

# Boost to the chic of Cherokee

**S**MALL improvements to the shape of a hull can result in enormous performance and handling changes.

The Whittley Cherokee has been a top performance powerboat since its release in 1979, but the new model with a slightly refined hull shape is better still.

The moulds in which fibreglass boats are built have a limited life. When they wear out boat manufacturers usually take the opportunity of improving on a previous design when replacement moulds are constructed.

**J**IM Whittley has taken a moderate line, making design improvements on the new Cherokee which are so subtle that few observers would be able to identify the new and the old Cherokee if they were parked alongside each other.

Up front, the new Cherokee forefront was made 38 mm deeper and the beam was stretched out across the chines by 50 mm. At the gunwales, the beam is a full 100 mm wider, making the overall beam now 2.5 m.

The major benefits of the extra width are to be found

## BOATING

Bob Carter

in the cockpit. Back-to-back seats have been retained in the Cherokee, but the walk-through between the seats is now 100 mm wider, making access to the front so much easier.

At the transom, the extra width has also been well used. Padded stern quarter seats have been fitted either side of the sterndrive engine hatch, providing adequate room for beamy rear ends to plop down.

Externally, the old clinker sides of the Cherokee have been mostly removed, more as a concession to modern styling than for any performance reasons.

Powered by a MerCruiser V-6 sterndrive engine, the Cherokee is a high quality family rig, ideally suited to open water boating. By virtue of the Cherokee's high sided hull, deep cockpit and high protective fastback 'screen, those who take to the water in her can be assured of being comfortably and securely accommodated.

While this rig possesses

very traditional lines, her performance is sizzling. The MerCruiser is rated at 205 hp at the prop and develops more than enough power to snap the rig up on to the plane. With skiers out the back, the MerCruiser would barely know they were there.

Rough conditions on Port Phillip Bay prevented the engine working any more than at three quarter pace.

However, the hull manufacturer claims a top speed of 90 kmh at 5000 rpm with the 584 mm Laser prop.

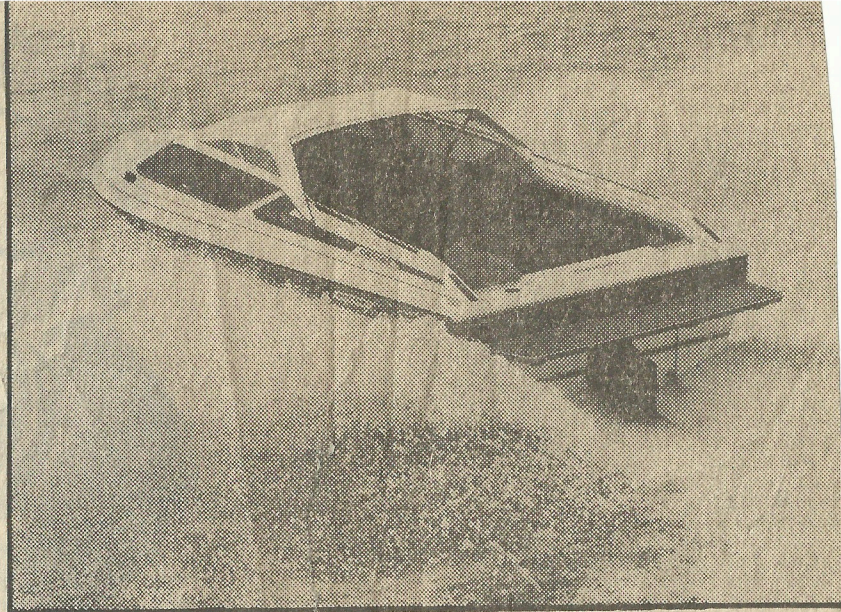
At a more sedate cruise speed the Cherokee easily coped with the lumpy water.

Whether running downhill, beam on or directly into the swells, the Cherokee was precise in her tracking and coped with the conditions very well.

**O**NCE or twice the runabout crunched into a lump of rolling green water, as much a result of a heavy hand on the throttle as the terrible conditions.

Despite the inevitable bone jarring crunch, the Cherokee never gave a hint of rattling her teeth, but simply climbed out of the hole, flicking spray off as she powered away.

The Cherokee was a breeze



The Whittley Cherokee . . . sizzling performance.

to handle. Power steering made light work of directional control, while a dab on the throttle produced instant bursts of power when needed.

With quality features loaded into the rig from bow to stern, the Cherokee is one of the better family powerboats in her class.

Top quality and excellent performance however are reflected in the price ticket of \$23,100. Much of the hefty price can be attributed to the powerplant, tandem trailer, teak boarding platform and one or two other extras.

The Cherokee is also manufactured in an outboard version.

□ Test boat supplied by Whittley Marine, 24 Simms Rd., Briar Hill, 3088, phone 434-4979.