



AT 97 CURLEW

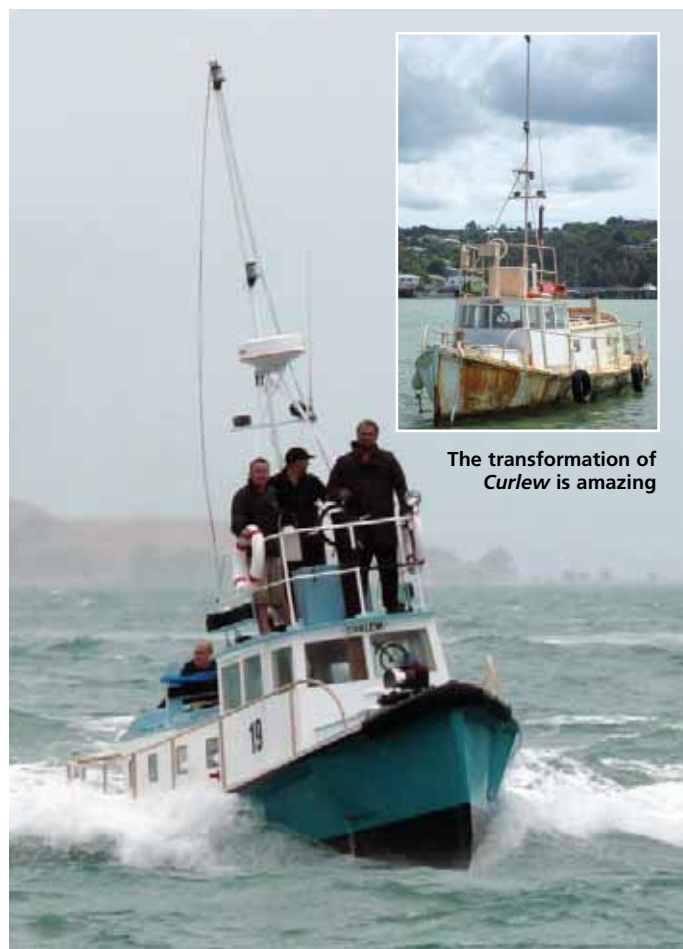
SHOWED A SLICK PAIR OF HEELS

BY KEITH INGRAM

Auckland's Anniversary Day regatta for 2010 gave those awaking early a gloomy, wet morning, with 25 knot winds in the offering. First phone call was at some ungodly hour when all respectable sailors should still be in bed. "Its bloody windy out and a bit wet! Are you cancelling the tug boat race?" What! I said gathering my thoughts, how windy? "Its screaming where I am," says my knowledgeable informant. By this time I have the VHF on and waiting for the Nowcasting to give me the wind in the Gulf and at Bean Rock. Have you ever noticed that when you want an update in a hurry you have just missed the bit you want and so one has to twiddle ones thumbs waiting for the sales pitch then the forecast which was not so bad and then finally the wind update?

Meanwhile my earnest informant is telling me about wind waves and swell and the effects wind against tide might have on the tug boat entrants. By now, after wandering out on my deck in my shorties (not a pretty sight), I am wide awake and have a clear grasp of what the day is likely to present. I advised my phone enquirer that all would be well, yes the tug boats will get a race start and yes all stations warnings will be given to advise other craft on the water of the race, its time and course, and the likelihood of there being a washing machine effect in the area of the course. Likewise, masters of smaller heritage vessels would be advised to ensure safety first amidst the enthusiasm of the race.

Big boats starting from the east end of the start line and smaller craft from the west or North Head end and stay away from the big beasts and all would be cool, so I will see you out on the harbour. "Are you sure?" asked my man. In the politest voice I could possibly muster at that time of the morning, I informed him that this was a tug boat race, a working boat race, not an opti-sail event and I wished him well. Now, I'm thinking, do I put the billy on or shall I go and warm my hands on her, who remains blissfully comfy amongst the bed sheets. Discretion being the better part of valour, I decided that this might not be such a brave move when a second call came in, once again suggesting it was piping where he was out west.



The transformation of Curlew is amazing

No problems I said, we have about 15 to 20 from the east, it might get a little choppy on the first leg and at the bend but nothing our vessels would not have experienced before. To the next question, no I am not cancelling. If and when that were to happen, it would be done by the regatta committee and

announced on local radio as well as all stations on VHF. The winds are going to hover around 20 and ease during the day, so we will see you there.

By this time it's a quick breckie, grab my gear and out the door. Once in town my predictions were proving to be correct as the much reduced fleet of vessels mustered in the assembly area. The darling of the harbour our, *William C Daldy*, had a head of steam up as she waited to pick up her passengers.

