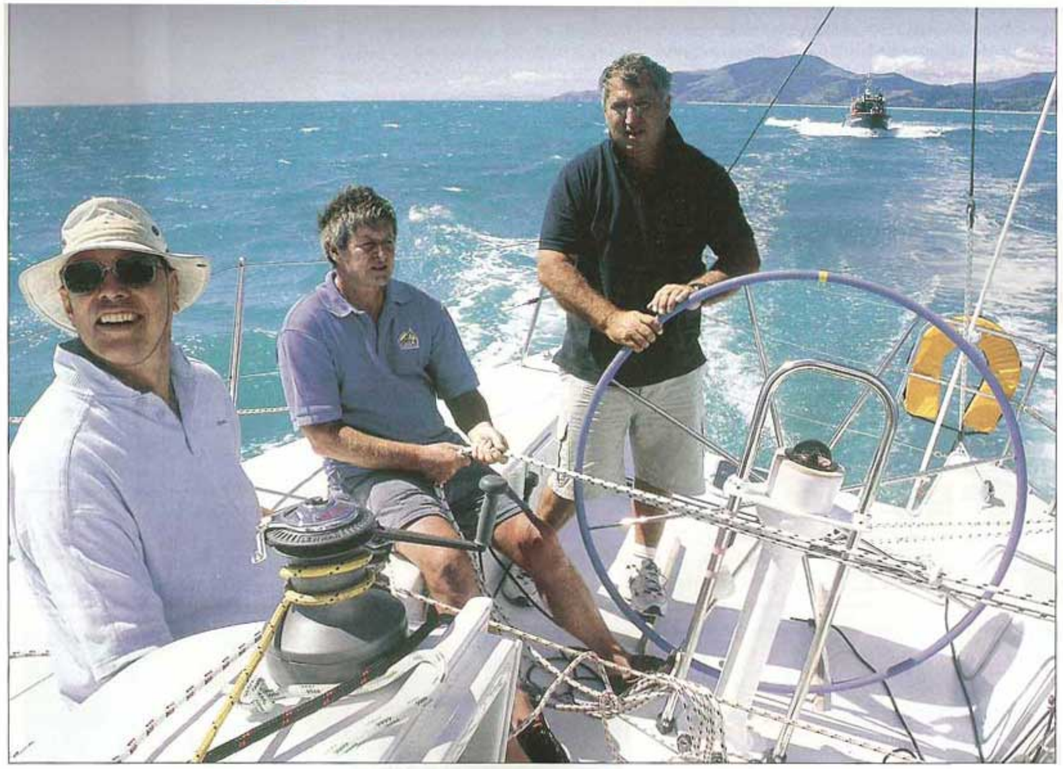
A good thing goin' on ...



WE DIDN'T HAVE THE VOICE OF BILLY PAUL ACCOMPANYING US OUT OF

Nelson Marina but we did make sweet music as we pirouetted with the 11-metre *Mrs Jones*, out through the Cut for a cruise around Tasman Bay.

STORY BY **REBECCA HAYTER** ▮ PHOTOS BY **GRANT STIRLING**

The cockpit on *Mrs Jones*, the new Elliott 11m, is set up primarily for racing offshore, and is suitable for short-handed work.

Mrs Jones comes from the board of Greg Elliott, whose maxi yachts Maximus and *Mari Cha IV* – of which Elliott was part of the design team – are globe trotting the race circuits. But, as recent launchings show, Elliott still has the small boat touch.

Mrs Jones was built at the Auckland yard of Harbour Yachts with boatbuilder Darren Schofield; her shake down cruise was the Auckland-Nelson delivery. Her owner was aiming for the Wellington-Lyttelton race which started on Boxing Day but time ran short and her owner sensibly postponed that particular plan.

