



The *Frae* leads a new life as the *Bounty Bay*



Many hands make light work of on-board duties



Dr Graham Wragg at the helm station

# A NUGGETY LITTLE VESSEL

BY MICHAEL PIGNÉGUY

Crewing on fishing boats off the Alaskan Coast, skipping your own expedition vessel in the South Pacific and also having a PhD in zoology has the makings of an impressive resume.

Dr Graham Wragg has these and many other achievements to add to his name. He and his long-time friend, Ed Saul, whose achievements as a field ecologist are just as impressive, make a formidable team as owners of the scientific exploration vessel *Bounty Bay*.

The *Bounty Bay* began as an idea on a sketch pad by the New Zealander Harry Verney back in 1983, and she was launched in Patea, Taranaki a year later. Then named the *Frae*, she spent 17 years operating as a charter fishing and diving boat out of Sandspit in the Hauraki Gulf.

The *Frae* was the first catamaran to be built in New Zealand with asymmetrical hulls. This was the result of some simple but fascinating experiments that Verney undertook with prototype

hulls in a stream. By placing simple measuring devices on the stream's banks he was able to observe which type of hull design produced the least amount of drag.

From his experiments he concluded that having two-thirds of the bow section on the "outside" of the hull centreline and one third on the "inside" was the most efficient hull shape.

After nearly 20 years, the hull is in remarkably good condition, no doubt due to good initial preparation followed by good maintenance. This included placing a lit candle in the airtight space for ward of the collision bulkhead before the hatch was bolted on. The result was that no rusting could take place, as all the oxygen in this space was burnt up, and the compartments have remained rust free!

Expedition vessels need plenty of deck space, and the *Bounty Bay's* ample 6m beam within an overall length of only 15.5m gives the crew plenty of stowage areas. The accommodation for 12 is made up of four single berths plus a double berth in each



The large functional work deck is ideal for marine research work

hull. It's definitely of the "no frills" variety, but quite adequate for the types of voyages undertaken.

The aft third of each hull is taken up with enginerooms, 6000 litres of diesel fuel tanks, 1200 litres of water, and storage spaces. Her twin six-cylinder Fords push her along at a stately seven knots and, with a full load of fuel, she has a cruising range of some 3300 miles.

The *Bounty Bay's* hulls are round bilged, which give her a more comfortable ride than chines, and her 1.7m draft allows her skipper to slide into most Pacific Island atolls.

Graham Wragg and Ed Saul bought the vessel in 2002 and formed Pacific Expeditions. They saw her as being perfect for their intention of eco-tourism, exploring remote Pacific Islands, scientific surveys and scuba diving. Although they still use Auckland-based Dunsford Marine for their safe ship management programme, they have changed the vessel's registration to the Cook Islands due to the inflexibility of the Maritime Safety Authority's manning requirements. The Cook Island's Ministry of Transport allows overseas certification for mates and deckhands, and Wragg feels that the manning of his vessel is now much more relevant and "fit for purpose", rather than by just having foreign-going ticket holders on board.

The Bauer and Bristol air compressors were well used earlier this year during the first diving expedition around Pitcairn Island with the British Navy Dive Club. This was followed by a five-week voyage around the Tuamotu Archipelago to clarify what flora and fauna were there, and if any invasive species were present.

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the United States Federal Fish and Wildlife Service equally funded the trip, and there were both Kiwi and US scientists on board.

The pair is currently awaiting permission to start eco-tourism trips to Suvarrow in the northern Cook Islands. The island is uninhabited and has one of the few lagoons that vessels of this size can enter. The trips will provide small groups with a great opportunity to experience life on a really remote island and study the local habitat.

Wragg says he has found that the *Bounty Bay* handles all sea conditions well, and while at anchor in a blow he has been impressed by how quietly she sits, not even coming up short on the chain in strong gusts.

The vessel is licensed as an international charterboat, and is well equipped with all the essential navigation aids and safety equipment. Three tenders, two RIBs and an inflatable tender ensure complete flexibility with their passenger requirements.

After being a familiar sight in the Hauraki Gulf for 18 years, this nuggety little vessel seems destined to become a well-known research and eco-tourism venture in the South Pacific.

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