

PROFESSIONAL
Skipper
MAGAZINE

THE HERLEY COMMANDER

BY KEITH INGRAM



Last month we were fortunate to catch up with the Tauranga independent workboats operator Sean Kelly in what is his latest charge and creation, the Herley Commander. The brand name 'Herley' is new to the maritime industry – it's adapted from the designer Nick Herd and principal Sean Kelly.

She's a classy looking boat, a definite step above what we have come to expect in a small workboat or water taxi. And for her size, the Commander is a big little boat. The designers have returned to a bluff 'axe bow', reverse sheer windscreen and clean transom. Collectively, this adds a lot of volume into the vessel giving working and passenger space where it is most needed.

When asked why they chose to use an axe bow, Sean responded: Increasing the waterline longer allows you to have more weight in the front. It reduces point loading, and will generally allow you to go faster while improving efficiencies and using less fuel.

The deadrise is not constant as it starts at 60 degrees at the bow and washes out to 9 degrees the stern. A boat should be stable at rest, and underway, and should not need the addition of trim tabs, said Sean. In his view, trim tabs are a cover for poor design when calculating trim and weight loadings.

CONSTRUCTION

The Commander is constructed in 5083 marine alloy plate – the hull to the chine is 6mm, hull sides 5mm, and the deckhouse is

4mm. She has a hull length of 6.5m and a beam of 2.5m. The deadrise specified above gives an indication of her potential sea-keeping abilities.

The design of the enclosed deckhouse is a bit futuristic in look, with excellent frameless windows using toughened safety glass and the new, now-fashionable polymer bonding. (Although to meet survey standards, we note two solid mullions supporting the front screen.)

DESIGN

Where to start? Clearly a lot of thought has gone into the high bluff axe bow which bossoms out as it swells upwards to an upper chine extending forward from the coaming height. The forward deck height rises from the smart wooden beltings back to the windscreen adding to the volume contained within.

Mounted in a shallow well is a solid stainless-steel electric 'Viper' anchor winch and drum. Using this commercial-style anchor and warp drum combination eliminates the need for horrible anchor wells – and the associated dampness and potential for corrosion in vessels.

But the anchor itself is mounted in a solid 400mm stainless steel protruding spare-man. While a practical arrangement, it does detract and look butt ugly – and out of place, when everywhere else you look on this vessel exudes class and attention-to-detail.

Across the rear of the cabin top we find the traditional eight-rod rocket launcher, to keep rods not in use out of harm's way.

Moving to the stern, we board via the small transom door. Starboard side, beside us is the power plant for the vessel – a Yamaha 200hp four-stroke outboard motor mounted directly on the transom in a traditional self-draining motor well.

The vessel carries 170 litres of fuel in an underfloor tank.



Large clean cockpit with ease of access forward



A smart interior



Nana's flour bin lockers

On the opposite side of the transom, we find the live bait tank and, hello, tucked inside is a tuna tube – indicating that this vessel is geared with sport fishing in mind.

Built into the transom are two watertight lockers giving access to the twin battery stowage and a fold-out hatch under the motor well that reveals the bilge and deck hose pumps.

On top of the motor well is a bait station with rod holders, along with a cutting board with tackle draws that can be folded out clear when the motor is tilted up.

COCKPIT

Once in the cockpit the area is clear and clean, with ample toe space under the coamings and enclosed bins each side. This side area (normally with open and exposed side trays lined in frontrunner marine fabric) has been replaced with two lift-and-

fold-out seats, one each side forward, and two large 1.6m bins – Sean calls them his Nana's flour bins. These plastic-lined fold-out bins are designed so you can chuck in anything you like, including fish, and just wipe it out when finished.

The cockpit decks are lined in composite rubber non-skid teak lookalike deck tread, which clearly lifts the classy look of the vessel above your basic workboat usually fitted with alloy chequer plate decks.

