

review

Proline Alloy 1860 HT

WORDS BY **GRANT DIXON**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MAT CRANSWICK**
AND **GRANT DIXON**

"Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats." – Toad of Toad Hall from *Wind in the Willows*.



T

oad's famous quote is something that most readers will hold close to their nautical hearts, but for many Kiwis getting into their first craft can be a step too far.

Boating is no different from the property ladder, you must start somewhere and for many of us this was a second-hand unit or the family rig. 'Dad, can I borrow the boat' was a not infrequent request in the Dixon household, followed by 'and can we swap vehicles so I can tow it!'

Growing up, ownership of a new boat that could be used for fishing and diving, as well as pulling skiers and water toys, was

for me out of the question.

With affordable finance options, getting a new rig like the Proline 1860 is much easier than before, especially with many boats available on the market.

Extreme Boats provide the horsepower behind Proline Alloy. As a division of Extreme Boats, Proline Boats are built in the same factory, by the same welders, using the same material as Extremes, which are well-known for their high-quality build, finish, and innovation. For 25 years Extreme has produced a range of hulls to suit everything from sheltered water lake sessions to getting out wide for billfish; day-tripping



Fish factor

to extended multi-day missions. A check of its Whakatane showroom, displaying Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show category and overall Best of Show awards, is testament to its achievements.

The idea behind the creation of Proline Alloy was to give the fishing community a more affordable option for both first-boat-buyers and experienced fishos looking for a basic, capable, and well-built boat – a sound fishing and fun platform that won't break the bank.

Extreme will be launching its Proline Alloy range at this year's Auckland On Water Boat Show when patrons will get a chance to test drive the Proline 1860 HT for themselves. I was

given a sneak preview when marketing manager Mat Cranswick made a flying visit to Mangawhai to put the Proline 1860 HT through its paces.

Mat says the hull is designed to cater for all, with ease of use being one of the main priorities. "It runs very flat, soft and predictable without the use of any trimming aids and wide, flat chines do a great job of deflecting spray and giving bow lift when required in a following sea."

Launching at dawn, we headed to the harbour's narrow entrance to negotiate a 'grumpy' bar. Access to the open water is via a tight channel keeping Head Rock close to your port side.



LEFT & BELOW

Boat reviews aren't all hard work, although the fishing was!

RIGHT As well as protection from the elements, the hardtop offers great 180° visibility.

At dead low tide there was the odd swell breaking right across. After exercising a little patience waiting for a lull, we crossed safely and headed south on a flat sea to shoot the running pics.

Powered by a Yamaha 90hp four stroke, the hull loped along with a top speed over 30 knots, and cruising at a little under 30 knots burning a miserly 14.5 litres an hour. At trolling speed – 7.5 to 8 knots – the fuel burn was seven litres with two crew and a couple of large 45-litre tote tanks on board (90 litres total). So, fuel-wise an inexpensive vessel to run.

Mat told me in initial trials he had undertaken a run out to White Island from Whakatane and back, only changing the 45-litre tote tank over as a safety precaution before re-entering the Whakatane River entrance at the end of the trip.

The Proline is nimble on its feet. I pushed the hull hard through the turns and even at speed there was no cavitation or other vices evident – also a sign of a boat set up correctly with





The designers have made good use of the available space for storage.

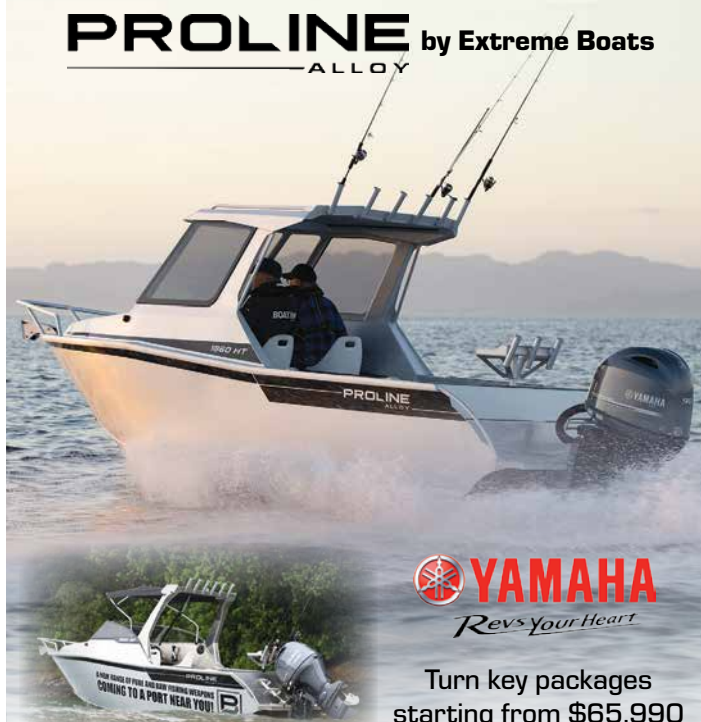
optimum engine height and appropriate prop.

