

F&B Y-2011

Project Logbook

Trailcraft
560
Sportscab
Joins F&B



Early last month, our new Trailcraft 560 Sportscab arrived from WA where it was made by the re-jigged Trailcraft organisation.

It had taken several months to get the order, packaging and delivery sorted out, so we were relieved when it all finally came together just before Christmas. Many of the issues were created by the F&B team when midway through the order being sorted, we had a change of heart – *we seem to do this quite a lot lately* – and decided to upgrade the planned 510 Trailcraft

Profish, the open side console model that was basically an upgraded and slightly bigger version of the 475 Trailcraft Profish we used with such success in 2004-2006.

As everybody knows, we were very happy with that craft, and decided the only way we could really improve it was to come up one size to the bigger 510 model, with its distinctive raised sheerline.

However, just as the order was being processed, a couple of other issues arose, not least of which was the

realisation that the 510 Trailcraft would actually be too big for quite a number of jobs we wanted to achieve with this project boat.

The ‘mission statement’ for this Project was (originally) to undertake a series of what we call “soft water” articles on estuarine lakes and freshwater impoundments along the Eastern seaboard. In that environment, the big beamy 510 would be almost a handicap, not withstanding the obvious fact that it would have fantastic levels of seaworthiness and would be a

SEA Media’s Project Boats Policy - Sea Media maintains a number of ‘project boats’ principally to ensure the editorial team is able to keep up with today’s rapidly changing boating world. It allows us to form our own conclusions, develop factual reference information for readers, and most importantly, get a “feel” for the product - something you cannot do from a press release, a brochure, or a 30 minute zoom ‘around the bay’ in perfect weather. Most boats are kept for about 12-18 months, depending on their complexity, effectiveness, usage, cost, and how much interesting editorial we can develop for readers from the project. When we’re finished, project boats are (then) usually sold to Fisherman & Boatowner readers.

wonderful fishing platform to work with.

However, the Trailcraft 510 Profish we inspected at the Brisbane Boat Show in September last year, surprised us with its size, and once again, worried the writer with the motor packaging we had in mind.

We suspected the newly released 70hp Yamaha 4-stroke which we'd all fallen in love with, and wanted to use in a Project Boat program, would probably end up be underpowered on this deep bodied, wide-beamed production platey from the West.

By the time we put camera gear aboard, tackle boxes, installed the double edged bimini, a Minn Kota electric outboard and its battery(s), and carried a couple of adult passengers, we were not confident we'd get the level of performance we'd like to have.

When Bigger Is Not Always Better

The only disadvantage we ever had with the original 475 Profish with its 60hp Yammy 4-stroke EFI, was that when it had more than 3 people onboard and all their gear, it became a bit slow and with the canopy and bimini arrangement we had on it at the time, it was definitely a bit underpowered for offshore work.

Not that it worried us all that much in normal conditions, because these boats are not fast boats, and performance in the 16-20 knot zone is just fine, but that said, it's still important to have enough grunt to accelerate very quickly through any good wave 'saddles' going out through the bar, or pull yourself away from any wave suck coming back in – in our case, through the Seaway Entrance, which of course, is on our back doorstep here on the 'Coast.

So for all these reasons, when we studied the 510 Side Console at the Brissy Boat Show, we became worried that the package was getting slightly out of whack, and that a 90-100hp engine would be better. But then, that changed the whole concept of the boat, didn't it?

After quite a deal of thought we then decided that our editorial program had to take the leading role in determining the sort of craft we would get, and the more we thought about it, it became obvious that no one boat would ever do the jobs we had in mind.

The classic 4.3 tinny or small side console we had in mind from the likes



of Horizon or Sea Jay, would never have the seaworthiness that we needed to go and fish Portland, Victoria for SBT's. That much was bleedin' obvious, so after much long and detailed analysis of the available options vs the desired editorial program, we decided to re-jig the Logbook Program.

What you have here is part of the outcome.

As it now stands, the Horizon 4.4 is under construction as this magazine goes on the newsstands. It will be dedicated to our "soft water" series which we have been very keen to produce for quite a few years.

In turn, with the Horizon taking charge of the "soft water", we then looked to the Trailcraft to see if we could upgrade its capabilities to do the next line of jobs we had in mind for

2011 and 2012.

