

BOAT REPORT

The vagaries of an average month's British weather worked well when we got to grips with Sealine's latest. Nature arranged a Force 6 for initial trials, and a balmy calm for pictures.



SEALINE are one of our most successful boatbuilders. They have correctly identified a niche in the market, and filled it with a range that appeals strongly to today's new generation of motorboat owners. Sporting performance and looks are matched by deep-vee hulls that will enable them to keep out in seas that would send larger craft back to port.

At the same time the company has not forgotten that boating is a family affair, with far more time spent tied up than underway, and down below the boats are comfortable and practical. Sensible layouts, with standing headroom wherever possible, attract both the Smiths and the Schmidts, with the range selling extensively throughout Europe.

If the boats have competition, it is from the compact American cruisers, but the Sealine scoring point is their quality of fit-out and interior finish. Wood abounds, originally a rich red mahogany, but latterly with the option of lighter-coloured oak. Solid timber is found where others would be using plastic capping, veneered ply takes the place of laminates, and drawers are made from real tree wood, not chipboard or plastic. The labour involved costs money, but the reward is a warm welcoming interior, a solid feel in the roughest of conditions, and a loyal family of owners.

Family is a theme that Sealine foster, and working alongside chairman Tom Murrant are his wife, and more recently, his daughter. The company has expanded rapidly over the last ten years, but at 200 employees, and a turnover of £11m they think that they have reached the sensible limit, beyond which personal contact will be lost. Fortunately availability of adjoining premises has allowed them to remain in the same location, and they now have 100,000 ft² of modern buildings ready for the 1990s.

Design

The underwater sections of all the models are designed by Tom Murrant. Medium-vee hulls of the late 70s have given way to deeper vee forms, better able to take the power of modern lightweight diesel and petrol engines, and to handle rougher seas. Above the waterline, Sealine have latterly employed the services of ▶



SEALINE 328

SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS

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SEALINE 328



A door to the back of the port settee gives easy access to the fuel cut-offs, master circuit breakers and battery switches—a neat idea. The optional second fridge also finds a home behind a second door here. Far left: starboard side of the sociable lower cockpit area. Above left: the comprehensively equipped galley to port. Above: the saloon looking towards the master cabin forward and right: a closer view of the same cabin.



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stylist Roger Tucker. Responsible for several Austin/Rover car designs, Tucker has transformed the look of the range, bringing in curves where once there were flat panels, rounded edges instead of corners. The effect is distinctive and modern — so much so that earlier models, themselves striking in their time, are suddenly starting to look dated. Around the walls of the drawing office, and down in the pattern shop are coloured visuals of the finished concept of each design, both giving guidance to the craftsmen, and a sense of future to all the staff.

Accommodation

The layout of the 328 provides berths for six people in three separate cabins, plus a large split-level cockpit for entertaining. The unusual feature is the aft cabin, entered either from the saloon, or from a lifting hatch in the cockpit. The headroom and elbow-room down here are of necessity, limited, but it does provide a useful private double cabin, especially for children or occasional guests.

Starting our detail inspection in the cockpit, we find space for up to a dozen people. The aft section has an all-round settee that will take six or seven. Forward to port is an L-shaped seat that will allow four people to sit opposite the helmsman, who has a double bench.

The helm position itself is excellent, with gauges and instruments set in five panels ahead of the wheel. The first level has ready-use switches strategically placed for quick operation. Ahead of these are the autopilot, and outdrive trim switches. Ahead again are the trim gauges, engine warning lights, and fuel gauges, while the fourth level contains just the compass. The final panel, that stretches three-quarters of the width of the cockpit, has the engine gauges, log and echo-sounder ahead of the helm, with ample space to the left for radar, Decca, VHF, and even a chart-plotter, the latter items needless to say being extras. The whole layout clearly has had a lot of thought put into it.

Further touches include two chart areas, under hinged perspex lids, one to port, the other on the top of the sliding cabin door. This latter also caught our eye, firstly for its simple but effective clip to keep it open, and secondly for the solid grabrail, sited just where the passenger needs it, complemented by some effective padding all round. If you build a 30-knot-plus boat, you must expect owners to use that performance, and must allow for the fact that passengers will occasionally be thrown around.

The aft area of the cockpit has allround seating, and plenty of stowage space. Pockets in the back of the helm seat take papers and books, while under the benches are deep lockers that will take covers, a deflated dinghy, and even its outboard. The only snag here is that the boat's batteries are located under the



Sealine Sovereign 328

Engines: Twin Volvo AQAD41A diesels, 200hp at 3800rpm, 3600cc, 6 cyl.

