



Moody 31



Can this responsive and predictable 1980s cruiser still hold her own in today's second-hand market?

Geoff Hales climbs aboard to find out

This Bill Dixon design was launched in 1983 at the Southampton Boat Show. A dependable style and classic Moody image immediately gave her the air of a sensible cruising boat – a logical follow-on from the previous, smaller Moodys and typical of the more recent generation.

The 31 came with fin or, less frequently, bilge keels and a sideways-facing chart table. Wheel steering was also an option. The boat's well thought out and spacious accommodation quickly found favour with buyers, and the 31 became one of the best-selling boats of its size in the 1980s.

A Mk2 model was introduced at the Southampton show three years later and offered a slightly scooped transom for easier boarding, different style lines and a forward-facing chart table.

A light displacement for her 31 feet, aided by the fin keel option on our test boat, makes this Moody responsive and reasonably nifty under sail. She's also easily worked from clear decks. A 28hp Volvo-Penta 2003 diesel was fitted as standard and provides more than enough power.

GRP mouldings, plywood bulkheads, teak trim and the teak/holly-faced sole are also typical Moody features. Because the boat was built to a price, lockers have uncoated plywood

inside, and flowcoat resin is applied to bilges and only to the easily accessible parts of the inside of the hull skin.

Construction ceased in June 1991, and it's believed that few boats were built during the last year. In 1984, a new Moody 31 would set you back £23,500 (inc VAT), in 1986, the new boat price was £28,500, and later than that about £39,000. Early models are now advertised in the region of £32,000, 1986 boats from £37,000 to £39,000 and the later boats will cost around £42,000 to £45,000. Prices will reflect any extras and modifications made by the owners, but these boats have still not depreciated, which is a sure testament to the popularity of this design.

Note that the 31 should not be confused with the 531 which started building in 1994 and has a completely different hull.

Our test boat *Orsova Too* was delivered to John and Marian Hughes in March 1989. They chose a fin keel boat with a tiller, and added a Profurl furling headsail, refrigerator, hot water system and stripper on the propshaft as optional extras. The boat gives them a feeling of comfort and security, and they see no reason to move on from their choice of 10 years ago. They keep the boat at Hayling Island Sailing Club and use her for unstressed cruising in the Channel and Solent.

Specifications

LOA	9.37m	30ft 9in
LWL	7.75m	25ft 5in
Beam	3.2m	10ft 5in
Draught (fin keel)	1.52m	5ft
(bilge keel)	1.12m	3ft 8in
Water	136.3lt	30gal
Fuel	90.9lt	20gal
Sail area	58.8m ²	506ft ²
Engine	28hp Volvo-Penta 2003 diesel	
Berths	6	

Designed by Bill Dixon

Built by Marine Projects, Plymouth

Marketed by Moody Marketing and Development, Swarwick Marina, Swarwick, Southampton SO31 1ZL
☎ 01489 885000 Fax 01489 885509

Price guide From £32,000 (early model) to £45,000 (1990 boat)

Owners' association ☎ 01483 273786



Anatomy of a cruising



There's plenty of stowage around the forward-facing chart table



The galley has good stowage and adequate worktop space



Aft cabin berth is large, but under the cockpit headroom is limited

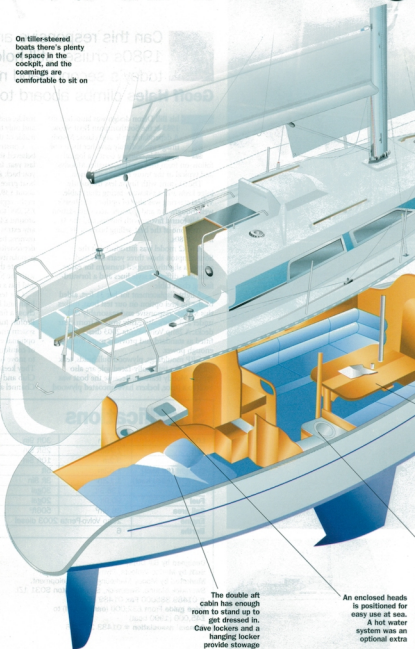


An inflat cushion converts the V-berth in the forecabin to a double



The heads compartment is easy to keep clean and has a large basin

On tiller-steered boats there's plenty of space in the cockpit, and the coamings are comfortable to sit on



The double aft cabin has enough room to stand up to get dressed in. Cave lockers and a hanging locker provide stowage

An enclosed heads is positioned for easy use at sea. A hot water system was an optional extra

yacht

Accommodation and interior



The Moody's layout below is conventional and sensible: a navigation station to port, with the heads abaft the nav seat and the galley to starboard next to the aft cabin. The spacious saloon has two good sea berths and there are two more berths in the forecabin, which has reasonable stowage and space to stand up abaft the berth.

