



Janet and Michael Buxton

# Black Pearl

## A JEWEL OF THE PACIFIC

BY KEITH INGRAM

In January this year the latest long-range expedition cruising vessel, the *Black Pearl*, quietly entered the water for her sea trials and christening before departing our shores.

This was the quiet bit, because the 31.5m ship makes a significant statement about the quality synonymous with New Zealand boatbuilding.

The *Black Pearl* was designed by Craig Loomes and built to Lloyds LY2/MCA international class standard. She is designed to the owner's requirements for extended offshore cruising, with excellent sea-keeping qualities, while maintaining all the comforts of home.

As part of the design brief, they wanted a small ship, with all the functions of a sturdy go-anywhere expedition vessel with a low profile, not only in terms of her constructed height to aid her seakeeping ability, but also to minimise her

presence and appearance in port. The owners did not want a vessel that cried, "Am I flash!"

Because of the need for her to have long legs and be able to travel great distances, the *Black Pearl's* hull form moved away from the traditional hard chine, passage-maker style common to many of these new vessels.

Her round bilge hull form minimises wetted surface areas while maximising the interior volume. The end result has proved to be successful. The hull is decidedly slippery, resulting in a reduced fuel burn of up to 40 percent less than similar vessels of her size and tonnage at the same speeds. She has a range of 3500 miles at 12 knots, but pulling her back to eight knots extends that to 5000 miles.

The ship build was managed by Diverse Projects Limited of Auckland, which offers clients an extension of modern project management skills by coordinating the best trades and suppliers in what they call a "virtual shipyard".



The two halves arrive at the port of Napier



Ready for the clip on



Lifting into the tide for delivery



Finally, the christening

As boatbuilding becomes extremely complex and building codes require higher standards, Diverse Projects' philosophy is enhanced by this independent selection choice, taking in the skills of many trades from up and down the North Island.

Control and ownership of the project belongs with the client. "At all times clients know where the funds are being spent, giving 100 percent transparency," says the company director, John Vitali. "There are no hidden costs or added percentages to outside contractors."

This project is an example of how our boatbuilding industry should be thinking in the future, especially when it comes to large, specialised builds such as this.

The *Black Pearl's* build encompassed a number of stages. The Palmerston North boat yard of Profab Central Engineering Limited constructed the alloy hull and superstructure.

This part of the project took nearly 14 months from cutting ►

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The pilothouse is the captain's domain



The main saloon



A practical galley

the 8mm and 6mm marine alloy plates until she emerged from the Profab yard in two parts to be transported to Whangarei via the port of Napier. This work included the alloy tanks and the stainless steel fuel and bilge lines. Her tankage allows for 28,500 litres of fuel and 6000 litres of water, plus black-water sewage treatment and holding tanks.

This part of the build included constructing and installing all the underwater running gear shafts, rudders and stabilisers, along with two Caterpillar C18 A diesels rated at 437kW. These are coupled to twin ZF 2150 marine gearboxes which deliver a mile-eating service speed of 12 knots.

Add to this twin Caterpillar C4.4 gensets, hydraulics for her bowthrusters and capstan, an FCI Neptune watermaker producing up to 8800 litres per day and the Climma airconditioning unit and you have a lot of mechanical engineering. To hush all these puppies up, the machinery spaces were completely lined with Pyrotech sound and heat insulation.

All this work was done at Profab. When she left their yard her accommodation spaces remained unfinished and she looked to be a bare shell. The quality of the plate rolling and welding could be clearly seen and she showed true, clean lines and strong welds, with minimal heat distortion evident. It was the mark of a team of boatbuilders and engineers who know and are proud of their trade, with everyone adding their signature to the high quality workmanship.

The ship was transported to Napier by road in two parts on large, low-loader heavy transport trucks. Once at the port, the top section was lifted onto its parent hull and welded in place before she was lifted into the water in preparation for the tow north to Oceania Marine's yard in Whangarei for fitting out and finishing.

Once again, this was a team effort, with several trades pulling together. Specialist Marine Interiors were responsible for the interior fit-out. This company has developed what it says is a unique system of building complete interiors away from the ship

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Their interlock system enables the entire interior to be assembled, checked, disassembled, packed and shipped to the host vessel anywhere in the world, where it can then be reassembled within the hull. This was no different with the *Black Pearl*, with the sections fitting together like a jigsaw puzzle. Soundguard materials were used in all areas where noise might travel. Paint, soft furnishings and light oak timber completed the package.

