

By TOM KING

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**S**EA-CHANGES usually happen to people, but alongside a jetty in a Canvey creek you can see it happen to a boat.

Ste'alth is a 49ft-long, seagoing luxury cruiser, built in the 1980s.

Superficially she looks like any other millionaire's plaything of the sort that you see lined up in rows during the Cannes film festival.

Ste'alth, though, isn't like other sleek, teak-decked lux-

## □ Firm showcases glass on 49ft cruiser □ Press a button and windows go opaque

ury yachts. She is one of a kind. No other vessel quite like her exists in the UK, and so far as anyone involved with her knows, in the world.

"Ramon Abramovich has got a lot of luxury yachts, but even he hasn't anything quite like this," says Ste'alth's owner Brian Chelton, director of the Canvey

ond before, it was possible to look through the glass of the portholes and wheelhouse. Now the glass has turned opaquer than the sunglasses of a supermodel in a strop.

Heaps of celebrities could be misbehaving behind those windows and no passer-by or paparazzi would be any the wiser.

Then Brian presses the button again and the glass switches back to transparent mode, revealing nothing more saucy than a bit of builder's bum from the guys at work on the interior.

Give it time, though, and

the boat will be teeming with blondes and playboys. Brian plans to sail Ste'alth round the Kent and Sussex coast in September, in time to launch the design at the South Coast Boat Show.

"I'll be surprised if it isn't the hit of the show," he says.

After that, Ste'alth will move from prototype to production basis. The boat's own story is a wreck-to-riches one.

The Italian-made Versilcraft was found and acquired by Brian in Ipswich, partly to entertain business contacts, partly as an attempt by

window manufacturer Duration.

"When he sets eyes on her, he's going to be on the phone to us right away."

Brian proceeds to demonstrate why Ste'alth is the ultimate toy for the ultimate billionaire boy.

All it needs is a small hand-held electronic device, indistinguishable from a TV remote control.

Pointing this blipper at Ste'alth, Brian presses a button and, instantaneously she transforms into a different vessel.

One thousandth of a sec-

this workaholic businessman "to make myself relax."

But the boat was in a poor state. Photographs taken at the time show she was rotting fast.

"Much longer and she would have fallen to pieces," Brian says. The decision was taken to rebuild her from the hull up, under the supervision of Brian's son, Adam.

It was at that stage, in autumn 2007, that Brian discovered the dual-mode glass. The American-made product had just been patented, and

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Brian was one of the first to do a deal to use it in the UK. For competitive reasons, he is still withholding the trade name.

"I wanted to launch with a bit of impact and I thought, instead of putting the glass on one of Duration's regular window frames, why not put it on the boat?"

"Nobody else has thought of putting it afloat."

So the once woebegone Ste'alth had found a new role, as a showpiece, an upmarket marine version of a glazing salesroom.

The result, complete with new teak decks and luxury master bedroom is also, in Brian's words, "a tribute to the Canvey boat-building industry".

He explains: "A range of craftsmen, all based on the island, have contributed to Ste'alth."

"There's been no need to go any further than our doorstep."

"The skills we've got available locally are very impressive."

Brian calls Ste'alth "the first of a breed". Once in production, the series will sell for a six-figure sum.

Ste'alth herself doesn't have a price-tag on her, however. Brian plans to keep her for his own use.

"I might finally get the chance to start doing a bit of fishing in her, if I can just stop inventing things," he says.

Meanwhile, one query is likely to be raised when the boat is launched at Southampton.

Why the name? Stealth is just about the last quality anyone would associate with a high-profile gadget-packed possession like this boat.

Nobody who buys it is going to want to creep around unnoticed.

In fact, Ste'alth is a term already widely used by Duration Windows.

It stands for steel aluminium thermal window, a utilitarian name for a utilitarian product that has become one of the hottest things afloat.