

# **BOATING**

NEW ZEALAND

review

Herley  
Commander

WORDS BY  
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PHOTOGRAPHY  
SUPPLIED

# VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

It's always a buzz to step aboard a new boat, in this case the first offering from a newcomer to the industry. It's especially exciting when the boat is as distinctly different as the Herley Commander.







ther than its hull material, the Herley Commander shares very little with other aluminium trailer boats. Its looks are like no other Kiwi-built 7m trailer boat, which has the potential to polarise potential customers, but its unusual design translates into a smooth, unruffled ride, lots of internal volume and sure-footed handling.

The culmination of a fruitful collaboration between Nick Herd, a timber and composites boatbuilder, and ex-Navy commercial boat operator Sean Kelly, the Herley Commander is a large-volume, planing trailer boat with a long waterline. Its lines reference traditional and workboat styles: plumb bow, lashings of timber trim, pronounced tumblehome aft and raked windscreens for the wheelhouse.

## TOTALLY DIFFERENT

Recognising they are competing in a crowded marketplace, Herd and Kelly wanted the Commander to be totally different. They had three goals for her: she had to be an excellent sea boat; the styling should be traditional and the boat had to be attractive to wives and partners.

Presented on a Hoskings tandem-axle trailer, the rig comes in at around 2.5 tonnes on the road and with a beam of 2.5m, there are no over-width trailering restrictions to worry about.

Kelly's influence can be seen in the beamy hull, which carries its volume well forward. It's quite ship-like in profile with a deep forefoot, a nearly plumb bow and lots of volume above the waterline. It presents an extremely fine entry and a long waterline, meaning the 7m Commander behaves more like an 8m boat. She rides level, and with a flat run aft and a shallow







The wheelhouse styling, with its reverse sheer and steeply-raked windscreen, is very workboat-like, but it offers several advantages.



deadrise at the transom, is extremely stable at rest.

In some respects, says Herd, the Commander's planing hull has many of the characteristics of a displacement design. At rest the bows sit deeper in the water than the stern, but the boat trims up nicely and there is no tendency to bow-steer.

"We sought the help of other builders with the hull design and we are very happy with the result," explains Herd.

### STRONGLY BUILT

Construction is robust with 6mm hull plates, 5mm sides, and 4mm for the decks and cabin superstructure. There are three longitudinal girders a side, plus an internal keel bar, and the hull is fully seam-welded. Sealed buoyancy chambers are incorporated either side of the fuel tank under the wheelhouse.

The wheelhouse styling, with its reverse-sheer and steeply raked windscreen, is very workboat-like, but it offers several advantages: there's no glare to contend with at the helm and far more useable space in the wheelhouse. If the screen had been raked back in the usual way, the wheelhouse would have felt much smaller.

The Commander is tall in the bows, which also flare a little for a dry ride. A Viper drum anchor winch sits on the foredeck

between a pair of bow cleats. There's no anchor locker.

The traditional feel of the boat is particularly noticeable in the cockpit which features teak-like oiled jatoba coamings and Ultralon on the cockpit sole. Jatoba is also used to trim the wheelhouse interior.

The cockpit layout is very clean. The custom bait table looks good and works well, the batteries (two), isolation switches, pumps and bilge are easy to access, but well-protected behind a sealed transom door. The cockpit is self-draining through four scuppers with any excess water disposed of by the bilge pump.

There's a good-sized, self-filling live bait tank, a tuna tube and six flush, through-coaming rod holders to complement the bait station rod holders and the rocket launcher, which is constructed from classy-looking machined 20mm plate aluminium. The same material is used for handholds and grab rails around the boat. Cleats are X-fold types that sit flush with the coamings when not in use.

Huge, outward opening, bin-like side lockers hinge at their bases. The plastic facings close flush with the coamings for a very clean look. A pair of dickey seats fold down when required, one either side of the cockpit, there's a saltwater



**ABOVE:** The well-crafted interior provides more space than one would expect in a boat of this length.

**L TO R:** The helm console features flush-mounted instruments and custom switches; The fridge is situated under the seat on the port side; Deep cockpit side pocket bins close flush against the gunwales.



wash-down and LED flood and foot lighting.

Access to the carpeted wheelhouse is via custom-made aluminium tri-fold stacker doors. The interior is spacious and nicely appointed with a comfortable swivelling helm seat with bolster offering excellent vision through the reverse-sheer windscreen.

