

Condition Report:
Pearson 323

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**Modern arrangements and design innovations
for a boat traditional in outward appearance**

A review of the prototype Pearson 323 from Motor Boating & Sailing December 1976

Note to reader: This is a re-published copy of the original low resolution document. The text is accurate but some of the table data is "best estimate" and may not reflect the authors original content – we will update as more research is completed. *Webmaster Pearson323.com*

I had heard that the Pearson 323 was a new design, but I didn't realize how much the design was a departure from the traditional Pearson line until I stepped aboard the prototype at Hawkins & Fales, Bristol, R.I. Pearson Yachts has, in essence, built a traditional boat in outward appearance, but completely redesigned and modernized the arrangements, starting in the cockpit and continuing belowdecks.

My first look through the cockpit pointed up some of these redesigned features. The 323's seats are rounded and pitched, which makes them very comfortable. A dashboard-type instrument panel along the forward part of the cockpit well is angled for easy viewing by the helmsman and has space for the normally required instruments. This model had a know meter and wind-speed, wind-point, and engine gauges.

Other interesting aspects of the cockpit area are the drains for the winch wells and two propane bottle storage compartments under the cockpit seats, with drains directly overboard. There is room in the aft end of the cockpit suitable for lashing down a four-to-six man life raft. Two large port and starboard sail bins are open to the bilge but closed off by perforated board; the sail bins come with lock hasps. All cockpit sea hatches are fitted with good-size lips to keep water out of the lockers.

Walking around the deck, I noticed some other features: standard bow pulpit with anchor roller chock, double life lines in lieu of the standard single line, and stanchions through-bolted and backed by fiberglass plates. The bow-anchor well is large enough to hold a 20 lb Danforth anchor though this boat had two smaller anchors stowed in the well. The well has a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch drain and two anchor tie-down padeyes. A groove is molded in the hatch cover front for the anchor line. The 70-gallon water capacity is divided between three tanks with the fills on deck.

The cabin top has two Dorade vents. The one to starboard is standard; the optional one can be added at any time. The unusual thing about this installation is that the Dorade splits the main cabin bulkhead, with the vent divided between the head and main cabin. Two aluminum, black-frame Bomar 19x19 hatches are standard, one forward cabin, one main cabin.

Teak hand rails run down both sides of the trunk cabin. Teak cap rails follow along both sides above the toerails with beautiful scarfs where the pieces are joined. The toerails underneath start at about four inches forward and run out aft by the cockpit.

Four fixed tinted deadlights are in the main cabin-house side, a plus for safety. Even the companionway hatch is flush with the cabin top. An optional sea hood can be added at any time.

The 323 has a standard type rig – one set of spreader with one upper and two lower shrouds. The mast and boom are black anodized aluminum. The mast is stepped through the deck and the masthead comes with a standard spinnaker

crane (handy for a spare halyard) even if you don't order the spinnaker gear option package. The boom is capped on both ends. Gooseneck permanent, jiffy-reefing standard. The double-barrel turnbuckles, in-line stainless steel chain plates and through-bolted tangs are all good size.

Under Way

We took the 323 out into a choppy bay with winds gusting over 25 mph carrying a full main and No. 3 jib. The boat handled well under these conditions and the rig was strong, but we were interested in obtaining test data under more stable conditions, so we double-reefed the main. After shortening sail, the 323 sailed well, taking each gust and laying over without putting the rail under. Later in the day the wind lightened for a period and we put up the full main. The gusts that returned still did not bother the boat to any great degree.

The boat steered well and wheel effort was easy. The 323 responds to puffs and wants to head up like she should. A little opposite wheel keeps the boat going straight. Visibility ahead was good. The helmsman can get around the wheel to trim the main sheet in the forward end of the cockpit: there's 6.5 inches from the wheel to the cockpit edge. Sid decks are not as wide as some displacement boats, and to go forward one must step around the inboard shrouds on the nonskid cabin top. The boat tacked quickly and sailed along easily when the wind slackened. All in all I enjoyed sailing this boat.

Under power the boat ran smoothly with no noticeable engine vibration. Stopping was good: she turned either way in less than a length. When backing under wind conditions, I was able to change directions while going in reverse. The boat handled well at the dock under windy conditions. I thought the noise level for a diesel installation in a small boat was low.

The engine controls are mounted high on the steering-wheel pedestal. The 28-inch wheel has the new radial steering, 1.75 turns hard over to hard over. Standard is a five-inch compass and pedestal guard. The main-sheet traveler is recessed into the cockpit seat top, so only the block and the sheet are above the seat level, a good design. The 30-gallon fuel tank is under the cockpit, with the fill cap in the well. Emergency tiller is standard, with the access plate to the rudder post behind the pedestal.

A design feature (whether planned or not) which I noticed is that the slight cutout at the aft end of the cockpit is at the same level or a little lower than the companionway lip. Should the boat be pooped and the cockpit fill up, the water would run out before it reaches the companionway, which is above the seats.

Belowdecks I was pleasantly surprised by design innovations. The deck beautifully combines teak and fiberglass, and a modern look is achieved with the addition of black anodized aluminum round grab rails and a table support pole. A lot of fiberglass and minimal amount of teak were used in the galley (port side aft). This, coupled with a metal companionway step construction, opens up the aft area, which can often seem closed in.

A note about the companionway ladder: Made of stainless steel with teak treads, the lower end bends back into bulkhead slots to give foot room under the ladder. I found the ladder steep to descend and a little shaky – but well anchored. Considering the sole area and open space gained by not installing steps with solid teak side pieces, one can overlook the steep ladder. The companionway is offset to starboard to provide a larger galley.

