

“...the boat  
exudes a rugged  
personality”



# STRAIT TALKER

Words and photos by **Matt Vance**

Foveaux Strait is one of New Zealand's most notorious don't-mess-with-me pieces of water; Stabicraft boats are built to take it on. The latest is the Stabicraft 2400 hardtop.

Stabicraft boats are built within cooee of Foveaux Strait, where tide rips and winds whip between the South Island and Stewart Island. I've often known it to live up to its fierce reputation but for our outing on the new Stabicraft 2400 Hardtop, it was taking a day off. Sometimes, reputations can be hard to live up to.

In some ways, the flat water was a pity because it didn't allow the Stabicraft to demonstrate its handling in rough water. However, the boat exudes a rugged personality with space for up to eight anglers.

At 2400kg including trailer, the Stabicraft 2400 is a big boat, but still well within the realms of sane towing for a 3-litre diesel vehicle. We got it off the Mudgway trailer easily enough, thanks to

the rollers and the 2400's good, low-speed directional stability. Reversing up was easy with the Game Chaser Transom (GCT) and stern pod shipping little water and remaining easy to steer.

We made a radio call to Bluff radio legend "Good as Gold" Mary and set our sights on a quick blast to Ruapuke Island which lies slap bang mid-Strait. Mary's voice had genuine concern but the water was as flat as a snooker table.

But as every Southlander knows it is not a Stabi until you get air under it, so we hunted down a likely looking tide rip at the southern end of Ruapuke Island. Adam Marshall from Stabicraft Marine took over the helm while I took to the Stabicraft 1850 Supercab camera boat. After several runs, we got a glimpse of daylight, but the prop remained firmly in the water.

The 2400 has a big boat feel with a soft motion, a firm grip on the water and a clean wake. The visibility from the cab is excellent as is the protection from the elements. The stability at rest is echoed while underway with no chine dancing in the remains of the swell. Trim tabs are an option, although the boat does not suffer for lack of them.

## CONSTRUCTION

The rugged hull of the Stabicraft 2400 is constructed with five sections of 6mm marine alloy, with pontoons and topsides in 4mm. This is all tied together with a ladder-frame keelson, which incorporates a built-in 300-litre fuel tank. There are six dedicated flotation chambers in each pontoon, in addition to side chambers under the deck. As is typical of the



ABOVE: Stabicraft's Adam Marshall at the helm.  
BELOW: Launching and retrieving is easy with the Mudgway trailer.



Stabicraft range, the hull is strong and rigid.

The engine is mounted in an integrated well rather than on a pod. The hull and transom angle meet at the outboard well, forming a wedge which creates extra buoyancy aft where it is needed under the motor. An added advantage is a slightly longer waterline allowing the boat to go astern without shipping large quantities of water. On the deck this is complemented with Stabicraft's Superfish Transom Box. This effectively seals the aft end of the cockpit from boarding seas and makes an excellent fishing position when boating big fish.

The 2400 includes Stabicraft's now standard Arrow Pontoons in the bottomside buoyancy compartments. They are a subtle improvement on the earlier, wider pontoon configuration to improve the ride without compromising on stability.

### LAYOUT

While aluminium pontoon boats have had a reputation for chunky looks, the design team at Stabicraft has minimised the effect and added subtle details into their hulls. The Arrow Pontoons give a clean transition into the deep-vee of the hull which finishes in a sea-kindly 19° deadrise. The Supercab is well-proportioned and set off nicely by the metallic jade-green paint job.

At the business end of the boat, fisher folk will be impressed with the large and accessible live-bait tank taking pride of place on the transom. With a clear glass front it looks like a fish TV which will impress the younger members of the crew. A large, filleting-friendly baitboard doubles as the lid and a couple of rod holders, knife slots and drink/tackle holders are close to hand. The wide, non-skid-covered gunwales make good perches and provide six additional rod holders with matching drink holders. The optional extra of a wash-down pump and hose makes for a tidy finishing touch.

