



Through the pages of *Fisherman and Boatowner*, we have followed the trend of tubular pontoon boats quite closely. In fact, we even owned one as a camera boat for 12 months - the Queensland Ships built Ocean Cylinder 7.4m. That boat was an excellent craft, soft riding, stable and seaworthy.

Sadly, the Ocean Cylinder range was caught up in the demise of Sportfish / Qld Ships closure of 2003, and although the rights, jigs, etc, have found a good long term home with Yamba Welding and Engineering, the initial momentum was lost, and it's only recently started to re-enter the big tent, let alone get back up onto the canvas.

In the meantime, entering into the ring, we also have the Ocean Craft Series of boats. Built on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, this range of boats is again aimed more at the commercial sector than it is the recreational boatowner.

Ocean Craft manufacture a large custom built range,

Ocean Craft 3100

Introducing a very special sort of boat - a genuine macro deep vee cylinder boat with big water attitude, astonishing stability, ally toughness and performance in a 43 kg package.

It makes a great tender, it's a real survival platform - and it's wet. Madly seriously wonderfully wet. But it has **HUGE potential** as the ultimate roof topper or mothership fisherman. . . .

offering sizes from 2.0 to 12.0 metres in anything from open boat to centre cabin or fly bridge style.

The Ocean Craft is not the prettiest boat in the world, however they are certainly fit for a purpose. On a not so perfect day we had the opportunity to run the 3100 model, designed to be a suitable tender for larger craft, a boat in which you could feel comfortable 100 miles out to sea with the mother ship anchored off a

reef somewhere close by.

Design

An aluminium version of an inflatable boat, the pontoons are in this case filled with closed cell foam flotation.

The deep-V hull, flanked by the aluminium pontoons is designed for flotation, creating a super stable platform, yet still allowing an extremely deep-V for this size vessel, providing an exceptionally soft ride in its

class.

They are built to be unsinkable, with the closed cell foam flotation ensuring the boat remains afloat at all times.

The 3100 is basically an open tender with a checker plate V-floor, and a forward anchor/fuel tank shelf. Handrails are provided around the boat for safety's sake.

The boat is built to be a lightweight rig, capable of being a roof topper, or a tender carried on the roof of a small boat.

Construction

The Ocean Craft range is built to a customised level, utilising whatever gauge of aluminium the customer requires depending on his or her intended use of the boat. In this case, the little Speorcraft is built to an almost commercial grade using 3.0mm on the hull and 2.5mm aluminium sheets on the pontoons. All aluminium sheets are pre-cut by computers, and assembled at the Sunshine Coast factory.

The pontoons are fitted with air valves, enabling the



boats to be pressure tested at factory level, to ensure their rigidity.

Every hull is also built to meet the 2C Survey standard, proving the build standard of each vessel.

Handling and Ride/Performance

I swear that the weather gods are watching over me, because every time I have the opportunity to test a small boat, the worst is thrown at me. After stepping from the beautiful Lascraft 740 plate aluminium boat and a good session offshore, it was then time to jump into the little Ocean Craft.

As the day wore on, the weather deteriorated substantially.

My first impression of the Ocean Craft upon boarding from the boat ramp was just how stable the little rig was. Moving around the boat to drop the engine, placing the fuel tank and setting it up, the boat barely moved underfoot, even with my heavyweight frame!

Something that was a pet hate to me throughout the test, was the v-floor. The checker plate floor became slippery very easy, and because of the extremely deep v in the floor, your feet had nowhere to slip but into

the keel. I would definitely fit a small flat false floor to this vessel if I owned it.

After setting the boat up, Mike jumped aboard, after which we proceeded out through the marina towards the big blue.

Upon reaching the entrance to the marina, it was easy to see the 1.0 metre swells and chop the 25+ knot winds had produced over the past couple of hours.

With our 7.0 metre camera boat running shotgun, I felt comfortable taking such a small boat out in such rough conditions. We motored out into the chop, and proceeded to run downwind with the chop.

Upon entering the first real swell, and powering over it, I waited for the customary drop and thump at the bottom of the wave. To its credit, the Ocean Craft 3.1 was excellent. It ran down the face, tracked straight, landed softly and remained dry.

Continuing on the waterways for the next 30 minutes or so, making sure we had the perfect photographs, the boat instilled confidence in me in terms of inherent safety with its excellent handling and surprisingly good ride - but in these circumstances, it is seriously wet - especially if you pushed it too hard. Back off the throttle, and just tick it over, downhill and beam to it runs very well, and keeps the occupants dry. But pushing straight up into the wind, with 25 knots of wind and 1.0m waves - we were soaked.

One thing I did notice with the little boat however was that it did lack a little



bit of forward buoyancy in the hull itself. When running into the back of the next wave, the bow failed to lift quickly enough, until it reached the point where the pontoon provided the lift it needed. This was not a problem, but did cause the boat to be a little wet at times. At one point, I was a little concerned when Mike mentioned that he didn't have the self-bailer aboard, just at the point when I looked down to notice how much water had gathered in the hull.

I must stress however, that these were extreme conditions for such a small boat, one in which the boat was never designed to be used in primarily.

The hull is rated to accept a 30hp outboard, however was modestly powered here by a Yamaha 15hp long shaft engine. The boat was powerful, and carried the weight of two guys very well. I would say this engine is a great match to this hull, and unless you were to carry more people and their dive or spear fishing gear, there is no need for more power.

Conclusion

A cheap, lightweight, safe vessel for use as a tender in any situation. This boat will happily and safely handle conditions you are likely to encounter anchored hundreds of miles out to sea, anchored off a nice bommie somewhere.

Definitely a boat with all weather capability, just remember to have the bailer aboard!

If you are after something similar to this, check out www.oceancraft.org, or call Mike Jessop on 0416 293 686.