However, offshore racing is his dream with *Mrs Jones*, named because even during her construction, she filled most of his waking thoughts. As a relative latecomer to yachting, the owner says he missed the normal sailing kindergarten of centreboarders, so rather than take on those who have been racing around the buoys all their lives, he's taken to offshore sailing as a more level playing field. His second place in a Wellington-Nelson race proves he's

Me and Mrs Jones, we got a good thing goin' on,
We both know that it's wrong
But it's much too strong to let it cool down now.
We meet ev'ry day at the same café
Six-thirty I know she'll be there,
Holding hands, making all kinds of plans
While the jukebox plays our favorite song . . .
– By Kenny Gamble, Leon Huff, Cary Gilbert, 1972

The starkly simple interior is focused on racing, rather than cruising, and keeps the boat's displacement to 3.8 tonnes.

probably right.

Mrs Jones is built in composite and starkly simple, so the interior adds little weight; displacement is 3.8 tonnes.

There is a foc's'le berth up for'ard, with a head hidden behind the bulkhead but no doors or curtains so if cruising, it's likely to be with people you know well. There is room for hanging wet weather gear opposite the head.

Aft of the main, partial bulkhead is a small galley to port, adequate for heating up casserole for the troops during racing, less suitable for preparing ornate recipes to impress the aunties. Opposite is the nav station which features VHF, SSB, chartplotter and basic gear. The chart table also houses the sizeable, top-loading fridge/freezer.

Most of the saloon is dedicated to long single berths running either side of a wide, clear sole which will make sail management easy when racing. The quarter berths extend back under the cockpit. *Mrs Jones* can sleep six people – the owner and his family have tested that on a cruise of the Abel Tasman – but it's not the Ritz. There are no shelves or lockers.

The racing style cockpit is where *Mrs Jones* really exudes her charms: it provides wide coamings rather than seats, an open transom and stark simplicity. The helm is well forward, to keep the weight of the helmsman and trimmers out of the stern. The traveller runs across the width of the cockpit behind the helmsman; the control lines run forward through blocks to be trimmed either side of the helm.

The mainsheet system is slightly unusual: it sheets down to a block in the cockpit sole, forward of the helm pedestal, rather than sheeting to the traveller. The cleats for the traveller and mainsheet are right beside each other, within easy reach of either the mainsheet trimmer or helmsman.

There are two Lewmar winches well forward in the cockpit for jib sheet and gennaker, plus keyboards on the coachroof. The double-spreader, swept back rig has no runners; the split backstay provides for good access onboard.

We set out with three crew plus myself and the owner. First up was a beat to windward. Trimming positions were comfortable and the boat was a dream to sail. The owner says she can be tricky to get in the groove but, "When you're there, you know about it," – meaning she accelerates easily and maintains good speed.

All headsails are non-overlapping and the boat has number one and number two jibs, and a storm jib. We were doing about 6.4 knots on the wind in light airs under the number two jib.

The mainsail is fairly generous at 54m², fully battened and loose footed. We were trimming the mainsail aggressively to heel the boat for the camera in the light airs but the owner says she prefers it much flatter. We eased the traveller, she stood up and picked up half a knot.

The helm, as you'd expect from an Elliott, turns as smoothly as silk and there will be many people who prove dif-

STRATIS SAIL TECHNOLOGY

The sails on *Mrs Jones* use Doyle Sails' new Stratis technology, which the New Zealand company began developing five years ago. The custom-made Stratis sails, pictured right on *Samurai Jack*, are the only fibre-aligned membrane sails manufactured in New Zealand at Doyles' dedicated facility in Penrose, Auckland.

The system uses combinations of fibres, films and taffeta finishes to provide the optimum sail performance to suit the boat. This technology is used for racing yachts.

Doyles says that advanced load path technology means the sails retain their shape for longer, with all fibres within the sail being used as 100% load bearing. The fibres in the sail are aligned to the load paths from head, tack and clew, as well as additional sets of fibres to each reef point, making distortion-free reefing, short and long term.

Having every fibre load-bearing, as opposed to a conventional panel sail, makes a stronger, lighter and more durable sail.

The increased stability of the fibre-aligned membrane produces smooth sails that won't distort, even after being reefed for long periods.

Doyles claims that conventional sails, made by cutting and placing many separate panels, can only approximate the different load paths of a sail and makes the traditional panelled sails at least 15% heavier with a narrower optimum design wind speed.