ARRANGEMENT

Essentially, the Herley Commander is a day boat, but with the capability to overnight in a comfortable camping mode. As we move forward, we find a three-piece stacker sliding door opens at the rear of the deckhouse cabin, extending an open roomy feeling on the vessel. ▶





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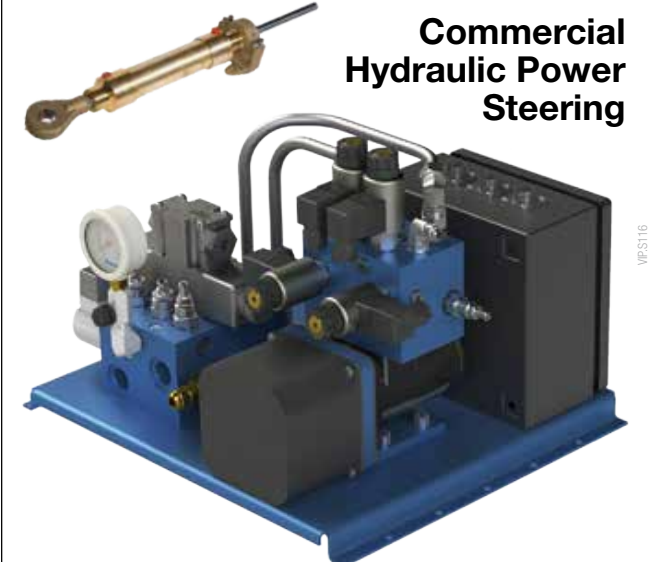
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Once inside, we find a large comfortable 'L' shaped bench couch to port (with stowage under). Leading forward there is a wide companionway into the forward cuddy cabin.

Also under the 'L' seat is an 85 litre Isotherm refrigerator to keep the lunches cold. The cuddy contains a full-length wraparound berth to port which is large enough to top-and-tail in. Additional stowage is available in several lined cubby holes. Opposite is the small head, positioned in front of the helm station, complete with an 'Ocean' electric marine toilet. Among other fitments and stainless steel products, Absolute Marine also supplied the two Italian 'Nuova Rade' skylight hatches in the cuddy coach deck.

Back out and the main conning position is on the starboard yield side, the layout of which is clean and smart.

ELECTRONICS

Above the hydraulic helm is the Garmin GPSMap 7410 10 inch multi-touch widescreen chartplotter/sonar combo fish finder. A Lowrance VHF radio for communications is to the left hand. A Plastimo bulkhead compass is mounted to the right, and the main switch panel is above. Once again, we have to comment that the dash panel has a quality look about it.

Drop the right hand, and the throttle gear control for the outboard motor is at ease of hand.

Lighting throughout the vessel, both inside and out, and underwater is discreet and functional. The helm seat is a comfortable 'Flip bolster – soft rider – pedestal with foot rest swivel marine seat'.

It is easy to forget that this is only a 6m vessel rated for six passengers plus skipper. During the incline tests with seven burly lads on one side, the vessel reached a maximum incline of




The herley commander remains impressive when underway at speed

9.5 degrees – well under the allowable 15 degrees – giving an indication of the stability of the vessel at rest.

Mounted on its purpose-built trailer, the vessel weighs in at 2,280 kg fully stored and fuelled, plus the trailer weight.

RIDE

Once underway, the Commander quickly lifts onto the plane while maintaining a level attitude to reach her economical service speed of 22 knots. Give the throttle a solid nudge, and she maxed out at 36 knots with four people on board. The vessel was soft-riding with the lower chine turning down the sea, ensuring a dry boat.

We are advised by Sean Kelly that she loves the rough, cutting through the seas with none of the pounding common in small craft, while still maintaining a soft ride and dry boat. This comfort factor is essential anticipating water taxi work – for both passengers and carry-on stores and luggage. 

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	6.9m
Hull length	6.5m
Beam	2.5m
Draft	300mm
Construction	5083 Marine alloy plate
Power	150 – 200hp
Weight	2,280 kg excluding trailer
Designer	Nick Herd
Builder	Herley Boats
Price as reviewed	\$185,000 inc GST and trailer
Commercial version	\$125,000 ex GST

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Conforms to the requirements of the MCA Workboat code and EN795:2012 class D.

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