

'Freycinet'

Bunbury Port chooses Kirby/Naiad pilot boat By Mike Brown



Europe has long used RIBs as pilot boats, but they are rare beasts in Australia. Bunbury Port stepped out of the mainstream when it ordered an 11.3-metre vessel from Kirby Marine as its new stand-by pilot boat.

'Freycinet' replaces an elderly timber vessel and was chosen partly on economic grounds: there was a tight budget for new-builds. The vessel's original wish list would have comfortably exceeded that budget, and it was only after lateral thinking by Rob Kirby that his economy model Naiad fitted the bill.

Bunbury wanted twin diesels for redundancy, and wanted shaft drive to reduce the maintenance on a vessel kept permanently afloat. The diesel sterndrives Kirby suggested were initially rejected, as the vessel would have to be lifted from the water for gear oil changes and there was the possibility of accelerated corrosion of the legs.

Shaft drive would require extensive new design work and complex engineering, so Kirby's solution was to keep the vessel on an airlift – the same type of floating dry storage seen in leisure craft pens. The sterndrives' perceived shortcomings now became advantages. Installation costs were far lower; the engine and propulsion systems were supplied as ready-assembled units; raw water intakes and exhausts were through the leg so no through-hull fittings were needed; and, as a bonus, the port got a boat with the enhanced manoeuvrability sterndrives deliver.

'Freycinet's' layout is very much mainstream pilot boat. The working deck is flush with the tube tops, a track on the wheelhouse carries the safety harness cars, the foredeck mounts the usual rails, and aft there is a man overboard system. The only unusual features by local standards are the propulsion system, and the fact

that the vessel is a rigid inflatable, although that is not strictly true: instead of inflatable tubes 'Freycinet' has a Naiad-specified closed cell foam-filled collar of exceptional abrasion resistance.

Bunbury Port wanted a simple, economical vessel. Frills such as air-conditioning were deemed unnecessary – although there is plenty of engine room space to install a genset and air-conditioning plant should that policy change. The nominal bathroom under the foredeck contains no shower, simply a toilet plumbed to a sullage tank, and a washbasin. In keeping with the simplicity motif, the man overboard system uses a 12V hydraulic power pack rather than anything powered by the main engines.

The wheelhouse, its deck at a lower level than the working deck, contains five KAB suspension seats, the coxswain's on the centreline. He has excellent visibility

through the forward-raked windscreen, extensive side glass and roof glass panels. His electronics are a Furuno Navnet package of radar and GPS plus AIF for ship identification.

Bunbury Port wanted a vessel capable of cruising at 25 knots, and are pleased not only that the figure was exceeded, but also with the top speed of 34 knots, this from a pair of 168kW Volvo D4s. 'Freycinet' will be available for the longer ranging search and rescue tasks, and has thus been given an 800-litre fuel capacity rather than the 300 litres that would have been adequate for the purely pilot boat role.

The success of 'Freycinet' has resulted in the firm order of a vessel of similar concept by Dampier Port, and strong interest from two other port authorities. Dampier opted for a larger 12.5-metre vessel, powered by a different system, although still using Volvo motors.

Dampier needs to keep their boat afloat, and use of sterndrives would require more lifting out than they would find convenient. They opted instead for Volvo IPS drives, the azimuthing pod drives that have been taking over a high proportion of the large leisure boat market. With their contra-rotating propellers ahead of the legs water flow is unimpeded and efficiency high, but the property liked most by the weekend warriors is the simplicity of manoeuvring by joystick.

Few people ever complained that a task was too easy, and the most traditional coxswain would be happy with a boat that goes sideways to order.

A bonus with the electronic joystick control is the possibility of fitting a remote control on the after deck to simplify the man overboard operation.

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'Freycinet' SPECIFICATIONS	
Type of vessel:	Pilot boat
In survey to:	NSCV 2C
Home port:	Bunbury, Western Australia
Owner:	Bunbury Port Authority
Designer:	Naiad Design, New Zealand
Builder:	Kirby Marine, Western Australia
Construction material:	Aluminium
Length overall:	11.3 metres
Length waterline:	9.2 metres
Beam:	4.0 metres
Draught:	0.9 metres
Depth:	3.5 metres
Displacement:	6.8 tonnes
Main engines:	2 x D4 Volvo, each 168kW
Gearbox:	Volvo stern drives
Steering:	Volvo stern drives
Maximum speed:	34 knots
Cruising speed:	25 knots
Range:	100nm
Electronics supplied by:	Taylor Marine
Radar:	Furuno
Depth sounder:	Furuno
Radio:	Icom VHF
Autopilot:	Coursemaster
Compass:	Plastimo
GPS:	Furuno
Plotter:	Furuno
Paints/coatings:	Jotun
Windows:	Beta Marine
Safety equipment:	RFD
Liferaft:	RFD
Fuel capacity:	800 litres
Crew:	2+3