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TEAKDECKING SYSTEMS
REFITS AT PHILBROOK'S
PALM BEACH
TOM WYLIE



Three's a Crowd

Refit projects at Philbrook's on Vancouver Island fit the bill, and fill the property.

by Dan Spurr

It's a very tight fit. The wood shop at this full-service yard north of Sidney, British Columbia, Canada, has been modified with a ceiling-high plywood wedge to accommodate the bow of a 125' (38m) Sovereign motoryacht. Space on this narrow piece of shore property is at a premium, yet through ingenuity, and a little tolerance on the crew's part, multiple projects are managed simultaneously—inside, on the two railways, and on the neighboring docks and boathouses maintained by the adjacent marina. Despite its small footprint, Philbrook's Boat Yard has on staff 60 to 80 people at any given time, working on 60 to 100 boats.

During a visit last August, the yard was busy with three major projects: a 56' (17m) vintage Chris-Craft motor cruiser, a 63' (19m) commercial fishboat, and the aforementioned Sovereign yacht. Other smaller boats were on-site and nearby for paint, a repower, and basic maintenance. In the engine shop was a Zeus pod drive that had encountered a rock in the beautiful archipelago of the Gulf Islands. Philbrook's is an authorized service center for Nordhavn expedition trawlers, and does a lot of work for Selene Yachts Northwest and Ocean Alexander (both in Seattle, Washington) as well. Founded in 1955, Philbrook's also has developed a quality

Above—The wood shop at Philbrook's Boat Yard had to be modified and reduced in size to accommodate the bow of the 125' (38m) Sovereign yacht; the protruding plywood wedge shape is visible at the far end.



DANA SPURLOCK HALL



résumé of new construction, and last fall had bids out on several projects, though in recent years most of its work has been in refits. (For more on the Philbrook's story, see the sidebar on page 68.)

On the organization chart, one tier below Philbrook's owners Harold "Hal" and son Drew Irwin is a team of project managers, each of whom assumes primary responsibility for overseeing work on a given boat, and communicating with the owners, vendors, and other departments at Philbrook's. Which is not to say each project manager operates totally independently, as there is a collegial interplay among the four, who share thoughts and advice at their weekly meetings. Indeed, they occupy desks in the same office, so it's easy to ask each other questions.

Project managers are supported by the usual departments, including parts, scheduling, wood shop, and mechanical systems. All departments work with Pier Vantage (www.pier-vantage.com) boatyard-management



software. In place for two years now, the program incorporates nearly every aspect of estimating jobs, creating work and change orders, and providing detailed invoicing, employee man-hours, and more. Drew Irwin: "Pier Vantage people speak our language, providing a connection often missing with IT providers. As issues arise, they have provided excellent support and are keen to improve the system."



Top left—Work orders, up to 100 at a time, line a hallway outside the administrative offices. **Top right**—Two boards are varnished by hand in the spray booth. **Middle**—The engine and mechanical systems shop. **Right**—On the top floor of the main building, Luke Gysbers heads the upholstery department. He makes up cushions, curtains, and, project manager Ian Collombin notes, a first-rate cockpit or flybridge enclosure using Stamoid and MR10 scratch-resistant Lexan panels with beading that runs through double tracks, so the panels operate like sliding patio doors.



COURTESY PHILBROOK'S

Fishboat

During my visit a 63' (19.2m) aquaculture processing boat, *Tamanawas*, was hauled and blocked for a variety of jobs: complete rewiring to Transport Canada standards; replumbing with stainless steel components, again to satisfy Transport Canada; painting inside and out; and a bottom job involving International Paint Co.'s Intersleek silicone coating, which is said to last five to seven years at sea.

(Movement is essential to keeping slime and marine growth in check, which project manager Ian Collombin said is a major reason the coating hasn't been marketed to the more sedentary recreational market.)

The owner of the boat, Creative Salmon, is the only company that farms certified organic Pacific salmon, which is sold in Canada, the United States, and Japan. For environmental reasons the company chose to avoid antifouling that includes the toxic chemicals in

Tamanawas is nearly ready for relaunching with her new topcoat of nontoxic Intersleek on her bottom. That paint was necessary to meet the health standards for her organic salmon farming operations.

bottom coatings, hence the application of Intersleek. For the same reason, the boat cannot discharge gray or black water, meaning there is a bilge circulation system with "a lot of pumps," according to Collombin.