A GPSMap 7410 dominates the dashboard, complemented by flush-mounted Yamaha Command Link electronic gauges and custom switches. A couple of 12V/USB charging ports are tucked into the helmsman's side pocket, there's a Lowrance VHF radio, and a 12V fridge under the passenger seat.

As reviewed, the Herley carries no fresh water and there's no galley, though a portable BBQ could easily take care of cooking duties for an overnight expedition. A couple of ceiling hatches provide ventilation and there's plenty of stowage under the seats.

The wheelhouse and cabin are finished to a high standard. Frontrunner is notable by its absence, there's a good-sized separate toilet and a decent-sized berth with an infill to come which will turn it into a unusually shaped double berth. Opening the inspection hatch behind the



## MARINE DECKING

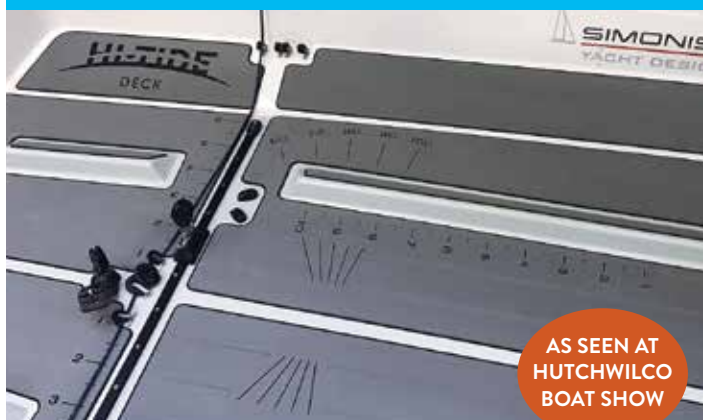
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**TOP LEFT**  
The Commander's styling references traditional displacement launches as well as workboats.



**LEFT** Batteries and switches are well-protected by a waterproof hatch.



**BELOW LEFT AND BELOW** The cockpit is spacious and uncluttered with generous freeboard.



**RIGHT** The Commander gets along at 36 knots.

dashboard reveals a very tidy wiring loom, which like the rest of the boat's engineering and fit-out was completed in-house.

### POWER AND PERFORMANCE

A 200hp four-cylinder Yamaha provides the motivation, pushing the Herley Commander along to a maximum speed of 36 knots – 20 knots is achieved at 3,600rpm, 25 knots at 4,200rpm and 30 knots at 5,000.

The boat is well on the plane at 12 knots, which was handy when travelling through the restricted speed zone in Auckland's inner Waitemata Harbour.

The hull remains level during its transition onto the plane and stays level throughout the rev range, though it still responds nicely to engine trim. Trim down to push the sharp-edged bow into the waves for a smoother ride or trim up for better fuel efficiency. A 170-litre underfloor fuel tank feeds the Yamaha, providing a decent range.

The Commander rides flat and level in the turns as well, hardly leaning over. The ride is smooth, though we had slight seas on our test day, but Herd and Kelly report the boat is exceptionally comfortable in the rough. The helm position is good, sitting or standing to drive, and steering is effortless. There was no need to use trim tabs on a windless day.

The Herley Commander is not only a little unusual, it is also rather special. **BNZ**







### Herley Commander

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www.herleyboats.com

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Traditional styling  
Plumb bow  
Comfortable ride

Well-finished  
Robust build

Trailerable  
Crafted interior  
Premium price

#### SPECIFICATIONS

loa 7.0m  
beam 2.5m  
draft approx 0.4m  
deadrise 9° at transom  
construction aluminium, 6mm bottom, 5mm sides  
engine Yamaha four-stroke 200hp  
fuel 170 litres  
trailerable weight 2,500kg  
cruising speed 25 knots  
max speed 36 knots

#### BOATING VERDICT

The Herley Commander will either appeal or it won't. With its ship-like lines, crafted interior and uncompromising build quality, the boat won't be everyone's cup of tea, while a premium price tag could further narrow the field of prospective customers. But this unusual trailer boat turns heads, is built strong and its custom interior is pleasantly luxurious without being impractical.

While it doesn't drive quite like a run-of-the-mill aluminium trailer boat, the ride is comfortable, sea-keeping is reportedly very good and the boat's handling is benign. With the 200hp Yamaha outboard, performance is pretty decent too.

**BELOW** The bespoke bait station features a table that swivels to one side to access storage beneath..



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