

SENATOR RH 780 W

A TALE OF TWO TINNIES

Once upon a time... well, about a year ago actually, two good mates, Grant Bagshaw and Mark Lane, decided to invest in new boats and approached Senator Boat's Hamilton agents, Rollo's Marine. Both prospective customers wanted Senator 780 W hulls, but each had different ideas about aspects of the layout and engines. Fortunately, Senator are happy to customise their designs. Recently, Grant Simmonds, owner of Senator, invited Sam Mossman to meet the two owners and check out their 'same but different' boats...

Keen fishos Grant Bagshaw and Mark Lane live near Bowentown at the western entry of Tauranga Harbour. There is a great sheltered (although a bit tidally limited) launching facility for members of the Bowentown Boating and Sportfishing Club, but to reach the open sea requires crossing the Bowentown bar. A lot of water pumps through the entrance between Bowentown and Matakana Island and the bar certainly must be treated with respect. This makes the Senator 780 W, with its big pontoon hull's inherent stability, considerable load-bearing capacity and reserve buoyancy, ideal for the task. These

qualities also make it perfect for diving, offshore game fishing and deep-water bottom fishing in the far-flung realms of the Bay of Plenty.

The two boats are named for fictional characters with Grant's aqua-green hull *Bad Jelly* finding its namesake in Spike Milligan's beloved children's book *Bad Jelly the Witch*, while Mark's more gothic magenta-brown rig takes its title *Cousin Itt* from a character in *The Addams Family*.

Having decided on the starting points of their hulls, Grant and Mark visited the Senator Factory in Napier late last year to talk about customising features. They hit it off with Grant Simmonds and his team and the project boats got

underway in earnest.

Basic differences

I must apologise in advance: these are two big, complex builds with many different features and customised aspects. I do not have space to cover everything, but in some ways, this showcases Senator Boats' ability to custom-build to an owner's requirements.

There are the basic differences in the rigs – Grant's boat is an open-back hardtop, while Mark's enclosed hardtop has a longer cabin and features lockable sliding glass and alloy doors. Both cockpits have a heap of workspace, but Mark's *Cousin Itt* has transom walk-throughs on both sides, while Grant's *Bad Jelly*

has a single walk-through on the port side.

The wheelhouse layout varies as well. Mark's enclosed version features a king and queen helm seat and a table with facing seats on the passenger side. The open back layout of Grant's boat has king and queen seating on both sides, as well as an offset, forward facing central seat.

Getting pushed around

Another difference between the two boats is the power plants. Both owners chose Yamaha engines, which were fitted by Rollo's Marine. While Mark went for a single 300hp four stroke, Grant decided to go with twin

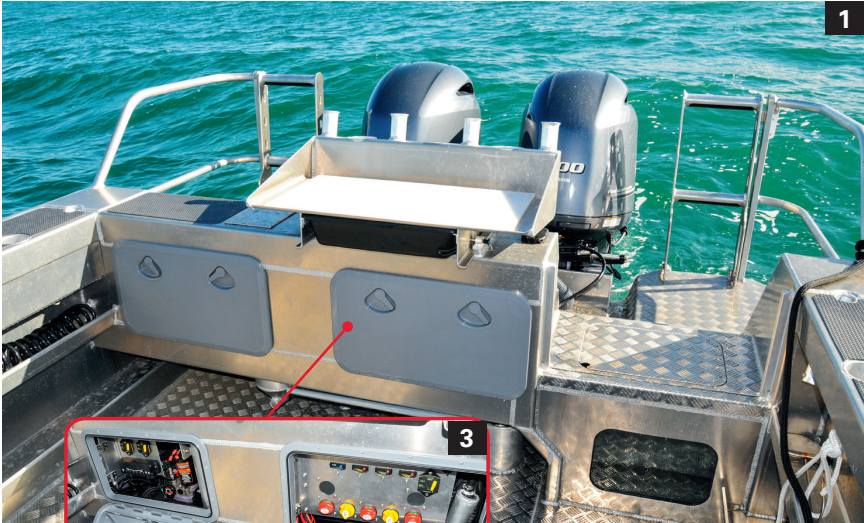
Yamaha 200hp outboards with a 'close' set-up and Yamaha's Helm Master integrated boat control system. This features a twin binnacle which can be linked to provide synchronised throttles, joystick control for tight handling (such as berthing in marinas etc) and SetPoint mode which will hold the boat in position over structure.

We gave both outboard rigs a run in flat water to compare their performances and the figures are in the tables on page 92.

The Bowentown bar was sloppy, running a metre of chop in a modest wind-against-tide situation. As might be expected from pontoon configurations of this size, the big Senators absolutely aced it in comfort.



1) Cousin Itt heads out over the Bowentown Bar; 2) The pontoons help turn down the spray; 3) King and Queen helm seating on Cousin Itt; 4) Bad Jelly's helm controls feature a joy-stick control and twin binnacle.



