

BOAT TEST

Seaspray 15 Fisherman

Des Westmore hits the high seas in a new 15-footer designed and built by MB Boats.





There's plenty of room up front.



Reincarnation

It is two and a half years since I first tested the Seaspray 15, made by MB Boats on the Isle of Wight. The craft we tested that day was dubbed the 'Super Dory 15 Fisherman'. Since then, increased interest from the angling fraternity has led Mike Brackenbury, who is owner of MB Boats and has

been designing and building boats for over forty years, to further hone the boat's layout. This has resulted in the latest incarnation, which is dubbed the 'Seaspray 15 Fisherman'.

Changes To Layout

The previous boat's four-seat layout has been replaced by two revolving

Warp factor nine cap'n!





seats. This new setup gives 30 square feet of clear deck space – not bad for a boat that is only 15ft 2in long. The roomy cuddy has not been changed, and can provide cover for up to four adults whilst still retaining the excellent visibility that impressed me on the last test.

The heavy duty GRP hull also remains unchanged. It is of a 'Gull Wing' form, rather than 'Cathedral' and is thought to be originally of American design having built-in buoyancy and a beam of 6ft. In all the years Mike has been building this boat, he has naturally made modifications and improvements but has never found any reason to tamper with the lines. The weight of 650lb ensures ease of trailability and launching, while the transom is structurally sized for recommended engine sizes of 25-75 HP long shaft outboards and incorporates a very useful locker.

Mike came up with this model a while back, but every time he has built one demand has meant it has been sold before we could test it. A demonstrator boat came available in mid autumn, but even then the weather did its best to prevent us getting out.

Second Opinion

To get someone else's opinion this time, I recruited Dale Edmunds to

do the 'Driving'. Dale is no stranger to dinghy fishing, he has his own dinghy and spends many hours afloat, most recently breaking the 10lb of Wight boat-caught bass record and I was sure his opinion would be of great relevance.

The weather was still by no means great, with an air temperature of 6°C and a nasty northeasterly breeze. We were certainly glad of the shelter of the cuddy, which still gives excellent visibility when seated.

The craft was moored in the calm waters of the River Medina and the craft zipped along smoothly as one would expect in conditions like this. We decided to head down to Cowes to get out into the Solent to get a better idea of how the boat would fair in less ideal conditions.

Worsening Conditions

Once in the Solent the conditions were far more testing, with the northeasterly breeze providing a choppy, short sea despite the high water slack tide. The Seaspray 15 was not fazed at all and 3000 RPM from the 40HP Tohatsu easily had the craft planing. Dale made comment as to how good the stability was, even when the seas were on our beam. This stability comes from the gull wing form



Fall throttle!

of the hull and while there was a vague hint of slamming, it was certainly nothing to worry about and came as no surprise given the conditions. Upon stopping the engines the Seaspray 15 settled quickly - which should be good for fishing on the drift or at anchor. As we headed back, I took some pictures of Dale sat at the helm. I was once again glad of the cuddy – not only did it mean I was a lot warmer, but it also protected all my camera equipment. Incidentally, the cuddy on the test boat is fitted with an optional roof hatch.

Impressive Performance

Back in the river, I was able to climb aboard one of the mooring pontoons so that Dale could put the Seaspray through a series of

turns for the camera to give you a better idea of the craft's lines.

I have already said how Dale was impressed with the craft's stability and he also echoed my thoughts regarding the lack of slamming and smooth ride, which is certainly not typical of most Dory designs on the market. Dale felt the controls and wheel were in just the right place for either sitting behind the cuddy or when standing, which he is more used to as his boat has an open deck with centre console. He also liked the transom locker, which maximises deck space by keeping the tank and battery well out of the way. Regarding the roof hatch in the cuddy, he felt that it would be down to the individual as

She's perfect for sneaking up on bass!



For a small boat she looks bigger.

to whether that was a desired feature or not, and that for anchoring, in his opinion, an Aldemey ring set-up would be best with anchor retrieval from the cockpit.

Finally he felt that the engine size of 40HP was about right for two anglers plus gear, and that the finish and fittings were of a high quality - all in all then a very favourable report.

I did not visit the factory this time but was impressed with the set up when I last went there. While most of the work is done at the factory, any tasks contracted out stay local - enabling quality and timescales to be monitored easily. In this age of mass production and cheap imports, this is good to hear.

Prices And Contacts

The Seaspray 15 Fisherman is available for a boat only (no engine or trailer) price of \$4595, but most are sold as a package including engine, steering, fairleads, fittings, trailer and cover. A typical package with 40 HP engine and trailer would be \$8595. A number of optional fittings are available, such as the roof hatch but electronics (VHF, GPS and Fishfinder) are not offered with the choice left to the customer.

Other configurations with more seating or without cuddy are available and if you would like to know more about the Seaspray 15 Fisherman, contact Mike Brackenbury on: 01983 532727.

It's cheaper than a car!

