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SEAFOOD

NEW ZEALAND



*Q-West Boat Builders:
New boat for lobster fisher*

Dolphin decision reaction

A few words about new versus old boats from acting editor Derek Johnson.

When one of the stalwarts of our commercial fishing fleet commissions a new boat, it's an exciting and notable event.

Investments such as that made by Paul Reinke, the subject of this month's lead story, are significant not only for the fisher in question but also for the industry as a whole. It shows confidence in the industry, in Paul's case ensuring the business will remain viable for his son and beyond.

But in preparing this month's lead feature on behalf of Wanganui's Q-West Boat Builders Limited, the yard which built Paul's boat, I was struck by one fact. If the company builds a boat for a commercial fisher in a year, it's a remarkable occurrence. Yet just 15 years ago, the situation was much different.

It's not that fishers don't change their boats, but the preference might be to buy a boat with a proven history. There is nothing wrong with buying an existing boat. Colin Mitchell, General Manager of Q-West, notes that the buyer will know what he's getting and it will likely have all the kinks ironed out.

Boats aren't like cars: given a rigorous maintenance schedule and upgrades of components such as engines, props or electronics, a well-built fishing boat can do its job efficiently many decades into its life.

And many do. As much as a shiny new aluminium vessel is a wondrous sight plying its trade in our waters, it can be equally uplifting to see a well-maintained classic built of native timbers still earning its skipper a living.

But a new boat can make business sense. As Colin says, work with the right yard and you'll get exactly what you want, for your fishing conditions. What could be better, if you can afford it? And a new boat offers the advantages of all the latest developments in marine technology, design and materials in one go, rather than one component at a time. As much as a classic boat has its own allure, maintenance of a new boat will not be such a worry.

Colin also raised an issue that illustrates the intertwined nature of our society, particularly in a small country such as New Zealand. Building fewer fishing boats has one particular knock-on effect:



if marine architects and boat builders aren't building boats for commercial fishermen, they'll lose some of the particular skills and insights that have accrued over many decades of boat construction.

Boat yards will always find other boats to build – for mineral exploration, tourism, pleasure use and so on. But if the skills required to service our industry go into mothballs, there may well be fewer and fewer options for "shopping around" when you and your bank manager decide a new build is just what your business needs.

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POSTAL ADDRESS: Private Bag 24901, Wellington 6142, NZ.

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

Level 1, Seafood Industry House, 74 Cambridge Terrace, Wellington 6011, NZ.

PHONE: +64 (0)4 385 4005, FAX: +64 (0)4 385 2727

www.seafoodnewzealand.co.nz

EDITOR: Derek Johnson

Mob 027 353 4642, +64 (0)4 802 1518

editor@seafood.co.nz

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Clay Nelson

Mob 029 381 6841

clay.nelson@seafood.co.nz

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From left: Jamie Reinke (crew), Paul Reinke (owner/skipper), Robert McHerron (skipper).

Messing around with new boats

Q-West build new boat for Kaikoura cray fisher

What better way to celebrate the success of your fishing business than by giving it a new-build boat?

Derek Johnson talks to Paul Reinke about working with Q-West Boat Builders to bring his business into the 21st century.

When Kaikoura rock lobster fisher Paul Reinke decided it was time to build a new boat, there seems to have been one choice: Q-West Boat Builders. The Wanganui yard had built Paul's last boat, *Mystique*, in the late 1990s.

That was a successful vessel but Paul wanted some improvements in comfort and performance with the boat that became *Mystique II*, launched in November last year.

Back to the beginning

Paul has been fishing for over 40 years but is still a relatively young man. He achieved this seeming impossible statistic through having started fishing commercially at the age of 12! "I had the smallest registered fishing boat in New Zealand, when I was going to school, registration number LN348."

Paul's dad was a builder but did a bit of commercial fishing on

the side, and living in South Bay 50 metres from the sea meant it was inevitable that he would end up mucking around in boats and dinghies. "One year, a neighbour built me an eight-foot pram dinghy as a Christmas present, when I was 12. I was registered when I turned 13 worked up to 10 pots. My mum used to take my crayfish over the hill in an old Ford Prefect!"

At the start, Paul would do paua diving, set netting, cray fishing, but the focus has largely been on crays, doing "bugger all lining" these days.

Paul and his dad may have taken some not entirely good advice during the moratorium that led up to the introduction of the Quota Management System (QMS) in the 1980s. "My dad and I both had a licence and it was suggested that we didn't really need two. I let mine go because I was set-netting at the time. My dad was still craying, and

when he retired and passed his licence on to me, I wasn't given his history. I did get quota but it was cut back. Over the years, though, I've bought a bit more."

Paul does note that the QMS was really needed: "Back then, you could struggle away nearly all year and you were lucky to catch three tonnes. A lot of fishers just sold up and got out. Something had to be done, and the QMS was it; it saved the fishery."

