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EXCLUSIVE!

Whittley's
Flagship
Reviewed

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Flying the Flag



Whittley's "all new" Cruisemaster CR2800 looks to have been well worth the wait. **John Willis** reports. Pictures by Robert Keeley

At first glance, Whittley's new CR2800 is simply stunning and befitting of its pedigree. Its layout and design is exceptional, all materials and workmanship first class, power selection exhilarating and as usual from Whittley, innovation is forthright.

This is a totally new boat from the ground up. Neville Whittley is understandably glowingly proud of the results of his company's million-dollar investment into this flagship of the Whittley product range. There are over 40 brand new mouldings used to form the basis for this package. A beautiful Tasmanian myrtle finish that perfectly highlights the internal trim has replaced the traditional teak that was the Whittley trademark.

The highest quality components are used right through from the premium gelcoat and polyester resins with multiple layers of woven

rovings and Divinycell reinforcement in the hull, Faria multifunction gauges, Waeco refrigeration, Lewmar stainless steel encased anchor winch and bow thruster, Navman electronics, Samsung microwave, Arista flat screen LCD TV, Majestic DVD, AM/FM/CD player, VacuFlush cassette type toilet system, Seabreeze Air conditioning unit and the tried and true performer in the MerCruiser 350 MAG 5.7 litre multi-point injected V8 coupled with a Bravo 3 twin prop leg.

On the water

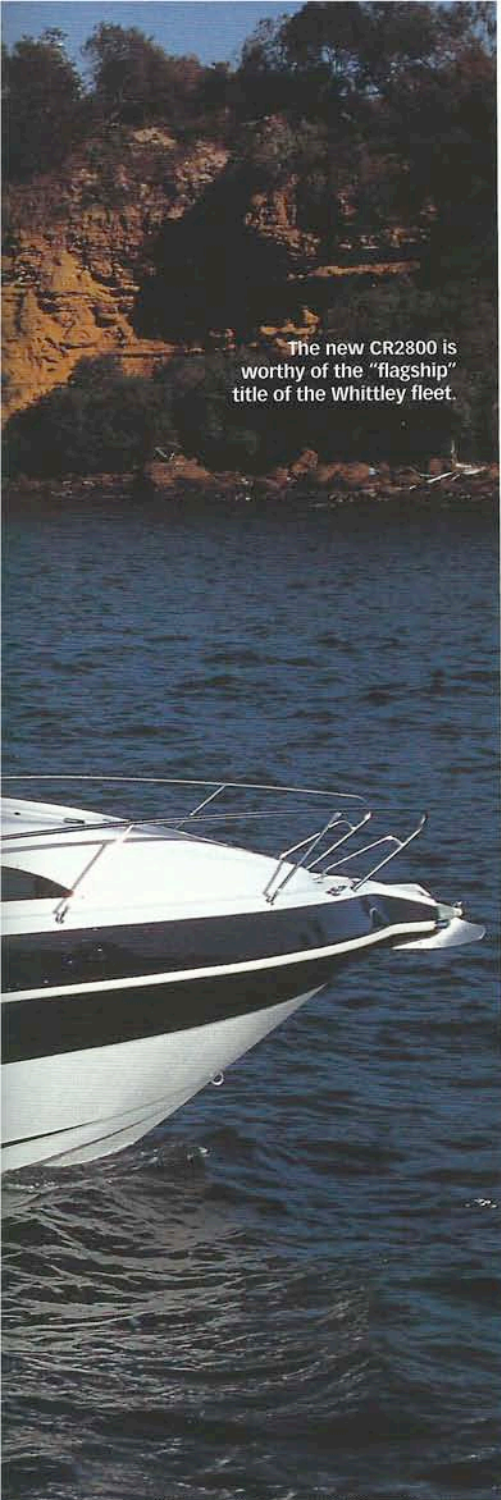
Whittley Cruisers were for many years considered as flat-water contenders. That all changed a long time ago with the Sea Legend range so I was pleased when our forecast came true with a nasty Port Phillip south-easterly chop to test the new hull. Pleasingly I can honestly report that the hull came through

with flying colours, especially considering the high shoulders of this hull.