The Galley

In my opinion, the 323's galley is well arranged and roomy. The sole area is good-sized, 50x24 inches. The single sink is deep, 12x14x10 inches, and the icebox measures 24x24x24 inches with a shelf. A three-burner alcohol stove with oven is standard. There is a seat, under-counter silverware compartment, build-in disk racks and stowage for pots under the stove. Counter space measures 17x14, 22x29, and 24x21 inches, with a removable counter over the stove. A clever deck-mold recess faced with smoked plexiglass keeps long kitchen utensils handy.

Opposite the galley is the navigation area, with a 30x23 inch hinged chart table with flat-chart stowage underneath. The bench seat is built-in and also has stowage room. Nice standard touches are racks for instruments, a teak pencil holder and chart lights.

A 12-volt electrical panel is located behind the navigation area, with a two-battery selector switch below and the engine ignition switch nearby. There is an automatic fuel-tank shutoff and a manual one just inside the engine-space door, next to the nav area. Engine access is either through this door or by removing the perforated board in the cockpit sail bins.

Main Cabin

Both ends of the main cabin have teak bulkheads, the cabin sole is teak with holly. The overhead has a partial vinyl headliner to break up the normal continuity of the fiberglass inner liner. The sides of the cabin are fiberglass, teak access

panels to the sheer are standard. The teak ceiling battens on the hull side are optional. Two fiberglass molded boxes cover the chainplates which can be removed by undoing a few screws. On this boat the speakers for the stereo system were installed on the face, thus hiding the actual purpose of the boxes. Headroom in the main cabin is 6' 2.5", sole area is 76x34 inches.

The main cabin has a dinette to starboard. The dining table is fiberglass and has no fiddles, definitely designed for dockside use only, but it revolves and raises or lowers to any position on the pole. In the lower portion, the dinette makes into a large berth, utilizing the four-inch thick seat back cushions on the port side settee opposite the dinette. The port side settee slides out to make a berth. Shelves are above the dinette and settee; stowage and water tanks are under berths. The dinette's sole area is 22x39 inches.

The Head

Forward of the main cabin is the head, which runs across the entire boat. To walk forward you cross the shower pan with its teak grating. A good-sized hanging locker is to port. To starboard is room for any of the five toilet-system packages offered as factory-installed options. The boat I inspected had the Lectra San unit installed under the forward V-berth, taking up only a small part of the compartment. A fold-down vanity unit and sink area behind the head. A stowage locker is provided in this area: shelves have 1.5 inch fiddles.

The Forward Cabin

A sliding door leads to the forward cabin. The V-berths are large: 18 inches across the front, 76 inches front to back and 74 total width aft. The V-berth insert standard, can be placed in a lower position to be used as a seat. Teak ceiling battens are optional. Shelves are outboard of the berths two-inch fiddles. Other stowage consists of three drawers with a locker below on the port side and a cubby compartment on starboard. The forward cabin's headroom is 6' 1", as it is in the head. Sole are measures four inches forward, 37 aft and 43 in length.

The 323 has a lot of new design features. Dead space is wisely utilized: for example the recesses in the cabin with plexiglass facing. Besides the standard safety items and some special latches for extra seaworthiness, there is a good choice of factory installed options available.

Standard Equipment (partial list)

- Atomic 4 Gasoline Engine
- Stainless Steel anchor-roller LOA sprit
- Recessed mainsheet traveler
- Pedestal steering with Guard and 5" compass
- Cove stripe
- Chart table and light
- Automatic fuel shut-off valve
- Jiffy reefing
- Teak toe-rail caps
- 3-burner alcohol stove with oven

Table Data:

Cockpit Drain Time & Specs		
Cockpit well volume	24.63 cu ft	1,576.32 lb
Volume seats to coaming	10.68 cu ft	683.52 lb
Total cockpit volume	35.31 cu ft	3259.84
Drain time (test)	8 cu ft	0 min 51 sec
Drain time well*	24.63 cu ft	2 min 37 sec
Drain time total*	35.31 cu ft	3 min 45 sec
*Projected time based on test rate		

Design Relationships			
	Pearson 323	Pearson Triton	S&S Half Tonner
Bal/Displ	0.35	0.36	0.44
Deck Beam/LOA	0.32	0.29	0.32
LWL/LOA	0.85	0.72	0.75
Draft/LWL	0.16	0.19	0.16
\sqrt{SA}/\sqrt{Displ}	0.94	0.94	1.04
Displ/SA	26.78	23.2	17.75
Displ/Hp	426.66	280	
Base S/lb	82.64		
Displ/LWL Ratio	271.43	436.04	236.63

Pearson 323 General Specifications	
LOA	32' 3"
LWL	27' 6"
Beam	10' 2.25"
Draft	4' 5"
Ballast	4,500 lb
Displacement	12,800 lb
SA	478 Sq Ft
Fuel Capacity	30 gal
Water Capacity	70 gal
Freeboard	
Forward	4' 2"
Amidships	3' 5.5"
Aft	3' 3"

Sail Plan and Rigging Specifications	
Main	194 Sq Ft
Jib	284 Sq Ft
Total	478 Sq Ft
I	41'
J	13.83'
E	10.75'
Headstay	9 32
Backstay	9 32
Upper Shrouds	9 32
Lower Shrouds	
Main Halyard	3 16"
Jib Halyard	3 16"
Winches (standard)	
Primary (2)	Lewmar 40
Jib Halyard	Lewmar 8
Main Halyard	Lewmar 8

Propulsion Data	
Engine (standard)	Atomic Four V-Drive
Hp	30
Reduction Gear	02:01:00 AM
Prop	3 blade 15x8