We are family

At the moment, *Mystique II* is run as a bit of a family affair. Paul's brother-in-law Robert McHerron is skipper, and his son Jamie is crew (Paul's daughters, Melissa and Tara, have also been known to go out and help with bait and so on). Paul, who's recently taken a step back, will go out when three crew are really needed, or to provide a day off for Robert or Jamie. In general, though, he now handles business ashore – fuel, bait, maintenance and managing the live handling facility they have in Kaikoura. The latter is part of his desire to provide high grade crays for his customers, with a particular focus on the live market.

Ngai Tahu Fisheries takes the team's catch – it was originally New Zealand Red Rock Lobster, but Ngai Tahu bought that firm about 16 years ago.

In part, Paul's decision to build a new boat is a reflection of a healthy business, and a healthy fishery – in contrast to the years before the QMS. "In the last three or four years, the industry has generally been getting better. But there are only eight or nine commercial fishers

on the whole Kaikoura coast; I fish a little bit east from the Shark's Tooth to the lighthouse. We're pretty spread out, and we all have our own patches. We're having a little bit of a problem with marine reserve applications, so we'll probably get a bit displaced there. We might have to move a bit further afield."

But the stock is in good shape, with anecdote backed up by science. "Even the Ministry notices that the fish have been getting bigger in the last few years. Changes in the rules around escapements and minimum catch size have helped a lot. And a lot of the guys have more escapements than are required; for example, most of my pots have at least four escapements, rather than the legal minimum of two. Education and good fishing practices have brought the fishery to life. Good handling practices are also essential, especially for the live market that we supply. You have to keep your catch in the best condition you can."

A concern about stocks led to Paul becoming involved in the local CRAMAC 5. "I used to attend the odd meeting when it was first formed, and eventually put my name forward and was elected to manage the committee. It does do some good work, with any burning issues that crop up."

He's also helped with stock monitoring for the New Zealand Rock Lobster Industry Council. "I've been doing voluntary puerulus collection for around five years, and it's very interesting."



The team have a separate building for storing their cray pots and other gear, along with a workshop for maintenance.

Building a new boat

Replacing the original, 14-year-old, *Mystique* arose due to wanting a bit more comfort – “as we get older we want a bit more comfort I suppose!” – and to carry more gear. “The new boat’s a totally different design with better sea-keeping and a drier wheelhouse. It’s generally a more comfortable boat.”

New sounders, radar and GPS, from Ferruno, sum up the electronic fit-out. “I’d like to get an underwater mapping system, like an ENL WAASP, at some point.”

At the moment, the boat is set up for crayfishing. On the odd occasion the team might go lining, they’ll fix bait hooks manually and push the lines over the rails. “A few years ago, we bought some of those Swedish-made Beltronic automatic jigging machines, through an ad in *Seafood New Zealand* from Terry Gorman and Associates in Australia. They’re quite efficient but were targeting perch and because the price wasn’t too flash we don’t use the jigger very much.”

A rapport with the team at Q-West led to them getting the job for building *Mystique II*. The company’s General Manager, Colin Mitchell, suggested Nic de Waal, Managing Director of Teknikraft Design in Auckland, as a good bet to design the new boat. “I know someone who has a boat very similar to *Mystique II* and his was also designed by Nic.” Paul also wanted to try a few new things, such as using jets rather than a prop “for ease of manoeuvrability and so we wouldn’t pick up ropes with the screws!”

Jet propulsion units may not be, on paper, the most fuel-efficient option. However, jets offer advantages in terms of speed, manoeuvrability and maintenance. “And they mean we can get into shallower water. The only problem is that weeds can affect the jets a little bit – the slipway’s quite congested where we take our trailer.” The comment about the slipway reveals another design consideration: Paul prefers to launch from a trailer – it’s easier for maintenance and cheaper for insurance – and because *Mystique II* is launched from and recovered on a trailer, her hull was reinforced to ensure that daily trailer recovery wouldn’t affect the vessel’s lifespan.

The design period took about six weeks, with Nic de Waal consulting regularly to make sure he understood what Paul needed for his particular fishery – the reinforced hull, location of the fish well, that sort of thing. She’s capable of storing a lot of fish – one and a half tonnes. As Paul says, “The fish well holds 30 bins, and we have plenty of space for our pots.”

Mystique II is basically overpowered – she’s capable of 24 knots cruising and over 35 knots max, courtesy of a pair of 500hp Yanmar 6CXM-GTE2s. “It’s better to be overpowered than under,” says Paul. “We never used all the horsepower on the last boat. We can just throttle back a bit, and it helps the boat last longer. The last engine I put in *Mystique* was up to 12,000 hours and we’d done nothing to it apart from basic maintenance. So *Mystique II* has more than enough grunt – she just flies!”



The Reinkes’ live crayfish holding facility in Kaikoura.



Loads of space ashore for storage and maintenance.



2A Gilbert St
PO Box 862
Wanganui
NEW ZEALAND

Phone: + 64 6 349 0035
Fax: + 64 6 344 3592
Email: sales@q-west.co.nz
Website: www.q-west.com

EXCELLENCE IN ALLOY



MANUFACTURERS OF ALUMINIUM PASSENGER FERRY'S, FISHING VESSELS AND PLEASURE CRAFT

Q-West Boat Builders, Wanganui

Colin Mitchell, General Manager of Q-West Boat Builders, offers some background to his company, and his viewpoint on the building of *Mystique II*.

