



# ...A DECADE LATER

BY KEITH INGRAM

Ten years and 51 issues ago, we published the first issue of *New Zealand Professional Skipper* in response to the industry's desire to have an informative publication that would not only keep them informed on the many issues arising but that would also be a showcase for the maritime transport industry.

The magazine started from modest beginnings as a quarterly of 28 pages and a limited budget. I well remember the days of cut-and-paste, and laying the magazine out on our dining room table, and of the frustrations of Vivienne, who was trying to manage a household, only to find a bedroom converted into an office with the dining room as an extension.

A breeze would unexpectedly strike all these bits of paper precariously sitting on blue mark-up boards and undo an hour's work, or the household cat, Paddy, would shred an important incoming facsimile as it rolled off the machine. They were interesting times.

Because we were new, the introduction of electronic desktop publishing was seen as the way to go, and after three issues, we moved into a computerised layout. It was a major change.

Our first printer was still driving a steam-driven, two-colour press. This was not a problem, given that our first magazines were predominantly black and white. In subsequent years more colour crept into the magazine, as new advertisers came on board and our circulation rose.

At this point I must acknowledge our printers and staff from the Business Printing group.

It's hard to keep a good secret in the maritime industry. As the magazine grew it ventured further afield into the Pacific, Australia and the northern hemisphere. Much of this growth was due to ex-pat Kiwi mariners who wanted to stay in touch with home. But as the magazine went offshore, it gained an international reputation, and in 2003 we became *Professional Skipper*,

which is acknowledged as being one of the leading marine professional magazines in Oceania.

Today, 10 years on, we should acknowledge some of the key staff writers who remain with us today. They include Steve Punter, who first wrote about "Wallys I have met". On this count, when one looks at wave rage photograph in our 50th issue, not a lot has changed.

Mike Pignéguy talked about the perennial problems of a fragmented and disjointed charterboat fleet. One would have thought that we might have learnt something these past few years. But as we look around our coast, our fleet remains as fragmented as ever. Apart from the New Zealand Marine Transport Association, which represents about one-third of the industry at national and political level, the rest of the fleet is largely a lost voice on the wind.

Mark Barratt-Boyes focussed on the ad-hoc growth of marine reserves, and the Department of Conservation's inability to manage the existing marine protected areas within its care. To be polite, I have to say that DoC's ability to manage its marine protected areas and consult with all stakeholders on new proposals remains abysmal.

Ricky Collins spoke of corrosion problems in vessels, and in every issue since he has kept us up to date with various protection and treatment methods to prevent corrosion, rot or vessel deterioration at sea. It would be remiss of us not to mention Altex Coatings, our longest-standing advertiser. They have appeared on the inside back cover of *Professional Skipper* from the first issue.

As its foundation editor, I spoke of an industry in change, with safe ship management on the horizon, the growing problem of pirate operators, and the need to have a cohesive voice and a good communication conduit.

Marine invaders were here a decade ago, and they remain a

constant cause of concern for our industry today. In looking at issue number one, we read of the Pacific oyster and its arrival in the early 1960s to become what we now regard as a success story for the aquaculture industry.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the Asian mussel, green codium seaweed, file shell, masking crabs, Pacific barnacles, tube worms, bryozoa, *Theora lubrica* bivalves, undaria, sea squirts - hold on a minute! This is the very same sea squirt, *Styela clava*, that was reportedly discovered four years ago during the America's Cup. And yet 10 years ago, we had a report by Dr Bruce Hayward that it was in Auckland's Viaduct Harbour. Nothing was done, so it has been added to our growing list of marine invaders, most of which we have had to learn to live with.

When one reads our latest issue, one could be forgiven for thinking, "What has changed?" After 10 years, the government decided that the Maritime Safety Authority needed a new look and changed its name to Maritime New Zealand. The new look works. For a period of time it successfully confused the maritime industry it is there to serve.

The opening of our coastal waters to foreign trade effectively drove the nail in the coffin of our New Zealand shipping lines, as many of the traditional workhorses on the coast disappeared.

Much has happened closer inshore. Unfortunately, we have continued to see a decline in our inshore fishing fleet, as many small vessels, with many owner/operators disappearing as corporate companies have sold and consolidated fishing quota into larger holdings. Our fishing fleet is but a shadow of its former self. Even the deepwater fleet, our new-generation fishing ships, is retrenching.

When we look over the covers, the diversity of our coastal fleet becomes evident. Our cover stories read like a Who's Who in the industry, with the many new vessels entering service. Equally, the articles reflect the diversity and the dynamics of an ever-changing industry. They include safety issues, from Too Rough to Rescue (issue 12), to foreign fishing vessel groundings resulting in total loss, to bulk carriers that nearly caused a huge environmental disaster. Environmental issues have played a large part, due in part that as mariners, we have a deep respect for the marine environment in which we live and work.

On reading our last couple of issues, one could be forgiven for believing that nothing has changed. Small owner-operators still face problems with ever-increasing costs of complying with safe ship management. In saying this, Maritime New Zealand has acknowledged the problem and given its commitment to facilitate a better understanding between SSM companies and its industry participants.

Pirates continue to raise their deceitful heads, as they bludge off the fringes of the industry. Clearly, the NZMTA, Maritime NZ, the seafood industry and this magazine are committed to unilaterally working to eliminate this scourge of the industry.

On a positive note, our safety record is second-to-none by world standards. Our coastline, nestled between the Pacific, the Tasman Sea and the Southern Ocean, faces some of the most exposed and inhospitable stretches of water in the world, and yet our seafarers are some of the most experienced professional sailors you can find.

Collectively, our various maritime sectors contribute billions of dollars to the New Zealand economy, be it aquaculture, fishing, marine transport, tourism or boat and shipbuilding. In this area we remain vibrant and in good heart. But the maritime industry can do more. Given half a chance, and government leadership, it could double its contribution to New Zealand in the next 10 years. We have the infrastructure, we have the skills and training and we have the means. If only our politicians and bureaucrats would let us get on with the job we all do so well.

We are, after all, professionals in our fields. I frequently cringe when I see a "Johnny come lately" politician or an ill-informed bureaucrat making stupid decisions, which affect so many for no reason. We remain committed and passionate about our industry, and we intend, God willing, to be here for at least the next 10 years.

It would be fair to say that, like anything good, we have matured with age. It is a privilege to remain an active participant in our industry, and continue to deliver a quality publication that you, the industry, give us due acknowledgement and support for. On this note, we would like to thank you for your continued support and acknowledgement of *Professional Skipper* magazine. ⚓

**Congratulations Skipper**


Business Printing Group would like to thank **PROFESSIONAL Skipper** for their continued support and congratulate them on 10 years of successful publishing.

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