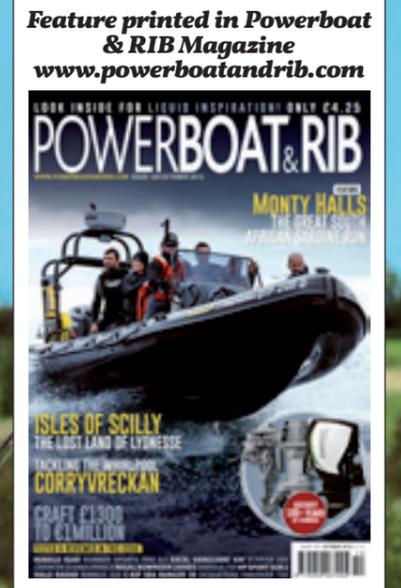


Ocqueteau 725 TIMONIER



Simon Everett examines the 725 Timonier from Ocqueteau, a French, family-owned boatbuilding company that has been building boats for over 60 years.

i PRICE TESTED: (with Suzuki DF150TX) £42,885 (inc. VAT) BERTHS: 4 POWER: 200hp CONTACT: EC Leisurecraft Ltd. Tel: 01702 568482



The wide beam is apparent in this picture, giving great stability and extra room aboard



Aft seat section tilts forward to allow engine to trim right up

OCQUETEAU IS A family-owned boatbuilding yard based not far from La Rochelle, amid the shrimp and oyster growers of the Ile d'Oléron, which was once an island of revolutionaries who stood up against the King of France and has a seafaring tradition that can be traced back to earliest times. The first rules of the sea were drawn up on the Ile d'Oléron, and were called the Rolls of Oléron. These rules were adopted by navies throughout Europe and they formed the basis for the modern Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. The company has a long-standing reputation for building boats for fishermen, and more latterly for pleasure boaters.

The new 725 is an upgrade of the previous 715 and was designed to provide a 7m boat powered by an outboard. The previous model, the 715, used an inboard engine with conventional drive that took up a sizable proportion of the internal space. By utilising outboard power for the 725, Ocqueteau have released the space previously occupied by the machinery and gained the benefits of outboard propulsion, namely quieter running, easier maintenance and unhindered movement throughout the boat.

The Timonier 725 is a well-proportioned boat with a sleek, aft-tapering profile that is pleasing to the eye. Softening the wheelhouse roofline has been achieved

by curving the overhanging coachroof (it reminds me of a sail), and the graphics are cleverly placed to reduce the aft section depth and make it look sleeker. It works. From the high stem with its flared bow through to the stern, the two-panelled hull cuts a dash. The understated graphics lightly enhance the lines and provide a sophisticated elegance through their simplicity.

The French are very family-orientated and the Ocqueteau 725 has a tremendous amount of appeal for this sector. For a start, there are sleeping arrangements for four on a typically French open-plan layout, which reflects the social aspect of this practical pocket

cruiser. A separate heads compartment is often a deal breaker for the female persuasion, while the galley, just inside the double sliding cockpit doors, offers self-contained catering either inside or al fresco. All these features are neatly shoehorned into the 7.27 metres available length, where the use of the Suzuki DF140 outboard, instead of the inboard of the 715, releases some internal space and makes the whole boat feel far more spacious.

The cabin and wheelhouse are as one, with the forward vee berth, dinette, heads and helm all on the same level. There is no companionway to negotiate, just a straight-through walkway once over the

storm sill that protects the interior from the cockpit, which simplifies moving about the boat as well as saving weight. It also makes the accommodation very well lit through the large glass panels supported on slim aluminium frames, giving a virtually uninterrupted all-round view.

Unusually, the vee berth is the smaller of the two doubles and is not the main berth. The dinette converts to create a sizable double berth, while that in the bow is three-quarter length, due to the inclusion of the enclosed heads compartment. The boxed forward seat will house your bed linen, so everything is contained and is less of a chore to make up. Despite the wooden interior, this is more of a short weekender than an extended cruiser, and for that she

From the high stem with its flared bow through to the stern, the two-panelled hull cuts a dash.

will work superbly. The warmth of the natural finish is evident throughout, with an interesting mix of modern and traditional.

The helm is minimalist, with a plain, moulded dash panel ahead of the wheel and serviced by an adjustable bucket seat. Everything you need can be installed within the area of the helm. The traditional ship's wheel in wood and stainless sits well within the decor. It isn't adjustable but the height should suit most people. The throttle was set a little low for me, but there is room to raise it a few inches without impacting on anything. Ahead of the wheel there is a small shelf, and the instruments and display screen are set on an angled fascia nicely positioned in front of the helm without affecting the vision ahead.

