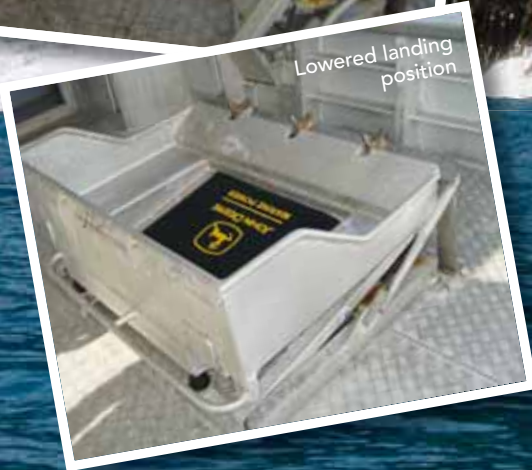


The hydraulic catching tray



Lowered landing position

of going to Australia for his next vessel quickly faded.

He had a budget and wanted a lot of boat for it. Not only did he require all the creature comforts and a decent bed, she also had to feel like home.

He was looking for a good sea boat with a deep forefoot, something that could punch into a decent sea while remaining dry on deck. Speed was not a major consideration, but the ability to work up the coast of the fiords in winds of up to 50 knots and return daily with the catch was a key factor to meeting the new fishing standards.

These standards were adopted from a review of the local fishing practices by Plant and Food Research, who took an in-depth look at the local fish handling methods and developed new animal husbandry systems.

It quickly became apparent this kiwi boatbuilder might just have the edge and knew what he was doing, so the deal was done. Construction started in June 2009 with delivery in May 2010, just in time for the pending crayfishing season.

Ata Whenua, meaning “shadowlands”, the Maori term for Fiordland, headed into the fiords for her sea trials and 60 days of productive fishing. Talk about a shakedown, ►

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Ata Whenua shows clean lines when underway

this was certainly going to test the boatbuilder's ability to deliver a turnkey vessel.

We caught up with Darren and *Ata Whenua* as he emerged from Fiordland, smiling with the results of 60 days and over 30 tonne caught with a bit left for chinese new year.

By monitoring the market with all the latest communication aids, even though he was in the back of beyond in some of the most isolated parts of New Zealand, he was able to achieve up to \$120 per kilo for quality fish with less than one percent of rejects, giving catch return averages not previously experienced.

The boat, with her new systems and ways of catching and handling the fish, has certainly proved herself. The days of sloshing around in swim tanks has gone. New pots were developed with 32mm base runners with 375mm wide steel necks and four snifter pots.

"Short pot soak times, overnight" was to be the standard

maxim. The catch hold is built to take the slotted plastic boxes used to hold the crayfish to suit chilling to seven degrees Celsius. Once the fish is graded, these crates are only packed two-thirds full and a square of 65mm absorbent sponge laid over the top.

These are held in a small holding tank on deck, and once three crates are full, the sponge is soaked and the crates quickly stowed in the hold, where they are in the dark, and chilled. Ninety-nine percent of Darren's catch was exported live to China by the Fiordland Lobster Company. The crays are chilled and anaesthetised, packed in wood shavings and unpacked at their destination in China 30 hours later.

Once placed back into cool, saltwater tanks, they "re-animate" and are ready for live distribution in China. They are sold to a discerning market that demands top quality rock lobster and is prepared to pay top prices.

"Achieving the top returns we have makes it worthwhile taking extra care and time to ensure we get the best quality and look after them," says Darren. "The Chinese are now using us as an international standard."

On stepping aboard *Ata Whenua* through the solid, hinged transom door for the first time, it is clear she has Tony Gough and Gough Bros written all over her – not in so many words, rather in her design, looks, style and quality of workmanship, like the rolled edge to the exposed stringers between the frames on deck.

The attention to detail is evident throughout. For her 18.5m length she has one heap of real estate on board as we take in her 8.5m x 5.5m deck space.

Starting from aft, we have a raised deck hatch giving access to the lazarette, twin-rudder steering gear and refrigeration machinery space.

Moving for'ard, installed by Refrigeration Supplies, accessed through a flush deck hatch, is the two-tonne

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bait freezer set at a temperature of -30 degrees Celsius, which can be adjusted to run as a chiller as well. Moving forward, a large raised hatch with a removable gear tray or worktop is set up to use when splicing lines and performing similar tasks.

Lift the hatch and the insulated inserts and we have the main fish hold, which can carry 1800kg of crays in baskets or up to six tonnes of wet fish. This hold runs at -10 degrees or at seven to eight degrees Celsius for live crays. Ahead of this is the catch tank, which can hold up to six crates.

Moving forward again, the ship's crane, a necessity for shifting the new, heavy pots on deck, is centrally mounted. The main ship's head and shower is off the aft deck to port, with access to the deckhouse and saloon to starboard.

Also to starboard under the shelter of the full-width overhead canopy is the main working station, complete with a lower hydraulic slack line recovery splitter drum. Above this is the main hydraulic variable-speed, reversible-splitter line hauler and the fold-out davit.

A key feature in this area is the hydraulic, adjustable scissor-lift landing tray and sorting table. By having the reversible winch, the 100kg pot is lowered onto the ship's rail and catch tray onto stainless steel catch points, where the end is opened and the catch emptied out into the angled alloy hopper, the door is then closed, pot rebaited and the crewman uses a kick pedal to operate hydraulic lift, raising both pot and bin of cray to be sorted at waist height. The backbreaking work has all but been removed.

The two deck hoses are supplied by either a 240 volt



The two-tonne freezer

pump or the 24 volt clutched pump off the main engine, ensuring there is always ample water pressure for washing down.

