

Classic Yacht Association

O F A U S T R A L I A

www.classic-yacht.asn.au

Issue 30 - April 2011 - Classic Yacht Association of Australia Magazine



CONTENTS

CYAA Representatives	2
Sea fog fails to dampen a great anniversary	3
The Southern Trust Classic Yacht Regatta - One gaffer's point of view	5
Southern Trust Classic Yacht Regatta	7
Mark Chew	9
The AGM was held recently	10
Messing about in Wooden Boats at Goolwa	11
The Leda Enchantment 2	13
New Zealand Classic Yacht Journal	24
Classic Boats Preserved In Miniature	26
Return of a wooden boat workshop	28
The 2011 Festival was certainly the biggest and best yet!	29
For Sale	30
Membership Application	32

Our aim is to promote the appreciation and participation of sailing classic yachts in Australia, and help preserve the historical and cultural significance of these unique vessels.

CYAA REPRESENTATIVES

ADMINISTRATION

CYAA
65 Surrey Road
South Yarra
Victoria 3414
admin@classic-yacht.asn.au

EDITORIAL

Roger Dundas
Mobile 0419 342 144
rogermdundas@gmail.com

Design and Production
Blueboat
www.blueboat.com.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

Philip Kinsella
Tel (02) 9498 2481
pm_kinsella@hotmail.com

QUEENSLAND

Ivan Holm
Tel (07) 3207 6722, Mobile 0407 128 715
ivanholm@bigpond.com.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Tony Kearney
Mobile 0408 232 740
tony.kearney@internode.on.net

TASMANIA

Kelvin Aldred
Mobile 0412 108 994
huonkelly@bigpond.com

VICTORIA

Peter Lloyd
Tel (03) 9431 1611
pwalloyd@netcon.net.au

COVER PHOTO BY: ALAN HOUGHTON

COVER PHOTO: JULIAN HORSLEY ALOFT FINE-TUNING THE SAILS ON FATHER STEVE'S 1904 (CHAS BAILEY JNR.) 'NGATIRA'



Photo: Roger Dundas

Sayonara on Port Phillip



All photos by John Jeremy

Australia Day Regatta 2011 - approaching the finish in light winds

SEA FOG FAILS TO DAMPEN A GREAT ANNIVERSARY

PETER CAMPBELL

The 175th Australia Day Regatta, sailed into the nation's history yesterday when more than 160 harbour racing yachts, classic yachts, ocean racers and modern and historical skills celebrated this remarkable yachting anniversary on Sydney Harbour.

The regatta is the world's oldest, continuously-conducted annual sailing regatta, a celebration of the arrival in 1788 of the First Fleet to found the penal colony that eventually became the great Commonwealth of Australia.

The Regatta was the centrepiece of Australia Day celebrations on Sydney Harbour, with other aquatic, dockside and aerial events adding colour to the National Day. A feature ashore was the many citizenship functions.

The 175th Australia Day Regatta is also a totally organised by a band of volunteer yachtsman headed by the eminent international yachtsman Sir James Hardy as president and naval architect and yachtsman John Jeremy as chairman of the organising committee. The regatta is sponsored by Commonwealth Private Bank.

The fleet included 49 mostly wooden yachts in the Classic Yachts division, many gaff-rigged and several built more than a century ago. Many crews dressed in period sailing gear and later rendezvoused at the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club to celebrate the regatta's history.

Despite a morning sea fog that blanketed the city and suburbs and the harbour, the misty conditions cleared somewhat and a light east to north-easterly breeze cooled conditions and provided close racing around fixed marks.



Plym

On waterways along the New South Wales coast, Australia Day regattas were linked to the historic event on Sydney Harbour while ocean racing yachts sailed to Botany Bay and return, albeit slowly, covering the same course sailed by the First Fleet in 1788.

In Hobart, Australia's second oldest seaport, yachts, dinghies and windsurfers competed in the Australia Day Green Island race and the Sandy Bay Regatta.

Another icon of Australian yachting, the 1970 and 1977 America's Cup Challenger *Gretel II* took line honours in the 40 nautical mile Green Island Race, helmed by her 1977 skipper, 85-year-old Gordon Ingate.

On Sydney Harbour, a fleet of 49 yachts, mostly built of wood, many gaff-rigged and several more than a hundred years ago, contested the Classic Yacht division of the 175th Australia Day Regatta.

Winner of the special 175th Australia Day Regatta Trophy and the Australia Day Council Trophy was *Antares* (R Keeson and D Wood). The Centenary of Federation Gold Medal went to *Reverie*, owned by Nigel Berlyn and John Barclay.

Only four Historical Skiffs turned out with *Tangalooma* (Peter Le Grove) winning from *Australia IV* (Eric Priestley) and *Australia* (Chris Haskard).