Readers don't ever really think about it (nor should they have to) but from the writer's point of view we have to produce between 800 – 1000 pages of magazine artwork a year for F&B, and within that, we need at least 80-100 feature articles.

About half of *them* need to be of the exploring, fishing or adventure kind. It's an enormous burden in one sense, and a heap of fun in another – and between us and our long suffering team of contributors, we try very hard to sustain a high level of interest and unique editorial.

So these machinations are quite complex and detailed, to the extent that the Trailcraft 560 is now embedded in a program that will run for at least the next two years, and involve thousands of road miles to places as far afield as

Top Left: Construction stage shots of F&B's 560 Trailcraft 560 Sportscab, reveal some important changes for the new 2011 series Trailcraft, but the retention of the principle Trailcraft values - such as the true self-draining cockpit and big ally 'Grant' scuppers.

Left Below: Shows the new "soft patch" principle over the fuel tank. This allows the cockpit sole (floor) to be totally sealed, but if access to the fuel tanks is required, it can be, by undoing the screws (easy) and slicing the sikkaflex (v. bloody difficult!) but this is a mile better system.

Below: Also note spoofy new helm and passenger chairs.

We commonly have to tackle barred river entrances choppy offshore conditions, and the writer has an admitted aversion to regularly running open centre consoles (or poorly designed walkarounds, for that matter) through a typical river bar, or for that matter, rough water offshore.

For decades, I've always advocated the "cuddy cabin" approach, as I truly believe this format, as shown in these pages here, is considerably more seaworthy (read: safer) let alone more comfortable, than an open centre or side console.

With a cuddy cabin configuration, we can actually poke the nose and shoulders of the craft into a breaking wave if we have to, and/or I've got the timing badly wrong - and sometimes

cabin sides right out to the gunwales.

Not only is it very hard for water to get in - in this Trailcraft 560, we have a fully sealed self draining deck and two huge scuppers (or "freeing ports" to use their proper name) to clear out any water that does come down into the cockpit from above, in seconds.

People starting out in boating might find this all a bit esoteric, but I can assure you, it's not just about crossing bars and river entrances - boats of this kind are more than capable of going offshore into nearshore reefs chasing snapper, morwong, sharks, kingies, (whatever your favourite blue water species) but when you do that, and you commit to going offshore, then you have to (by definition) commit to dealing with ocean conditions.

And even if you're only a mile offshore, those conditions can change very quickly and you might find yourself sometimes in short, hard chop where the structure or configuration of the boat becomes most important.

After weeks of agonistics (*hey - you are not alone!*) we finally decided that if we were going to go for the 510 size, then we should really step up and make the bigger outboard worthwhile and deal with the issues of comfort, security, shelter, seaworthiness etc, in one hit.

The end result was what we originally described as the Trailcraft Sportscab 530, as tested back in F&B #87 in 2003, but then we discovered it had been reconfigured to become a 540. Then, to our amazement, between October and its arrival here on the Gold Coast last month, it had magically grown to become a 560.

And that folks, is how we went from a 510 Profish to a 560 Sportscab.

Bigger Than We Thought

First reactions to seeing the boat here at Oceanic Trailers' big new facility on the Molendinar Industrial Estate (here on the Gold Coast) was one of genuine surprise.

Ruth and I were a bit surprised at just how much bigger it was than we'd remembered the original 530 we tested back in 2003, but running a tape down the centreline we very quickly worked out why Trailcraft have now decided to call this model the 560 - it is 5.6m LOA.

Initial reactions were one of delight, because the paint job is such a cheerful colour it makes you feel happy just



Borooloola and Bermagui - and that covers an awful lot of territory!

Profish Replaced By Sportscab

In the end, we decided against the open centre console or side console, primarily because my wife Mary and I are not getting any younger and Mary not unreasonably doesn't want to spend days being blown out of an open centre console anymore. She wants to be able to sit comfortably behind the windscreen and canopy of a more sensible style of boat that we older folk now need.

Not *just* because we are getting older, either, I have to stress, because throughout the writer's boating life, I've never been an advocate or particularly keen on small centre consoles, especially for the sort of work we do.

that can happen with the best laid plans, etc!

Anybody who's ever done any bar work will acknowledge that you can line it up and get it sighted perfectly, gun it for the saddle - but by the time you get there, the wave is starting to curl and tumble down, leaving you with no choice but to walk up to the wave and then tiptoe over it - and this is the point where the writer just finds life in a centre console too nerve wracking to be worth the risk.

