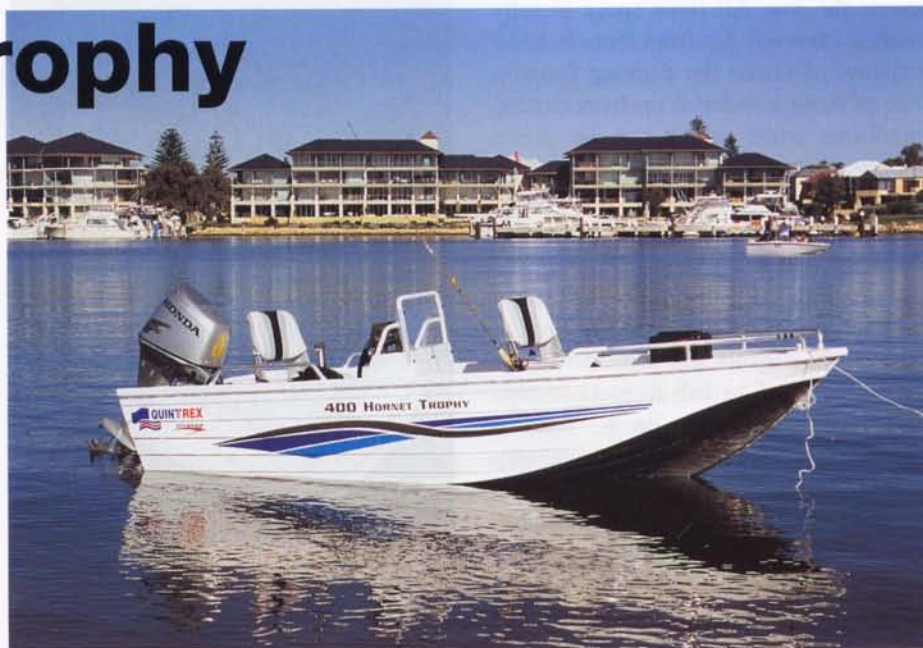


400 Quintrex Hornet Trophy

In this boat review, **GERRY RYDER** puts an Australian bream/barra boat through its paces and likes what he finds.



Quintrex's 400 Hornet Trophy, a sweet river/estuary boat.

AUSSIE ICON

I own a compact and stable little 3.15m dinghy I use primarily for bream fishing. Because breaming isn't my major fishing interest and I run a larger boat, it serves me admirably. It's dirt cheap to run and no trouble to handle. It would make a decent car-topper if I wished.

I enjoy bream fishing, and if it held a bigger place in my life I wouldn't settle for a boat as small as a 3.15m, unless I always fished alone in small waters. If I were working estuaries and rivers regularly I'd be swanning around in a dedicated boat of 3.8-5m. And I wouldn't hesitate to put one of

Quintrex's extensive range on my shortlist if I was hunting down a new bream/barra boat.

Boy, do those Quinnie blokes knock together some useful boats of that ilk. Be your budget slight or substantial, you'll find a Quintrex to suit. Anything from a basic pointy punt with no more than a couple of cross-thwarts right up to the ultimate breaming accessory – casting platforms, multi-position seats, live bait tank, console and carpeted floor – can be found in the company's 2006 catalogue.

You don't have to be a bream competition denizen to appreciate how useful one of those top-line machines are for enclosed water fishing. They may have taken their cue from US bass boats, but their nature and layout reflects the Aussie estuary/river/impoundment scene to a tee.

When I got a message stick from the editor asking if I'd like to have a close look at one of Quinnie's top-spec versions, the 400 Hornet Trophy, for *WAngler* I hesitated...for about two milliseconds. Since the Telwater concern picked up the Quintrex

brand, their ongoing dedication to improving the product has impressed me enormously. Some of the boats in their huge range are only a wisp away from being completely ready for action. The Hornet Trophy series is no exception. These top of the line bream/barra boats need only be equipped with your collection of tackle, fuelled up, and you're on your way. Quintrex is offering their boats fully equipped with Mariner motors and Lowrance electronics in their 'Instant Boating' packages. You can also upgrade from the motor fitted.

FEATURE-PACKED DESIGN

The boat I was to test came with the optional side console and had an alternative fit-out with a 30hp Honda four-stroke with cable steering to the console. Owners can opt for a tiller steered model, popular in the far north where simplicity can be a benefit for operators in remote areas. There's a weight, space and cost advantage in that as well.

Loucas (Luke) Loizou, from Marlin Boat Sales, accompanied me for the run. I started by checking over the compact yet roomy craft, inspecting the features



Multi mounts and fold-down seats mean boat set-up is highly flexible.

in what, at first glance, looks a deceptively simple layout. Yet, as with your favourite lady, there's more than meets the eye. All floor space is fully marine carpeted. Up front there is a fair expanse of raised flat decking forming one of those wonderful up-front casting platforms under which can be stored plenty of gear. Three separate hatches, one large and two smaller at the bow, allow access down into the bowels underneath.