The classic division included many beautiful yachts such as, the 1933 gaffer *Nerida*, the family yacht, which was sailed by Sir James Hardy's son while he, in his role as the President of the Australia Day Regatta, hosted the Governor and guests on the flagship, HMAS *Ballarat*.

Weene, one Australia's oldest yachts still actively racing, was among the large fleet of wooden yachts, many gaff-rigged, racing for the Classic Yacht Trophy.

The highly-successful and beautiful classic wooden yacht was inducted into the Australian Register of Historic Vessels at the annual Classic and Wooden Boat Festival at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Current owner, Sydney Amateur Sailing Club member and antique restorer Ben Stoner, regular competes in the SASC Classic Yachts division and regattas on Sydney Harbour.

Ranger, skippered by octogenarian Bill Gale, was among a number of Ranger class yachts also competing in the Classic Yacht Trophy race.

Warana, a 1930 Hayes built 31ft sloop sailed by Fred Bevis competed against *Tio Hia*, a 1935 double-ender gaffer built at Williamstown by Savage, which was skippered by Beverley Bevis with her two sons as crew and she again beat her husband on handicap as in the previous year.

The winner of the 175th Australia Day Regatta Classic Yacht Trophy was presented by Sir James Hardy at the post Regatta gathering at the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club which was attended by many of

the competitors including *Sana*, winner of the best dressed crew, and *Four Winds* from Brisbane which won a prize as the boat which had travelled furthest to participate in the Regatta. A traditional Jazz band added to the occasion at the SASC.



Antares and Warana



Harbour full of Classic yachts



Antara



Photo: Alan Houghton

Confirming the way ahead on 'Ngatira'

THE SOUTHERN TRUST CLASSIC YACHT REGATTA - ONE GAFFER'S POINT OF VIEW

STEVE HORSLEY

Once again, in 2011, the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand put on a first class Annual Regatta. All eyes had been on the weather leading up to the Regatta because of recent La Niña cyclones diving down on the South Pacific. Fortunately we were spared the devastating damage in Australia. In the face of the weather the Mahurangi Cruising Club Regatta was cancelled for the first time in 23 years and some fierce winds adversely affected the Auckland Anniversary regatta, resulting in several of the classics gracefully retiring. We can expect the odd blow at this time of the year but normally we are blessed with champagne cruising weather.

The weather Gods did eventually look favourably upon us for our own Regatta, almost leaving us wanting a little more breeze. On a personal note, I prefer the light airs as my recently restored yacht *Ngatira* (November 1904 Chas. Bailey Jr. 40ft cutter) has proved herself to be a slippery witch. I'm still coming to terms with the four-sided sail and sometimes have trouble following through in breezier conditions against the larger gaffers.

Because of recent construction developments in Auckland's Viaduct Basin and the NZ-built America's Cup 45 catamarans commandeering the usual berth area in front of the race HQ, berthage was at a premium. However, Tino Rawa Trust's Tony Stevenson generously allowed visiting yachts a place to park. It is really great to see all these lovely classics snuggled up together. Thankfully the AC45s allowed the classics their usual spot for the Saturday and Sunday nights, right in front of the race HQ for everyone to view these gracious old ladies.

We had light airs for the Friday racing with wind speeds of only 6 to 9 knots at the start, building to 10 to 14 as the day progressed. Some good keen starting saw a closed-out start line with the A Division Bermudans too early and sailing down the line, really getting in the way of the gaffers coming in on port. Some decisive helming saw boats passing on opposite tacks within inches of each other and crews absolutely jumping out of their skins. It seemed that the only calm people were the guys with their hands on the tillers. A split fleet saw some dramatic changes in the light as boats sniffed out the breeze heading to the top mark, which was quite congested. *Waitangi* enforced Rule 18, beating *Thelma* to the first mark, but had to tack round the beacon. In the process she tried to sweep several of the crew off *Thelma* with her bowsprit. It was all done in fine humour as boat speed was a nail biting 2 to 3 knots. Unfortunately this was the only windward mark as the remainder of the course was



Photo: Alan Haughton

Jason Prew's 1904 (Logan) 'Wairiki'

straight-line sailing and any passing was down to sail trim and waterline length. There was some confusion between Rangitoto Yellow Buoy and Flax Works Yellow Buoy which resulted in several boats suddenly altering course out to the mark and then most of the fleet following suit. Those with their wits about them saw our Stewart 34 patikis cutting the corner and missing Rangitoto Buoy altogether. This was to become a telling factor in tactics during the course of the Regatta; follow the Stewarts and come out on top. In the light air *Ngatira* stole the race for the gaff division and finished ahead of some bigger boats. Even some of the Bermudans had a struggle passing on the downward leg to the finish against the four-sided sails.

