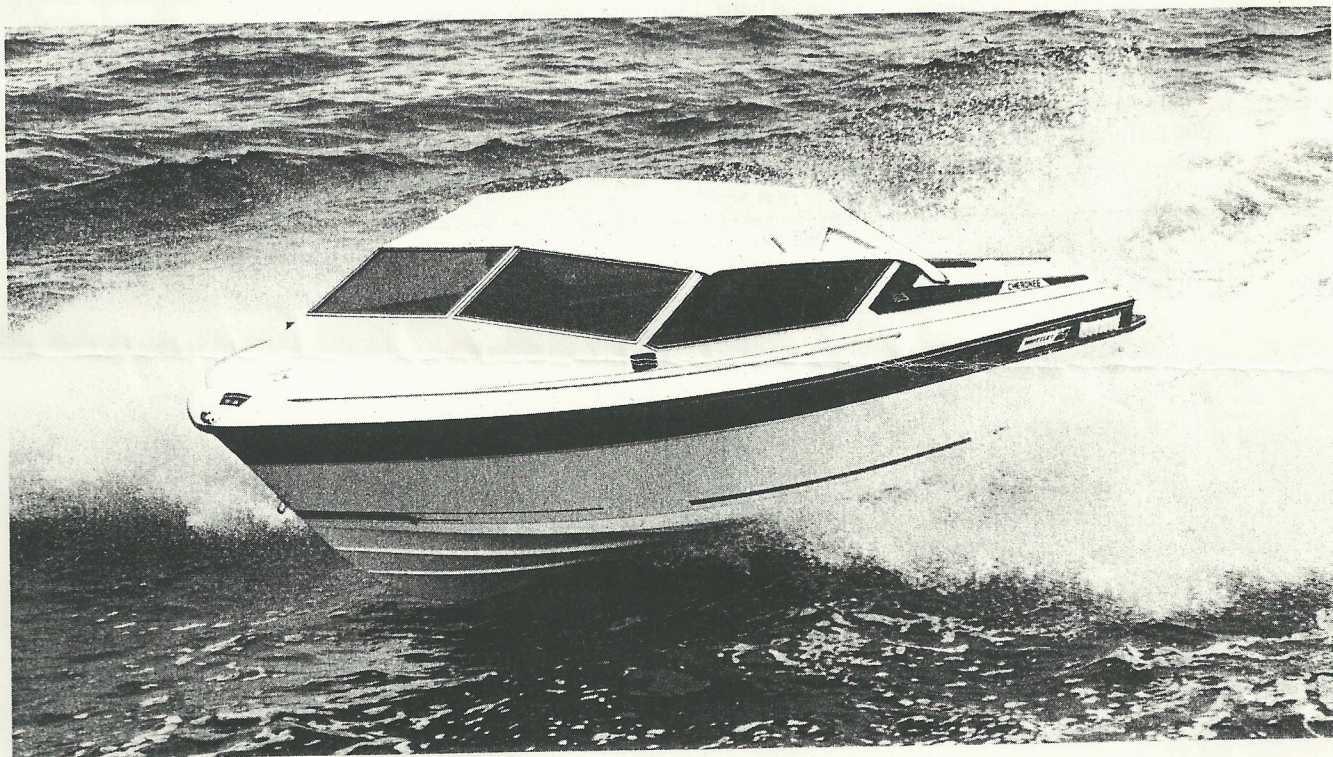


POWER BOAT

UPDATE

WHITTLEY CHEROKEE

by Bob Carter



Jim Whittley's Cherokee runabout heads up a new wave of stylish open water family boats. In previous issues of Power Boat, the Cherokee in both outboard and stern drive versions has attracted excellent reviews and impressive performance figures.

The Whittley lineup in general proved so popular that Jim Whittley decided to expand the business selling through a small, select net-

work of dealers. Cherokee orders piled up and as things turned out, the mould being in constant use, had to be pensioned off.

Faced with the prospect of building a new mould to maintain the highest possible finish on the craft, the Whittley team decided it was opportune to make some mild modifications to the hull.

Up front the forefoot was made 3 mm deeper and across the chines the beam was stret-

ched out by 50mm. At gunwale height, the new Cherokee is a full 100mm wider making the overall beam now 2.25m.

These changes are all very subtle and it would take a particularly keen eye to pick the new Cherokee from the old. However, the new Cherokee has been greatly enhanced by the extra beam in the cockpit.

The walk-through area between the back to back seats in the cockpit is now much

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Over, allowing passengers to move from the rear to the dash without being squashed in by the seats.

At the transom, the extra beam has been well utilised with stern quarter seats fitted either side of the sterndrive hatch.

Externally, the clinkers on the side have largely been removed to bring the boat in line with more modern styling. This is a strictly cosmetic change and should have no effect on performance.

Translated to on water performance, the new model Cherokee has substantially improved handling. Power for the test boat came in the form of a MerCruiser 205 V-6 sterndrive package, a compact power system ideally suited to mid sized runabouts.

Developing ample low down torque, the 4 stroke 205 prop rated horsepower engine easily picked the Cherokee up out of the hole and pumped her onto the plane.

Overall acceleration

through the power band was blinding and the Cherokee proved well capable of accepting all the neddies the MerCruiser could muster. Swinging a 584mm Laser prop the Cherokee is good for 90 km/h at 5,000 rpm.

However due to Port Phillip Bay being her usual nasty self, top speed was limited to a more sedate pace. In the appalling conditions though the Cherokee clearly demonstrated her seaworthiness.

She handled the chop and slop with reckless abandon, never flinching away from a rolling swell of green water. Whether beam on, running downhill or simply punching straight into the swell, the Cherokee always landed the right way and never gave a moment's worry.

From the driver's seat the power steering proved a significant bonus to Cherokee's nimble tracking. Aimed from one crest to the next, the Cherokee lightly danced her way across the top of the bitchy water.

Every now and then the Cherokee dropped into a giant hole crunching the crew in the process. That's part and parcel of boating on Port Phillip, but to her credit the Whittley never gave so much as a rattle or a whimper. She just powered out of the hole and roared on flicking drops of spray aside.

Carpeted throughout with an exceptionally high standard of finish the Cherokee is a top quality family boat that has the credentials to handle the super rough stuff where families should never go boating.

Like her predecessor, the new Cherokee has a very safe feel about her due to the plush interior and high sided cockpit. The screen is also high and protective, while the clip-on canopy managed to keep the wind blown spray outside.

A boarding platform had been fitted across the transom. The solid teak platform was situated above the sterndrive leg, effectively shrouding the leg and adding a neat touch to the rear of the craft.

As a total package, it is difficult not to be impressed by the Whittley Cherokee rig. It makes no pretence of being a gung ho speed machine, yet it does have a good turn of speed when called on to run hard.

As a quality family boat, the Cherokee is particularly well finished. Whittley boats have enjoyed a solid reputation in past years for holding their value and providing an excellent investment in boating.

Priced at ~~\$20,000~~ complete with MerCruiser 205, tandem trailer and a host of extras built into the boat, the Whittley is not cheap.

But top performing, neatly finished and stylish boats tend to attract a solid price ticket. Judging by some delivery times often quoted by dealers, the Whittley Cherokee is as popular as ever with the boating public obviously prepared to pay top dollar for top quality.

Test boat supplied by: Whittley Marine, 24 Simms Road, Briar Hill 3088.