



After three years *Wisting* is 'quietly' launched. She's the biggest and most sophisticated project undertaken by BWK in 40 years.

the little yard that did...

WISTING CONVERSION | Early Monday morning on August 16, 2007, crowds began to gather on the quay opposite the Booth W Kelly (BWK) shipyard in Ramsey in the Isle of Man. Apparently someone had leaked that, after almost three years, the 31m (102ft) expedition yacht *Wisting* would be launched 'quietly' at high tide.

Wisting's conversion by BWK was certainly the most complex project for the tiny yard which, after years of mixed trading, had been bought by its employees in 2003. Many in the industry would have been surprised that the yard was even trying it.

"The *Wisting* project was a special challenge for us, raising the bar in all areas," says BWK's managing

director Chris Baker. "She's the biggest project for our workforce in 40 years — certainly the most sophisticated — and we didn't just provide space on the slipway, we did the work."

Baker, a naval architect and one of the four who bought the yard in 2003, has been responsible for virtually all of the technical design of the new *Wisting*.

Until the 'new' BWK won the *Wisting* contract, they had been noted only for doing heavy work on fishing and work vessels, and for being the site where, 150 years ago, the fully-rigged ship *Euterpe* was built. *Euterpe* should be famous in the 21st Century as the centrepiece of the San Diego Maritime Museum

bearing the name *Star of India* and, now sailing again, the world's oldest active merchant vessel.

A Cinderella story

In 1978, *Wisting* was built of steel to Ice Class Rules for the Norwegian Navy and was decommissioned in 2004. Businessman Peter Whipp bought her for an undisclosed price for conversion. But when she arrived in Ramsey under her own power and somewhat worn, she bore no resemblance to the luxury yacht she would become in the hands of BWK.

But first, everyone had to decide exactly what she could become, within the constraints of that weathered ice-strengthened hull.

"Our priority was to do a

complete laser survey in-house to get a good picture of her hull," says Baker. "Once we had that, we could plan her ultimate design."

BWK's design settled on a single screw, all-electric ship with a new superstructure, new stern and bowthruster, and all-new machinery and equipment. In the style of many modern cruise ships, *Wisting's* main engine generators, main engine, auxiliary generator and bowthruster would be connected by a single bus.

"Because she's still single-screw, we chose a 360° thruster to provide propulsion redundancy," Baker comments. "This gives *Wisting* a 'get-home' capability and also enables her to take the ground in harbours that dry out."



Built in 1978, *Wisting* was decommissioned in '04. BWK built the new pilothouse in aluminium.



This unique 360° electric bowthruster made by HRP would also reduce space required inside the vessel compared to that needed for a tunnel or retractable thruster.

Hard work begins

Naiad zero-speed stabilizers would be fitted to provide stabilisation underway, as well as when *Wisting* is at anchor.

So plan in hand, the work began. "First we cut off the superstructure and half of her main deck," says Baker. "Then we chopped off her old square transom."

Baker, a naval architect, was responsible for all of the design work at BWK which, since the yard's MBO, has covered the gamut from RO-RO ships to small sailing yachts.

He recalls: "Basically all that was left of the old *Wisting* when we were done was a very solid seaworthy hull, the other half of her main deck,

"First we cut off the superstructure and half of her main deck... Then we chopped off her old square transom."

her rudder and steering gear."

There were, no doubt, those who might have been saying "cutting steel is cutting steel; that's what they do in a scrap yard, isn't it?"

And indeed, the hard part for BWK had just begun.

BWK designed the superstructure with a new pilothouse and funnel, all in aluminium alloy to cut down on weight above the centre of buoyancy. *Wisting's* funnel also doubles as a wet bar for entertaining on the upper weather deck.

The deckhouse and pilothouse were designed and modelled in-house by BWK, then fabricated as a single unit by Mustang Marine in

Pembrokeshire and lifted aboard the Manx-owned, Mezeron coaster *Silver River* for the trip across the Irish Sea.

On a high tide in Ramsey Harbour, the whole assembly was lifted off and *Silver River* then moved out of the way. The hull of *Wisting*, sans deckhouse, was then manoeuvred underneath and the aluminum superstructure was lowered as a unit onto the bare steel deck to be welded in place using Tri-plate joining strips.

Then it was back up the slipway and soon *Wisting* was completely cocooned in a shrink-wrapped plastic enclosure. Beneath it, BWK was hard at work.

