

Westport Marine Pilot 6

Mike Thrussell tested The Westport Marine Pilot 6 for TSF back in the June 2008 issue. Now he tells us how well the boat has stood the test of time...

In my original review it was my opinion that this boat would become a leading contender in the popular 17ft/18ft size range. Designed by Charles Broughton, an ex-naval design architect, the Pilot 6 features a reinforced medium V hull that produces a strong and rigid structure.

The vessel also includes four separate foam-filled chambers, which give it over 1,300kg of buoyancy. Another important feature is that the main deck sits above the water line, allowing aft deck drains to be fitted to each quarter and ensuring that the deck area drains rapidly – even in bad sea conditions. These lead directly back through the transom, which means that any blockage can be instantly cleared, plus they have a non-return flap to prevent water sloshing back up onto the deck.

The bow of our test boat is fitted with a stainless-steel bow roller – the anchor locker is on the port side, with a double cleat in the middle for anchoring off, plus double cleats at each side for tying off.

A wide Houdini hatch in

the cabin roof gives access to the bow for anchoring, which proves to be a comfortable and stable position for full physical pressure to be applied to the anchor rope in total safety.

The windows are tinted green to reduce glare, and owners of the Pilot 6 have often commented that they particularly like the fact that the windows are bolted in for maximum strength.

I mentioned in my original review that the cabin top had room for a full stainless-steel gantry to take aerials, radar and so on, and that's one of the additions that many owners have subsequently added after purchase.

Also, a grab rail is fitted at the rear edges of the cabin for passenger comfort when at speed.

Buyers also tell me that one of the main selling points for them was the huge amount of open deck area to work from, meaning you have room to fish comfortably without being overly close, even with four aboard!

The deck, having a high stipple finish, also gives good grip in all weather conditions and when you've been landing lots of slimy fish,

The easy access into the cuddy, which has spacious U-shaped seating with locker storage, is also rated as excellent for a boat of this size. You have masses of locker space to take all the usual bits, plus, in the middle of the seated area, there is a hinge-up seat that some owners have utilised as their main fishing-tackle store.

The helm position is on the starboard side and faces a console supported by sturdy chrome legs. The console has a flat area on top big enough for a GPS and Fish Finder,

with the instrumentation proving easy to read from the helm seat. It's also noteworthy that the seat allows for full forward vision so that you can spot hazards, such as floating debris, when running at speed.

My test boat was fitted with two swivel chairs, which I found extremely comfortable, and subsequent owners agree that these make a huge difference in minimising fatigue over a long day, plus they allow you to stay seated and watch your rods fishing off the gunnels and stern.

I suggested in my original review that, although the gunnels are good and high, experienced boaters might choose to add 4in to 6in safety rails. This has proved the case, and I understand that Westport Marine now has safety rails available.

The transom carries a huge middle fuel-tank locker, flanked by a smaller battery/stowage locker at each side. This provides a large and useful stowage space for spare gear, lifejackets, fenders and suchlike.

None of the boat's owners

have picked up on this next point, but in my test I liked the fact that the splash well is a shallow, basin type. The designer was telling me that with deeper splash wells people, especially children, can fall in to them and consequently out of the boat, but the shallow type, as fitted to the Pilot 6, tends to reduce this risk. An important point missed by most!

Stainless-steel grab rails and double cleats for tying off are fitted to the stern corners, plus you can opt for a stainless-steel dive ladder ☺



FACT FILE

STATISTICS

Length: 5.2 metres
Beam: 2.2 metres
Weight: 550kg
Category: C
Engine Size: 50hp to 90hp

PRICE

The Pilot 6 originally retailed for £17,500 including VAT, with a Brenderup-braked roller trailer adding £1,962 including VAT. The 2010 price for the Pilot 6 with the Honda 60hp engine and trailer is £19,995 including VAT, quoted by The Boating Centre, Axminster, Devon. Tel: 01297 631314.

Second-hand prices will be very strong due to lack of supply – you might not actually be able to find a second-hand Pilot for sale!

CONTACT

For more information, and to arrange a boat test of the Pilot 6, contact Charles Broughton, Westport Marine, Gunshed 9, Crownhill Fort, Plymouth Devon PL46 5BX. Tel: 01752 772224. E-mail: sales@westportmarine.co.uk. Also visit their website www.westportmarine.co.uk.

On The Inside



The helm console is nicely arranged around the seat.



Tinted windows reduce glare and one acts as a Houdini hatch to access the anchor.



There's plenty of room in the cuddy.



The Pilot 6 boasts a deep hull.

fitted to the starboard stern corner. There's also space on the port side of the stern for an auxiliary engine bracket.

PERFORMANCE

The original test boat was fitted with a 90hp four-stroke outboard and this seems to have been the most popular package sold.

Owners quote that this package gives outstanding out-of-the-hole power and acceleration, something I remember from the test day. The boat will cruise easily at 20 knots or a little over, but top speed is said to be in excess of 32 knots. Fuel economy is also quoted as being excellent!

The general consensus is that the handling is incredible, with the boat

having tremendous grip in the water during tight turns at speed, plus it's totally stable when underway with people on deck. I'm told that barely any spray reaches back over the cabin and onto the deck, keeping your crew and gear relatively dry.

SPOT ON!

My first words in the Conclusion panel in my original review were: "The Pilot 6 just stormed into my all-time favourites!" It seems, given the feedback from owners and the fact that none seem to be available second-hand, that I got it pretty much right.

I also said she is almost the perfect design for angling and she is. The boat is also exceptionally well thought

out with a large deck area, good storage facilities, good seating and an easy access cuddy, plus a totally safe and stable hatch to work from when pulling anchor in rough seas.

She's very fast and amazingly economical, but with the medium V hull configuration she enjoys brilliant sea-keeping qualities and will bring you home in the most appalling conditions. She's also proved a highly stable platform to fish off and is what I call a 'big-fish boat' – one you can handle sharks and common skate from without her leaning over at a silly angle.

The Pilot 6 is currently one of the market leaders in her size range and fast becoming an angling classic! **TSF**

OWNER'S QUOTE

I bought my Pilot 6 both as a family boat and as a sea angling boat to be used mainly off Milford Haven, but with occasional long tows to Scotland. Before purchase I viewed and assessed many other boats in the same size category, but the Pilot 6 stood head and shoulders above the others.

She's proved highly stable, has excellent sea-keeping qualities and is a totally dry boat – even when travelling at speed through rough seas – and nor does she slam when working through waves head on.

Also important in my purchase decision was the large amount of deck space available. What's more, the overall finish is superb!

I added rails to the gunnels for increased safety, plus I'm considering having an extra fuel tank made to fit in a space in the cabin for increased travelling range, but these are the only changes.

Mr G Jones, Gwent, South Wales

OWNERS' ADDITIONS

1 Safety rails to the gunnels, particularly owners who take children aboard or who work far offshore.

2 A stainless-steel gantry to the cabin top for additional aerial height with extra 'rocket-launcher' tubes to these to keep spare rods off the deck.

3 Extra rod holders fitted to the gunnel tops.

4 Due to glare from the white deck, some owners have repainted their decks grey.



Enough room for four anglers.