1) Bad Jelly's transom step through features an in-built livebait tank; 2) Bad Jelly is put through its paces off Bowentown. 3) Bad Jelly's extensive fitout requires a serious electrical system; 4) An open-back hard top configuration provides plenty of workspace in the cockpit.

5) A wide beam and pontoon construction gives excellent stability; 6) Cousin Itt has two transom step-throughs and two batteries in the transom wall; 7) Both 780's have a heap of cockpit space, and Cousin Itt's features a customised Icey-Tek.



Fishing fittings

Both owners are into offshore game fishing (Mark Lane was headed to the eastern Bay of Plenty after the test to chase southern bluefin tuna) and deep-water dropping for 'puka, bass, bluenose and the like. To provide plenty of range, Grant Bagshaw has a 550-litre under-deck fuel tank, while Mark Lane went for a 500-litre capacity tank, allowing for plenty of trolling and stayaway

trips in the far reaches of the Bay of Plenty. Fittings to make multi-day trips more comfortable include electric toilets in the forward cabins. The fore cabins will sleep three adults and there is a fourth bunk to the side. Grant's boat has a 100-litre freshwater tank and there is provision for a portable cooker. Grant has a built-in Isotherm fridge while Mark has a huge customised Icey-Tek bin in the cockpit.

Both boats are excellent fishing platforms due to the inherent stability of the pontoon design. Extra fishing space is formed by the pipe cages around the boarding platforms. There are some cool fishing fittings in this boat. Both boats feature US-made Rupp outriggers. The mounts for these are built through the hardtop and the 'riggers can be adjusted with a crank handle from under the back

of the hardtop. Another fitting both boats have in common is a substantial cray-pot davit with electric winch. There are four through-gunwale rod holders set along each side, three with adjacent cup holders. The transom bait stations have an additional four holders and the rocket launchers another 12 positions, a total of 24. Mark's boat features twin tuna tubes and Grant's one tube. Mackerel-sized



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SARCA Anchors		GUARDIAN Alloy Anchors		ANCHOR CHAIN G30 HDG		ANCHOR WINCH ROPES	
4kg	\$214.11	G5 1.2kg	\$117.60	6mm Italian made	\$7.37	High Strength Certified 8 Strand	
6kg	\$240.88	G7 1.8kg	\$150.95	7mm Italian made	\$8.75	12mm ProWarp8	\$4.53
9.5kg	\$297.38	G11 2.7kg	\$207.12	8mm Italian made	\$11.81	14mm ProWarp8	\$6.31
12kg	\$410.37	G16 3.1kg	\$300.15	10mm Italian made	\$17.19	16mm ProWarp8	\$8.22
EXCEL Anchors		DELTOID Anchors		ANCHOR CHAIN G40 Solid Zinc		20mm ProWarp8	\$10.58
7.5kg	\$338.10	5kg	\$97.16	8mm Italian made	\$16.88	High Strength 3 Strand	
9.5kg	\$391.77	5kg Stainless	\$418.29	10mm Italian made	\$25.37	12mm ProWarp3	\$4.37
12.5kg	\$472.27	6kg	\$116.60	12mm Italian made	\$31.94	14mm ProWarp3	\$7.64
16kg	\$759.38	6kg Stainless	\$501.95	13mm Italian made	\$38.21	16mm ProWarp3	\$9.84
SHOVEL Anchors		SUPREME Anchors		ANCHOR CHAIN G40 Stainless		High Strength Certified 12 Stand	
4kg	\$135.34	2.3kg	\$136.56	6mm Italian made	\$32.69	12mm ProWarp12	\$4.77
4kg Stainless	\$306.23	4.5kg	\$194.06	7mm Italian made	\$40.64	14mm ProWarp14	\$6.27
6kg	\$200.95	7kg	\$254.44	8mm Italian made	\$50.22	Drum Braid High Strength Certified	
6kg Stainless	\$459.39	12kg	\$323.44	10mm Italian made	\$75.53	6mm DrumWarp Pro	\$2.62
FORTRESS Alloy Anchors		STOWFLAT Grapnels				8mm DrumWarp Pro	\$3.11
FX-7 1.8kg	\$285.94	8mm	\$54.74			10mm DrumWarp Pro	\$4.97
FX-11 3.1kg	\$383.27	10mm	\$66.70			Drum Braid	
FX-16 4.5kg	\$554.50	12mm	\$78.20			6mm DrumWarp Std	\$1.90
FX-11 3.1kg	\$748.35	16mm	\$103.50			8mm DrumWarp Std	\$2.76
DELTA Anchors		STOWFLAT Stainless				10mm DrumWarp Std	\$3.22
4kg	\$116.14	8mm	\$77.37			Bog Std 3 Strand Polyester	
6kg	\$152.13	10mm	\$86.24			8mm	\$1.05
10kg	\$215.13	12mm	\$95.92			10mm	\$1.74
16kg	\$341.12	16mm	\$230.04			12mm	\$2.46

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1) There are plenty of storage options in Bad Jelly; 2) Bad Jelly's seating includes a swivelling helm seat, two rear facing bench seats and two reversing bolster passenger seats; 3) The Rupp outrigger base is fitted through the hardtop; 4) The enclosed wheelhouse on Cousin Itt features a table, bench seat and reversable passenger seat; 5) A single 300hp Yamaha outboard powers Cousin Itt; 6) Four rod holders and three cup holders are set along each side.

livebait tanks are fitted under the port step-throughs.

