

# KAURI VESSEL ready for generations



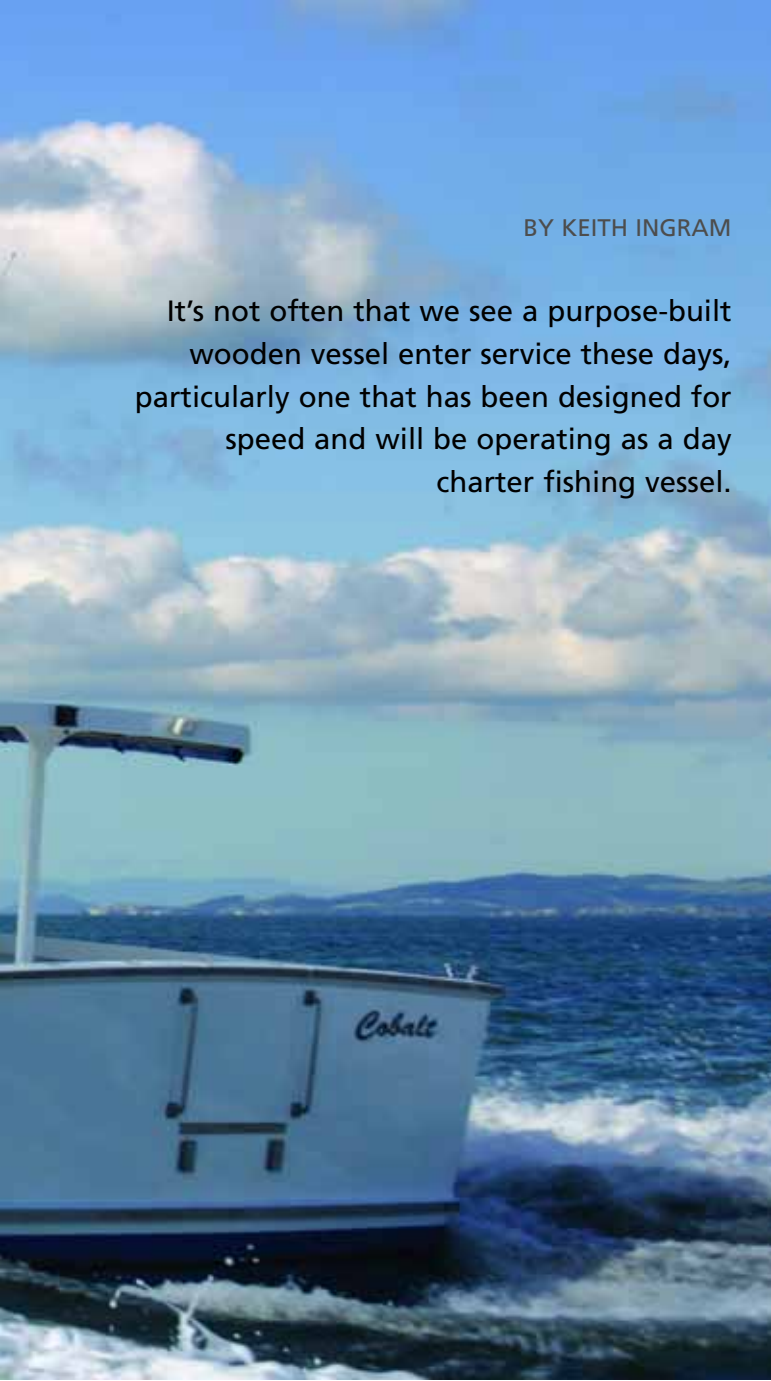
The helmstation, while compact, provides easy access to all navigational aids and controls, with good vision forward

At first glance from a distance, one could be mistaken into thinking that *Cobalt* is made from alloy or GRP. She was designed by Tim Barnett, and built by the owner, Alan Viscovich, of Northcote, Auckland, assisted by Terry King, a traditional wooden boatbuilder who, even in his 70s, still sets a fast pace. Terry was to play the important part of using the old skills of lofting and then constructing the hull. It is made up of 18 frames and 34 stringers clad in triple-diagonal 9mm kauri planks on the hull below the chine, and double-diagonal on the sides.

Alan is the son of the prominent fisherman and boatbuilder Gus Viscovich, who is also of the old school. Over the years, Gus amassed a huge store of demolition native timber bought from the old BNZ building, Affco, and many other waterfront sheds that were being demolished.

One of the boats he has built from these timber stocks is the 23.5m ketch *Augustin*, his pride and joy, which gives him much pleasure in his retirement. Commercial vessels include the *Matea*, *Tungsten*, *San Al Pa*, *Samantha* and *Lady Jess*, to name a few of the fishing boats that have worked for the Viscovich family.