A small front saw some stiff breeze and a bit of rain pass over on Friday night but most crews were tucked up nicely and some were enjoying the night on board other boats revelling in the day's racing.

On Saturday there were signs of a building breeze in which gaffers did not fly their top sails at first. The task ahead was to complete two races in the day. There were two more cut and thrust starts from the Corinthian classics, more akin to a Thursday night Squadron Rum race. Nothing was held back. Boats that were crying for breeze on Friday now got down to business and showed what they could do with a bit more pressure. Two good races involved some good tactics from skippers who could read the conditions and knew the waters well.

In the afternoon race the gaffers set their topsails on the final reach across to Browns Island Beacon from Navy Buoy for the run down to the Orakei finish. The course took us through a fleet of Starling centreboarders out from Kohimarama. The expressions on the faces of some of their crews showed awe as they looked upon such a spread of canvas. It was a great breeze for racing and two most enjoyable races for the crew, not too wet, sun shining and a glorious parade of Auckland's yachting history doing what they've done for 170 years. The northeasterly breeze was in a comfortable quarter for the sail back to Race HQ after two races; sheets were eased and a beer or six were relished with banter about the day's racing.

Sunday saw a very calm Waitemata with not much prospect of a brisk sail. The race was around Motuihe Island, keeping it to starboard. The fleet split between those choosing the Tamaki estuary and skirting up the side of Browns Island and those working the Rangitoto coast. There were sinking hearts (a more polite way than writing unprintable expletives) among the Rangitoto contingent as they looked across the course and saw in utter disbelief boats so far ahead that it was game over. Once again... follow the patikis! There was no way out but to cross over to the other side and play catch up. This was becoming a cat and mouse game.

Ngatira made massive gains working up under Motuihe with *Waitangi* while much of the fleet crossed over the channel to Emu Point (named after the paddle steamer *Emu*, wrecked there in 1860) at the southern extremity of Motutapu Island and parked. What could have been our defining moment once again turned to rout as the Emu Point brigade picked up a building nor'easter. *Thelma* ventured out too far into the channel and lost wind against tide and had to tack back in while *Prize* and *Rainbow* capitalised on their good breeze. We had no choice but to head for Emu Point, out of the channel, and follow the leaders. Oh, hang on, we couldn't see the leaders by this point, they had just done a horizon job on us. Again waterline length and sail area won out as the breeze built.

Everyone enjoyed the CYA Southern Trust Regatta after-match dissection of the highs and lows of the day's sailing back at Race HQ. Next year there will be a new function complex to enjoy with ample berths for all yachts out front. This should make for an even bigger and better event.

Now all that remains is to have a quite word with the handicapper!

SOUTHERN TRUST CLASSIC YACHT REGATTA

CAMERON DORROUGH

Jenny and I arrived into Auckland on Wednesday night after our plane was delayed for two hours in Sydney by a blown light bulb in the cockpit (How many Qantas engineers does it take to change a light bulb? Seven!). We arrived at Latitude 37 apartments in the Viaduct very tired, slightly jet-lagged and not thinking straight after a crazy few days in Melbourne preparing for this trip.

The weather forecast for Auckland, checked when we left home, had been for rain the entire week, but Thursday dawned hot and sunny with rain forecast the next day—and so it was for the remainder of our stay until it rained on the way to the airport as we headed home exactly one week later.

Although we spent most of Thursday touring Auckland on the hop-on hop-off bus, it seems I didn't really understand the directions to the briefing given to me the night before, but we made it there in the end with just enough of it sinking in to know where to be the next morning to crew on *Waitangi*—that amazing 76' Logan-designed gaff cutter, built in 1894. We both enjoyed a lovely Welcome Dinner at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron—some people we knew, but most we didn't—but our New Zealand hosts made us feel so very welcome.

Friday morning, bright and early, we were dockside outside the Maritime Museum to meet Captain Larry Paul and a crew of many, including *MacNugget*—a Guinea Fowl about the size of its edible namesake and brought along as the ship's mascot. *MacNugget* provided much entertainment and light-hearted discussion as to (a) whether or not it should be wearing a lifejacket, (b) who was going to rescue it if it went overboard and (c) bets on whether or not it would be seasick before the end of the race. Since neither of us had sailed on a gaffer before, Jenny was allocated a job on midship runners and I on aft runners.

With very light NE winds and the sun shining on azure blue waters and sandstone cliffs, we headed out to the start between Bastion Point and Rangitoto Island surrounded by a huge fleet (well, bigger than we're used to in Melbourne anyway) of classic yachts including gaffers, Bermudans, modern classics and the odd mullet boat.