Divers are catered for by tank storage room in the cockpit side trays and boarding platforms with integral fold-down boarding ladders.

The machines that go ping

The electronics were supplied, installed and commissioned by Bay Marine Electronics. The navigation and communication suites are extensive and the same in both boats: twin Garmin GPSMAP 8416 Multi-Function Displays (MFD) which give plenty of real estate to show the data from the Fantom series radome (radar) alongside the chartplotter and sounder. Garmin's High Performance GSD26 1-3kW chirp sounder module with an Airmar 2kW dual chirp transducer is mounted in the custom Senator Boats in-hull wet box mounting system. Bay Marine Electronics were very happy with the transducer wet box that Senator had constructed. The system also has a GT52HW transducer 250w High Wide chirp (with side vu and clear vu for inner harbour fishing). The boats are also fitted with a Garmin Autopilot with

stand-alone controller, gesture control remote and reverse heading hold functionality. Other electronics include a FLIR M200 series infrared camera integrated into the Garmin network and an ICOM M330 VHF radio. Sound and entertainment systems are from Fusion – an AV-755 DVD player and audio system in Mark Lane's *Cousin Itt*, while Grant Bagshaw went for a Fusion Apollo RA670 Marine Entertainment Stereo in *Bad Jelly*.

And that is just the electronics. There is plenty more electrical equipment, including comprehensive lighting packages – cabin lighting, cockpit spots, deck lighting and forward facing,

remote-controlled Marincó spotlights on top of the cabin. Naturally, all of this requires robust house and start battery systems – dual batteries for *Cousin Itt* with its single outboard and triple batteries for *Bad Jelly* with the twin outboard.

On the road

Both boats are carried on tandem axle DMW Premier trailers with electronic/hydraulic braking. Credo control systems from Trailparts are used to operate the trailer brakes and are simple to install, plugging into the cigarette lighter. These trailers are strongly built with extra gusseting and are fitted with walk boards. The

boats are supported on twelve pairs of wobble rollers per side and four keel rollers. Both feature wind-down jockey wheels and submersible LED lights. The main differences are that Mark added a couple of extras to his rig: a spare wheel and paired guide poles towards the stern for easier loading in a side current. These rigs are over-width, but that is a simple thing to comply with these days.

The tow weight is around 3100kg, dry. Grant Simmonds, principal of Senator Boats, told me that the RH 780 W is the biggest trailer boat that is towable by a standard ute (such as a Ford Ranger).

Performance				
Vessel	BAD JELLY		COUSIN ITT	
Engine	Twin Yamaha F200hp DEC four-stroke outboards		Yamaha F300hp DEC four-stroke outboard	
Propellor	Yamaha Reliance Series SDS props 17" pitch x 14¼ (DIA)		Yamaha Saltwater Series II SDS prop - 15" pitch x 15¼ (DIA)	
RPM	Speed (kts)	Fuel (lph)	Speed (kts)	Fuel (lph)
1000	5	6	5.3	4.8
2000	8.5	15.4	8.1	12.3
3000	15	30	11	24.1
4000	26	53	22.4	42.1
5000	35	88	29.5	70.5
6000 (WOT)	40	147	33.4	101.7
Load	four adults; 450 litres fuel.		three adults; 100 litres of fuel.	



Five adults and a load of fuel was no trouble for the twin 200 Yamahas.

Just the same, but different

You need the right tools to do any job properly. In the case of these two tinnies, the job includes bar crossing, diving, offshore game fishing and deep-water bottom fishing in the Bay of Plenty. The Senator 780 W, a big pontoon hull with great inherent stability, considerable load-bearing capacity and

reserve buoyancy has proven ideal for the task and these two boats impress with their high level of finish and robust construction. Grant and Mark started with the same blank canvas but with the expertise of Senator Boats, Rollo's Marine and Bay Marine Electronics, finished up with two different rigs, tailored to suit their tastes and needs.

Specifications		
Material	Aluminium	
Configuration	Hardtop – open and closed	
LOA	7.90m	
Beam (external)	2.70m	
Beam (internal)	2.16m	
Hull thickness	6mm	
Pontoon thickness	3mm	
Deck thickness	4mm 3– treadplate	
Deadrise	18°	
Rated power	350HP – 450 HP	
Recommended power	300HP+	
Vessel Specifics	Bad Jelly	Cousin Itt
Test engine	2 x F200DEC	1 x F300HP DEC
Prop	2 x 17" Yamaha Reliance Series	1 x 15" Saltwater Series II
Fuel capacity	550 litres	500 litres
Trailer	DMW tandem, braked	
Tow weight	3100kg dry	
Price as tested	\$260,000	\$300,000
Test boats courtesy of	Grant Bagshaw	Mark Lane

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