

It's a soft ride

It is just as well to destroy the myth that Broads boat builders only build for the Broads - the Moonraker 36 Softrider is a fully seagoing boat, which, when fitted with long range fuel tanks, can speed across nearly 500 miles of sea.

On taking delivery his Moonraker and sailing it to Madrid a Spanish customer wrote: "I am most pleased with the boat, which survived really vicious storms --- in the Bay of Biscay, and if only for this (the boat) deserves full recognition --- One of the storms --- resulted in heavy damage on the French coasts caused by winds in excess of 100 km/hr. as reported by the Press --- For ten hours during the night we were weathering the storm on autopilot --- one of us keeping watch on deck and the other two --- sleeping in spite of the bouncing."

Perhaps the most interesting single feature about the Moonraker is its hull design, which has a sharp "V" entry, softening aft to a 15 degree stepped "V" underside, with a shallow keel aft of the stem. The effect of this shape is said to give a low rate of roll at sea with the minimum of pitch and consequently an easy ride in most sea conditions.

CONFIDENCE

A short trip up the river Yare did not demonstrate these characteristics because of the flatness of the water, but one was given every confidence in the boat by the general ease of handling at all speeds.

With a £10,000-odd boat under one's thumb, so to speak, one expects to feel a certain amount of apprehension as one takes the shiny chrome helm for the first time - especially in the confined waters of the river Yare. But the Moonraker is a boat that instills confidence - it feels equally happy at 25 knots as it does at five knots.

At first the twin diesel engines might strike one as a bit noisy, but considering that there is the equivalent of two London buses throbbing away immediately below one's feet, one can only praise the makers for their sound insulation.

PLANING

As the throttles are opened, Softrider, the name of the company's demonstration boat, climbs into a plane and sits proudly, as steady as a rock, on her bow wave. Once planing, the throttles can be almost half closed and she will keep her position down to about 13 knots, an ideal cruising speed, after which she drops her bow gently back into the water.

Her turning ability is almost phenomenal. At ten knots, without using the engines, she will complete a 180-degree turn in almost her own length, and with as negligible time lag. At the end of half an hour with the boat one has no inhibitions left. Visibility is excellent.

Moonraker is sheer luxury below decks. "My design philosophy" said Mr. Buxton, "is that a man should have in his boat what he has in his own home." And that includes as standard equipment a 405/625 TV, press-button domestic radio, an eight-track stereo tape player with extension speakers in the cockpit, wall-to-wall carpeting and full warm-air ventral heating.

SPACIOUS

Moonraker is exceptionally spacious. The forward cabin provides twin single berths or a double berth, and is equipped with a full-length wardrobe, lockers, shelves and berth lights. The main saloon is finished in wood veneer and soft furnishings to the owner's choice of colours. A raised dining area gives excellent visibility and this can be quickly converted into a double berth or U-shaped settee.

There is a choice of aft cabin, aft stateroom, or aft cockpit models. The aft cabin model has two single berths with a hide-away vanity unit, twin wardrobes, cupboards, draws and berth lights.

Aft stateroom models provide a self-contained wash-room / shower / toilet suite, a choice of twin berths or double berth, wardrobe, lockers, drawers, in fact all the storage space one might require. They also contain a separate domestic radio. Aft cockpit models are identical to the other models forward of the cockpit area. Behind the cockpit is a deck area with fully upholstered seating for six to eight people.

Mr. Buxton has fulfilled his design philosophy, the Moonraker is as comfortable as any home, if a little more confined.