It was a pity I could not deliver as good a performance on the fishing front. We came across one of the biggest workups I have seen for a long time, with several whales, a huge pod of dolphins and hundreds of gannets feeding hard, but with few snapper marks showing in the water column to chow down on the outfall from the action above.



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Heading back in, the wind had risen to 10-12 knots scuffing up the sea with a short half-metre or so of chop. Taking it on the quarter at a conservative 15-16 knots, I remembered Mat's advice – "this is a hull that performs at its best driven harder with a bit of trim on." With that in mind, the throttle went down and at 20 knots the ride proved more comfortable. My dodgy back was grateful for the heads up!

As to the Proline's fishability, there is some great stuff going on. With the helm and navigator's seats set on pedestals there is plenty of cockpit space. SeaDek, one of the few optional extras, lines the floor and the wide gunwales and transom, providing secure and comfortable footing (and seating). We carried a 56-litre Ikey-Tek bin sitting across cockpit. When placed lengthways it gives better access to the removeable baitboard allowing three anglers to operate with plenty of space.

There is excellent rod storage. Four full-length holders grace each side of the cockpit and there is narrow shelving each side



BELOW & ABOVE Performance with the Yamaha F90 is good. The 1860 is available in hardtop (HT) and Bimini configurations.



It is big and capable enough to head out after a gamefish, but also ideal for family boating fun.

as well – ideal for smaller snapper and kingfish gaffs, spare ropes and all the other bits and pieces. Three more rod holders are mounted on the bait board (swaps out for a ski pole for towing water toys/skiers). Four standard gunwale holders – two each side and set for trolling for both salt and freshwater species – give further options, along with six holders in the hardtop's rocket-launcher. If gamefishing's your deal, drop-in telescopic riggers could be run off the rocket-launcher from the outermost rod holders.

I appreciated the thigh-high gunwale height and the toe space from an angling perspective. If this were to be a family boat the height would help keep junior inboard, not overboard.

There is a generous swimstep as part of the design, with an optional boarding ladder. There is plenty of space for the more serious fisher to add aftermarket tuna tubes and a livebait tank, neither of which are part of the standard offering.

The designers have made good use of the available space for storage. Very few anglers I know are 'minimalists' – we will fill every nook and cranny with 'stuff' we might just need. The Proline 1860HT caters to this. Across the transom is a full-length shelf, only a small section of which is taken up by the single battery and switches. The area is accessed via a dropdown full-width seat. The space inside is perfect for tackle boxes/bags too big to fit in the cockpit shelves or inside the seat pedestals.

Under the hardtop on the port side there is storage beside the passenger seat for smaller items – keys, cellphones,



TOP LEFT OPPOSITE Access to the rear battery/storage compartment folds down to create a bench seat. Plenty of rod stowage.

ABOVE Tote tanks, gear stowage in the forepeak and a tidy transom – simplicity as a virtue.

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cameras – while in the cuddy, further shelving runs lengthwise. Think PFDs, flare pack, first aid kit, wet weather gear, further boosting storage options. The lipped dash, lined with SeaDek, provides yet more small-item storage.

Bigger items such as dive bags and air bottles; cooler bins and other bulkier items have a place up forward inside the cuddy cabin. Access to the anchor is via a generous hatch in the cabin top – if I can fit through it, almost anyone can!

The helm station console has plenty of real estate. The test boat was fitted with a Raymarine sounder/plotter and a VHF, along with essential switches and two Yamaha engine management and speed/tachometer gauges. Vision from the helm was excellent, sitting and standing, and there was plenty of headroom under the hardtop.

Handholds are positioned in all the right places, the one exception being the lack of one for the seated/standing passenger on the port side – an omission easily rectified in build or as an aftermarket addition.

The rig sits on a single axle unbraked Kiwi Az trailer, built in Whakatane. Mat towed it behind a Ford Ranger XLT, but a two-litre SUV or family car would do the job.

Two models are in production, with a dedicated lure-fishing side/centre console option on the drawing board.

IN SUMMARY

There is a lot to like about this boat. It is unpretentious and delivers what it promises – an affordable, basic boat that is easily driven (although I would like to see how it would go with the 115hp on the transom) and inexpensive to run.

The hull was finished in Nyalic, with other options including bare alloy or paint. A wrap could be another consideration.

Proline Alloy set out to create the bare bones of a great boat – all that is needed now is an owner to flesh the frame out to suit his/her purpose. It is big and capable enough to head out after a gamefish, but also ideal for family boating fun. But don't take my word for it, check it out for yourself at the Auckland On Water Boat Show where you can take advantage of a test run. **BNZ**



Proline Alloy 1860HT

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HIGHLIGHTS

Easily driven and
inexpensive to run

Can be towed by
a two-litre car or SUV

Great as a first boat
or as a no-frills starting point
for owners to add features

Safe, predictable
handling, dry ride

SPECIFICATIONS

loa 5.7m
beam 2.0m
hull thickness 5mm
sides and deck thickness 4mm
deadrise 17.0°
recommended HP 70-115hp
engine Yamaha F90 90hp O/B
fuel 2 x 45l tote tanks
height on trailer 2.76m
approximate towing weight dry
1,350kg
cruise speed 20-25 knots
max speed 32 knots

