

Arran 16

For a sixteen footer the Arran 16 is one sturdy vessel

Mike Thrussell certainly gets some weather thrown his way when it comes to the TSF boat test. Find out how the Arran 16 copes with a blustery force 6 gale.

This latest TSF boat review brought back fond memories for me. Way back in the mid-1980s a mate bought an Arran 16, and I was lucky enough to accompany him on a few trips in the Menai Straits and off the reefs around Trearddur Bay in Anglesey.

He loved that Arran, but inevitably a lady came along, a baby followed, a mortgage was organised and the Arran, with some tears shed, was sold to go towards the house deposit. The marriage didn't last, but his love for the Arran has. It was up to Stockton-on-Tees for me then, to meet up with Arran agent Dave Naithy, and to reacquaint myself with a boat I already knew pretty well. Good job too, as the north of England had been battered the night before with force 9 winds, and the fields were showing signs of flooding as I headed up through Yorkshire. It was still a force 6 as I drew close to Dave's house.

A Little bit Of History

The Arran 16 was originally popular all along the Yorkshire and northeast coast with small commercial inshore creel fishermen, and was also used for small-scale commercial long-lining for cod close in under the cliffs.

Being a proven hull it was easily adapted for angling. The hull is a traditional displacement design with a high and deep forward bow, broad at mid-gunnel, gently tapering towards the stern. The Arran is built in heavy duty GRP with simulated clinker-type planking.

The main keel is deep and runs the full length of the hull. She also sports a deep bilge keel at each side giving extra stability, and with the added advantage that if you moor on tidal flats that dry out, the boat will sit pretty much upright, helping to protect the hull. Each keel carries a protective, galvanised rubbing band. Also hidden inside the hull is

420kg of foam buoyancy. The test boat was fitted with a cuddy, something I'd choose as standard for any boat you intend to take outside an estuary to the open sea. The cuddy has three front windows, the middle of which is a lift up Houdini hatch, giving access for hauling the anchor. This gives you stacks of room, with a direct pull at the rope from a comfy and safe stance with your feet firmly on the deck below the cuddy.

There are small oval-shaped windows either side of the Houdini hatch for added forward vision, and a large side window along the cuddy sides. They're held in place by rubber seals, which are more than adequate.

The cuddy secures to the hull via heavy-duty clips. This allows you to remove it at any time in a matter of few seconds – useful if you want to enjoy the summer sun while estuary fishing.

What's Inside?

There's a surprising amount of storage space on this little gem. Inside the cuddy there is a large forward bow locker for housing the anchor and rope. In front of the bow locker is a moulded seating area for two people. You also have extra stowage space underneath the seat.

The Arran 16 is usually set up for tiller steering with the helmsman at the stern, but the test boat was fitted with the optional extra console at the cuddy, on the starboard side with wheel steering. This is a really good option, and one that I would advise.

The console is open at the base for leg room, and has room for sounder and GPS to be fixed to the top of the console too, though some anglers would choose the available roof area of the cuddy to mount these, especially the VHF radio.

The hull is normally supplied with a pine, full-width thwart seat amidships, though Dave had modified the test boat, which is his own craft, using a padded seat. Additional moulded seating is housed along The port and starboard quarters, and across the transom where you normally sit to tiller steer. This is actually quite comfortable, so you won't become restless when fishing a long session.

Underneath the transom seat is space to take a five-gallon fuel tank. The deck area for the fuel tank is raised a good three inches off the main deck level. Drainage is via a sump area aft.

There's a small splash well area, armed with a single drain tube. The transom mount area is supplied with a heavy-duty steel plate to take the motor clamps and protect the GRP.

Fixtures And Fittings

There's a stainless steel bow roller at the bow, along with a polished alloy cleat. The gunnels are protected by heavy-duty fendering and you get galvanised rowlocks and polished alloy mooring cleats at the stern corners. The two-wheel galvanised trailer supplied is purpose-designed for the Arran, with long runners to fully protect and support the hull when travelling.



There's plenty of room for fishing on this baby

The helm position is comfortable



Engine Choice

Dave's boat is fitted with a long-shaft 15hp Yamaha, but the boat is recommended for use with long-shaft engines from 6hp to 15hp. Given that this is a true traditional displacement hull design, with a limited speed capability immaterial of the power sat at the stern, then I'd suggest 8 to 10hp motors as ideal.

The alternative viewpoint is to go for a bigger unit up to 15hp if you intend to fish areas where you may need to push back against a strong tide, or if you never like to 'work' a motor hard, and deliberately choose a big motor intending to only use two thirds of its power to maximise its life.

All Aboard

With the severe weather dumped on me yet again, I was to test the boat within the River Tees. Even so, the wind was whipping across the water, lifting spray up off the surface.

