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TY TEST: ELLIOTT 7.4

The Kiwi market needed
a large trailable cruiser
and it's now available
in Australia too.
BARRY TRANTER tested
out the Elliott 7.4

WHEN I interviewed Kiwi yacht designer Greg Elliott a few months ago I asked him about the performance reputation of his then new Elliott 7.4 trailer yacht. He was surprised by the question; he had designed the 7.4 as a cruiser, or at best a cruiser/racer, with internal hull volume as his first consideration.

The Kiwi production yacht market lacked a bigish, comfortable, trailable cruiser, so that's what Elliott Type Yachts, designers and builders, gave them. But presumably the design brief did not include the requirement that the boat had to be slow.

This performance image is one that the Australian Elliott connection will have to overcome. The boat is not extreme enough to dominate the dedicated TYA racing fleet, and the general public may be deterred by the

Elliott sporting image. The 7.4 is certainly quick and agile; it is also dry and stable.

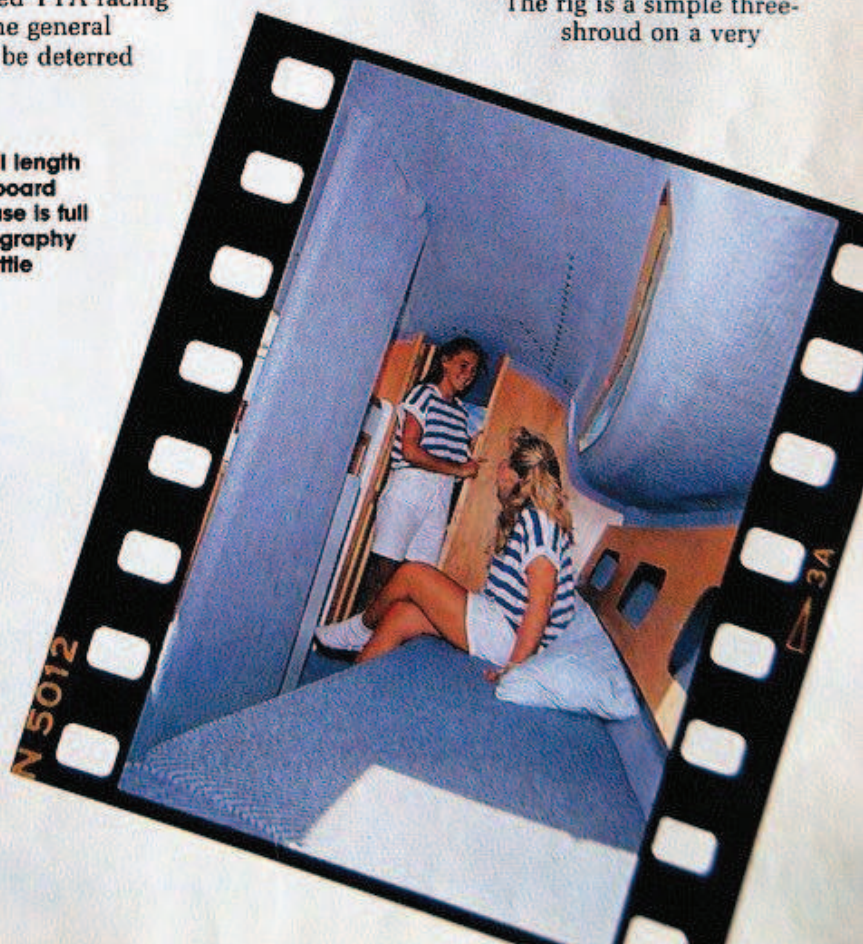
At 1000kg displacement it is quite a lightweight, and with 420kg of lead in a delta-shaped wedge at the end of the keel, the ballast:weight ratio is healthy. With 2.45m beam on an LOA of 7.4m and a waterline length of 6.6m, it is neither a skinny TY nor a fat little rating boat.

