

## 2008 Fall - Ganges:

Here's the story that ran in the Sept. 26, 2008 Driftwood Weekender

### Vessels unite form and function

By SEAN MCINTYRE  
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A warm cabin and a hot cup of tea were just a sampling of the comforts Lesley Head and Ian King had to offer aboard their 50-foot vessel moored among the ships at Salt Spring's fourth annual work boat festival last week.

"Down below we've got three staterooms, four double beds, three showers, three sinks, three toilets, a claw foot bathtub," said Lesley during an interview on board the Dagan last week. There's even a washer and dryer, a full-sized kitchen and talk of getting connected to the internet. "She's almost done now," said Lesley.

It's an incredible achievement considering the boat's history.

A decade ago, the Dagan spent most of its time trawling the Strait of Georgia's waters in search of plankton destined for the Vancouver Aquarium. When the weather- and work-beaten vessel came on the market, the couple couldn't resist the challenge and opportunity the ship represented.

"We are here to prove that you can have just as good a boat made of wood as you can buying a big fancy fibreglass boat," she said. "We've done everything we can possibly do to make it as comfortable as possible. Ian has taken all of the knowledge that he's accumulated through his entire life to rebuild the boat." Lesley explained that she and her husband worked on the boat nearly every day for three and a half years to make it what it is today.

"It was a challenge," she added. With most of the work complete, the couple now enjoys cruising to isolated areas along British Columbia's coast. Lesley also uses the ship as a Transport Canada training vessel and the couple offers charters to various groups. It was during one of those trips, three years ago, that the couple first heard of the Westcoast Work Boat Association.

The Dagan is now a regular feature at the group's events. Last weekend the vessel was one of 40 vessels moored in Ganges Harbour as boaters congregated for the group's annual fall gathering. From its modest roots, the group has grown to include 161 members who all share a passion for the spirit and history represented by the ships.

Salt Spring's Martin Milner coordinated the event. He said the group's members come from all age groups and walks of life. A lot of the members, he said, are former fishermen or people still working in the marine industry, whereas others are retirees who just love cruising and working on the boats. The association's events include a spring get together in Cowichan Bay and a number of cruises throughout the year.

"The boaters really like it in Ganges," he said, adding that there are few harbours on the coast that can accommodate so many vessels at one time. He said the gathering allows onlookers to get a peek at the vessels and lets owners share information about them.

Maple Bay's Neal Griffin recently bought a 58-foot seiner, originally built in 1914. He has lived on ships for most of his life and is in the process of customizing his new home. A life aboard a converted work boat, he said, requires a major commitment of time, effort and funds. For members like Neal, work boats represent far more than a hobby, they're a way of life.

"I measure everything in boat units of about \$1,000 dollars," he said. "Everything you have to do on a boat costs at least one boat unit." For Neal, the costs and time are worth living the life he has grown accustomed to, which includes most of his working days being spent plying the waters around Vancouver Island as a tug boat operator.

And he wouldn't want it any other way, "I don't like land," he said. "I get sick when I'm not on the water."

For more information on the Westcoast Work Boat Association, visit the group's website at [www.wwba.ca](http://www.wwba.ca).

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