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FRENCH TEMPTATION

Article published in "Båtmagasinet" nr. 11/2007 (Norwegian text)



The harbour boat Håja of Hammerfest is the first of its kind in Norway — an ORC 140 MP. She is an exotic French temptation which the Port Authority fell for as they were about to renew the fleet — and which the Harbour Master and colleagues just as well drove home from the yard in Lorient, France to Hammerfest in February...

24-01-2008

In the center of Hammerfest, right at the inside of the breakwater, a raw tough boat catches the attention. Hull dark blue with orange superstructure, it reminds one of any old British rescue boat from RNLI, but the rest is unlike anything we have seen before. The bows are in fact jagged like a coarse saw blade and act like a "shock absorber" when the semi planing boats must fight their way through the brutal head seas along the French Atlantic coast at around 30 knots. A boat with such qualities would be very suitable along the coast of Finnmark as well, thought Harbour Master Roll Stiansen, who saw the boat for the first time at the Seawork International Work Boat Exhibition in Southampton two years ago.

Patented Bows

The French Design Office Pantocarene Naval Architects has a patent on the hull design which has been given the name "BEAK". The relatively round bottomed, semi planing hull has a lot in common with more traditional boats built for fast speed in heavy seas, like "Nelson". With a weight of as much as 20 tons divided between 14,99 meters, and with a total of 1000 hp from two Volvo Penta D9 500 with V-drive, the yard could not evade the old fundamental rule that in order to obtain comfort in tough surroundings, heavy weight and raw engine power are unbeatable. The big difference are the "BEAK"- bows.

-The bows act as a hydro dynamic shock absorber in head seas, says Roll Stiansen, who is unable to hide a certain pride over the new combi boat of the arctic town. The sophisticated vessel is self-righting and divided into four water-tight sections.

- At first sight it looks like if the boat has been put together by two hulls of different lengths. The idea is that the "bottom hull" which is extremely sharp, provides some positive buoyancy as it meets the seawater, then negative buoyancy is provided as the seawater meets the "upper hull", and finally the "upper hull" itself again helps lifting the boat out of the water, Roll Stiansen explains. He himself took part in projecting the new boat in collaboration with the constructor and the Bernard Shipyard, that builds the so-called ORC-boats from 12 to 22

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2012-02-05: Mesteren Marianne

2012-02-05: Huttetu, så kaldt

meters length.

On Its Own Keel

With the tremendous Snøhvit development on Melkøya literally spoken in the background, we climb on board the Håja, named after the characteristic islet west of Hammerfest.

True enough, subsequently there are solutions that need adjustments, and the noise level is still too high, but when it comes to sea qualities, the Håja belongs in the elite division. The Harbour Master and colleagues got to test out just that when they collected the boat in Lorient in February this year.

-We received an offer of transportation from Lorient to Le Havre for 40.000 Euro, which did not make the choice very difficult, Stiansen says, who, together with some colleagues, packed up the sea bag and went to France to drive the boat home on its own keel.

The very first day we had to seek harbour of refuge in Brest. That day everything came falling down. Masts and antennas were dangling, nothing had been properly secured. However, from the first moment on we were impressed by the sea qualities, says Stiansen, who refreshed old knowledge and took the boat to Hammerfest in ten days. With "Hammerfest Port Authority" written on the side, they attracted attention wherever they came, and the Harbour Master has to admit that the atmosphere became somewhat hectic as they approached the heavily trafficked waters outside Rotterdam.

-It has been a few years since I was at sea, Stiansen says with a twinkle in his eyes. The former Sea Captain has an extensive sea duty behind him, including service on supply ships in the Barents Sea.

With Authority

Even with its 6.000 ships' calls per year, the waters around Hammerfest appear drowsy compared with Rotterdam. Today, Pilot Per Inge Sivertsen is to bring the supply ship "Thor Supplier" alongside, and we set course on the inside of the Melkøya to bring the pilot on board. From his seat aft in the wheelhouse, he gazes at the sea with its white crested waves. Oh yes, there is a gail warning forecast today. The weather changes fascinatingly fast in Finnmark. And now the wind force increases while the Pilot Boat Captain brings the Håja up to 25 knots. She lifts in the water but has no planing threshold. Just cuts her way through the waves with authority. Enormous trim-flaps keeps the bows down in head seas which we keep bursting through without slamming one single time. The yard promises too, that the boat will be able to run at more than 20 knots in waves up to 4 - 5 meters.

Similar boats are in use at the major French Pilot Stations in Le Havre, St. Nazaire, Bordeaux, and Dunkerque. The French Marine Rescue Services SNSM (Societe nationale de souvetage en mer) has 25 boats with "BEAK" - hulls and the Pilot Boat in Noumea in New Caledonia is a ORC 150.

No wonder that the Harbour Master got feelings for the French.