Access to the stern and swim ladder is via a small step up on fold-up seats, as international safety regulations preclude an open walk-through transom. The cockpit space is huge at 2.8m x 1.8m with plenty of room for gear, dive tanks and hangers-on. For those who literally like to hang on, the 2400 is well equipped with plenty of handholds.

The helm station features generous 1.9m headroom at the



The drive-by-wire throttle and helmstation are features of a comfortable driving position.

bolstered seats. The seats are in a king and queen arrangement with the forward pair featuring excellent visibility through the twin pane, 6mm windscreen. The helm area and dash are in alloy with a solid grab rail to port and a generously sized navigation station to starboard. A dark frontrunner keeps glare down and becomes a handy holder for phones and keys. The aft end provides a nice eye level mount for the Yamaha electronic gauges, the Fusion stereo and Lowrance VHF radio. Navigation on the test boat is by Lowrance HDS Gen 2 touch screen which provides easy to read information on everything from depth to the precise location of your secret Foveaux Strait fishing locations.

Up forward there is a generous in-fill V-berth that would allow plenty of room for overnight trips. Access to the foredeck is through a standard aluminum hatch, however any anchoring work can be

handled back at the helm station with controls for the Maxwell HRC8 windlass.

The powerhouse of the Stabicraft 2400 is the Yamaha 200hp four-stroke that spins a 17-inch prop. This is controlled by a Command link, drive-by-wire throttle and gear lever. The stern bracket is wide enough and the reserve buoyancy of the stern high enough to accommodate a twin engine configuration if desired.

There was plenty of power in the Yamaha 200hp that got us off the mark quickly in the flat conditions and with a smooth transition onto the plane. Steering was positive with the chines and pontoons giving a sure-footed grip to even the tightest of turns, pushing the spray away from the boat. Experimenting with the trim angle on the motor was the key to getting cavitation-free tight turns. Cruising speed seemed comfortable at about 24 knots with 3500rpm, which gave us an economical 22

litres an hour burn rate. When we “gave her the turrrps” as they say in Southland, we got to 35 knots, still well in control.

Less in control were our fishing skills. The crew of the camera boat had a crack at a likely looking site with no luck, until they spotted a well-fed New Zealand fur seal on the rocks, which explained the lack of cod.

The journey back to Bluff proved the roughest patch of water all day as the out-going tide stood up a small chop in the channel. This further illustrated the 2400's pedigree as a little trim up gave her an easy motion without the surging decelerations that are the feature of some boats in down-wave conditions. Mary welcomed us back on the radio and we retired to Invercargill with the boat in tow to admire some of Adam's venison that he had recovered on a recent hunting expedition.

After 27 years in business, Stabicraft has developed a reputation for constructing

Foveaux Strait on an unusually calm day. It didn't give the Stabicraft much chance to show off its rough water ability.



The clean lines of the Arrow Pontoons.

## Stabcraft 2400 supercab

- **length** 24ft / 7.3m
- **recommended HP** 200hp
- **maximum HP** 250hp
- **maximum engine weight** 537kg
- **leg length** 25in
- **fuel tank** 300L
- **external beam** 2.30m
- **internal beam** 1.8m
- **deadrise** 19 degrees
- **tube thickness** 4mm
- **hull thickness** 6mm
- **reserve buoyancy** approx 1833L
- **dry hull weight** approx 1180kg
- **tow weight** approx 2400kg
- **length on trailer** 8.5m
- **height on trailer** approx 3.3m



robust, seaworthy blue water boats that can take the knocks. The factory's proximity to the hard testing ground of Foveaux Strait and Stabcraft's focus on innovative design and excellent build quality have led the charge in alloy pontoon boats in New Zealand.

Overseas markets have taken note and there is a healthy fan-base in Australia and North America. The Stabcraft 2400 Supercab takes the model range to 18 and is aimed firmly at their hunter-gatherer clientele who want robust construction, sea keeping ability, the extra space and the smooth ride of a larger hull. ■

LEFT: The 2400 reverses up well due to the Game Chaser transom. MIDDLE: The live bait tank at the transom. RIGHT: The Maxwell RC6 capstan takes the hassle out of anchoring.