Colin describes his company as “diverse”, which is inevitable for a company based in a country as small as New Zealand. “It’s hard as a commercial builder to specialise in one industry – fishing industry or pleasure or tourism – so we build commercial boats. That’s the way to describe us.”

Solid experience, contacts with a wide range of marine architects and flexibility mean that builds of all kinds can be accommodated. “Clients come to us for a design and application that suits them. More often than not, it’s a custom build.” At the time of this interview, boats in the Q-West yard included a 12-metre passenger vessel for Papua New Guinea and a 40-metre barge.

One constant, though, is aluminium. “We have built some steel boats over the years, and we would again if the right project came along, but we work primarily in aluminium.”

With regard to commercial fishing boats, Colin notes that Paul Reinke’s *Mystique II* was the only build of that type last year. “Go back 15 or more years and we were quite busy with fishing boats. But it’s dwindled away.”

As a company, Q-West can find other boats to build – recreational, tourism, pleasure as well as barges as mentioned above – but when New Zealand boatbuilders have fewer fishing boats to build, there is one significant side-effect. “When the market drops off, some of the skills can become lost. Building a commercial fishing boat is obviously different to doing a pleasure boat or a tourism boat, so your builders might not understand how a cray fisher operates: the way his tanks work, some of the systems they typically have, how boats go on and off trailers and all those things can be lost if the market slows down and builders focus on other projects.”

A new boat is a huge investment, not without risk. “People invest significant money in a boat and if the building yard is a less experienced yard there is potential for the finished vessel to not perform.”

In that light, buying an existing boat offers some surety. “You know what you’re getting for your money, you know how it goes and all the problems have been worked out. A lot of fishers could be quite shy of investing their money into something only to find that it doesn’t do what they intended it to do. With Paul, he knew us, we knew what he does and the designer we brought on board was very, very good.”

So finding an experienced yard – one that works with the customer, trying to understand his needs – is key to a satisfactory build. “Paul knew from his past boat the things that worked well and what he wanted to improve on. The new boat had all those elements to it plus a few little luxuries. Paul wanted to go with engines that weren’t electronic, because he hadn’t had such good luck with them in the past. We picked the right engine that was going to give us the right amount of power without being too heavy. We really customised the electrical system on the boat, by examining how often the boat’s running and what shore power is available. We got right into what he and his boat are up to so we could cater for it.”

And that’s not allowing for the advantages of more modern

techniques and materials. “There have been a lot of developments in the last 14 years of boatbuilding – and in this company. What we were doing in the late 90’s was OK for then but move forward to 2012 and you expect a much higher level.”

Designer Nic de Waal, of Teknikraft Design, has a lot of experience with high-performance catamarans, which are predominantly jet boats. “Although *Mystique II* is a monohull, Nic is an exceptional structural engineer so he brought all those elements and experience to the design. He knows jets, and he knows high performance boats.”

Jets have some advantages over props, but they’re generally chosen for boats where speed – anything over 25 knots – is a primary concern. “We do select jets for slower boats, displacement craft such as barges, because of draught considerations. A lot of cray fishermen have propeller boats but some prefer the jet boat because of manoeuvrability and because they may do close-in work.”

Speed could be an issue too – for getting out and getting home more quickly! – but as Colin says: “We don’t build the boats so that everything’s on the edge. The horsepower isn’t running at full revs to achieve its cruise speed. It’s running at about 60 percent, so the engine, everything, lasts longer. It’s not all done just to fit a budget, it’s done around what’s the right thing for the boat, and ultimately it’ll last.”

www.q-west.com



MYSTIQUE II SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH : 13.6m

BEAM : 4.0m

DRAFT : 0.7m

FUEL CAPACITY : 1600 litres

ENGINES : 2x 500hp Yanmar 6CXM-GTE2s,
357kW @ 2900rpm

PROPULSION : 2x HamiltonJet HJ 322s

CRUISE SPEED : 24-30 Knots

CONSTRUCTION : Marine Grade Aluminium

What Q-West has to offer

Q-West can offer a wide range of services, including design and development, design co-ordination, construction, repairs and maintenance, re-fit and fit-out, shipwrighting, project management, technical and servicing backup and marine consulting.

The company’s facilities are purpose-built for the construction and maintenance of vessels. Over the years Q-West has developed and obtained specific fabrication equipment. Below is a general overview of Q-West’s equipment:

- Three workshops capable of fabricating vessels of up to 47 metres
- 150 tonne capacity slipway with the ability to slip the vessels directly into the main construction hall
- Modern machine shop including brake press, pipe rolling equipment, drills, lathes, guillotine
- MIG welding (including pulse technology) of steel, stainless steel and aluminium alloys
- TIG welding of stainless steel and aluminium alloys
- Four overhead gantries with a capacity of up to 5 tonnes
- Test equipment for hydraulics, electronics and welding
- Time quality management
- Computer Aided Design capabilities
- Established team of professional, qualified boat builders and engineers