

The Minerva under cover, jacked and slowly drying out



THE MINERVA TAKES HER NEXT BIG STEP

THE *MINERVA* HAS taken a second big step towards restoration to her former glory as an inshore passenger steam ship.

With her top hamper removed *Minerva* has now been transported to a site where she is slowly being jacked to remove her aging hog. This will also allow her 98 year-old timbers to slowly dry out in preparation for what, in effect, will be her half life refit.

With the interior stripped out, years of accumulated oil and grime has been steam cleaned in preparation for sealing.

The Kerikeri Steam Trust will shortly be taking the lines off the

vessels and in preparation for doing new design and construction drawings and moving her into a soon to be built shed.

The trust has already identified two steam engines as being available and suitable in the UK with new boiler plans underway. Once the hull has dried out, her planking will be splined and the use of modern composites and resins will ensure the ageing timbers will be good for another 100 years.

The project is being run by the Kerikeri Steam Trust and any donations will be gratefully received. Donations can be sent to KKST C/- 82 Riverview Road, Kerikeri. 0230. Ph 09 4079564.



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NELSON SCALLOP SEASON DOUBTFUL

THE PROSPECT OF a commercial scallop season around the top of the South Island this year looks bleak and will depend on the outcome of a biomass survey to be done in May.

The company that handles the region's commercial scallop fishery fears that lack of spat settlement in 2006 resulted in fewer scallops growing in Tasman, Golden Bay and the Marlborough Sounds.

Scallops take 30 months to reach optimum size and the coming season is when that year's class would be harvested.

"Some of them have been enhanced, but we haven't had a very good recruitment in 2006. There wasn't much spat fall; we didn't find many in Tasman and Golden Bays," Mr Campbell told the Nelson Mail.

"So it looks like this year, we don't know if we'll have a season," he said.

Mr Campbell said having no season would make life tough for commercial fishers.

Scallops are a large part of the local inshore fleet's annual income. If that fails fishermen are looking for a good tuna and wet fish season to cover the winter.

Meanwhile, Cawthron Institute marine scientist, Dr Paul Gillespie, has blamed years of commercial trawling and dredging for the depletion of the Tasman Bay scallop fishery.

Fears that the Golden Bay scallop fishery could go the same way has prompted a call for a separate marine management plan for the bay by Alan Vaughan, a representative on the Fisheries Advisory Group, and Golden Bay Community Board chairman Joe Bell.

Dr Gillespie said high levels of suspended sediment were discovered in the river plume just offshore, both at times of flood and during dry weather.

"Scallops are very sensitive to high concentrations of suspended sediments."

He said scallops ate phytoplankton and diatoms floating in the water and did not have enough food when sediment levels were high in their feeding environment near the sea bottom.



Collision raises eyebrows and oil

A COLLISION BETWEEN two US Navy boats in the narrow straits of Hormuz caused some red faces and temporarily increased the price of oil.

The accident happened on March 20 when the *USS Hartford*, a nuclear powered submarine, and the *USS New Orleans*, an amphibious ship, were moving in the same direction through the strait.

There was no damage to the sub's nuclear propulsion system and no disruption to shipping in the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes.

The *New Orleans* suffered a ruptured fuel tank, resulting in an oil spill of approximately 95,000 litres of diesel fuel and 15 sailors aboard the *Hartford* were slightly injured but able to return to duty. No injuries were reported aboard the *New Orleans* and both ships continued under their own power.

Military analyst Loren Thompson of the US based Lexington Institute said a collision between two vessels in the world's most sophisticated navy was nearly unheard of. It's

more common for ships of different navies to collide, or military vessels and commercial ships, he said.

"It's almost inevitable that people are relieved of duty pending investigation," Mr Thomson told the Associated Press. "These sort of accidents are so uncommon that you have to take it for granted that a major mistake occurred by one of the vessels' captains."

Both ships were heading to port and were going in the same direction when the incident occurred. The submarine was submerged at the time but he could give no further details as the collision was still under investigation.

