

ONJ LOODSBOOT 920

As a boat to pose in, there are better choices. As a boat for the serious business of heading offshore, this one warrants a second look...



A second outside helm is an unusual luxury

Plenty of space to sit outside

Backrest flips to become a helm seat



The wheelhouse feels quite busy with the galley up here too

Think 30ft pilot-style semi-displacement and the mind instinctively turns to traditional British offerings such as the Seaward 29, or perhaps a Hardy 32DS. It's a fair bet that the products of the Netherlands won't register; after all, the Dutch build sloops and steel boats, don't they?

Well yes, they do, and indeed, ONJ Motor Launches & Workboats create some very fine-looking canoe stern sloops. But they also build a Loodsboot range from 7.7m to 10m. *Loodsboot* translates into English as pilot boat, and the 920 is the latest of this line, slotting neatly between the existing Loodsboot 800 and Pilot 1020.

From a distance, the upright stem and smooth navy-blue topsides that curve gently from concave at the bow through to mildly convex at the stern, topped with solid black D fendering, speak of reassuring practicality. And it's the same story close up, where wide side decks with chunky toerails sport stainless-steel hardware including double-spring cleats. The substantial-looking mast at the aft end of the saloon roof will backflip, hinging down into the cockpit to reduce air draft.

The cockpit is long and deep, with a horseshoe of seating around a folding and removable table and the unusual option of an outside helm. It feels more

spacious out here than the Seaward 29, partly because a larger percentage of the length has been given over to the cockpit, but chiefly because the Loodsboot 920 is physically wider, 3.20m of width playing 3.04m for the British boat.

The interior feels shorter – the galley is in the saloon rather than on the lower deck, for example, but that extra beam means there's space for an L-shaped dinette and the helm seat folds away, extending this area and allowing it to convert to an extra berth when required. The lower deck is simply laid out, with a large wardrobe opposite the usefully roomy heads and a vee berth forward that infills if you prefer a double. It's nicely finished too – a little light of 'surprise and delight'

perhaps, but the 920 goes heavy on practical detailing and quality woodworking.

The other big difference between the Loodsboot 920 and its British counterpart is below the waterline. Both boats utilise a sea-kindly round-bilged semi-displacement hull with a centre keel, but should they look up, a passing diver would observe a single shaft emanating from the Dutch boat rather than the twin props that typically stick out of the British contingent. In fact, you can have twin motors in your Loodsboot 920 if you really must (twin Yanmar 260hp engines), but the preferred setup is a single motor connected to the shaft via a vee drive which keeps the engine further back in the boat for lower

internal noise levels. You lose the close-quarter manoeuvring options of twin shafts, but adding a bow and stern thruster quickly restores the status quo.

The smallest offering of a Yanmar 55hp is fine for inland use, giving strictly displacement speeds. You'll need Yanmar's 150hp if you want to put the 'semi' into semi-displacement, lifting terminal velocity to 11 knots. Better yet is the Yanmar 6BY-260 6-cylinder unit fitted to our test boat which gives 19 knots flat out in return for a 50lph diet of diesel, and runs nicely at 13 knots for a consumption reduction of almost half at 30lph. It's reasonably quiet at that speed too, peaking at about 76dB on the sound meter. Drop back to a completely displacement speed and you'll sip just a tenth of that lower figure – 6 knots equates to just 3lph; such is the cost of fighting the laws of physics. Add the optional second fuel tank for an 800-mile range at that speed!

The view is great from the lower helm, but also surprisingly good from the optional cockpit helm station. The height of the saloon roof means that you have to look through the saloon to see out, but large windows make that easier than it sounds. The only issue is the aft-most window, the one closest to you, which picks up light reflections from outside. ONJ are looking into a way of retracting this window, which would help enormously.

Despite the freshness of the design, there's an old-school feel to the Loodsboot 920, a sense of that 'proper boat' vibe where the practicalities of going to sea outweigh the last vestige of internal volume. As a boat to pose in, there are better choices. As a boat for the serious business of heading offshore, it definitely warrants a second look. **MBY**

Contact ONJ Motor Launches & Workboats. Web: www.onj.nl

THE DATA

LENGTH 30ft 1in (9.20m)
BEAM 10ft 6in (3.20m)
RCD CATEGORY B
ENGINE Yanmar
 6BY-260 260hp diesel
FUEL CAPACITY 250 litres
PRICE FROM €185,000 inc VAT
PRICE AS TESTED
 €245,000 inc VAT



The separate vee-berth cabin is fine for a couple



Limited space but the quality is very good



The heads doubles as the shower room