

WELCOME BACK TO A LADY

BY KEITH INGRAM



Stella rests gracefully at anchor



Just rescued from the knacker's yard

Five years ago, the 70ft (21.3m) 80 tonne former government lighthouse supply vessel *Stella* was languishing on Auckland's waterfront, destined for the knacker's yard.

She was originally built in 1973 by Simms in Dunedin to high Governments Stores Board specifications for small coastal ships and was well maintained during her time under Crown ownership. Sadly, once sold into private enterprise her proud looks and general upkeep quickly diminished as she fell from grace.

This was a sad ending for this once proud and respected ship on our coast until Grant Clothier, a Tauranga businessman with a vision and big balls, decided to have a go and saved her from the gas axe. Grant, a long-time boatie, previously owned and operated the Tauranga-based 13.7m charter boat *Papillon*.

In the winter of 2005 he steamed *Papillon* to Tonga, and while this presented a number of challenges with her deck cargo of fuel and tight accommodation, he enjoyed the experience so much he said, "Right, let's now do it in a real boat."

Grant had caught the bug of passage-making and offshore cruising and charters, but was looking for a vessel large enough to handle offshore passages in comfort. He needed a walk-in engineroom with a workshop, all the auxiliary tools for extended cruising, plus lots of fuel, water and a watermaker.

Large cabins had to be complete with ensuites, as the new vessel had to have all the creature comforts to assist folk in enjoying extended times at sea or away from home. Above all, she needed to have good seakeeping ability. All of this was a big ask.

When Grant spotted *Stella* waiting in death row, he knew of her, had seen her at sea and could see her potential. He took



Stella underway again

some photographs and drafted some line drawings off these as the vision started to evolve into a possibility.

After negotiating a scrap value for the vessel he took her to Tauranga for lifting out and transporting her to his yard, where a temporary tarpaulin shed was built around her.

Four years and one week later the monarch appeared from her chrysalis and Grant showed the world a lovingly rebuilt *Stella*, with much of the work being done by himself. His passion to restore this once fine ship was contagious, as all who worked on her gave of their best.

It was hard not to share in the pride of both Grant and his partner Bron when we were given the privilege of reviewing this vessel. They had just returned from a family shakedown cruise for a week in weather of which the Gods were just smiling to see this fine lady on the coast again.

As we knew the ship well in her former government life, we ►



Looking down on the new foredeck



The new mast and flybridge



Alfresco dining

were keen to see the changes and were delighted with the result. Gone was the utilitarian workboat look and configuration.

What we now have is a functional, classy charter vessel suitable for passage-making and offshore cruising. Everything is in household proportions.

Outwardly, *Stella* has scrubbed up well, while retaining her original lines. Noticeable are the changes to the upper deck, with the fo'c'sle being remodelled to form easy access to the chain locker and provide a dry area for ropes, fenders and compacted rubbish for returning to the shore.

A new Muir hydraulic double anchor winch has been installed on deck. While the bridge deckhouse remains much the same, retaining its traditional command interior, there are a number of noticeable changes. Up top, a new flybridge observation deck has been built, with a new funnel and mast structure sporting shiny exhaust pipes and an array of electronic aids, including

SatCom and Sky television.

The top sundeck has been extended to provide shelter over the waists and is fully railed. While not fitted during our tour, provision is made for mounting the ship's tender aft and installation of a new hydraulic crane adjacent to the access ladder to the main deck.

The expansive quarter deck will become the outdoor social hub of the vessel, while providing access through a transom door to the large boarding or swim platform. Above the area of the old cargo hatch is now a low coach deck, giving low side-lights to the master's cabin below.

This coach top is dogged down, so when the main engine has to come out it is moved through a bolted, removable section of the engineroom aft bulkhead into the master's cabin before being lifted up.

Above this hatch is a large teak table for alfresco dining and ►

 An advertisement for Sunderland Marine Mutual Insurance Company Limited. The background is a scenic photograph of a boat named 'Phoenix' navigating through a narrow, rocky waterway. The boat is white with blue and red accents.