Alan started fishing in the *San Al Pa* for three years in the 1970s. He then fished on the *Tungsten* for 21 years. With his wife, Lin, and two children, Sam and Breanna, at home, Alan decided that he



BY KEITH INGRAM

It's not often that we see a purpose-built wooden vessel enter service these days, particularly one that has been designed for speed and will be operating as a day charter fishing vessel.

would like to work closer to home so he could be with his children as they grew up in the important education years.

After leasing out his quota, Alan operated *Tungsten* from 1996 to 2000 as one of Auckland's line fishing charter boats to test the market. This proved to be both successful and trying for him, as the Auckland sustenance fishing community quickly appreciated his commercial skills and ability to provide them with successful fishing opportunities. But after operating by himself for years as a long-line fisherman, the trials and tribulations of fishing punters sorely tested his patience, so he decided to return to fishing.

While the *Tungsten* was an excellent sea boat and an ideal long-line vessel, her conversion to passenger and line fishing was a compromise.

On returning to commercial fishing, he saw that the industry was in the middle of a state of change. Fuel prices were starting to move upwards, and licensed fish receivers were putting more pressure on commercial fishers and forcing the wharf price down.

The Japanese iki market had all but collapsed, and the high prices once paid for iki longline snapper were dropping significantly. But this gave Alan the time to think and reflect on his future direction. He retained the desire to be close to his family, and he valued the weekend sports days where he supported his children. There is, after all, life after fishing. Once again, Alan offered his quota for lease. ►



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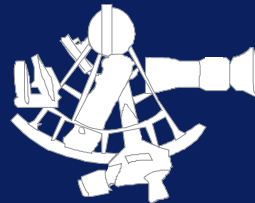
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**Cobalt maintains a flat profile at cruising speed when underway**



**ABOVE: The heart of the timber boat's frames and stringers seen during construction**



**A gentle squeeze as Cobalt sees the light of day**

As he prepared to build a new, customised day vessel to cater for the Auckland recreational line fishing fraternity, Gus still had enough demolition timber to build two more boats.

So in 2003, Alan came ashore and started milling the timber he would need for his new vessel from demolition-recovered kauri, 14in x 12in x 25ft-long flitches. Some of the flitches were milled 100 to 140 years ago, and the task was heavy and time-consuming, as the timber had to be checked for nails and other bits of foreign metal.

In 2004, with Terry at his side, construction on *Cobalt* started. The 13.8m hull, with its 4.3m beam and 1.4m draft, was built upside-down, glassed over and painted. Her bulkheads, decking and superstructure, constructed from 110 sheets of marine ply of varying thicknesses, were fitted after she was turned over. All the frames, stringers, beams, structural timber, posts and so on are of kauri.

Terry, being a patternmaker as well as a shipwright, made the patterns for the cross-floors, which were then cast in bronze. These were used to secure the deadwood and garboard to the hull and

engine beds. Externally, the hull is fully glassed over using 810 tri-axial E-glass, and the topsides are done using 430 double-bias glass.

*Cobalt* was finally finished using Perfection two-pot epoxy paints applied by roller and brush. This surprised us, because the quality of the finish is such that one could be

forgiven for thinking it was sprayed. The use of

cheap yellow foam rollers is the secret.

Moving through the vessel from fore to aft, in the forepeak is a two-berth crew's quarters in a V-berth configuration, with stowage under the bunks. This area, a justifiable source of pride, is finished in six coats of clear polyurethane to give a natural look and show how the boat is constructed.

Stepping up takes one directly into the wheelhouse saloon. To starboard is the main helmstation, with all the electronics to hand. As Alan intends to operate *Cobalt* as a skipper-only vessel, a sliding door is fitted so he can go fore to aft when anchoring or berthing.

*Cobalt's* electronic package includes a Simrad EQ42 colour fishfinder and a JRC JMA 2300 4kW 48-mile radar, with a Sewa Barramundi plotter providing navigation services, plus the usual back-up charts and a Cobra VHF radio for communication.

To port is a small shelf and then a large, U-shaped alcove seat with a kauri drop-down table that can be converted into a double berth when the family is away together on holiday. The use of nice, serviceable squabs and marine carpets completes the décor.

Opposite and behind the helmstation is a full-sized galley with a two-burner gas stove and oven, a stainless steel sink bench, a 12-24 volt x 240 volt Engle 130 litre refrigerator under the helm seat, and plenty of drawers and storage for plates and galley utensils.

An automatic, self-igniting gas califont provides hot water, and a large void under the saloon floor contains the water tanks and space for dry stores.

Internal access from this void through a watertight bulkhead door gives access to the spacious engine room. This compartment contains the fuel tanks, batteries and the large Daewoo 158TA 540hp marine diesel engine. This is coupled to a ZF 325-1A 1.733:1 gearbox connected to a 2.75in stainless steel shaft swinging a 28.5in x 30in four-blade Nalder and Biddle propeller.

Once we are back on deck, we immediately notice that the fishing area is immense, with 20 rod holders around the coamings alone. To starboard on the fore to aft bulkhead is the cockpit helmstation and the engine berthing controls, including the 10hp Max-Power bowthruster dual control.