Everything is within easy, safe reach and is laid out efficiently for use at sea. The Moody has plenty of grabrails around the saloon and hatch access, although the steps are slightly deceptive when you are descending them, because of a change in the riser heights.

The navigator has plenty of space for instruments and book storage. The chart table will take much more than a half-size chart, and has room to stow lots of them.

The galley opposite has a single sink, with the plate-drying area well separated from the opening to the cold box. The cooker is a Plastimo Atlantic with two burners, grill and oven. It's mounted inboard of the traditional sliding-fronted lockers for crockery. The crash bar in front of the cooker and the sliding cover over it are sensible features.

The saloon has a single berth each side of a folding table, which is slightly offset to starboard for better access forward. The table has glass and bottle storage. With lee cloths fitted the two berths make good sea berths. There are cave lockers outboard each side in the

saloon and in the aft and fore cabins, the latter being a conventional, convertible double/twin vee berth.

The aft cabin has a hanging locker at its forward end and cave lockers along its outboard side. The double berth is a good size (71in long and 63in wide) although the section under the cockpit has a height of only 16in. There is no escape hatch in this cabin, although two small opening hatches into the cockpit provide ventilation.

The furnishings throughout *Orsvoa Too* are in very good condition with comfortably thick settees and well-padded backrests. The overhead linings show no signs of deterioration or coming unstuck. There is ample natural light, and an optional overhead saloon hatch, together with the opening forecabin hatch, provides good ventilation.

The heads compartment has easy-clean moulded surfaces, a small hanging locker for oilskin storage and a Par Brydon hand-pumped sea toilet. The wash basin is a good size, there is ample locker space, and an overhead ventilator is provided.

Orsvoa Too has proved to be a very dry boat when stored ashore in the winter. Instead of an electrical de-humidifier John finds that a pot of de-humidifying granules is all that's needed to keep damp at bay in the interior, which seems remarkable to us.

Engine access

Access to the aft end of the engine, including the stern gland greaser, is good via a sloping panel in the aft cabin, but we found it difficult to replace the dipstick, even with guidance from someone at the other access located at the foot of the companionway.

Unusually, instead of having easily-removed clips for the forward panel of the engine box as standard, pan-headed bolts and big washers are fitted. The water pump impeller, alternator belt, lift pump and fuel and oil filters can all be accessed from here.

Construction and design

The 31 is a solidly constructed boat. Hamble-based Sailing Opportunities, who uses Moody 31s for tuition and chartering, expects its boats to stand up to sailing approximately 30 miles a day for 150 days a year. It's a stern test which the company says the boats have come through well.

Neilson (formerly Sunworld Sailing), who uses Moody's for flotilla and charter holidays, has 17 Moody 31s, bought between 1987 and 1991. The boats have proved so reliable that the company bought 12 S31s when they first started building and has now ordered six more.

Neilson has found no particular weaknesses in the build and design of the 31, and the only changes made have been bolt-ons, such as anchor windlasses, self-tailing winches, a holding tank and electric bilge pumps. The company is happy with the construction standards, the rig and no-nonsense strength of the boats.

But, like any design, the Moody has a few quirks. One of these is the positioning of the air breather for the water tank – right back in the cockpit, when the tank itself is situated under the starboard saloon berth. Also, the seacocks for the heads are under the port settee berth, connected by a long length of hose which could become choked and seriously restricted.

Another problem is that the diesel tank breather is situated above the engine instruments and starter controls – not the sort of place you'd want diesel splashes. The starter controls themselves are perhaps better placed and more visible than in many boats, but it would still be easy for someone to obscure the dials or muffle an alarm. In addition, John feels that the provision of a key control somewhere for the engine would improve security.

These are, in the main, small details and do not detract from the 31's overall appeal.