ESTABLISHED 1882

Sunderland Marine
Mutual Insurance Company Limited

- Specialising in marine insurance for over 125 years
- Recognised as a world leader
- Complete insurance packages for Hull & Machinery, Liability and associated risks
- Aquaculture insurance for Stock, Equipment and Support Craft

Address: P.O. Box 754, Nelson, New Zealand
 Phone: 03 546 8824 or 03 546 8830
 Freephone: 0800 SUN MAR
 Fax: 03 546 8814
 E-mail: mutual@smmi.co.nz
 Websites: www.smmi.co.uk
 www.smmi.co.nz

“Phoenix” - Photo supplied courtesy of Greenshell New Zealand Ltd.

VIP:577



COULD YOUR BOAT BE KILLING THE WATERS YOU LOVE?

When your boat's hull is heavily fouled, it's easy for marine life to take hold and be moved from location to location as you travel.

If you're giving a ride to pest species, you can be creating a threat to the environment, a nuisance for marine farmers and fishermen and an eyesore for everyone who enjoys our seas and coastline.

Be a better boatie. Help protect our coastal waters by keeping your boat hull clean and thoroughly antifouled. That way you won't give hitchhiking pests a lift.

For more information on protecting our waters, go to:
www.biosecurity.govt.nz



The full-sized functional galley



One of the guest's double cabins



The bridge retains much of its traditional look



The old commercial chunky look has now been given a facelift

hospitality. There is provision for a barbecue and a small alcove holds the beer fridge and bar, with its own sink bench with hot and cold running water. An external shower for swimmers is mounted in the stowage locker to starboard.

On stepping inside we immediately enter the main saloon, complete with galley, dining and lounge area. To ensure all on board are fed well, the galley has a full-size stainless steel sink, a commercial-size dishwasher, a five-burner gas hob and a large domestic electric oven. The combination fridge-freezer also includes a large ice-maker. Beside the galley is a door leading down to what was the hold and is now the master's double cabin, with its own ensuite.

Opposite the head and back under the stairs is another room holding the freezers and dry stores. There are also two good-sized bunks which may be used for stowage or as crew quarters when on charter. Moving for'ard from the saloon, the engine room hatch remains to starboard, where down below the V12 Detroit still remains and is still going strong.

A Lister drives a 75hp hydraulic pump that drives the anchor

winch, bow thrusters and ship's crane. There is a new 32kVa genset and an additional 14kVa generator driven off a dog clutch on the main engine to provide the ship's power.

A large inverter maintains refrigeration, pumps and lighting at night for silent running. For'ard is a watermaker with a capacity of 160 litres per hour and the all-important workbench. A new feature is the addition of a large sprocket in the coupling behind the gearbox on the main shaft.

Stella has been engineered to run two hydraulic pumps which drive a radial piston hydraulic motor to drive this main shaft sprocket at around five knots to get her home, if the main engine falters for any reason. Being a screaming jimmy, that is unlikely.

Another feature inherited from the old days is that all the heads are flushed with fresh water, thus removing the smelly plankton bits. The old ship's three tonne bulk oil tanks from the lighthouse days have been converted into new sewage tanks, servicing all the heads on board.

Back up top, the day head and shower remain opposite and beside this, in what was part of the old master's cabin is the ship's laundry.

Stepping down the companionway for'ard into what was the old galley and mess room are two identical double cabins, complete with ensuites, thus making her ideal for two couples to charter. If they happen to bring young ones, the fo'c'sle cabin retains four single berths.

Skylights provide ample daylight and the all-important escape route in an emergency. Guests in this cabin share the day head at the top of the companionway.

Up on the bridge, the traditional layout and much of the equipment has been retained and is now complimented by a suite of modern electronics.

While *Stella* remains a sturdy 10-knot vessel, most of the legacy of her working past has gone. Her sweet lines and no-nonsense small ship commercial look remain, but the transformation is immense.

With tanks for 18 tonnes of fuel and eight tonnes of water, plus a watermaker and all the new mod-cons on board, *Stella* can rightfully take her place as a passage-maker and offshore expedition vessel that will go anywhere her owners choose to sail.

We welcome back a fine lady to our coast.



SPECIFICATIONS

Length	21.3m (70ft)
Beam	5.5m
Draft	2.4m
Engines	12v 71 Detroit
Cruising speed	10 knots
Deadweight	80 tonnes