



# Dominator Bonito Calais 622

As further evidence of the growing affinity between boats produced in Australia and New Zealand, here is another trans Tasman product - the Kiwi Bonito 622, now completely manufactured in Port Macquarie, NSW by Mark Hookham's Dominator organisation.

Although Hookham is best known for his work with the original Markham Whalers and subsequently, the Dominator cats, he's produced mono hulls for many years too. His monohull credentials date back to the 1970's with the 24' Alglass Fisherman, and include the renowned Ranger Cruisers (1980s), and more recently, Connelly high performance ski race boats and now, several models from the Kiwi Bonito range.

Last month, we had the opportunity to test one of the new Kiwi designed, Hookham built Bonito Calais 622s fitted with the Honda 4-stroke 130 hp engine.

The Calais is the "cruiser" version of

this model. There is also a "Pro-Fish" version which is finished along more traditional Oz fishing boat lines, with a couple of seats over boxes, a plain cockpit and very few toys.

The Calais is designed for two people, although it could also be used by a small family, putting the youngsters on air beds in the cockpit. However, it's not really designed for that purpose. The constraints of the single burner stove and the toilet location would become very obvious with more than two onboard for more than a couple of days.

But that's getting into specifics and the philosophy of cruising, as distinct from testing the Calais 622, so join me now as we step onboard this Kiwi

designed, Australian built 6.2 metre cruising boat.

**Design:** I think is a very sleek, stylish cruiser with one of the prettiest hulls I've seen in years. The lines are really nice, with that lovely soft chine so favoured by the Kiwis and so ignored by Australian designers. Check out the shot of the boat on the trailer - I think you'll agree it's a very pretty hull.

The cabin is a very low profile set-up with a very sleek, raked back windscreen that looks terrific and is practically useless. But this comment can be applied to most Australian boats of the same length, too, so I wouldn't want Mark Hookham to feel we've

singled him out for unique criticism.

However, the windscreen is pretty silly, and doesn't protect the skipper or the passenger from anything. Of necessity then, the boat has to have a canopy and bimini arrangement with one of those clear infill panels between the top of the bimini and the top edge of the windscreen.

The cabin itself is surprising roomy with good headroom for adults and very long, comfortable berths at 1900 mm long by an average 540 mm wide.

Provision is made for a chemical toilet between them and it features a three quarter open bulkhead which is a nice compromise in that a curtain can easily be added for privacy but slid open to make the cabin feel more open and livable.

Stepping back up onto the cockpit, there is 810 mm of space behind the ice chest moulding (see photograph) to the forward edge of the three quarter seat. The cockpit at this point, is 1.87 m wide. The cockpit is thus wider than it is long, but there's actually quite a reasonable amount of space,

to keep food stuffs and drinks cold for periods of up to seven days.

Completing the "cruisette" feel, Hookham has installed a very nice little dinette table off the transom, and thus solves another issue that needs to be dealt with in a cruising environment ie, where do you eat your meals?

All in all, this is a well set-up little "cruiser" that reflects a good deal of thought in the way it's been developed.

Local dealer Bill Fankhauser from Runaway Bay Marine Sales (the Qld agent for the boat) supplied the Calais 622 for this test, had also done his part by arranging for Phil Baker's Craft Covers to make a terrific set of camper covers for the boat. This provides a totally waterproof 'room' all the way down to the transom. Although this set-up obviously is unique to this particular boat at Bill's yard, other agents and dealers around Australia can easily replicate the Craft Covers.

Statistically, the 622 has an overall length of 6.10 m, a maximum beam of 2.4 m, a deadrise of an astonishing 23 degrees (we'll get back to that later)

**Performance:** The test boat was fitted with a 130 hp 4-stroke Honda, the 2.2 litre 4-stroke engine that is fast becoming a standard fitment for Australia's mosquito fleet of professional charter and guided fishing boats.

And if you'll take a few minutes out to carefully study the figures in the accompanying table, you can quickly see why.

Here is a 4-stroke engine pushing this quite large craft to 34 knots easily, yet it returns full consumption at its 'sweet' cruising speed of 3500 rpm at just 16.80 Lph. To put it another way, this equates to a return of 4.83 nautical miles per gallon.

This works up a cruising range of approx 200 nautical miles, a truly fantastic figure.

Only a couple of years ago, it was inconceivable you could run a boat of this calibre for a fuel burn of around 17 l/ph. And just look at these figures for the Calais. At 4000 revs, it's using exactly 1 litre per nautical mile - and that's going to put a big smile on just

particularly if you take out the 3/4 seats next to the outboard well.

In the Profish version, these seats are dropped, and the boat is much more attuned to fishing. It (then) does not include the cruising moulds that are featured in this boat.

Here, on the port side, the seat box moulding houses the typical 85 litre ice chest of the Baileys or EvaKool kind, with a single burner butane stove above it under the seat cushion. (see photograph) To starboard you have the same sort of set-up except there's a separate water tank, sink and manual pump immediately behind the skipper's seat.

The fibreglass cockpit mouldings convert this boat into a real weekend cruiser. It is completely feasible to cook a light meal on the stove. There's a sensible sink arrangement with fresh water, and a big ice chest to keep the food and drinks cold for a couple of days. If dry ice is available, these chests can be adapted quite efficiently

with an estimated hull weight of about 810 kgs. Fuel capacity is 200 L in its standard configuration but longer range tanks can be developed as an optional extra. The 622 is rated for horsepower in the 135-200 hp range, so the 130 Honda shown here is actually under powered - especially considering it is quite a bit heavier than comparable 2-stroke 130 hp engines.

**Construction:** The Calais is very well built. It carries a three year structural hull warranty, has extensive use of good quality stainless steel (grab rails, bow rails, ladder etc) and is built with that professionalism that has given Hookham a reputation as one of Australia's top builders.

We are not too sure who cleaned up the moulds or how much work Hookham had to do on them to get them to this standard, but the end result speaks for itself. The tooling is very impressive and the fibreglass work, gel coats etc were virtually flawless.

about any boatowner's face. Add to this the very smooth delivery of power, the Honda's quietness and its laid back, under-stressed reliability and you've got a package that has a life span of many, many years.

Just for the record, we did take this boat offshore in quite brisk conditions to see what the Honda was like on the Calais, given that this is a boat with a very deep vee and that usually translates to a need for higher power to weight ratios than the Honda is able to deliver.

But we needn't have worried - the Calais hull is extremely good, and the big Honda just burghled away in the background delivering exactly what the skipper wanted. When we wanted power coming in through a white water break on the bar, it just simply surged away, smoothly and quietly, leaving the skipper in no doubt what so ever that this was an almost perfect match for the hull. There is no need for more horsepower than the grunt this Honda