Heading aft, the mid section is another stretch of flat flooring broken only by the console and seats. An angler might still wish to fish from amidships and there's room to do it. Battery storage is provided underfloor centrally in a well-balanced set-up.

With six mounting points available for the two padded pedestal seats provided, including one well forward for a lean seat, the boat can be laid out to suit your desires.

In keeping with the uncluttered theme of the Trophy, the side console doesn't provide any gear storage. It's there to keep wiring and steering gear neat, and provide mounting for instruments and electronics. Two instruments were fitted, a trim gauge and tachometer.

A neat monotone Lowrance X47 sonar unit graced the dash of the Trophy and I found it easy to read and effective. The catalogue lists Lowrance's X52 compact sonar as standard equipment for these boats. So the X47 was a Marlin fit-out alternative.

Although I didn't fiddle with the sounder, as an old Lowrance fan I know the unit would pose no problems to a new starter. A clear screen fitted to the



There's space, style and comfort in this utilitarian package.

console barwork helps keep the evil spray away from the black boxes. Not that spray is any great issue with the Quinnie's Eclipse lines and flared bow.

Down at the blunt end there's another raised casting platform-cum-cover under which is tucked a 20-litre live bait tank to one side, and fuel tank storage on the other. Water is fed to the bait tank via a skin fitting in the transom connected to an internal pump and piping all neatly out of sight under cover. The test boat didn't have a scoop fitted to the intake, meaning water couldn't be force-fed into the tank on the move. A screw-on scoop is available from Quintrex.

In operation, water is drained from the tank via a push-in pipe fitted into the base outlet. The length of the pipe dictates the level of water held in the tank. I felt sure the pipe fitted to our test boat was a little long, meaning the tank would be almost full to the brim. The contents would probably slop out while the boat is travelling. It would be a simple matter to cut the PVC pipe down somewhat to drop the water level. For the bream tournament contestant, an optional forward live well is also available. In fact the list of

standard and optional equipment for the Trophy range is extensive and pretty much exhaustive.

Next door to the live tank is a moulded PVC motor splash-well. That's a nice touch in a boat that's basically an open transom model. Once again Quinnie shows forethought.

When the planners sat down to nut out the Trophy series design, they made a point of assuring the boats would be fly and spin friendly. Everything from the fold-down seats, wide flat decking, raised casting platforms and low unobtrusive gunwale railing is casting friendly. The bow rails are lovely. Low, yet just right to keep hold of the boat when mounting and alighting beachside, they come complete with plates for fitting navigation lights. Rear grab rails are substantial and right there if passing traffic forces you to do a jive while you're trying to sock it to a tough blackie.

Underneath all this is one of Quintrex's finely crafted Eclipse series hulls. Bottom plating is 2mm and sides are 1.6mm, more than adequate for the specified job. External welding is neat as a pin, and the baked finish is beautiful and tough. Bottomsides are left bare as they take all the rough stuff beaching and on the road. The transom boasts a welded mounting plate for sonar transducers and a pair of large drain plugs.

It's common knowledge about Quintrex's acclaimed ability to press complex shapes into aluminium plate, producing hulls that approach the level of fibreglass finish. And is Quinnie really getting their aluminium hulls to ride smoother than the average tinnie? My rear end tells me so.

RIVER REVELATIONS

Oh, the lot of a tester is oft one of woe. Well, woe is a little strong. The gods can send the weather we pray for when fishing, calm and gentle. The Swan was calm and gentle this day. I could have done with some wind and chop. And the new Honda four-stroke had zero hours on it. So we would have to keep away from wide-open throttle, and make our own waves to boot.

I jumped in with Luke and took her



At the wheel, the helmsman fits in nicely. Plenty of room for electronics.

into midstream. At 3500rpm, the Honda was pushing her along just below the plane. She rode nose-up, but not greatly so. Kicking the donk up to 4500rpm saw her up and planing nicely and trimming sweetly, but I can't report what speeds she achieved with only a tacho available. A speedometer would be essential for river use with that plethora of speed limits popping up.

The ride was smooth and stable. Throwing the boat from side to side didn't produce any worrying quirks. Honda's 30hp is unobtrusive and quiet. It wasn't working as hard as I thought it might on the Trophy. Because we couldn't give her heaps my judgement was that with two aboard the motor was doing pretty well. A lighter two-stroke motor *would* definitely offer a bit more oomph. The hull is rated to 40hp, so there are alternatives if you feel the need, although that whispering four-banger would creep up on fish more effectively. And fuel usage at cruising speeds would be frugal.

I pumped up some nasty little cross-waves with figure-eight manoeuvres, ran through them at mid-speed, and was rewarded with a much smoother ride than I would have bet on. That impressed me a lot. I think my gammy neck would happily settle for this baby. The helm position was about right for an average person like myself and the padded seats were comfortable.