The Timonier, like the other Ocqueteau boats, is built using racing yacht lamination, with resin-infused fibreglass and coremat, to produce an ultra-lightweight hull that is stronger and more rigid than a standard lay-up. Racing yacht hulls need to withstand enormous forces at the speed they encounter big waves – this sandwich construction is designed to withstand those pressures and is well proven. With the finished hull being lighter, this also means a greater power-to-weight ratio, so the boat is faster too. A further benefit is that the infusion process can be automated, saving expensive man-hours, keeping the boat competitive on

i **SNAPSHOT** Onboard the Ocqueteau 725 Timonier



CABIN: The wheelhouse and cabin are all one with a flat deck throughout that permits through vision all round.



MAIN BERTH: Created out of the dining table and seating



FINISH: A wooden table complements the wooden fitted interior and lends an air of tradition.



GALLEY: well ventilated, right next to the cockpit doors.



GALLEY: The galley unit has storage and fridge all in the same unit.



HEADS: Compact heads

The Timonier 725 is an elegant, nicely proportioned boat.



the pricing front and helping with the economics of running costs.

How the walls are built is one thing, but one needs a good hull shape to make best use of that special lay-up and its inherent qualities. The Timonier has a shallow keel section with a moderate vee that planes easily, at just over 10 knots. There is sufficient angle to deal with most chop, but rough water needs to be dealt with at reasonable speeds, rather than charged hard. The high, flared bow provides plenty of lift, as do the reversed chines carried right forward, but those chines also introduce a firm ride while they are creating the planing lift. At prudent, pleasure speeds you won't feel it, which is why I say you need to take seas at sensible speeds. Really chucking her at waves will feel quite harsh, but the stiffness in the build soaks it all up

With the finished hull being lighter, this also means a greater power-to-weight ratio, so the boat is faster too.

without any fuss.

Handling is quite assured and stable, with those chines limiting the list in turns by creating a wall of water the hull can lean on. This also maintains the vision from the helm, without the wheelhouse roof dipping in to block your view. For a pleasure boat, the handling is more than adequate. Manoeuvring in a crosswind has to be watched due to the light weight and shallow forefoot. It is just something you get used to with whichever boat you are on.

The cockpit on the Timonier is what makes this a boat for many reasons. There are rod holders for those who like to fish and an across-the-stern bench, with a removable section for the transom gate. The centre section hinges forward to allow the engine to trim up. This function adds another few inches to the cockpit length with the engine down, the thinking being that when the engine is raised, on the mooring or for trailering, nobody needs to sit on the seats – those extra inches matter on smaller boats. Fuel tank access and plenty of stowage is provided under the main hatch in the cockpit. This is a large opening that hinges to port and will swallow all your mooring gear and more besides. Other stowage is provided below the port seat aft and within the wheelhouse.

PERFORMANCE

RPM	Speed (knots)	Fuel (galls/hr)
1000	3.1	0.6
2000	5.6	1.8
3000 plane	10.8	3.9
3500	16.0	5.0 - 1.4 litres/mile
4000	20.4	7.8 - 1.7 litres/mile
5000	25.8	14.0 - 2.4 litres/mile
5600	34.1	15.2 - 2 litres/mile

Access to the foredeck is via two teak-covered steps to the side deck protected by a double guard rail and given a well-placed handrail along the wheelhouse roof and a vertical one on the aft end of the wheelhouse. The latter is also very useful for those standing in the cockpit when underway. The foredeck is dominated by the huge anchor locker with its double hatch covers and the mounting point for an electric windlass within, although there is plenty of space to work the anchor or mooring lines manually.

Given the type of use the Timonier will be put to, a top speed of nearly 35 knots from the 150hp is a function of the lightweight resin matrix, for those who need to keep the throttle to the stop. Under more sympathetic use, a steady cruising speed of 20 knots is achieved in the most economical rev range at 4000rpm and will use just over 7 gallons per hour, which for a boat of this size is acceptable. Keeping your speed down to 16 knots or so will save you another 15% in the fuel stakes and increase the cruising range to around 120 miles, which isn't too shabby.

As a multi-purpose craft, the Timonier 725 has most bases covered – comfortable cruising, spacious cockpit and practical seakeeping. Exactly the sort of boat many people are looking for. **PBR**



Cavernous chain locker with gull wing hatch covers.

WHAT WE THOUGHT

THUMBS UP

-  Advanced construction
-  Good vision all round
-  Spacious main berth

THUMBS DOWN

-  Restricted stowage options

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SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 7.27m
Beam: 2.73m
Draught: 0.39m
Dry weight: 1600kg
Max. power: 200hp
Fuel tank: 192 litres
Fresh water: 50 litres
Berths: 4
CE cat: C for 8 persons

PRICE

As tested: (with Suzuki DF150TX) £42,885 (inc. VAT)
Boat only: £29,352

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Unit A Essex Marina
Wallasea Island
Essex SS4 2HF
Tel: 01702 568482