The underwater hull shape is that of a big modern dinghy rather than a small keelboat, with maximum depth under the mast, quite a bit of rocker, and maximum beam at the front edge of the cockpit. At rest the bow knuckle is clear of the water; sailing fast downwind, the 7.4 sits back on her buttock lines, lifts the knuckle well clear, and charges.

There is no ballast in the hull or the keel blade. The rudder is a dagger, carried in a simple alloy frame. The transom is open, the lifelines removeable. The outboard rides on a stern bracket, and was quite easy to reach. The boat we sailed had a 4hp Mariner, not big enough but still with enough muscle to push the boat and five adults straight into a 12-knot north easterly; 7.5hp would be nice, but maybe 6 would do.

The rig is a simple three-shroud on a very

Berths run full length of hull's starboard side. Keel case is full depth. Photography by Peter Beattie





Galley moulding (right) is to port side of the centre case. Despite Kiwis' reputation, 7.4 hull is stiff upwind (left)

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light Baverstock mast section, the same as that used on the Elliott 5.9. This proved a little too flexible between the spreaders and the hounds, so importer Morris Short added a second, short set of spreaders to steady the mast in this area. These spreaders pull the shrouds only slightly out of a straight line.

The rig is otherwise straightforward. You push it up and tension with a bottlescrew on the forestay, a sound system if you don't lose the adjustable spanner.

The Elliott we tried was transported on an unglamorous delivery trailer. The experts tell me that these snub-nosed hulls can be difficult to get on to a conventional trailer; whatever the reason, Morris Short uses the extending drawbar submersible type of trailer. He says that is the NZ way and that Australians worry too much about trailer bearings. Certainly extending the trailer, floating the boat on and lashing it to the stempost was a painless way to retrieve. I don't know enough about trailing to know how the trailer lasts over a long period.

Accommodation

The layout is the familiar style, with a continuous run of berths right down the starboard side into the forepeak. To port there is a quarter berth, settee in the saloon, and galley against the forward bulkhead. The WC is a small portable between the V berths. You'd need a curtain here if you are sensitive to things like privacy.

The layout is not lavish, but is certainly sensible — good enough, in fact. The trim is carpet on the cabin roof and hull sides.



Sailing

No matter how many boats you sail, it is difficult to separate the boat's performance from the qualities of the day on which you sailed it, eg, a mediocre boat on a great day with great company can leave a great impression. A great boat on a crappy day with a crabby owner can leave a pretty negative impression of the craft.

When we sailed the Elliott 7.4 we had a steady 12- to 14-knot north easterly, which suited the boat perfectly, and congenial company. Morris Short and his partner Phil are not the sort of people who get tense when they go sailing; they had a good time, as did we. So the boat left a strong impression.

The Elliott was easy to settle down upwind; we had five aboard, but three would be plenty. The boat did not seem to be particularly sensitive to crew weight or position.

That big, low-aspect mainsail drew beautifully; it's the sort of sail seen these days only by Starboat sailors. The Elliott seemed quite close-winded, but again it was her downwind speed that impressed. Running more or less square, in the puffs the bow lifts and she goes faster. The helm was particularly direct — more than minor deflections were

never called for. It would take a mighty lot of breeze to get the 7.4 out of shape. She was quite happy under shy kite as well. Sure, we had smooth water and only a moderate breeze, but you could steer with your toes.

Summary

A nice compromise, the Elliott 7.4, a good size and a really fine sailer. Easy to handle, easy to launch and retrieve, not too heavy to tow.

Elliott Type Yachts plan to build the boat here. They estimate the craft will cost around \$32,000, which is probably a bit on the high side for a 24-footer.

To all intents and purposes it is a roomy keelboat with a trailable capacity. If you could control the growth in the centre case, it's the sort of boat you could easily leave on the mooring and take home now and then for a scrub and a bit of love and care. ☺

ELLIOTT 7.4

LOA	7.4m
LWL	6.6m
Beam	2.45m
Draft (keel down)	1.65m
Displacement	1000kg
Ballast	420kg
Sail area, main plus No 1	33.7m ²
More information from Elliott Type Yachts, (02) 290-2307.	