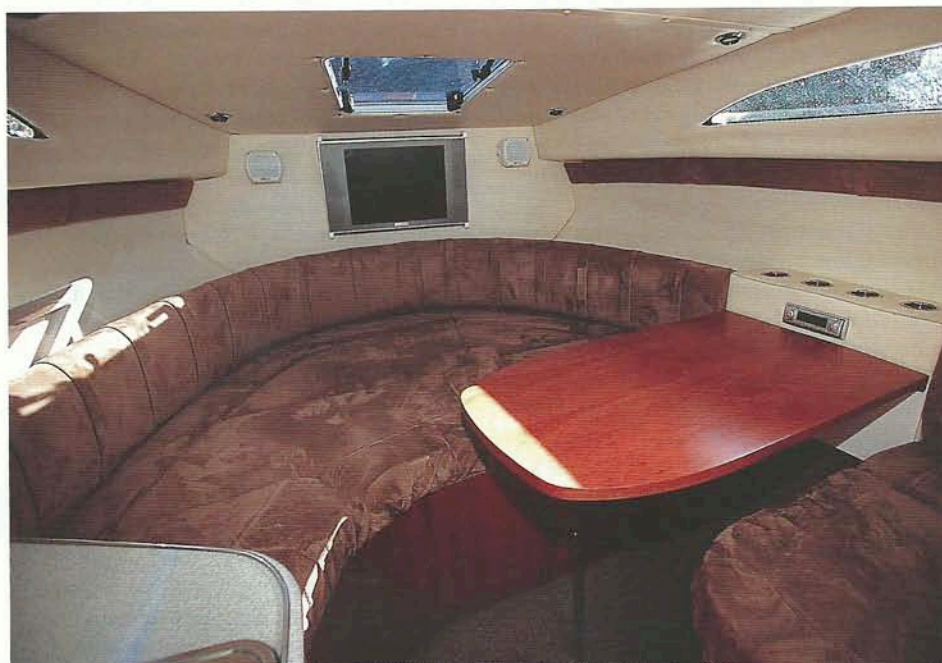
We gave the hull a very thorough pounding – and our photographers in the camera boat a very thorough drowning!

The big Whittley rises out of the hole very nicely without any cavitation and feels very positive right through the rev range. The nose rises slightly up to planing speed – achieved at 2900rpm and 14 knots – however this can be easily reduced with the trim tabs which we really didn't use much in the test; they would be more useful when travelling with large numbers of passengers and uneven loads.

The power gradient was even and positive right through the rev range and is entirely suitable for some family water skiing as well as exhilarating top end performance. Wide open throttle was a bit hard to gauge accurately due to the amount of wind and chop present by