New canoe stern

Double tanks were soon in place and a bulkhead moved to conform to class. Then two new C9 CAT gensets were installed to turn a 400kW electric motor as main propulsion to drive the new 1.5m (5ft), five-bladed single-screw via a new 100mm shaft.

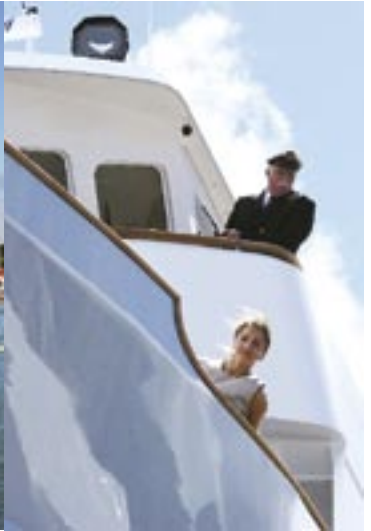
BWK installed a new Northern Lights 100kW diesel gen-set and a Seafresh desalinator reverse-osmosis unit.

Wisting's new canoe stern was designed by BWK, CNC-machined, plasma-cut, and then fabricated at the yard, giving a classic look to what had been a rather truncated profile.

"Her new canoe stern was a real success," says Baker. "Not only does it transform her looks, but it has added valuable space both above and below deck."

At the same time, virtually all of the stainless steel in *Wisting*,

refit news



Left: *Wisting's* bow on the slip. Centre and right: The new-look *Wisting* leaving harbour for its maiden voyage with pilot and crew.

“We’ve shown that BWK has moved a long way past building and repairing just rugged working vessels.”

including all of her galley, was being fabricated and installed by BWK with accommodation for eight guests and four crew.

“It was a great opportunity to demonstrate our skills,” says Kelvin Keightley, welding and fabrication director, but more significantly the employee who led the company’s 2003 MBO.

Teak decks soon covered steel and, now protected from the Manx weather by the enclosure, *Wisting's* hull was finished in light grey AwlGrip on International epoxy fairing.

Launch day finally arrived, sunny, clear and crisp.

Wisting launch

The last of the scaffolding was removed by noon as the crowds and local media continued to gather.

Coming up on the morning’s tide were the tugs from Douglas and soon the pilot and *Wisting's* new master climbed aboard.

BWK’s operations director, Tony Hadley, another of the owners of the yard, waited at the controls of the slipway for the signal.

When Mrs Whipp released the

bottle of champagne and it broke the first time, the omens were good for the future of the new *Wisting* and for her launch, it seemed.

Seconds later, at the crest of the tide, this was confirmed as *Wisting* slid effortlessly into the waters of Ramsey Harbour and made her way out to the open sea to the cheers of the locals.

Classed by Lloyds and registered in the Isle of Man, she completed brief trials just offshore that easily confirmed her speed, and then *Wisting* set off for Merseyside like *Euterpe* did 150 years before. A circumnavigation is rumoured.

Once the excitement was over, within days a fisheries protection vessel would occupy the slip *Wisting* had vacated and attention focused on the dredger, *Taroo Ushtey*, sitting

on the adjacent slipway.

But at BWK, going back to just doing work on boats and trawlers may not be in the cards.

Chris Baker thinks *Wisting* has changed the yard’s direction.

BWK is now promoting its services, particularly the design, woodworking and stainless steel craftsmanship displayed in *Wisting*, to yachting interests. A video of the *Wisting's* launch has been produced to prove the point.

There’s no question that, for the tiny shipyard, *Wisting* has been a quantum leap.

“We’ve shown that BWK has moved a long way past building and repairing rugged working vessels,” says Baker. “Now that *Wisting* is launched, we’re looking for another yacht project.” □

WISTING'S VITAL STATS

- ▶ LOA: 31m (102ft)
- ▶ Beam: 6.70m (22ft)
- ▶ Depth: 3.55m (12ft)
- ▶ Draft: 2.50m (8ft)
- ▶ Displacement (Lightship): 165 tonnes
- ▶ Frame Spacing: 400mm
- ▶ Hull/Deck Construction: Steel
- ▶ Superstructure: Aluminium Alloy
- ▶ Main Propulsion: Diesel-Electric 2xC9 Caterpillar gensets driving a 400kW electric motor

