

# Southern Gem

Text &amp; Photos by Barry Thompson

BOAT TEST: FREWZA F14 Fisher



*The fascia is plenty big enough for the usual engine monitoring instruments.*

the boys set out for their fishing trip was great for the brand", said Brendon. Since then the company has exported many more boats to the Tokelau Islands.

### Easy Driven

Traditionally, pontoon boats had a reputation for being very flat in the bow sections, but not so the F14 Fisher. The design features a fine entry hull, with a 16-degree deadrise at the transom. The pontoons are built in 2.5mm alloy, with the hull sections all 3mm. The boat we tested had the optional 4mm hull as this was the owner's choice. The F14 Fisher, like

all the Frewza boats, has three separate air compartments in the pontoons and a separate sealed underfloor compartment, which makes it virtually unsinkable!

Stability at rest is excellent and the hull at speed is easily driven, having positive tracking and quick response to helm changes. The screen is at such a height that when I was seated I had a line of sight just over the top of the alloy surround and yet no wind was in my face – just the right height I reckon.

My test day on Tauranga Harbour was all flat water, which ideally suits a small boat like the F14 Fisher. As expected it was free of

*The Yamaha 40 pushes the F14 to 26 knots.*

**Frewza may not be regarded as a mainstream brand, but when you've built over 500 boats and current production is close to 150 boats a year, you can justifiably say you are a serious player in the aluminium boat industry.**

When designer Brendan Frew and his wife Kirsten started Frews Marine Ltd eight years ago the concentration was on the 4-5m open tiller steer dinghy market, but as time progressed the emphasis started to go towards the cuddy boats, of which the Frewza F14 Fisher is a major part.

Brendon says that their cuddy range is now as popular as any of their open dinghies. "I see a big future for the brand in this market and the response we have had to the F14 and the larger F16 has been very encouraging", he adds.

Currently the company produces a range of boats from 2.8m right through to 9m from its Invercargill factory and doesn't just restrict itself to production boats.

"We have an attitude that we can build just about anything anyone wants in the way

of alloy boats and so over the years we have produced quite a few custom boats", added Brendon.

So who's buying the F14 Fisher?

According to Brendon it's quite diverse, from the first-time boat owner to those who are more 'senior in years' and are wanting something smaller and easier to handle on their own and doesn't cost \$300 to fill the tank. I can certainly relate to that!

To date, most of the Frewza boats have been sold locally, although there has been some export to Canada and the Pacific Islands. The brand gained some great international press when a few years ago a trio of young boys drifted for 52 days off Tokelau Islands in a Frewza open dinghy.

"The resulting rescue and the fact that our boat was still very much as it was when

**The Frewza F14 is an extremely practical entry level pontoon boat.**





**Practical Layout**

Being only a small cuddy, the forward space is strictly for storage, with a cargo rack to stop any gear working its way back into the cockpit. A one-level treadplate sole runs from bow to stern through the 1.2m beam cockpit. Anchoring can be carried out from the cockpit, with an easy reach to the open anchor locker. A walk-through screen is available but I don't see it being necessary. There is also the option of fitting a small capstan and even a drum winch.

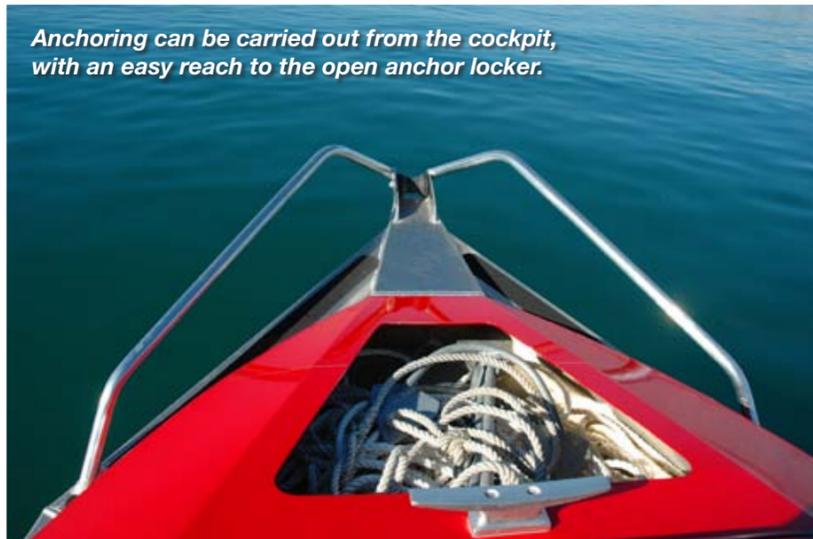
Space behind the screen is provided for either a small flush-mounted or bracket-mounted fishfinder on the dash. Our test boat was fitted with a bracketed Raymarine Dragonfly. The fascia is plenty big enough for the usual engine monitoring instruments,

**A big practical cockpit that is ideal for fishing.**

vices and easily driven. The F40 Yamaha is ideally suited and although the boat is recommended to 60hp, I found the 40hp to be more than enough.

