



A PROUD HISTORY

BY BARRY THOMPSON

When Frank Simpson built his first all fibreglass production trailer boat in 1962, under the Fi Glass banner, he changed the way we looked at our family boating. It didn't happen overnight, but it did happen. Thousands of boats later, Fi Glass are still producing fibreglass boats and are still one of the leading brands in the industry.

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Fi Glass might not have been the first, that distinction goes to Arnold France in the early '50s and even Condor Craft beat Fi Glass by at least five years. However it was Fi Glass that turned the industry on its head and took volume boat production to new heights.

In the boom years of the late 70s and early 80s, the company built over 20 boats a week, with names such as Firecrest, Viscount, Fireball, Regent and Lightning very much part of the local trailerboat vocabulary. The 6m Viscount at the time was the biggest production fibreglass trailerboat in the country and came about as a result of the new era of V6 outboards. At last there was a boat suitable for the size and horsepower being offered by Mercury and OMC. Hundreds of the earliest Mercury Black Max and Johnson/Evinrude "Jumbo" 200s found their way onto Viscounts.

In 1977, Fi Glass introduced a 'smaller' version of the Viscount they called the Warrior. It looked very much like its big brother but fitted into a lower price bracket, required less horsepower and

smaller tow vehicle.

A few years ago, Fi Glass saw the need to replace their now very aged and somewhat dated Viscount and Warrior models. Interestingly they compromised by retaining the Warrior name, but fixing it to a Viscount sized hull. The result is a nice combination and a balanced boat that is a totally new look for the company.

The easy way would have been to take the existing Viscount hull

and slap on a new deck and cabin. This time however Fi Glass went all the way with a hull shape that is unlike any other Fi Glass. While the deck lines and layout carry over some of the best ideas from the previous boats, essentially it's all-new.

The variable deadrise hull is 22-degree at the transom, however it features a v-plank section on the bottom that runs well forward, tapering away around the base of the stem. This is designed to give the boat easy acceleration onto the plane and in calm water the boat runs on the v-plank, thereby reducing the hull drag and unlike a flat plank doesn't pound in the rough or tend to fall off.

There is a finer entry forward than the previous Warrior and although the same strake pattern as the Viscount has been retained the inner strakes go further aft to handle the bigger horsepower engines. There is also a wide downturn chine and flats both sides which give stability both at rest and underway.

TRIPLE RIG

I had the opportunity to try the



The rear seats are deep and ideal for kids, but also remove for fishing.

Warrior with three different engine combinations and in three different water conditions. The first was with a Suzuki 150 EFI off Whangaparaoa Peninsula on calm to mildly choppy water. The Suzuki ran out to 5600 rpm @ 51 mph and as expected in the sea conditions the hull ran faultlessly. It sat up on the v-plank at speed and with out too much trim had plenty of bow lift. Nicest cruise was at 40 mph @ 4500 rpm.

When my time came to try out the same boat with a Honda 130, the sea state was a lot more severe, with a stiff 25 knot plus breeze blowing the tops off a short 1/2 metre Auckland Harbour chop. The Honda returned a top speed of 43 mph @ 5500 rpm and 37 mph @ 4500 rpm. The Warrior loved the rough water and handled the following, head and side seas with ease. It's a quiet hull and responds quickly to throttle and steering alterations. There was a little spray over the screen when quartering the sea and in the stiff cross-wind leaned into the wind. That's nothing against this particular boat, it's a trait of most boats with big volume topsides and no tabs. Shifting passenger weight soon fixes the problem.

The third outing was a mirror smooth Lyttelton Harbour with a Yamaha 130. Top speed was an impressive 46.2 mph @ 5800 rpm and 35 mph @ 4500 rpm. As I found the day I drove the boat with the Honda, the boat ran perfectly, with good acceleration and effortless handling and ride.

OPEN PLAN

The thing that impresses me about the layout of the new Warrior is the openness. Personally I'm not a fan of lockable cabins with solid bulkheads in boats this size. The Warrior has a port bulkhead only, with a deep



back to give a true feeling of open space.

If you don't have your canopy up, then the rear of the cabin squabs may get wet in the rain, although the large racked back perspex screen does tend to cover a lot.

The cabin layout is basic regulation twin full length berths and deep side trays. It is a full size cabin with the berths long enough to sleep on and the cabin height adequate for 2-3 adults seated. There's no storage under the squabs - the space is used for foam filled buoyancy - and the front squab can be removed

when standing in the large cabin hatch for anchoring duties. Although the Warrior does have wide side decks with anti skid, I can't image an easier place to handle the anchor tackle, than from the cabin top hatch. The deep self draining anchor locker is concealed under a large moulded cover that follows the contours of the deck. There is space beneath for a low profile capstan, which can be operated from either the helm or with a foot/knee pad inside the cabin.

The interior is all fully lined and carpeted with an internal light and access panel to the rear of the helm.