Conditions: Wind 3/4, sea slight. **Load:** Fuel 50%, water 75%, crew 6.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range	trim	Sound levels (dB(A))		
							saloon	helm	aft ckpt
1000	5.9	0.9	4.1	6.56	918	1.0	66	69	64
1500	7.4	1.7	7.7	4.35	609	2.0	67	75	69
2000	9.3	3.6	16.4	2.58	361	4.0	71	78	75
2500	14.0	6.4	29.1	2.19	306	5.5	73	82	77
3000	21.7	10.2	46.4	2.13	298	3.5	75	82	76
3500	27.4	14.3	65.0	1.92	267	3.0	76	83	76
3800	32.1	19.0	86.4	1.69	237	2.5	76	84	77

LOA 34ft 0in (10.36m)

Hull length 31ft 9in (9.68m)

LWL 25ft 7in (7.80m)

Beam 11ft 6in (3.53m)

Draft 3ft 0in (0.90m)

Displacement 5.5 tons

Fuel 2x70gal (630lt)

Water 50gal (230lt)

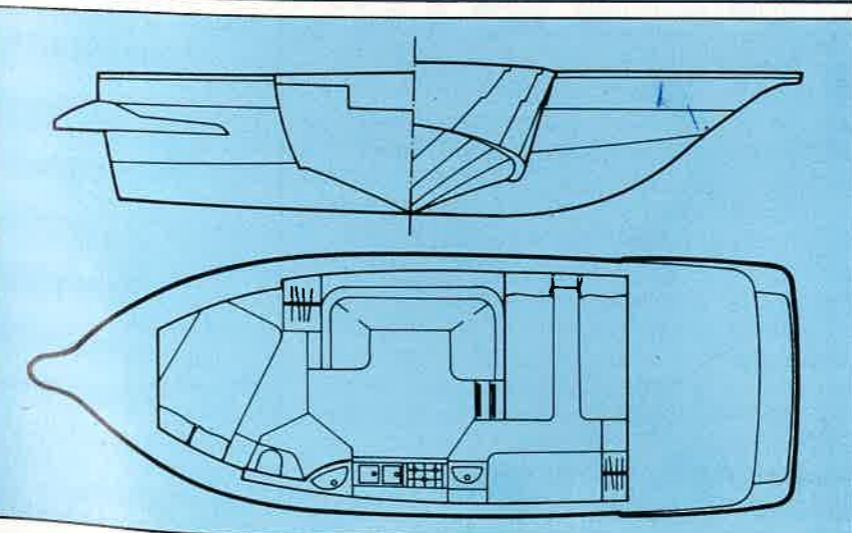
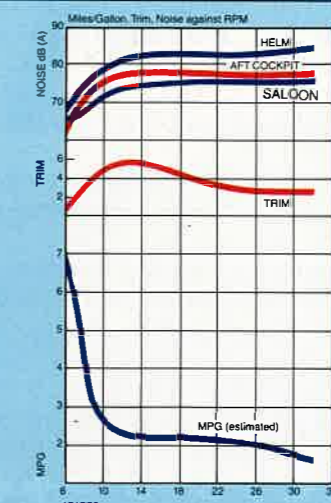
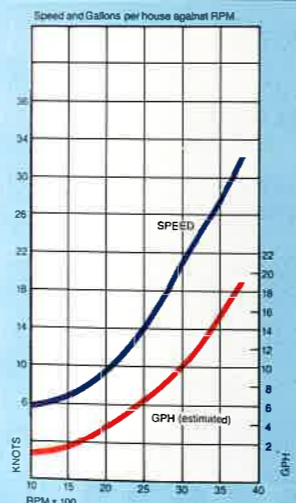
Price ex VAT with twin Volvo AQAD 41s £67,760

Builder:

Sealine International Ltd,
Whitehouse Road
Kidderminster
Worcs. DY10 1HT
Tel: 0562 740900

Supplier:

Quay Marine
Hamble River Boatyard
Swanwick,
Southampton SO3 7EB
Tel: 0489 885115.



SEALINE 328

bottom of the starboard locker, and are going to receive scant attention once the space above fills up. A neat idea is the hinged door in the back of the port settee that opens up to reveal fuel cut-offs, master circuit breakers, and the battery switches. A second matching door gives access to the optional second fridge.

A walk-through door lets you out onto the integral bathing platform, a substantial structure, that also has four large fender stowages. A two-piece hinged hatch in the cockpit sole gives access to the engines. On our test boat, which was number one off the production line, these proved awkward to lift and keep open. We are told that gas struts have now resolved this problem. Details of the engines and engine room can be found later in this report.

Stepping through the sliding door from the cockpit into the saloon, you immediately gain an impression of space. This is achieved partly by the generous beam of the boat, and partly by the light-coloured materials and joinery. The overhead is pitched, giving a good 6ft headroom in the centre of the saloon, a couple of inches less forward and aft. On your right hand is a U-shaped settee, while to the left is the galley. The settee faces a medium-sized table, and would take five people at a pinch. Dropping the table provides the infill for a double berth. Under the seats are lockers, and we were pleased to see that the base of the cushions formed the locker lids, making access a one-handed operation. Separate cushions and lids always add an unnecessary complication, something that a builder only discovers if he spends time on his own boats.