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At the rear of the deckhouse with the cockpit helmstation to starboard, head to port and the califont cupboard amidships

In the centre, behind a protective ventilated cupboard, is the califont, and to port is a door to a large head and shower compartment, which may be hosed down for cleaning.

Immediately below on the deck is the large, soft-top hatch, which may be unbolted and hinged to give full access to the Daewoo for servicing and maintenance. Behind this is the exhaust and ventilation stack, with a small gas barbecue installed on the starboard side.

Moving further aft, we find an insulated ice-box with a capacity of about 1cu m. Aft of this is the main hatch into the lazarette, on either side of which are two small stowage compartments for ropes, cleaning gear, bait boards and other items.

A hardtop and drop-down clear screens along the sides protect about 80 percent of the cockpit. In keeping with the vessel's clean lines, the topsides are unobstructed, with only the vents, exhaust, life rings, radar and radio aerials and a short navigation light mast present. The transom door and built-in ladder makes access easy for swimmers and for boarding from the dinghy. A drop-down step constructed from totara fitted centrally half way along the bulwarks on each side can be used when alongside to assist in stepping over the bulwarks.

The for'ard deck is accessible from either side of the main deckhouse, and is protected by sturdy stainless steel rails. For'ard is a heavy-duty winch and access to the anchor and chain lockers.

*Cobalt* attained a speed of 21 knots and a service speed of 18 knots at 1850rpm on her sea trials. During her stability checks, with 22 people on board, her maximum tilt was six degrees, indicating that she will be a stable vessel at rest, making her ideal for her intended role of day fishing trips.

Alan insisted on a fuel computer, because when you have a huge power plant and 540hp, if you want speed it takes a lot of fuel to feed these horses. The fuel computer is a good leveller and slows the hand up considerably, he says.

The Daewoo engine burns 7.5 litres per hour at eight knots. Working through the speed ratios, we converted the fuel consumption to the more realistic litres per nautical mile, and at eight knots *Cobalt* was burning one litre per mile.

At 16-18 knots this leapt to four litres per mile, and at her top speed she was consuming five litres per mile. This definitely indicates that if you want speed you have to pay for it, an important consideration for the new generation of faster charterboats that are appearing on the Auckland waterfront.

Clearly, in this case, covering the miles quickly is not equal to distance travelled to fuel consumed. We would suggest that if many other fast vessels used fuel computers they would be surprised at the economies of fuel burn and costs.

The Daewoo is one grunty engine, and interestingly, when you buy a Daewoo marine diesel engine you not only get the engine and gauges but other boxes of fittings, which include valves, sea

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The large Daewoo engine may be accessed from below or by lifting the deck service hatch

chest, strum boxes and a tool kit and other fittings.

On departing from the marina, we noted that as soon as the engine was engaged, the large propeller immediately bit, both when put into astern or ahead, and keeping the speed down in the marina was a bit of a challenge, as the vessel idles at five knots. While she is fitted with a mechanical trolling valve, this is not practicable when manoeuvring, as it is not designed for this purpose.

Although she ended up heavier than her original design expectations, the *Cobalt's* wash when underway is more than acceptable and should not cause concern to other water users.


Once underway, noise levels were an acceptable deep throb from within. As the *Cobalt* increased speed she maintained a nice angle with no noticeable high lift in the bow or burying of her tail. Equally, in the turns she maintained a stable aspect with no noticeably bad habits.

In closing, we found *Cobalt* to be a pleasure to be aboard. She is light, airy and comfortable. Even when underway, her spray from

the chine rails is acceptable, and noise levels on board are very moderate at all speeds.

To build a boat of this size and performance using timber and traditional construction is a love-hate affair, because you could probably build her cheaper using alloy or GRP. However, we are confident that this vessel will still be around in 50 year's time, doing the sort of work she has been designed to do.

The choice of a Daewoo marine diesel is a step away from the expected traditional performance-versus-weight power plants. In saying this, the Daewoo is fast gaining a reputation as a strong, no-nonsense power plant that will deliver years of continual service.

We are sure that *Cobalt* and Alan will be a welcome addition to the Auckland charterboat scene, and the recreational fishers who have no access to their own boats and wish to venture out to fish for food or fun. 

## SPECIFICATIONS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Length overall | 13.8m   |
| Beam           | 4.3m  |
| Draft          | 1.4m  |
| Deadweight     | 12.5 tonnes   |
| Engine         | Daewoo V158TA, marine diesel                        |
| Power          | 540hp   |
| Fuel           | 2000 litres   |
| Water          | 600 litres  |
| Construction   | glass over double-diagonal kauri 9mm strip planking |
| Speed          | 21 knots  |
| Service speed  | 18 knots  |
| Passengers     | 20  |
| SSM            | MMS   |
| Designer       | Tim Barnett Design                                  |

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