When you design a boat to be an all-purpose utility, then the layout must reflect that image. The Warrior's cockpit imparts that design with a simple yet practical design that should cater for most tastes. Standard seating is twin back to back (upper/lower) bucket seats on moulded fibreglass bases, plus removable jump seats aft. The rear seats are wide enough for the larger prosteria and recessed stainless rails incorporated into the side decks give your passengers a secure handhold. There are other seating variations available with



recess into the cabin. In fact there isn't anything ahead of the passenger seat but the wind-screen, with the deck cut right

Opposite page:
The Yamaha 130
returned a top
speed of 46.2
mph.

Top: The transom
area is well
thought out.

Centre: With no
port bulkhead
the cabin looks
big.

Bottom: FIGlass'
newest is
possibly their
best.



single buckets and swivelling bases also very popular.

The helm position is great when seated, with the footrest at the right height (for me anyway), the screen doing its job keeping off the wind and spray, the controls are well placed and the instruments easy to read. I found the fixed seat base too close when standing to drive and would have preferred to see it mounted about 100mm further back or replaced with a sliding pedestal type. The split-level dash allows you to fit either flush or bracket mounted electronics plus plenty of instruments and switches.

Storage is not wanting in the Warrior with a cavernous underfloor locker that is long enough to take skis, wakeboards and fishing rods and deep enough for all your dive gear and bottles. Behind this is a 150 litre stainless steel fuel tank. If you don't like the idea of your rods under the floor, then you can use the rod racks, fitted to the narrow trays either side. There are the deep areas under the front seats, in a port side half shelf and extra space below the aft deck. Battery, oil tank and spare tote tanks are fitted away behind a clip-on vinyl curtain.

If you are a fisherman, then you will appreciate the removable back seats, wide flat side decks and plenty of space to mount a bait board. Large built-in boarding platforms and a stainless ladder will satisfy the divers and skiers.

CPC PACKAGE

The Fi Glass Warrior is a CPC boat, which means you know that such items as navigation lights, bilge pump, battery cut-off switch and structural hull warranty (6 years) are standard.

The Warrior is a boat that comes with a huge reputation and tradition, from a company that has been 40 years in the business. It is Warrior with a proud history.



Back to back seats are standard.

Fi GLASS WARRIOR

HULL

Model:	Warrior
Price:	\$22500
Price as Tested:	\$41000
Designer:	Frank Simpson
Material:	GRP
Type:	cabin
LOA:	6.4 m
Beam:	2.3 m
Deadrise:	22 deg
Traileable Weight:	1400 lbs (approx)
Engine Capacity:	115hp - 200hp
Power Options:	Outboard / sterndrive
Fuel Capacity:	150 litres
Cookpit LOA:	3.0 m
Cabin LOA:	1.9 m

PERFORMANCE

	Honda 130	Suzuki 150	Yamaha 130
	13' x 16"	14 1/4' x 20"	13' x 19"
500 rpm	2.5 mph	—	—
750 rpm	3.5 mph	4.0 mph	6.5 mph
1000 rpm	3.5 mph	6.5 mph	7.5 mph
1500 rpm	6.5 mph	7.5 mph	9.5 mph
2000 rpm	7.5 mph	11.0 mph	10.0 mph
2500 rpm	9.5 mph	20.5 mph	12.0 mph
3000 rpm	17.5 mph	26.0 mph	19.0 mph
3500 rpm	23.0 mph	31.5 mph	24.5 mph
4000 rpm	27.0 mph	35.0 mph	30.0 mph
4500 rpm	32.0 mph	40.0 mph	35.0 mph
5000 rpm	37.5 mph	44.5 mph	39.5 mph
5500 rpm	43.0 mph	48.0 mph	44.5 mph
5800 rpm	—	51.0 mph	—
5900 rpm	—	—	46.2 mph

Speeds are recorded on an Eagle GPS and recorded to the nearest .5 mph.

NOTABLE STANDARD EQUIPMENT

CPC, 12 volt socket, bow rail, rod racks, boarding ladder.

OPTIONS ON TEST BOATS

Canopy, ski pole

ENGINES

Make	Honda	Suzuki	Yamaha
HP	130	150	130
Model	EFI	EFI	Carb
Cylinder Type:	4	VE	V4
Displacement:	2254cc	2253cc	1730 cc
Max RPM:	5500	5600	5500
Retail Price:	\$16672	\$15805	\$12868

TRAILER

Make:	Fi Glass
Model:	NA
Braked:	No
Suspension:	Springs
Rollers:	Multi roller
Std Features	lip lights, jockey wheel, plug holder
Retail Price:	\$4640

MANUFACTURER

Fi Glass Products Ltd, 247 Dyers Road, P.O. Box 19682, Christchurch, Tel: 03 384 3199, Fax 03 384 4470.

BOATS SUPPLIED BY

Suzuki - Gullford Marine, 671 Whangaparaoa Rd, Whangaparaoa, Auckland Tel 09 424 5555
 Honda - Mikes Marine Centre Ltd, P.O. Box 55, Silverdale, Auckland, Tel 09 426 8555
 Yamaha - Mr Boats Ltd, 247 Dyers Road, Christchurch, Tel 03 384 3199, Fax 03 384 4470.