Despite its size you may wish to take this boat offshore, and while I am sure it will ride well in choppy water, remember it's still only 4.4m long. Top speed with two aboard and a full tote tank was 30mph @ 5800 rpm, running a Powertech 10" three-blade stainless prop.

What impressed me was how easily the F14 Fisher got onto the plane and maintained it at low rpm. We were still planing at 2000 rpm doing 7mph. About 22-25 mph was a sweet cruise range, with the fuel consumption certainly dropping as we got off the higher rpm range. Flat-out the Yamaha F40 4-stroke was indicating 15.3L/h and when I dropped back to 22mph this decreased to just 8.4L/h. That would give a range of around 92NM on a single 45L tote tank.



**Anchoring can be carried out from the cockpit, with an easy reach to the open anchor locker.**



switch panel and extras such as a GME VHF and stereo head deck.

Storage is available in full-length side trays as well as full-beam shelf across the transom. There's still space underneath for a couple of tote tanks and the battery. One of the options on our test boat was a wooden bench seat, which extends the seating to five. This can be either fixed in place or removable. Standard seating is a couple of plastic swivel seats forward on cantilevered bases complete with storage compartments.

Again, the transom area can be customised to include a walkthrough space as well as a bait tank or an extra boarding platform. Standard layout is a single port side platform with handholds and drop-down ladder.

**Being only a small cuddy, the forward space is strictly for storage.**



**The wooden bench seat is an extra.**

**Keeping Up With Demand**

Due to constant demand for the small boats in the range, Brendon admits that the development of the larger cuddies has been somewhat held back. However, that seems to be changing now, with a 5.5m hardtop due for completion shortly and a number of boats in the 6-6.8m range now launched or in development.

"Last year we built 104 boats and this year that will be closer to 150, of which a growing proportion is the larger cuddies such as the F14 Fisher and F16 Fisher, plus we are seeing a demand for bigger hardtops", says Brendon.

With around 70 F14s built since the first was released just over three years ago, the demand has grown steadily for this practical entry level pontoon boat. Brendan and Kirsten and their team pride themselves on building boats to the highest standards, incorporating high-grade materials with excellent craftsmanship. The F14 Fisher certainly ticks all the boxes.

•AB

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Model:	Frewza F14
Priced from:	\$NZ25,000
Price as tested:	\$NZ34,000
Type:	Cuddy
Construction:	3mm / 2.5mm
LOA:	4.40m
Beam:	1.75m
Deadrise:	16 degrees
Trailer Make:	Mudgway
Height on trailer:	1.70m
Trailerable weight:	560kg
Power:	Yamaha F40 4-stroke
Propeller:	Powertech 10" 3-blade S/S
Power options:	40-60hp
Fuel capacity:	Tote tanks

**Performance & Fuel**

Rpm	Mph	L/h	Nm
700	2.6	0.8	132
1000	3.9	1.0	158
1500	4.3	1.5	117
2000	6.1	2.2	112
2500	7.4	3.3	91
3000	8.7	4.9	72
3500	12.2	5.6	88
4000	16.9	7.0	98
4500	19.1	8.4	92
5000	21.7	11.0	80
5500	23.9	14.3	68
5800	26.1	15.3	69

Fuel capacity = 45 litres  
Note: Range is based on 90% of fuel capacity, in calm conditions.

**Notable features:**  
Baitboard, bilge pump, navigation light package

**Notable Options on Test Boat**  
Raymarine Dragonfly MFD, GME VHF, Rockford stereo, wooden bench seat.

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Manufacturer: Frews Marine Ltd

- +64 03 2131442
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- frewsmarine@xtra.co.nz
- www.frewzaboats.co.nz

Boat Supplied by: Conder Marine Limited

- +64 07 542 3935
- +64 027 451 2353
- condermarine@xtra.co.nz
- www.outboardmotor.co.nz