Another raised hatch against the aft bulkhead gives access to the engineroom. Dropping down below into the mechanical heart of the vessel we find twin 6125SFM-75 John Deere marine diesels de-rated to 525hp, driving through twin ZF360 2:1 gearboxes.

The 240 volt ship's power is supplied by a 25kVa Kohler genset. Also present is the range of pumps, plumbing and extensive hydraulics that drive the line haulers and main anchor drum. Once again the skills of the boatbuilders and engineers becomes evident with the smart and well laid out engineroom.

There is provision for 6000 litres of fuel in four fuel ►

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The master cabin



Foc's'le accommodation



Diesel burner cooker



Main galley

tanks and 1200 litres of water in two tanks, along with two 100 litre black-water sullage tanks. Forced air to feed the big beasts and keep the engineroom cool is drawn through large ducts concealed in the canopy overhang above the deck and protected by the flybridge.

Back up top, we move for'ard up the port side waist and note that access to the flybridge is via a short ladder from either side. This area for relaxing and cruising has a small helmstation consisting of a joystick, engine controls and a Furuno FCV 585 and Uniden VHF in its own weather-protected box with a sliding polycarbonate cover.

Looking over the front screen on top of the wheelhouse deckhead is the all-important liferaft in the unlikely event of an emergency.

On the foc's'le foredeck, mounted in the central position, is a large hydraulic anchor chain drum synonymous with southern vessels and the 55kg Rocna ship's anchor. The drum carries 20m of 16mm chain and 80m of 12mm chain, giving a total rode of 100m on the drum.

Access to the deckhouse is via the large rear door to starboard adjacent to the line hauling gear. There is also a small side door by the helm to give the skipper access for'ard or stick his head out on those shitty dark nights when one must check with the Mark 4 eyeball to be sure, to be sure.

Although the interior is utilitarian it is large and comfortable, and the décor is very pleasing to the eye. The main helmstation is directly ahead with excellent all-round vision enabling the skipper to see all points of the vessel and the water around him clearly. We note another Gough Bros feature with the use of large, tapered window mullions. The deckhead is of substantial height to allow for the general height of the family of fishermen working this vessel.

A full suite of electronics includes a Furuno Navnet 3D MFD12 12.1in plotter with DRS4D 4kw digital radar with ARPA, plus a Furuno FCV-1150 12.1in sounder with 2kW/38kHz and 2kW/200kHz transducers.

There is also a Furuno NavPilot 500 autopilot and a backup FCV-585 sounder.

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The flybridge conning position



John Deere power

Robbed from his previous vessel is all Darren's electronic fishing marks and records on a Nobeltec version 9 plotter and Olex bottom mapping. There is a Furuno Nav-Pilot when choosing to use "George".

To port is the u-shaped saloon dinette with a large dining table. The soft furnishings of the saloon seating are covered in dark, embossed leather, adding to its serviceability and comfort, with the galley taking up the remaining space in the large alcove facing aft.

In pride of place is the Dickinson Adriatic diesel-burning stove, so important not only for cooking but also for heating when working in southern climes. This cooker, placed just off the centreline, has additional space either side with removable inserts to help with cleaning and to circulate heat.

There is a small, two-burner electric ceramic hob, a toaster, a jug and the usual galley aids normally found in a home kitchen. The sink faces aft, with a large, sliding window to expel cooking fumes or excess heat, or act as a servery to the crew on deck.

There is a small, domestic upright freezer under the sink and a larger upright fridge for the crew's tucker. Above this is the television and entertainment system complete with DVD and satellite links.

Moving for'ard and down a short companionway gives access to the four-berth foc's'le cabin set up in the traditional v-berth configuration. Clothing lockers and additional stowage is available.

Turning aft, we take a couple of steps down and enter the large master cabin, with a queen-sized bed to port and a three-quarter cosy double to starboard. On the aft bulkhead is a small ensuite, head, shower and basin complete with its own sullage tank.

The accommodation spaces are tastefully fitted out with a mixture of Fronrunner-type fabrics, deckhead panels and stained timber with soft carpets. Ample stowage is provided in alcoves, lockers or cupboards.

Sea boots are not to be seen in this area. In looking around, clearly someone other than a scruffy fisherman has had input into the interior design and we find Darren's partner, Lucy, had a significant input into the interior décor. We must say we approve of her choices.

The interior of *Ata Whenua*, away from the harsh reality of the working areas, is serviceable, soothing and relaxing. This work was carried out by Howard Anderson Upholstery, who had this to say: "Our main focus was to work closely with Darren and Lucy to

ensure that the finished product was all they could hope for. They had a particular aim in mind for their boat and it was important to make it a reality. Even though it was to be a working boat they wanted it to have a little bit of luxury. There were many meetings discussing colours, fabrics and mattress foam!"

In giving our final appraisal, we would have to say, why bother with Australian hand-me-downs. This is a large and well-equipped cray boat. The real estate on board is vast and the ability to fish for other species and stay away for extended voyages is equally viable.

Beyond crayfishing, *Ata Whenua* has the makings of being a versatile general fishing vessel and workboat. In addition, aesthetically she is a good looker as well – not bad for a fishing boat.

When it comes down to dollars there is a lot of boat here for the money. We welcome *Ata Whenua* to the New Zealand workboat fleet. ■

specs

Length	18.5m
Beam	5.6m
Draft	1.5m
Deadweight	25 tonnes
Speed	21.7 knots continuous
Service speed	17 knots @ 1600rpm
Power	2x 6125SFM-75 John Deere marine diesels
Designer	Tony Gough
Builder	Gough Bros
Price in service	\$2 million

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