

Perfect manners from this well-bred sailer

TRAILER-SAILERS have come a long way since the introduction of the boat that started a world-wide trend in the sixties — the Hartley TS 16. GREIG ROBERTS reports:



ABOVE: The Austral 24 . . . a true cruiser-racer.

BELOW: Breeding will tell. The Austral 24 takes over where its little brother the award-winning Austra 20 leaves off, a simple case of bigger and better.

THE trailer-sailer concept has been through a multitude of design expressions — water-ballast, alloy construction, TSs which would require a front-end loader to transport them and the current little “trick” go-fast range, again originating in New Zealand.

However, there are not many current trailer-sailers that fulfil the role of a genuine cruiser-racer.

Last week I spent a morning aboard what would be the closest I have seen to meeting the requirements of a true cruiser-racer of the trailer-sailer variety. The yacht was an Austral 24.

The Austral range of yachts range from the award winning 20-footer through to the Austral 30 — for mine the mid-range A24 is the pick of the litter.

With a price tag of around \$32,000, it's not the cheapest of boats, but one has only to spend a few hours aboard this superbly finished yacht to understand that it's true — you get what you pay for.

On the day of our test sail the wind was a constant 15-18 knots from the west. Ideal conditions to put a new boat through its paces.

With a full main and number three headsail the yacht showed impeccable manners on all points. Even in the odd 20-plus gusts the lee rail remained well clear.

Above deck the A24 was one of the best thought out boats of this size I have sailed.

Touches of class, such as the innovative mainsail furler, timber wedges for bracing oneself in all the right places and a well thought out cockpit which, of course, includes an icebox for the tinnies, all go to making the A24 something special — but that's only the beginning.

Below decks the boat positively distances itself from others which carry price tags not all that far removed from the A24.

The boat has near standing headroom with the pop-top down and full headroom around the starboard located galley area with the hatch up. A three-quarter bulkhead separates the saloon area from the conventional double V-berth arrangement forward.

While there's nothing “one-off” about the interior it's simply one that works.

This is one of those yachts which could be trailed north and once there would take its crew of four or five in both comfort and safety through some of the best cruising grounds in the world with the added bonus of a draught of 0.36m with the board up.

I imagine the most favorable comment one could bestow on a test boat is if given the chance buy one — I would — without the slightest hesitation.

The A24, it's a 10 for mine.