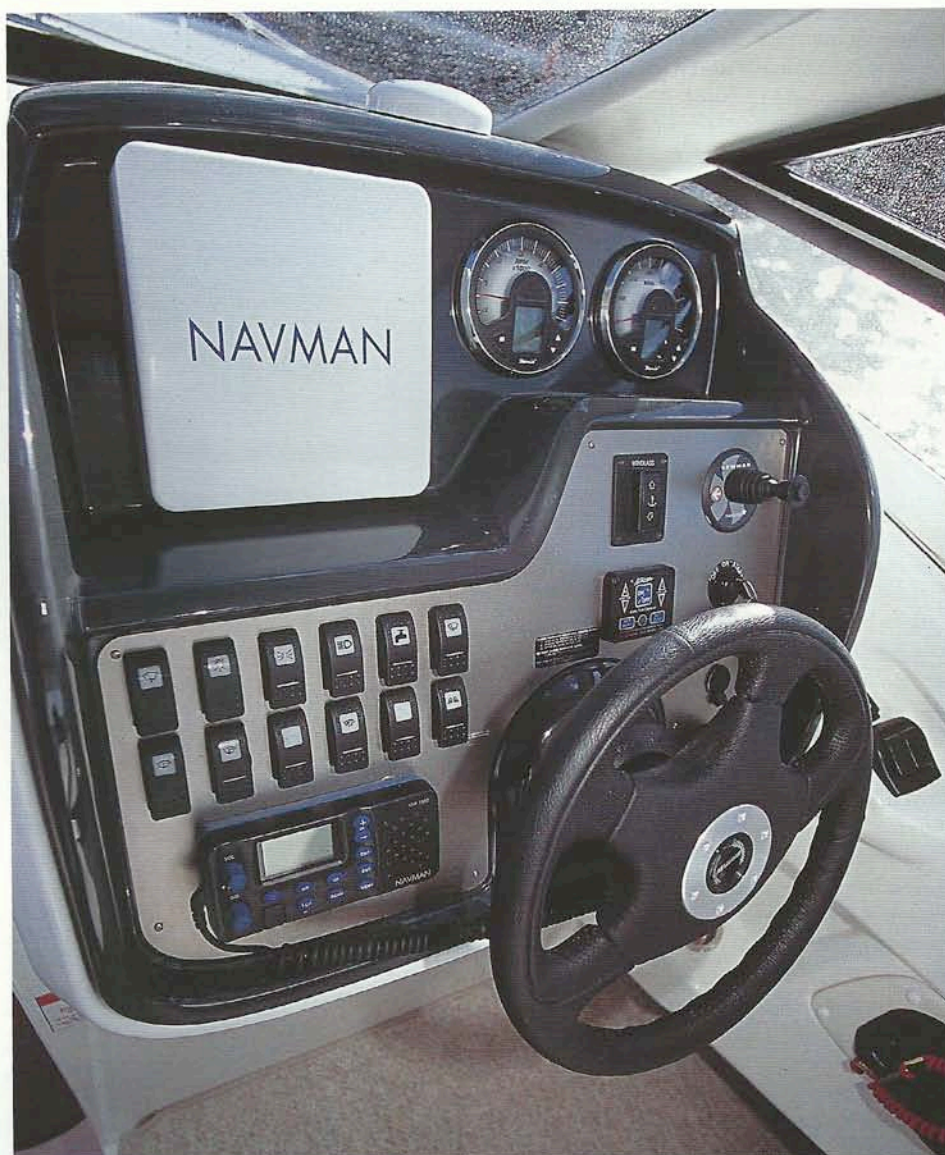


The new CR2800 is worthy of the "flagship" title of the Whittley fleet.



ABOVE: The high level of finish and craftsmanship is obvious throughout.

BELOW: View from the helm – the dashboard is functional and stylish and utilises the latest in technology.



the time we got around to speed trials, but I believe top speed to be around 38 knots (44 mph) at 5000rpm. Most importantly though, its slow to mid-range stability and performance is more than satisfying and the noise levels are comfortably low.

The hull design features a standard 19-degree deadrise, however it feels much deeper on the water. The deep entry obviously adds considerably to the riding comfort and a nice combination of a small reverse chine and multiple lifting strakes allows great stability, increased lift and terrific directional tracking and hold. The strakes extend right to a stem that has a lovely fine entry to subdue that inevitable steep chop.

All in all, the ride is very pleasing and portrays no bad habits. The spray off the big shoulders is minimal and can be virtually eliminated with sensible driving techniques.

REVIEWED: Whitley Cruisemaster CR2800

The trim levels are very responsive, as is generally the case with the duo-prop configuration. Manoeuvrability at low speeds is terrific with great response in reverse. The addition of the Lewmar bow thruster is a sensational bonus for easy, controlled docking in high winds and swell.

Entry to the boat is made easy with a very large transom swim platform and fold down stainless steel ladder. The non-skid platform is terrific for the family boating enthusiast and also allows mounting of the fishing rod holder/bait board combination and detachable barbecue. A large and very sensible wet storage area is moulded into the platform that can also be used as a kill tank for divers and anglers. A convenient hot/cold transom shower is also fitted.