Panel sails suit the cruising market, such as those seen on the Salona 45, page 58.

ficult to prise off the wheel because she's just so pleasant to helm. There is little feedback from the Whitlock system; the boat's so well balanced upwind, it was possible to let go of the wheel and the boat stayed on course as though on a monorail. The helm has good visibility over the coachroof.

She tacked through about 80 degrees and accelerated quickly out of the tacks. There is certainly potential for making this boat quicker and quicker – losing as little speed as possible in the tacks, trimming sails, and trimming the boat with crew weight in different conditions. The experimentation is something the owner is really enjoying in the boat.

We were looking forward to hoisting the gennaker and planned it through as we were one crew down on the usual racing crew of six. A control line in the cockpit extended the prod and we hoisted cleanly, except for a minor problem with the tackline letting go. Once that was rectified, the boat slipped along nicely.

Her motion was smooth and steady through the gusts; she would heel slightly and take the speed, and as long as the helmsman anticipated the gusts, she would obediently bear away.

However, she definitely felt the wave motion, such as a passing wake, a function of her light, stiff hull at 3.8 tonnes. She had the enthusiastic response of a quick, light boat and I had to remind myself she was 11 metres.

In the gybes, the action tends to get crowded in the for'ard cockpit when fully crewed: the mainsheet trimmer, gennaker trimmer and keyboardist are all working within a confined area in front of the helm and all are wanting to throw their elbows around. It helps to keep the mainsheet trimmer well out to one side.

We couldn't quite touch 11 knots under gennaker in the light breeze which strengthened to about 12 knots true wind by the end of our sail, but the owner says *Mrs Jones* has exceeded 20 knots in storm conditions, with storm jib and double-reefed main in 50 knots in Cook Strait – I'm happy to take his word for that particular statistic.

Too soon, we were running out of water, heading for the Cut under mainsail and gennaker. The owner drops the gennaker in letterbox drop fashion, taking a lazy sheet under the foot of the mainsail, and dousing the gennaker as it follows. Soon we were once more inside

Dousing the gennaker in a letterbox drop as we approach the Cut in Nelson.

the picturesque harbour, two-sailing past Nelson Yacht Club.

Having enjoyed a couple of races across Cook Strait, the owner is considering the Two-Handed Round North Island Race, for which *Mrs Jones* could be a real contender; not too big, not too small; quick, and easy enough for one person to manage while the other crew was off-watch.

Bow-on, *Mrs Jones* exhibits an extremely fine bow, with flared topsides to get her crew weight well outboard, and to provide wide sidedecks for crew seating and sail management. The carbon fibre chain plates are on the gunwale so the decks are clear all the way for'ard.

Beam-on, she exhibits her Elliott plumb bow and slightly raked stern for maximum waterline length.

Under motor, she proved easily manoevrable and obedient in for'ard and reverse.

The boat's bulbed fin keel draws 2.4 metres, about the limit for Nelson Marina, and it means that she has to anchor well out when cruising the shallow bays of Abel Tasman National Park. Offshore, however, it will be just what she needs to eat up those miles.

SPECIFICATIONS

loa	11m
beam	3.4m
draft	2.4m
fuel cap	80L
water cap	200L

Suppliers to *Mrs Jones* include – Elliott Marine: design; Doyles Sails, Nelson & Auckland: built Stratis sails; Harbour Yachts: construction; Kiwi Yachting: steering system; Southern Seas Marine: engineer; Power and Marine: Yanmar 30hp; Mast and Spar Services: rig; Kiwi Yachting: Lewmar winches, Whitlock steering, B&G electronics; Coast Stainless Steel: stainless work; Akzo Nobel: Micron 66; High Modulus: composite supplies; Adhesive Technologies: resins; Marine Electrical Services: electrics; Fridgetech: refrigeration; North Sails: upholstery; Rubbermark: flooring; BEP: lighting; Lusty and Blundell: Jabsco; Altex Coatings: Ultra Shield 2000.