Your scribe just loves that up-front platform, but watch the step when fighting a tough fish.

Back at the ramp the 'Ryder stability test', standing on the gunwale, proved no worry by four-metre boat standards. For the record, I go a touch under 80kg.

BREAMERS' BENEFIT

I dropped Luke ashore and got my spouse/assistant to jump in. We cruised over to the cove opposite where I chucked a lure around to get a fishing feel for the Trophy. Up on the forward platform I took note of the inherent stability of this beamy boat. Obviously no four-metre hull is going to be as steady as a monitor, but all in all she made for confident stand-up fishing.

The Trophy 400 has a small step-up in the forward platform, while others in the Trophy range feature a completely flat surface. The step-up on the 400 might prove a slight disadvantage for a fly fisher who requires the most unobstructed floor he can get for no-fuss casting. But for the lure man, I found the step no problem, as long as you remained aware it was there and didn't let the heat of the moment make you careless.

Moving around the boat posed no problems for a couple of mid-sized bods. It's ideal for two crew, where budget restraints or the need for compactness is a consideration. With the ability to allow two anglers to lob from a raised position at either end, the boat lends itself to sight and snag casting. It is in fact rated to carry four adults. As a fishing boat for two, it's fine.

The Trophy could be successfully run in close offshore waters on the right day. But that is really outside its design brief in southern waters. As a gulf and



Quintrex's Eclipse hull slices rather than bangs its way through chop.



Quinnie's trademark attention to detail. Ready for navigation lights.



Perhaps the best fishing bit of the whole boat, with mounting for a possible lean seat.

creek boat in the tropics, the Trophy would do extremely well. There's no reason why you couldn't utilise the boat for fishing Ningaloo Reef waters, inshore of the break, on an easy day.

At the end of the session, getting the boat onto the Dunbier trailer posed no problems as long as you kept the bow on the rear roller as you connected and wound her up. I felt a somewhat deeper roller might work better in a crosswind. It's an owner preference thing and easily fixed. Light aluminium boats like these

are usually a cinch to wind onto a trailer and the Quinnie was no exception.

One day, when we've had our fill of the offshore scene, my wife and I will be taking a long, hard look at a boat just like the Quintrex 400 Hornet Trophy. I can see such a boat serving me well until I'm too old and rattly to go fishing. I can't imagine any more handy class of inshore boat than the Hornet series. And the 400 Hornet Trophy reflects that perfectly.

FITTING A LEKKIE

One cannot talk of bream boats without commenting on fitting electric trolling motors. A bow mounting plate is available as an option ex factory on these models. Alternatively, a bow mounting could also be achieved by either removing the welded-on forward cleat, or cutting and shortening one of the bow rails for a slightly offset mount. Cans of spray paint which colour-match Quintrex's tones are available to get the boat back to her sexy self after the operation. It would pay to enquire about warranty issues before such a mod was undertaken though.

I'd be considering an electric of at least 55-pounds thrust for this baby.

PROS

- Safe, stable, economical river/estuary boat, ideal for two average-sized people.
- Smooth ride over river-sized chop.
- Easy handling on the ramp.



Quinnie doesn't muck around! Big drain plugs, live tank plumbing and a factory-fitted transducer plate are standard.

- Plenty of fishing room for size of boat.
- Front and rear casting platforms.
- Live bait tank pumped and plumbed.
- Large range of factory accessories and options available.

CONS

- Forward casting platform step might be a problem in heat of battle.
- A little more power than average may be required to plane the Eclipse hulls.
- Bait tank outlet pipe could be shorter.



On the water the Trophy performs admirably.

FACTS AND FIGURES

MODEL: QUINTREX 400 HORNET TROPHY.

Type: Round-nose bream/barra style with Quintrex Eclipse V-Flared hull.

Length bow to transom: 3.94m.
LOA: 4 m.

Beam: 1.76m.

Weight, boat only: 205kg.
Max motor weight: 110kg.

Length on trailer: 5.1m.

Horsepower rating: Min: 30hp.
Max: 40hp.

Motor fitted: Honda four-stroke 30hp.

Material: Pressed aluminium alloy with baked enamel finish available in four colours. Striping available in 14 colours.

Basic flotation.

OPTIONS FITTED

Side console; tachometer; motor trim-meter; Lowrance X47 sonar; live bait tank (20l) with pump and plumbing; white paint with blue striping; safety equipment; anchor, chain and line.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Live bait tank/battery box combo unit; navigation lights; trolling motor bow mount plate; 27meg or VHF marine radio; rod locker; bimini/envelope; ignition box (four switch); bow sprit.

PRICE

Basic boat/motor (Mariner 30hp two-stroke)/trailer package (sans console): \$11300.

Price as tested: \$15,995 (after \$1400 boatshow discount) for this boat only.

Warranty: Three-year Quintrex warranty for boat/motor/trailer.

Test boat provided by Marlin Boat Sales, Fremantle.