Further stowage is found in the deep locker under the cabin sole, and a variety of small lockers all around the saloon. We felt that some of these looked a little like an afterthought, giving a fussy and cluttered finish to the boat. The resulting bits and pieces effect did nothing to help the joinery, which in places was not up to the usual Sealine standard. Hopefully this is a result of it being the first boat, finished in a hurry for this year's London Boat Show.

The galley to port has a double sink, two-burner gas hob, oven and grill, fridge, and plenty of storage space. The worktop is big enough for food preparation, while purpose-built lockers and drawers take cutlery and crockery. Bottles live in a stowage ahead of the settee.

Forward of the galley is the boat's only toilet compartment. This has two doors and can be entered from the saloon or forward cabin. While it is comparatively small, the space has been well utilised, with adequate elbow room, and good stowage. There is, however, no vent here, a bad omission on a small boat.

The master cabin is sited forward. In here you find a good-sized double berth, set almost

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◀ athwartships. Alongside is a small dressing table, while further stowage is found in five drawers, a three-quarter height hanging locker, cave lockers outboard, and a large locker under the berth. Headroom is 6ft at the aft end, while overhead an escape hatch provides ventilation and light.

At the opposite end of the saloon, a door to port gives access to the aft cabin. Headroom comes courtesy of the plinths on which the cockpit seats above are mounted, and this makes for a very restricted area. Two single berths are served by two drawers, a hanging locker, and lockers underneath. Light comes from an opening port to starboard, while as we have said, a lifting hatch allows the occupants direct access to the cockpit. Definitely an occasional cabin this, but nonetheless valuable on a medium-sized boat.

Exterior

Stepping out of the cockpit is aided by a strategically-placed grabrail on the glassfibre goalpost mast. From there forward, substantial solid guardrails keep you safely in place, with a two-thirds height lower wire for extra security. The side-decks have a reasonably effective non-slip, which is continued over the coachroof. The anchor stowage is a notable feature of the boat, being flush under the stem platform, with a hinged cover allowing access for inspection. An electric winch provides the muscle, while a large foredeck locker takes the chain, plus lines and spare fenders. 12in (300mm) stainless steel bollards forward, midships and aft amply take care of mooring. While looking at the outside of the boat, we were impressed by the substantial cockpit drains, standard on all the Sealine range, and essential on boats that are intended to be driven hard offshore.

Engines

Power on the 328 comes from twin Volvos, driving Duo Prop outdrives. These give a claimed 32-37 knots depending on models. Our test boat had 200hp AQAD 41A diesels. Alternatively 231 or 271 petrols are available.

The units are mounted under the cockpit, with access through the double-hinged hatch we have mentioned before. All the routine service points are easily reached, though as you step into the front of the compartment you get very close to the drive belts, and cannot avoid standing on the engine starter cables. The twin aluminium fuel tanks are mounted forward of the engineroom bulkhead, and supply through copper pipes to large filter/separators, easily accessible for checking or draining. A changeover valve between the filters allows both engines to draw fuel from either tank, though the return system below was less clear in its operation.

Sound insulation is fitted to all the bulkheads, though surprisingly on this boat,

not to the undersides of the hatches. Also the hatches were not a good fit, allowing some noise to escape, but despite this, sound levels were good underway.

An automatic electric bilge pump is located at the aft end of the compartment, and we were pleased to also see a large manual pump as standard, with its access from inside the cockpit. A second electric pump is mounted under the saloon.

Fire extinguishers include two automatics over the engines, and a manual in the galley.

Handling and performance

Top speed during our tests, with 50% fuel, 75% water, and six crew aboard was 32 knots, and as we have said, we were impressed with the lack of noise at these speeds. The days when diesels were characterised by their noise and vibration have gone, and we recorded a maximum of 84dB(A) at the helm, and only 79 in the aft cabin. Dropping down to 25 knots made only a marginal difference, with figures of 83 and 76 respectively.

Our usual fuel consumption estimates with these engines show that at maximum speed you should be drawing a total of 19.0gph, giving 1.69mpg, and a range of 237 miles. Dropping to 27 knots gives 14.0gph, 1.92mpg, and 267 miles, while down at 22 knots you should see 10.5, 2.13 and 300 respectively.

Acceleration was nothing startling, at 14.1 seconds from 0-20 knots, and these figures confirmed your feelings — the boat certainly is not particularly quick onto the plane, and this was with only an average load aboard. However once up and running, it responds well to the throttle.

The day of our main test was regrettably calm, and gave no indication of the boat's heavy weather capabilities, but an earlier photo shoot, a picture from which we include, proved a much sterner trial which the 328 came through admirably.

Conclusion

The Sovereign is a worthy addition to the Sealine range. It fills the gap between the 285 and the 365, and will please a lot of owners wanting to trade up in size. The accommodation is ample for four people, with the extra two berths there for guests or children. The cockpit is huge, allowing two separate parties to be going on at the same time. The performance is more than adequate for a diesel boat, while the hull should allow you to use this to the full, whatever the weather. Practical features are there in plenty, and this would be a comfortable boat to live on for extended periods, while the styling ensures that you will turn plenty of heads in any marina. ■