Unusually for a 31-footer, the Moody's forecabin has standing space at the head of the berth

There's a large saloon with space for six people to sit around the table in comfort

The Moody 31's galley is configured to be easy to use at sea

How does she perform



Above and right: The 31 can easily be sailed by a small crew



Below: The foredeck boasts a large anchor locker with space for plenty of chain



Above: All the main service points on the 28hp Volvo Penta 2003 diesel engine are within reasonably easy reach

Left: This easily-stowed cockpit table is a useful addition to Orsova Too's inventory

Key points to check out before buying a Moody 31

Small craft surveyor **Martin Evans** discusses some common problems

Unless there's clear evidence of movement or leakage, don't be alarmed at first sight of the commonly-found rust staining at the keel's landing seam and on keelstud nuts and washers within the bilge – they don't necessarily indicate a structural defect. Your surveyor will take a close look at the hull at the aft end of the keel stub where any stress cracks or fractured floors could result from a grounding at speed.

The cleverly-designed heel fitting on the half-skeg assists with bearing replacement and rudder removal, but should be checked for casting defects and to ensure that it has not loosened on the skeg. Shroud chainplate attachment seems robust, although it's hard to assess fully without some destructive dismantling. On the other hand the poorly-supported babystay fitting on the forward part of the coachroof may show some

localised stress cracking of the deck moulding, and it's not uncommon to find appreciable depression on the moulded plinth under the mast step.

Looking at *Orsova Too*, it's hard to believe that she is 10 years old. There are no signs of gel coat crazing or joinery or fabric wear. She retains the original Lucas sails which show little sign of wear apart from a slightly baggy leech on the genoa.

at sea?



Below: On 31s post 1988, some lines were led aft on the coachroof. Without John's choice of full non-slip on deck, there would be limited safe-walking areas

Below right: Typical of Moody designs, there are an abundance of solid grabrails. These ones on the companionway are especially reassuring



On deck and under way

Orsova Too performed creditably in the light breeze we experienced. The sails are the original Lucas suit, although John gave up the original mainsail reefing system for single-line reefing which he finds very satisfactory.

In common with other 31s built later than 1988, some lines are led aft on the coachroof, and a Lewmar 6 or 7 winch was fitted on the starboard side to handle the main halyard and reefing lines. Occasionally, a second winch was fitted on the port side, though the only ropes usually led aft there were the main topping lift and the spinnaker pole topping lift.

The cockpit seats six comfortably. John and Marian chose the tiller-steered boat partly because the tiller will fold right up out of the way when in harbour.

In just 10 knots of apparent wind, we close reached at an indicated 3.5 knots and got up to 4.7 in 12 knots of apparent. In this light breeze, she tacked through a little over 90 degrees. With full genoa and main, she hove to with the wind just forward of the beam and made about 1/2 knot; and then gybed out without a fuss. Under the mainsail only, she tacked perfectly well, bearing away only a small amount before picking up way after a tack. Not surprisingly, she sailed better on the genoa alone, getting 2.8 knots close reaching in the same breeze.

Jim and Pat McCarthy (who we met on the Achilles 24 test last month) moved on from an Achilles 9m to a bilge keel Moody 31, and said that while she was inevitably a less weathery boat than the Achilles 9m they found her a comfortable boat at sea with very little pounding between the bilge keels – a tribute to Bill Dixon's design.

The spars are single spreader Kemp, supported by babystay and aft lowers, and working the rig is simple. John has chosen full non-slip on deck, and without this there would only be limited patches of safe walking areas. The coachroof handrails stop abreast of the mast and start again for a short span forward – this looks like an unnecessary complication in the building process for no evident gain.

There's a good size cockpit locker on the port side, and from here it's easy to see the hull to deck joint – the deck being bolted and glued on to an internal flange from the hull – which

remains in good condition. The gas locker is aft on the starboard side, and there is space for a liferaft at the very aft end of the cockpit. Primary (genoa sheet) winches are Lewmar 30s.

Under power

The rudder is hung on a short skeg and has a small balancing area. As a result, the boat handles positively, quickly picking up steering way in the chosen direction astern and turning in either direction in less than two boat lengths. A choice of props – two-blade, three-blade and folding – was offered.



SAILING TODAY

Verdict

We weren't surprised to find the Moody 31 both predictable and dependable during our test sails. According to several owners we spoke to, she doesn't have any obvious vices, and resale prices indicate that she remains a popular choice for a second-hand buy.

FOR

Excellent resale price
Secure-feeling cockpit
Practical layout below

AGAINST

No escape hatch from aft cabin
Restricted space in aft cabin below cockpit
Limited non-slip areas on standard boats

Charter a 31

■ Sailing Opportunities run chartering and tuition courses exclusively in Moody yachts, including 31s
☎ 01489 885345 Fax 01489 885845
■ Neilson brochures ☎ 01273 626283

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