The clock quickly ticked by as the first all stations was given, then the roll call with a couple of late no shows. She must be still screaming out west, and then it was time to make our way in a parade of vessels to the start line. This race, now in its fourth year, has quickly become a public highlight as the working tugs of our port give a rare display of brute force and power and yet demonstrate just how nimble they can be. Alongside them are the vessels of yester-year, all lovingly maintained. Some of these fine old vessels are over 100 years old with others not to far away. One thing this event has done is to encourage owners and seafarers alike to restore these vessels so that we all might enjoy the sight of them still active on the harbour.

Ports of Auckland Limited has turned out a great showing from the fire fighting capable *Tamaki* along with the newer *Daldy* and, of course, there would be no show without punch as the terrible twins, *Waipapa* and *Wakakume*, join the fray. Jimmy Thompson with his red beasts are present as are a number of other larger vessels. Clearly this event would not be possible without the support of our working fleet and our heritage vessels and as such *Professional Skipper* is proud to lend its support to the event and sponsor the winning trophy.

In speaking with Baden Pascoe, the organising conduit for the vessels, I am advised that there is some softening of city father views and while we had space for some of the heritage vessels to be on display in the viaduct, we are still working on getting an area where the larger vessels can join in. Work in progress.

The start line is clear when the balloon goes up from the start boat *Akarana*, Auckland's retired pilot boat, which still looks as beautiful as ever. The race is away and the big beasts start feeding the huge horse-power they have concealed below. The *William C Daldy* is with them but sadly fades as she runs out of steam. No amount of stoking down the boiler room was going to get her above eight knots at least, four down on where she should be. You know, it's a sad day when Solid Energy, who supply coal from Huntly, are selling crap coal of low calorific value when they know its going into a steam tug. I am told its cracking up, dusty, full of rock with no heat. What is needed is clean coal from a good seam in nugget sizes not the peas that keep falling through the grates. In saying this, she is here, manned by her band of volunteers and giving the public a chance to be on board as a part of the race, and to see the action up close.

Now, just where is the action? And there she is as the small, teal coloured, 39 foot by seven foot beam on a good day is powering to take the lead as she closes the first turning mark. The best kept secret of the race *Curlew* a 97 year old triple skin tow boat, originally built by Ropes. She was built skinny so that she could slip through the water with minimal power and yet be a great towboat. This time last year *Curlew* was languishing up in Opuia in the Bay of Islands, waiting for God, with three tonne of mussels hanging off her hull. Not a pretty sight, until the boys from Sefton Marine took a shine to her and decided to rescue her. Old Shorty Sefton would be proud of his grandsons if he saw this fine little ship today. Saved from a watery grave or the funeral bonfire, there is certainly life in the old girl yet as she commands the lead home in the 2010 Anniversary Day tug boat regatta.

I can see the race handicappers having another look at her before next year's event. But boys will be boys, with the only



Many of these old timers are well into their retirement years and still going strong

difference between small boys and big boys being the size of their toys. Seriously, if it was not for this event and the enthusiasm it is generating, the old *Curlew* might still be laying unloved in the Bay of Islands. All eyes will be on *Te Hauraki* when she returns for next year's event and gives challenge. Another oldie and member of the 100 club, the *Sterling*, fresh from a smarten up after a nudge in last year's event was giving the rest of the heritage fleet a shake as this fine assortment of vessels steamed home to finish off Devonport wharf, with many of them doing the fastest six nautical mile run they have done in a long time. The larger boats being lead by the solid looking *Christine Mary* were making a line for the finish.

As the last boats crossed the line to the welcoming blasts from ships' horns the fleet was then lead to the display area off Princes wharf by the winner. Once again the POAL tug *Tamaki* gave a demonstration of her water veil and fire fighting capability. Our twin tugs, always a public favourite, once again demonstrated to the awe of the assembled public on the end of Princes wharf just how manoeuvrable these 50 tonne bollard pull vessels are.

Lets not forget it's a fun day with families joining in. Many of the working tugs were bustling with happy faces enjoying a limited opportunity as these working vessels take time out for the day.

Of the heritage vessels, it is great to see them being maintained in their retirement and still able to turn an admiring head.

Last, but not least, I remain mindful that these vessels are either working or retired, but not one looked scruffy, a credit to the mariners who look after them.

From *Professional Skipper* magazine, and as your race safety officer, I must acknowledge all the participants and extend my thanks to the masters of the vessels for the professional manner in which you approach the day, the parade and of course, the race itself. A special thanks must go to the vessel owners, because without your support this event would not happen and Auckland's Anniversary Day regatta would be missing the public highlight of the day.

Thank you and well done all.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

- | | | | |
|---|----------------|----|-----------------|
| 1 | Curlew | 10 | Tuhua |
| 2 | Pilot | 11 | Tamaki |
| 3 | Sterling | 12 | Ronaki |
| 4 | Christine Mary | 13 | William C Daldy |
| 5 | Manukau | 14 | Wakakume |
| 6 | Hamal | 15 | Waipapa |
| 7 | Bondi Belle | 16 | Daldy |
| 8 | Mahia | 17 | Gladiator |
| 9 | Sierra | | |

