

# A NEW BREED OF FISHING BOATS

BY KEITH INGRAM



Aimee Marie rolls into the tight turns and hangs onto the water



It's a bit like bringing home the bacon



Top deckhand, Granny, can gut a fish as quick as anyone

Think fishing dory and one immediately imagines small, open, flat bottom punts or, as has become fashionable in modern times, fast open boats with maybe a steering console to give some shelter. Recognised as part of Auckland's fishing industry, the mosquito fleet has developed since the late seventies to early eighties where it probably peaked to become, in the eyes of the public, a more accepted part of the commercial fishing industry.

This fleet grew, probably out of necessity, with the change in times, giving fishermen greater flexibility to work the

inshore water of the Kaipara and Manukau harbours as well as Auckland's Waitemata Harbour, the inner Hauraki Gulf and the Firth of Thames. They were part of the inshore set netting industry chasing both flat fish as well as the traditional rough finfish like snapper, trevally, kahawai and dogs. Because of the mobility of this fleet, their fly-by-night attitudes and wasteful net setting practices, they became notorious and deservedly earned for themselves the nickname, scungies.

The introduction of the quota management system changed part of the problem as many fishermen sold their quota, got out of the small boats and came ashore. But what wasn't sorted then soon would be. Maritime NZ changed the rules to include fishing vessels under 40ft and then put vessels under 6m, into a safe operating management regime. This was a good move says Weymouth fisherman, Brendon Taylor. "It got rid of the cowboys," he said. Survey requirements and skippers' tickets have now cleaned up the industry and set some good standards, standards which fishermen like Brendon have taken onboard.

His new vessel, *Aimee Marie*, gives special meaning to dory fishing with its enclosed front and hard, shelter top. Not designed to be working the shallow flats but still target flounder, Brendon's latest vessel easily allows him to work in all weather. This is a serious advantage when night setting for flounder because of an MFish imposed maximum soak time of 18 hours. You have to check and recover the gear the next day. There is no longer the excuse that it got rough as modern met forecasting is now quite reliable and fishermen, when setting, have to consider the recovery of the gear as well. The other option, if you are unsure, is to stay with your gear. So there is a responsibility to check the gear, and or recover it, within 18 hours. Besides this, driver working comfort and safety are a big issue with Brendon,

especially when your deck hand, is your mum. It would not be a good look to read in the papers "Fisherman loses mum at sea." And yes mum, Elda Taylor or "Granny" as she is affectionately known, is the full time hard working decky on both of Brendon's vessels. One who can hold her own, from slinging nets to clearing them and she can gut a bin of flounder as quick as anyone, much to the envy of many other local fishermen.

Brendon's been fishing for around 10 years. He is one of the typical new breed of fishermen who do not own quota and must therefore lease their annual catch entitlement (ACE). "I focus on flatfish because that is where I started on the Manukau, chasing flounder for another fisherman. Plus, if you do it right, you can make a quid out of it," says Brendon. The trick is to pick a reasonably valuable fish, with an affordable lease price, that will give you sufficient margins for profit so you can invest in the business. It's a different story for snapper fishermen. With the way snapper quota owners keep hiking the ACE price to meet seasonal changes, these fishermen can never make enough to cover costs, let alone get ahead. In Brendon's case, he leases over 40 tonne of flats made up of a combination of dabs (sand flounder) and yellow bellies (yellow belly flounder) the primary target species. He also carries some by-catch quota to cover the small number of other species they encounter.

But what's with this night setting for flounder we enquired, and how do you deal with the incidental mortality of eat outs by lice? "We only night set in the deep," he responded. "You cannot night set in the shallows because you are asking for trouble with lice-outs giving high wastage. We are fishing for flounder in up to 20m of water with larger mesh size and the nets are tied down in pockets. Small fish pass through and the larger fish lay in the pockets and stay alive. Our lice-out rate is very small and ▶



Brendon happy hauling flounder

**ALPHATRON**  
gives you power



[www.alpatrononline.com](http://www.alpatrononline.com)

T: 1800 148 793 (AU)  
T: +64 9 414 5520 (NZ)  
E: [sales@alpatron.co.nz](mailto:sales@alpatron.co.nz)

VIP 554

**allencomarine**

**Heavy duty aluminium boats**

- Mono Hull • Twin Hull • Tri Hull •
- Commercial/Survey Vessels •
- Alterations • Modifications •

Ph: 07 8888 162  
29 Waihou St. Matamata  
[www.allencomarine.co.nz](http://www.allencomarine.co.nz)

ALLENCO 0908 VIP 558