

My dream boat

Lifelong Orkney Longliner fan **Dave Lewis** tests the latest model from this hugely popular marque, and concludes that it's even better than its worthy predecessors



Visit any harbour in the UK and it's a fair bet that you will see at least one example of the work of Orkney Boats Ltd.

This Sussex company has been building boats for more than 40 years, and the fact that a great many of these are fished commercially day in, day out should serve as solid testimony to the sea-keeping qualities and structural integrity of this iconic range of vessels.

For many years the tried and tested Orkney Longliner has been one of the most popular, with more than 3,000 produced, and recently I had the opportunity to try out the latest to pop out of the

mould – the Orkney Longliner 2.

With input from TT Boat Designs, the Longliner 2 features an improved hull shape that is lighter and stiffer than that of its predecessor, resulting in attainable speeds of up to 22 knots when fitted with outboard engines up to a maximum of 25hp. Further, the relatively light weight of the hull – 600lb (270kg) – makes the Longliner 2 simple to launch and recover on a low capacity unbraked trailer that can easily be towed behind a family car. For the record, speeds of up to 14 knots are achievable with just a 15hp outboard.

One thing common to all Orkney boats is their exceptional build. An incredible and immediately

obvious amount of attention and effort goes into ensuring that each vessel is perfectly turned out before it leaves the factory.

Sure enough, the Longliner 2 I found waiting for me on the pontoon at Itchenor in the upper reaches of Chichester Harbour was as pretty an angling boat as I have seen.

Clinker-built heritage

The story goes that the mould for the original Orkney Longliner was taken directly from a traditional, clinker-built Orkney fishing boat. Whether or not this is true, the fact remains that the simulated clinker hull has been something of a benchmark with the Orkney fleet. Certainly the clinker design

is pleasing on the eye, but also adds to the stiffness and strength of the hull.

The original Longliner was almost exclusively built as an open boat, with a folding canvas dodger as an optional extra. The Longliner 2 I trialed featured a smart open cuddy, a popular and practical choice for many sea anglers, though of course you can choose an open boat if you prefer.

As soon as I stepped aboard the Longliner 2 I was struck by the large amount of available deck space, most impressive considering she has an overall length of only 16ft (4.88m), with a 6ft (1.83m) beam. Gunnel's fall vertically to the main deck, which has a hardwearing, non-slip



Putting the Orkney Longliner 2 through her paces in Chichester Harbour

finish, and the inboard freeboard is excellent.

The cuddy features a large, top-hinged access hatch at the forward end, large enough to comfortably manage the anchor from within. Key features include a large sunken foredeck in which the anchor, chain and warp can be temporarily stowed while running between marks in calm conditions, along with a large lockable anchor locker within the bow for more secure stowage.

Excellent forward visibility is afforded via large windows that have been cut oversize and bolted outboard for maximum strength.

A single moulded thwart with open stowage beneath is located at the forward end of the deck,

with a good amount of headroom beneath the cuddy. The steering console is to starboard, and large enough to install a full range of onboard electronics.

Storage space to spare

Two GRP moulded pod-type seats are provided for the helmsman and crew, and these incorporate useful dry locker stowage space. An open space aft beneath the transom seat incorporates a standard five-gallon fuel tank, plus battery.

Built-in buoyancy is fitted at key locations within the hand-laminated hull, which incorporates woven reinforcement areas and is stiffened below the waterline

by a bonded-in GRP backbone. The hull and deck are bonded, resulting in a high strength-to-weight ratio. All necessary deck hardware is of the highest quality and fitted as standard, including PVC fendering outboard, with fitted stainless steel end caps.

Many of my happiest days sea angling afloat in the UK were spent fishing from my original Orkney Strikeliner 16+, and as soon as I stepped aboard the Longliner 2 I was struck by the similarity between it and that favourite boat.

That said, much as I loved the old version, the new Longliner is clearly more practical thanks to the design of the gunnels and enhanced deck space.

On the water

My first impression of the Longliner 2 was of a good-looking, highly practical, two-man trailerable angling boat.

After an hour or so putting her through her paces in Chichester Harbour I found that she handles like a dream, has excellent sea-keeping qualities and makes a fine, stable platform for fishing either at anchor or on the drift.

I tested the Longliner 2 on a beautiful summer day – it could only have been better if we'd been in the eastern Solent with the fishing rods. Clearly such conditions are not ideal for accurately assessing the sea-keeping qualities of any boat, but as I have more



BOAT ANGLER TESTED ORKNEY LONGLINER 2

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small-boat experience fishing aboard Orkneys than any other craft, I believe this allowed me to get an honest feel of this one.

Of course, at slow speeds within an area with a six-knot speed restriction she handled impeccably, tracking true and displaying an impressive amount of lateral stability even when two adults were braced against

the gunnel on one side. Before I stepped aboard the boat I had been warned that the steering was far from perfect, and sure enough it was very heavy and stiff – but this was the first production model. A more appropriate steering system will be installed on all future boats.

The original Longliner was a traditional displacement hull

that by design was restricted to a maximum 8-10 knots, which was probably why it was more of a success with commercial fishermen than with anglers.

The new hull around which the Longliner 2 has been built has clearly addressed this issue, and she now has a top speed a tad in excess of 20 knots, in my opinion more than enough to meet the requirements of most inshore boat anglers.

What's more, given that a 25hp engine is light and relatively affordable to buy, run and service, you'll soon start to see the appeal of choosing a Longliner 2.

When finally I was allowed to push the throttle forward and get a true feel of the top-end performance, it soon became apparent that this boat's performance matches her looks.

She rose quickly up on the plane and stayed there at minimum revs, handling perfectly even when thrown into the tightest of turns at speeds approaching 20 knots.

Memories of days gone by aboard my Orkney Strikeliner came flooding back, and I was struck by similarities in their handling qualities. The difference is the Longliner 2 is the better boat by a clear margin.

I haven't owned my own boat for several years, but increasingly find myself pondering the idea of getting another one. If I decide to scratch that itch, it is likely an Orkney Longliner 2 will find itself parked on my drive.



The hinged access hatch



The sunken foredeck for anchor stowage



The test boat was fitted with a 20hp outboard