There is also a fold-down step in the transom bulkhead for easy boarding. The step also forms part of the plush rear lounge when folded up. Another quite large (approximately 40 litres) wet storage/ice box is moulded into the centre of this bulkhead.

The cockpit floor area is pleasingly large and is trimmed with removable, rubber backed waterproof carpet. It also has a mounting insert for the removable table, which is conveniently stored in a swing-down locker in the hard top roof.

Weight savings

Whitley has gone to great pains to get rid of many of the excessively heavy items in this package for two reasons. One, to keep the towing weight within the reach of most family sized 4WD vehicles and two, to make doors on large hatches strong, lightweight, safe and easily manageable. The engineering team has developed the use of a plasticised foam type panelling to replace solid fibreglass and plywood cores in many items such as doors, hatches and tables. This is then laminated in the same Tasmanian myrtle or fibreglass outer skin and has revolutionised not only the weight but has increased the functional size of these items.

Back in the cockpit there is a huge ski locker in the floor and nice deep side pocket storage in the coamings. The wrap-around rear lounge is tastefully trimmed in a heavy-duty marine vinyl with inviting, luxurious seating. I particularly liked the rear facing curved lounge backrest that is moulded on the rear of the passenger module – most comfortable and practical.

Another practical change from previous models is the elimination of any timber surfaces on the outside or cockpit of the boat. This will drastically reduce ongoing maintenance and gives the work area an easily cleaned and hard wearing finish. The cockpit drains into the bilge where a manual and automatic pumping arrangement is fitted as standard, complete with bilge alarms.

The storage under the port side of the rear

lounge is so large that we called it the “coffin”. It’s just the thing for water toys, PFDs, ropes, tackle boxes and other fun paraphernalia. Forward of this enclosure is the mounting position of the optional Seabreeze air conditioning unit. If the A/C option is not selected the storage area is then utilised for a removable cool box. The passenger seat module itself then supplies even more storage.

The engine box is easily accessed under the rear lounge and provides plenty of room for service. The standard electrical fit-up includes three batteries; one dedicated to engine start and two house batteries. These are backed up with shore power and a 20-amp charger.

The tested engine was raw water cooled; however Neville Whitley tells me that the greater majority of his orders have wisely selected the Seacool freshwater cooling option. The engine bay is sealed with lead cored sound insulation to give the most satisfying noise levels from this powerful

engine. Recessed can holders are conveniently positioned all round the boat – inside and out!

The passenger seating position is comfortable, yet a little narrow for someone of my rather voluptuous bulk. It is entirely suitable for “normal” sized passengers. It was still quite comfortable and the essential “Jes Bar” is well positioned.

Being the prototype boat, the Whitley crew hadn’t quite finished the map pocket that will be placed in front of the passenger seating position when in production.

From the skipper’s chair

Sitting at the helm of the big Whitley is a real treat. The dashboard is functional and stylish whilst also utilising the latest in technology.

The Faria multifunction gauges look great with chrome bezels on a basic grey background. All instruments are easy to see and well positioned including the Navman Trackfish 6600 colour



LEFT: Galley refinements include benchtop cooker, sink, microwave oven and lots more



BELOW: The pointy end is well fitted out and includes a Lewmar electric anchor winch and bow thruster.

GPS/Depth Sounder/Plotter and Navman 7000 VHF radio.

The seating position is comfortable, strong and well upholstered with a comfortable bolster style backrest. It also featured terrific vision over the dashboard. Engine controls are flush mounted and the helm is finished off with an attractive black "leather look" steering wheel that's comfortable and strong. The helm seating module contains some surprises. Under the footrest is a very large Waeco fridge/freezer and the rear face holds the bar complete with sliding glasses rack, bottle and snacks storage.

The CR2800 features the best hardtop I have seen on a boat this size. The mouldings from the Targa style sides are stunning and the quality and design, sensational. All sections are hard glazed glass and visibility through the split windscreen and sliding side windows is terrific. Best of all is the huge electric sunroof, which opens smoothly at the flick of a switch and is just what the doctor ordered in a hardtop boat. A Majestic CD/AM/FM with speakers in the cockpit and cabin supplies the necessary background entertainment.