At the time of the incident, benchmark crude for April delivery had traded lower for most of the morning and then rose 39 cents to US\$52 on the New York Mercantile Exchange. In London, Brent prices rose 50 cents to US\$51.17 on the ICE Futures exchange.

However the rise was nowhere near what could have been expected months ago, when such a collision would likely have sent prices skyrocketing, Associated Press reported.



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In brief...

Accolade for alarm

Local marine electronics company Vesper Marine has received an accolade from United States magazine *Sail* for creating "one of the world's most innovative sailing products."

The company's vessel tracking product AISWatchMate was awarded the 2009 Freeman K Pittman Innovation award by the editors of *SAIL* in their annual Gear of the Year issue.

The system was highly commended for its ability to warn sailors in advance if they are on a collision course with another ship or any other vessel.

It delivers concise and prioritised information about approaching vessels and integrates it with a vessel's position, course and speed. It calculates the bearing, range and closest point of approach (CPA) for each approaching vessel.

Filters are provided to help eliminate false alarms and a unique feature graphically shows if a vessel will pass ahead or astern.

Bananas raise gas

A cargo of rotting bananas aboard the Greek freighter *Amfirite I*, berthed in the Ukrainian port of Odessa, became a hot topic at city hall. Urgent talks on the situation took place as fears mounted that the methane gas given off by the 3000 tonnes of fruit would cause an explosion.

A letter sent by the port authority to the local environmental department warned that concentrations of methane between five percent and 15 percent could explode and the situation needed to be treated with extreme caution.

Exclusive zones sought

Gisborne Recreational Fishing Council representative, Alain Jorion, is hoping for the establishment of significant "recreational exclusive" fishing areas.

Commenting in the *Gisborne Herald* Mr Jorion said recreational exclusive zones had to be established because of the increasing depletion of fish stocks.

"We want increased populations, smaller bag limits, but well-managed fisheries in smaller focus areas," he said.

"We support sustainable fisheries practices, an internationally competitive commercial fishing sector and high quality recreational fishing."

CANAL TRANSIT RATES FROZEN

AN INDEFINITE FREEZE has been placed on Suez Canal transit fees.

Lloyds List has reported that Egypt's Suez Canal Authority (SCA) is likely to be much more open to renegotiating some contract fees this year because of the worldwide recession. Discounts of a quarter or more look likely.

The decision not to increase fees was formally confirmed by SCA chairman, Ahmed Ali Fadel, after an unpopular hike of seven percent last March.

Mr Fadel admitted that traffic through the canal was likely to fall this year, depending on developments in the world economy. He was not ruling out a review later in the year. However, he did not give figures for transits or revenues in December.

There are indications the decline is

already in the order of around 20 percent in terms of vessel numbers. As a result, the authority's bargaining hand could already be significantly weaker than it was only weeks ago.

According to official statistics, on the basis that there were 21,080 transits last year, and revenues of \$5.11bn, the ballpark average figure is something like \$242,000 a ship. But this hides wide variations, with many operators enjoying substantial discounts if they can provide volume business.

While piracy off the coast of Somalia has made the area unattractive to shipping, it is believed a substantial reduction in fuel costs (and high service fees) is also encouraging companies to send vessels around the Cape of Good Hope.

Anger over new crayfish limit

NEW CRAYFISH CATCH limit restrictions have angered fishers in the Gisborne East Coast area and drawn the wrath of the New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council.

Several years ago, in the Gisborne area, the Ministry of Fisheries decided to grant commercial operators the right to take crayfish with tails 2mm smaller than what recreational fishers could take.

When first proposed, this concession was supposed to be for all fishers but the ministry, in its wisdom, gave it to commercial fishers only. Now very few crayfish get to a legal size for recreational fishers making the area almost a commercial fishery only.

"The concession must go," says recreational fishing council president, Geoff Rowling.

"It was a disastrous policy from the ministry that they are not willing to loose face over and withdraw. Couple that with the stringent controls on the gear we are allowed to use and perhaps one could be forgiven for thinking the minister and his ministry are simply not interested in allowing ordinary New Zealanders access to their own fish."

The Minister recently decided to cut the commercial catch limit but the extent of it "will have no significant positive impact for recreational fishers," says Mr Rowling.