Don Goddard, Philbrook's head painter, said, "It's exciting from the point of view that you can get away from antifoulants. Cruise ships and navy are using it because they can drastically reduce dry-dock time. The prep process is quite extreme. This boat is FRP, but most boats with it have steel hulls. With FRP you have to take it down to gelcoat."

Collombin: "For the vast majority of the hull surface we used a material called DeFOUL [innercrete.com], which is a paint stripper for antifouling paint. In order to strip the hull of antifouling paint, we hoarded-in the boat from the sheerline down to the concrete with shrinkwrap. The DeFOUL is applied



Above—Nearly all the vessel was enclosed in shrink-wrap before the anti-fouling paint could be stripped with spray-on DeFOUL and then hand-scraped. **Right**—The multi-coat Intersleek system required that the entire fiberglass hull be taken down to gelcoat and then sanded to a specific tooth profile.



DAVE SPURR (LEFT)

with an airless sprayer and allowed to work overnight or for eight hours, and then the old antifouling paint is scraped off manually. Two full applications plus some spot applications were required to remove about 40 years' accumulation of antifouling paint. Following removal of antifouling paint the entire hull surface was sanded with 36 grit as preparation for coatings both above and below the waterline."

"The process has to be overseen," advised Goddard. "The International Paint [www.international-marine.com] rep was here yesterday. Two of our guys watched it being applied to a navy boat."

"For sandblasting," Collombin added, "we use Enviro-Grit material [www.unitedconcreteandgravel.com], which is crushed recycled window glass. This is only for the metal surfaces. Small metal parts were done in our sandblasting cabinet, but larger



pieces like the rudder were sent out to a local service provider, Fox Customs, for sandblasting."

All sanding was done with hand sanders; the paint rep will look for a specific tooth profile before approving the hull as ready. The first coats were Intershield 300HS (high solids), similar to InterProtect, used for yachts. Then a tie coat was applied, followed

Yard History

Philbrook's takes its name from Eric Philbrook, who along with partner Ernie Butler started a business after World War II, making cabinets and wood Venetian blinds. Philbrook built his first boat in 1947, a 31' (9.4m) fishboat with a wedge seam bottom. In 1955 he was persuaded to move his business from

by the spray-on Intersleek topcoat.

Elsewhere on the boat, the house, decks, and engine room were also painted, the latter with the sound-attenuating paint Noxudol 3101 (www.noxudolusa.com). On the decks, the crew applied a commercial coating system used on ferries: Intershield 300 epoxy paint, aluminum oxide, and then a topcoat of Interthane 990

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Victoria to Sidney, British Columbia, augmenting a marina operation there. A commission from the British Columbia Department of Fisheries for several 65' (19.8) patrol boats finally provided some financial security. He sold out in 1971 to Donald Dobie and Bill Fryer, who completed the patrol boat contracts and quickly tooled the 39' (11.9m) Bill Garden-designed Fast

Passage sailboat. Around 36 were built before the mold was sold to Tollycraft. In 1978 Dobie and Fryer sold to Ted Hopkins and an investor, who in turn sold the business in 1987 to Hal Irwin and his son Drew, who are active, hands-on owners to this day. While the yard has undertaken numerous new builds, mostly motoryachts in the 50'-75' (15.2m-23m) range, many

also by Bill Garden, since the recession of 2008 refits have been its mainstay, along with repairs and maintenance.

A few years ago Philbrook's bought a marine facility in Roche Harbor, across the international boundary on nearby San Juan Island. Principal work is servicing cruising yachts on the U.S. side of the border.

—Dan Spurr

two-part polyurethane, the same paint applied to the topsides. Goddard directs a crew of up to six working on the boat. Everybody here, he said, does multiple jobs. A few spend 90% to 95% of their time in the paint shop. Some helpers are familiar but also assigned elsewhere.



In the months since my visit, work on all three projects continues apace. With other jobs lined up for more months to come, one project replaces another. Word of mouth is the best marketing tool, and when you have a good reputation for completing work well, on time, and on budget, it is self-sustaining. If Philbrook's secures new construction contracts, Boone said

they'd lease a facility as they have done in the past, most likely in the semi-industrial area that has sprung up around the Victoria airport, a few miles inland. There simply isn't space on the harbor. It's crowded, and they like it that way.

PBB

About the Author: Dan Spurr is Professional BoatBuilder's editor-at-large.



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