The high level of craftsmanship is obvious and featured on items such as the large, lockable, moulded timber sliding companionway door. It is the only timber visible from the cockpit and sets a high expectation for the cabin area. The CR2800's cabin is beautiful, its layout, fittings, accessories and chosen fabrics and finishes are all superb.

A full galley unit to the port side features a good-sized stainless steel sink with hot and cold water and a twin burner stove mounted on a granite style bench top. Above is a microwave oven and crockery cabinet that incidentally comes fully stocked, including utensils as standard. A very handy shelf with non-skid finish and stainless retaining bar, range hood, air conditioning control and down light tops the unit. Down below, the Cruisemaster has been upgraded with a Waeco 75 litre fridge/freezer and a large pantry cupboard recessed into the striking Tasmanian maple veneer.

The starboard side houses the large toilet/shower module where all internal and external moldings are beautifully presented and highly functional. The shower

cabinet/head features a VacuFlush cartridge type toilet system, small vanity with hot and cold water and retractable style shower rose, exhaust fan and lighting. The forward exterior face of the shower cabinet contains a very handy, large and deep wardrobe.

I was amazed at how much the designers have fitted into this package and it still feels spacious. The starboard side has a nifty bi-fold table for the dinette that also easily converts to the V-berth in-fill. The rear dinette seat has more storage and houses the VacuFlush cassette. Above the table is a neat little padded shelf with four cup holders and Majestic DVD 6600 player. The Arista flat screen television is neatly fitted to the bow bulkhead.

The vee berth is very large and the choice of thickly padded marine suede upholstery is soft and luxurious. Again, there is plenty of storage under the berths and deeply recessed, padded side pockets. Ventilation and access to the bow is via a large waterproof roof hatch that comes complete with removable fly screen. The roof is neatly trimmed with a white padded liner and downlights add to the roomy feel.



When put through its paces the hull came through with flying colours.

REVIEWED: Whittley Cruisemaster CR2800



ABOVE: The review boat was fitted with a 300hp MerCruiser 5.7 litre V8/Bravo 3 sterndrive that proved a good combination for the new CR2800.



ABOVE RIGHT: A large transom swim platform and fold-down stainless steel ladder is standard.

Outside the cabin the Whittley team has recognised the need for walk-around sides. The flush mounted water and fuel fillers are on the port side and a removable padded sundeck with backrests is supplied as standard for sunbaking on the cabin roof.

A strong split bow rail encloses the bow and the stainless steel bodied Lewmar anchor winch is mounted in a well-designed hatch with twin compartments. There is a solid fibreglass moulded bowsprit with stainless

support and guiding structure for the large plough anchor. I was pleased to see that thought and experience had been exercised in organising the mooring tackle – six good strong stainless cleats are fitted and capable of taking decent mooring ropes.

The boat was presented with a Duralum tandem axle, aluminium boat trailer that is one of the best imported trailers I've seen. Neville Whittley informed me that Mackay Trailers will build a locally produced

Technical summary

Whittley CR2800 Cruisemaster

Length:	Hull only 7.5m; (LOA) 9m
Beam:	2.47m
Fuel:	230 litres
Power:	As tested 300hp MerCruiser 5.7 litre V8 Bravo 3 sterndrive
Weight:	Hull only 2600kgs
Deadrise:	19 Degrees
Speed Figures:	14.3 kts @ 2900rpm (planing) (Approx.) 18 kts @ 3200rpm 22 kts @ 3500rpm 28 kts @ 4000rpm 34 kts @ 4500rpm 38 kts @ 5000rpm (WOT)
Price:	from \$147,500; as tested \$180,000.

Contact: Whittley Marine (03) 9358 9600;
website: www.whittley.com.au

aluminium trailer for the boat in the future.

All in all, this is a great boat that should fulfill all expectations. It will take pride of place at the head of the Whittley fleet and is sure to impress both the Whittley faithful and all newcomers to the brand.