The layout starts for'ard with a surprisingly traditional four-berth cabin in a vee-berth configuration, with a separate toilet and vanity to port and a shower to starboard. Guests have stowage space under the lower berths and in lockers built into the outer hull area. There is an escape hatch above and a large flat-screen television and music system for their entertainment.

The two identical side guest cabins are fitted with ensuites and adjustable berths that form either twin singles or a double bed.

The owner's cabin takes up the full width of the hull and

features a small office alcove, a walk-in wardrobe and a decent-sized bathroom with outside views. Crew accommodation is for four in two cabins, plus a small, single cabin for the captain's four-year-old son.

The galley is centrally located on the main deck between the pilothouse and the main saloon. It also has a door opening out onto the side waist, ensuring a nice open feeling, and a working space where even the most discerning galley slave will enjoy working.

The galley is fitted out with every essential the duty cook will need, with a good u-shaped island layout, a large refrigerator and freezers, a coffee maker, cook tops, microwave and conventional ovens and a rubbish compactor. A dumb waiter allows food and beverages to be sent up to the fully enclosed flybridge, which doubles as a casual dining area.

The saloon is huge, with a number of distinctive areas, such as the dedicated card playing area aft and a large, L-shaped settee for'ard, with matching coffee tables making an ideal space ▶

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your traditional bridge. While it is the main command centre of the ship and where the captain or crew can safely navigate the ship without disturbing the boss or guests up top, the layout is very relaxed and orderly. There is a settee and table at the rear of the pilothouse if guests wish to stop, relax and chat. Remembering this is an expedition vessel designed to take folk to isolated, exotic places where there is much to experience and learn, it's important for everyone to feel comfortable joining the captain in his domain.

The *Black Pearl* carries a full suite of electronics engineered and installed by Nav Station in Auckland. The package consists predominantly of Furuno hardware, including a Furuno 96-mile 25kW Arpa radar, a secondary radar, a NavNet 3D black box charting sounder, a GP37 GPS, a weather fax, AIS and Furuno Inmarsat SatC and a satellite compass. The pilothouse has 19in Hatteland displays, while the flybridge has 15in displays. There is a Maretron instrument and engine monitoring system plus closed-circuit cameras in the engineroom and looking over the aft deck.



to relax and chat. Swivel tub chairs provide further seating. There is a large 3D television, concealed when not in use, and a surround-sound entertainment system. The saloon's airconditioning may be isolated when the large aft doors are open for extended living.

Up top in the flybridge is a minor control station with dual electronics. This is the boss's area if he wants to have a play or be in command while on deck. Stepping outside and behind the bridge structure is the boat deck, where the main RHIB tender is stowed, along with twin PWCs and other water-sport toys. This space is also the muster station and life-raft deployment point. For'ard against the back of the bridge is the outdoor hospitality area, including a barbecue and bar.

The meticulous attention to detail extends to the exterior. The topsides are finished in Awlcraft 2000 SE (Special Effects), a fast-drying, acrylic urethane high gloss. Along with Awlcraft metallic paint it gives the hull a special effect. It was the first job of its kind finished in New Zealand and Australia using this "base" coat technology. It defies belief that she started as a great-looking alloy hull and now is not far short of perfect.

As we step into the main pilothouse, we see this space is not

Another break with tradition is the cable deck layout incorporating



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"Phoenix" - Photo supplied courtesy of Greenshell New Zealand Ltd.

twin Maxwell 6000 capstan and warping drums and the positioning of the two anchors one above the other on the stem. The outcome is nice to look at and practical in use, keeping the cable away from the stem when at anchor.

In closing, the *Black Pearl* is in a class of her own. While she is able to turn admiring heads, she is not so ostentatious that she might detract her from the primary role of extensive expedition-style cruising she has been designed for.

Her cruises will take her far beyond the Pacific Ocean and the black pearls from which she attracted her name. Clearly *Black Pearl* is an excellent example of what can be done when building class vessels to meet the discerning international market.

Using a respected, proven management company has demonstrated their ability to attract the best New Zealand boatbuilding trades and bring them together to build a world-class small ship. 

SPECIFICATIONS	
Length	31.6m
Beam	7.85m
Draft	2.05m
Displacement (light)	125 tonnes
Engines	2 x Caterpillar C18 A marine diesels
Power	2 x 437kW
Fuel	28,500 litres
Water	6000 litres
Service speed	12 knots
Range	3500 miles @ 12 knots
Gearbox	ZF 2150
Designer	LOMOcean
Builder	Profab Central Engineering
Project management	Diverse Projects
Estimated price delivered	\$20 million



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