



# A big word

Refit - The word alone covers a whole multitude of sins...



The 65 foot Swiss-owned ketch *Lady of the Sea* back afloat for sea trials after her major refit at the Goodacre yard in Port Solent

*Are you considering an update to your present vessel, buying an older vessel and completing work to your specification or buying to sell? Whatever the choice, ideas are foremost and decisions need to be made and followed through. Barry Goodacre of Goodacre Yacht Services at Port Solent gives the low down.*

From a personal and aesthetic viewpoint, refits are professionally very satisfying to complete. The well thought out and documented refit can be achieved within schedule and allocated budget, and can dramatically enhance a boat's desirability and value.

But the refit not properly contemplated and discussed can be a nightmare for contractor and owner alike. In the next few paragraphs, I will attempt to outline my thoughts and likely scenarios regarding this wide ranging subject - from a professional's point of view.

#### Requirements

As already stated, a refit can encompass many reasons as to the why and how. When contemplating that tempting shell of a Grand Banks that has lain dormant for some years,

it will all look really easy..... But after all the dreaming can sometimes come a very much harsher reality.

You have now purchased the vessel and have various ideas regarding what you will need to sail off around the world in your dream yacht. Now is the time to visit the shows, look at the brochures, scan the web and get as many ideas into your plan as you feel that you will need. Once the ideas are cemented and you are sure of priorities and essentials, as well as the peripheral items that you require, talk to your selected refit yards.

I would suggest that you make an appointment and visit the yard, rather than deal with your chosen contractors in any other manner. Ring ahead so that the yard will be expecting you, and can therefore give you proper time and make your visit more accommodating. The items that are essential will need to be discussed properly and examples of previous work will prove a useful yardstick. You can then successfully procure estimates and begin to budget.

If you can obtain references from previous yachtsmen that have used the same yard, then



that will also be helpful in your assessment of your estimates. Estimates themselves are sometimes ambiguous. A quote is more desirable, but dependent on the work involved is not always easy to give, as some aspects of work are unseen and therefore 'unquotable'. An example of this is the state of marine plywood under an old teak deck. Clearly in this situation it cannot be seen until an area of deck is removed. This brings us onto the budget...

#### **Budget**

The singularly most important aspect of your planning. A well thought out and successful refit will have documented budgets for all aspects of the job at hand. It is vital to set yourself a budget, unless of course expenditure is not an issue... In which case keep your 'good fortune' a secret!

Think of the essentials, the peripherals and luxury items that you may like on your world trip, then budget and plan accordingly. As previously mentioned, allow for the unseen, but state that you wish to be advised before any new aspect is undertaken and agree, or disagree in writing. This allays any confusion between yourself and the contractor at a later stage. In our experience, the most successful refits are best carried out by one single contractor who can coordinate all work, as agreed, as you do not want to be project managing yourself.

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Most yards will require order confirmation and a deposit and then subsequent stage payments. Deposits will range from 25% to 75% of total order value. Negotiate and confirm all of these options at the outset, prior to commencement of the job itself. Once the payment structure has been negotiated and is in place then your refit can commence.

#### **The next stage**

Schedules need to be made clear at this point, to all concerned. State when you wish the job to begin and give a realistic date for comple-

tion. Arrangements, parts, materials, staff, berths etc can then be arranged. If you have the time, make the arrangement with the yard to visit, or at least be contacted bi-weekly to keep up with progress and any other issues that may arise. If time is an issue, appoint an agent, be that a professional such as a surveyor to oversee and advise, or a skipper or friend that can make decisions on your behalf. It is vital that you or your agent can be contacted easily, in order to make fast decisions and so avoid hindering progress.

Try, as much as possible, in conjunction



**'Before and after...'** Fortunately not every refit need be as comprehensive as that required on *Lady of the Sea*. However even a task this daunting is entirely feasible provided that proper planning and budgetary controls are put in place. Remember that time usually equals money, in refits as anywhere else. If you 'need' a job to be rushed, then the final bill is likely to be considerably higher than if you had allowed more time for the work to be carried out

with the refitter, to anticipate all possible situations and events. For instance, if you are having a new calorifier, do you also want an inverter? You need a bigger propeller, but will the existing fittings and shaft be sufficient? You require a new improved holding tank, but will it fit into the old space or is a modification needed, has the boat got osmosis, is the cutlass bearing o.k. etc etc.

These are typical examples of areas that are sometimes simply not thought of and can lead to problems at a later date, both in terms of time and expenditure. More than anything

else, allow plenty of time for your refit. And sufficient financial reserve.

#### **Conclusion of refit**

Successful refits inevitably involve time. In this time it is important to build a bond of confidence and trust between owner and boatyard. In all aspects of the refit, communication is of paramount importance and will hopefully resolve all potential hiccups at the earliest possible stage. If all these simple suggestions are adhered to, a refit can be relatively stress free.

#### **A recent example**

An example of the situation under discussion is our recent refit of *The Lady Of The Sea*, a 65ft ketch, Swiss-owned and based in Guernsey. This vessel is one of only four of its kind and so information on the type is scarce. *The Lady* had been owned by one owner from new, but was now 21 years of age and in need of some modernisation as well as some vital structural improvements.

After countless meetings, e-mails and faxes the refit on the 65 footer began in earnest at

Port Solent nearly a year ago. As time progressed, the original refit specification grew substantially. However, with close liaison between boat owner and yard, the refit was successfully undertaken as requested, despite the distance between the owner and yard where his boat was being essentially rebuilt. Modernisation was only completed after communication as to how the owner wished to use his boat, and to where he wished to sail.

Communication is the most essential ingredient of a relatively complex refit such as this. All the parties benefit from discussion, firm decision making, dedication and commitment.

The pictures of this particular job give some idea as to the scale of work involved, including a new teak deck, a comprehensive re-paint, new bow thruster installation, new rig and finally extensive sea trials.

If you are contemplating a refit, use the above points as a basic reference and the refit will progress smoothly. Whatever your reasons for refit, or to what degree your vessel is professionally finished before you take over, are entirely your choice. But you *can* make that old forlorn Grand Banks your dream boat, if you give sufficient time and consideration. And have an adequate and realistic budget.

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