The new commercial catch limit announced by the minister of 164T is just five ton lower than the actual commercial catch of three years ago, and is only an eight tonne reduction on the average actual landings of the last three years.

"It is in reality less than a five percent reduction and one that is unlikely to contribute significantly to a rebuild," Mr Rowling said.

"Once again the commercial sector have been able to use money from the sale of fish to protect their interest while under resourced amateurs struggle to defend public access.

"If our only recourse to justice is through the court system then Phil Heatley's time as minister isn't going to be a good one for the amateur fishing public."



Rescued after 40 days adrift

AN ITALIAN SUPERTANKER came to the rescue of a British couple who were sailing around in circles and drifting more than 1000 nautical miles off course.

Stuart Armstrong, 51, and his partner Andrea Davison, 48, spent six weeks at sea after the rudder on their 13m yacht jammed to starboard. Attempts to fix it proved useless.

The drama began on January 9, six days after the couple left the Cape Verde Islands off the West Coast of Africa on board their yacht *Sara* and headed for Antigua where they intended to anchor until April.

"I have crossed the Atlantic seven times and this was Andrea's fourth so we are pretty experienced and for the first few days it was a challenge and a bit of an adventure," Mr Armstrong told news media. "We alerted the coastguards in Britain and America and we also let our families know – I spent a good few days trying to fix the rudder as well but I just didn't have any luck."

The Coast Guard said they were too far out for a safe rescue, so they had to sit it out and drift. They are experienced sailors and between them, have sailed the Atlantic Ocean 11 times.

But, it was not an easy trip. The pair fought their way through several storms and eventually lost power, which stopped the desalination unit working but by the end of 40 days there was worse to come.

Their plight ended around 320 miles south east of the coast of Bermuda, as they began to enter the infamous Bermuda Triangle and faced another battering from a hurricane force storm. Their SOS was picked up by the *Indian Point*, a supertanker en route from South America to Amsterdam.

The rescue, which took over two hours in very heavy seas, was made more difficult by the fact that Andrea was too weak to lift herself. Both had to be winched from the sea after fitting themselves with harnesses.

They said the hardest thing about the entire experience was having to abandon their yacht *Sara*, their home for eight years, to the mercy of the sea.

SEAFOOD PROVIDES ESSENTIAL INCOME

STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND has confirmed the importance of the seafood sector to the local economy. Since 1996 our wild catch has increased by \$2.74 billion.

The industry is New Zealand's fifth largest exporter and is still holding up well in the face of the worldwide recession.

"The seafood industry as a whole is a valuable contributor to the economy, and these figures confirm that. Not only is it pumping dollars into the country, and continuing to grow, it also provides direct and indirect employment for more than 20,000 people," says Seafood Industry Council chief

executive, Owen Symmans.

In 2008, 20 species contributed 90 percent of the total value of the resource. Eighteen of these species have been managed under the QMS over the entire 1996-2008 period. The number of species managed under the QMS has risen from 32 in 1996, to 96 species in 2008.

"We take pride in the fact that we can contribute to sustainable economic growth, particularly during the current economic climate. New Zealand's wild catch seafood is of high quality and sustainable, which is why it's so popular on the export market," Mr Symmans said.

Mururoa compensation possible

NEW ZEALAND NAVY veterans sent to Mururoa to protest against French nuclear testing may benefit from a compensation fund to be established by the French government.

A payout scheme is being established by the French to compensate victims of nuclear tests in the South Pacific and Algeria. Some \$13.5 million has been set aside in the first year. The money will be distributed on a case by case basis.

New Zealand's Mururoa Veterans Society has estimated that 90 per cent of the combined crews of 500 from protest frigates *Otago* and *Canterbury* have complained of health consequences as a result of exposure to the tests. Many, they say, have died from radiation-related illnesses.

The frigates were sent to Mururoa in 1973 under Norman Kirk's Labour Government to encourage international condemnation of the French Defence Force's nuclear activities.

The nuclear blasts were witnessed from the edge of the 12 mile territorial limit around Mururoa Atoll.



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