Here, in boats like this Trailcraft 560 Sportscab (a classic cuddy), you can deliberately poke the bow and shoulder structure into a breaking wave knowing that in the worse case situation you might take a little bit of water right up over the top, but almost none around the sides - especially as boats like this Trailcraft 560 take the



The Trailcraft 560 has a surprisingly large cabin for two, and although the seat boxes aren't taken out to the sides (Hhhmmnn!) the space will be very useful for 'soft' tackle bags - and more besides!

standing beside it, and of course it's going to look terrific in all the photographs. There's just something about yellow boats the writer particularly likes and most long term readers will acknowledge that we've certainly had quite a few of them over the years. But the combination of yellow hull, white decks and black trim always looks good, and this will be no exception.

Internally, the boat was such a shemuzzle when it arrived in terms of wrapped up seats, folded targa, dirt, grime and squished locusts, we decided not to take too many photographs for this edition of F&B, so we'll leave that until the February issue when we will have it all cleaned up and pristine.

By then, we might also find the bolts for the targa/rod rack that fell off somewhere between Perth and the Gold Coast, and generally sort all the loose bits and pieces out from the boat; it obviously had a pretty hard run across Australia.

A Good Set-up

The configuration is ideal for what we wanted. The cabin can sleep two people - just - but the writer (at 1830mm) can actually lie down and stretch out at full length, lying properly along the berths. In a 560, that's very pleasing.

We believe we can get a chemical toilet between the berths that we'll put in and out according to the type of jobs we're doing; we don't need a 'loo here on photo shoots (and it would be in the way going forward up through the smallish hatch) but will put it back in

for interstate trips, days with the grandkids over on nearby South Stradbroke Island, or day-long offshore fishing trips

We're very pleased with the seating standard, as two excellent and comfortable sliding and swivelling seats were provided for the skipper and passenger.

The configuration is spot-on for us in this size range because the windscreen is at the perfect height for all of us (remembering Ruth will still be doing all the professional precision driving here on the 'Coast, whilst Mary will assist when we're interstate) and we're looking forward to working with the canopy makers and trimmers to come up with a bimini/canopy arrangement that will be semi-permanent and carefully integrated with the rod racks.

All in all, it's a very promising start to a very interesting and sensible boat which we think will be ideal for F&B's mid-range activities over the next couple of years.

We are setting the Trailcraft 560 up for light offshore sportsfishing, and serious bottom fishing - *love the excellent, standard live bait tank* - and by the time we've mounted the black Relax outrigger poles against the black covers it should look AOK.

Power will be provided by a Yamaha 115hp 4-stroke at this stage, and Oceanic Trailers have built a magnificent trailer to order for us. This too promises to be a benchmark piece of equipment, and will be the subject of a special report further along the track.

A Trailcraft 560 doesn't need a

tandem trailer for normal family usage, but given the logistics and distances involved where this rig is going, it made sense to make sure the run would go smoothly, with a tandem axle, load sharing set-up that enables us to drop a wheel, a tyre or bearing and keep going to the next town reasonably safely.

When you're doing these things for a living, you really can't afford to be sidelined for the sake of a 'halfpenny's worth of tar' as they say, and that's how we approach all our boating activities today.

Everything is over-engineered, overpowered and able to run in redundancy mode - and that applies to just about everything we're doing on the boat. But we'll have more on that in the future, as we set the rig up and get it all tuned.

Here, it's on the trailer we'll be using for the next couple of years, but it too has to be tuned, but we won't do that until all the bits and pieces are on the boat, the outboard's installed, the batteries are in position, anchors (etc) stowed and everything is in its final position for travelling. Then we can adjust the drawbar weight to an ideal setting for safe, comfortable towing at highway speeds.

This is also the reason we won't finalise the prop for the Yammy until everything is settled and on the boat - especially the biminin and clears, as these can have quite a detrimental effect on a boat's performance. So we'll sort out the performance parameters with Yamaha's Glenn Gibson here in Brisbane at the very end of the fitting-out program, not the beginning.

Conclusion

We're very pleased with the Trailcraft 560 and looking forward to the fitting-out program over the next couple of months, before getting 'back into harness' and starting an editorial program that will see Mary and the writer going back to places we haven't seen for (*cough!*) years.

It's going to be a busy couple of months.

F&B