85 needed to equip to MBY basic standard
Builders	Orcantic Ltd, Hatston, Kirkwall, Orkney, Scotland, KW15 1RE. Tel: Kirkwall (0856) 2390.
Agents	Loch Ness Marine Ltd, Canal Road, Inverness IV3 6NF. Tel: Inverness (0463) 36539
Designers	Murray, Cormack Associates (1977)

Below, the Admiral's ample stern, showing the good steering position. Bottom, space and headroom in the toilet.





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