With Dave already aboard, I stepped in expecting that typical sudden dip at the gunnel you expect with smaller boats as she took my weight, but not so. She tilts at a shallow angle and holds there, even though both of us were on one side of the boat at the

same time – now that's stability for you.

Dave told me that they tested the boat originally with two of them standing on the gunnels without the gunnel tops reaching the water.

The travel on the throttle was quite long, but power is progressive and even. With the long keel and bilge keels the boat rides absolutely rock steady and will not deviate off course. I was wandering about on deck taking photos while Dave steered, the boat remained stable with no sudden leaning to one side as my weight shifted to alter her balance.

You steer with a hard plastic car-type wheel, which is fine. The steering is precise, and being a displacement she is predictable under steerage when making tight turns into small areas for mooring or berthing. I found her easy to handle, safe and forgiving.

Pushing her nose in to the wind, I chose to stand up to steer, finding this position comfortable, but also affording me excellent vision. You do have good visibility through the cuddy screens, but it's never as good as when you're standing up with a clear sight line. In estuary conditions you never know just what might be floating just underneath the surface!

Pile On The Power

Pushing forward there was surprisingly little spray coming upwards and onto the bow, then far enough to reach me, even in the high wind conditions while on test.

I turned her backside in to the wind to face the waves and reversed into it. A little water climbs up the stern and splashes into the splash well, but its nothing and was indicative of how dry she will be when worked in a following sea.

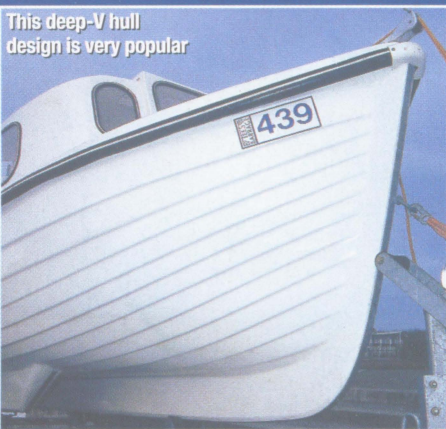
Setting her up bow against the wind, and shutting the power off to let her drift sees the bow come round for her to sit at about 45 degrees to the wind and hold. This is the balance point between the wind pressure on the cuddy and hull, and the grip of the keel in the water. It's a good angle for drift fishing over inshore shallow banks.

Access into the cuddy is easy, being fully open, and the inside layout of the boat is comfy with only the thwart seat to be negotiated when working and fishing. You've easy access to the water for lifting fish as well, using one of the stern quarter seats.

Launching the Arran 16 proved exceptionally easy. She can be handled on your own without fuss, and retrieves just as easily.

Dave will be pleased to take prospective customers out for a demonstration of the Arran 16. He also tells me that he usually has one new boat ready for sale at all times, but it only takes a turn-round of four weeks for a freshly-built craft.

This deep-V hull design is very popular



Performance

She travels at around 8 to 10 knots, just right for inshore fishing, but you'll work all day on a thimbleful of fuel. Dave and I worked out she was burning about a half gallon of petrol for every hour running.

If you fill a five-gallon tank, then you've enough fuel for three or four typical trips with plenty in reserve for emergencies. That's cheap boating!

Things I Might Change

I think the floor might be best treated with a non-slip deck finish. If you're handling lots of slimy fish like tope, then it might get a tad slippery without a full textured finish.

If you needed more storage space and wanted to retain the thwart seat, it wouldn't be a major modification to have a locker-type seat instead of the current pine bench type.

Verdict

The Arran 16 is a superb boat for estuary fishing, but is also a safe, predictable boat for working out a few hundred yards offshore, say up to about a mile in good sea conditions.

I think she's one of the best buys about for the first-time boat owner content to stay close to shore. She is a really predictable boat to handle used sensibly, she's stable, comfy, and lightweight for easy towing, launch and retrieve with a two-wheel-drive car.

She's perfect for trolling for bass over the reefs, tope fishing in the shallows, working right in by the cliffs over rough ground for pollack, codling and wrasse, and for anchoring up in the deeper estuary channels to ambush the bass and flatties as they push up with the tide. What's more, you won't have to break the bank getting yourself afloat. Two lads sharing this boat as a package buy are out and fishing for around £2,400 each, so what are you waiting for?

Information

Facts And Figures

- Length: 16ft
- Beam: 6ft 6in
- Weight: 305kg
- Rated: Category C

Prices

- Boat: £3200
- Cuddy: £495
- Trailer: £795
- Cover: £195
- Console: £195

Contact

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All in all a very comfortable fishing boat



She's easy to launch, too