With the sails hoisted (somehow I happened to find myself on the end of a rope—no winches on this yacht!) and otherwise being occupied at the aft runners, I didn't see much of the start, but a horn sounded on Committee Boat *Wild Duck* and we were away, chasing the other yachts in the Gaff A fleet: *Thelma*, *Rainbow* and *Ngatira*. We drifted around the first mark with *Thelma* only feet away. Some time soon after, as we headed into Islington Bay, the



Photo: Cameron Dorrough

Thelma drifting by Waitangi on Day 1

wind picked up a little and soon after that I found myself on the helm where I stayed for the remainder of the race!

I was in my element. Even though weeks have passed since that wonderful day in February, words really cannot properly describe the thrill of helming this huge, beautiful yacht on beautiful Auckland harbour in beautiful weather surrounded by other beautiful yachts and without the photographic evidence to prove it really happened, I'd be tempted to think I dreamed the whole thing!! My profuse thanks go out to Larry and his crew for trusting this Aussie with the helm of that magnificent yacht. And even with me steering, we still managed to come second...

On Saturday Jenny and I were assigned to Steve and Megan Cranch's 40' sloop *Rainbird* (a professed 'work in progress' parked at the RNZYS marina) for the two-short-races event, but with winds freshening and the possibility of rain, Jenny decided to 'take the day off' instead. Steve and Megan picked me up from the apartments and we headed off to the boat to meet Neil, the remainder of the crew. *Rainbird* was quite a contrast from *Waitangi* the day before, but Steve had convinced me she was a bit old and tired and not very fast so we'd just be taking it easy...

Somehow we'd left it too long to get the sails up and get out to the start, so we arrived on the line almost as the gun went, on the heels of the Modern A fleet heading for the first mark in Islington Bay. With nothing to lose, we decided to head off to clear air on the right hand side of the course where there seemed to be more pressure, while the rest of the fleet tacked along the Rangitoto Island shore.

As we got closer to our goal at Motutapu Island, we noticed the wind near the top mark was coming not only around the southern point of the island, but was also funneling down from the north-west between the two islands, making it rather difficult for the fleet to reach the mark—very different sailing conditions to those on our own Port Phillip. By sailing out to the right, we were in a much better windward position and sailing in a huge left hand curve we found ourselves among the leaders of the fleet

Photo: Cameron Darrough



Tony Blake and Bruce Tantrum in the office aboard Thelma

still struggling up the Rangitoto shore with only a few short tacks to get to the mark.

Excluding a tussle with one of two others who should have been way in front of us, the remainder of that first short race was largely uneventful and we soon found ourselves across the finish line and waiting for the second race. After what can only have been too much conversation, we heard a signal horn from *Wild Duck* and another one a minute later told us we had done it again—yep, messed up two starts in a row!

In the same starting position as the previous race (ie. dead last) and with a strong feeling of déjà vu, rather than follow on the heels of the fleet we decided to try the same tactic as before. This time however, the wind had swung ever so slightly further east and our left hand curve to the Islington Bay Red mark had us right on target—but this time at the head of the fleet! This course had us sailing close by Brown's Island, up around Salt Works and back to the finish off Bastion Point. The end result for Saturday? A first and a second. Not bad for a supposedly slow boat.

Sunday dawned hot and sunny for the Around Motuihe Island race with not a cloud in sight and light winds from the NE. This time Jenny and I were assigned to *Thelma* and with Jenny helping with the runners, I was stationed on the foredeck—the result of a bargain made with skipper Tony Blake when he was crewing for me in the Melbourne Cup Regatta last year.

While I was getting used to a gaffer again, we got an average start and tacked up along the Rangitoto Island shoreline heading for the Islington Bay mark. At one point I noticed *Waitangi* out to the right hand side and ahead of us—in the Gaff A fleet it was going to be anyone's race this time!

Rounding the Islington Bay mark, we kept close to the Motutapu Island shore to stay out of an adverse tide, but with Tony commenting on the depth we couldn't stay there forever and we headed across the channel for Motuihe Green channel marker, threading our way through a smallish fleet of fishing boats who

didn't seem the least bit concerned at the sight of a slender gaff-rigged racing yacht many times their size heading straight for their anchor chains and only just making it on one tack!

We made it (just)—others didn't—and we reached off under gennaker around the end of Motuihe Island around the Navy Buoy off Brown's Island to the finish gun, passing both *Ngatira* and *Rainbow* in the process. To my mind, Tony and the crew of *Thelma* deserve extra credit for getting Line Honours in the Gaff A division in all four races of the Regatta—races that didn't always go their way.

The many, many pictures tell a thousand words, but highlights of this event for me included the sight of so many Classic Yachts together in the one place including the sole Australian entry *Wraith of Odin* from Sydney and the stunning 1960s motor yacht *Akarana* that, with spectators aboard, followed the fleet around the course and simply added to the spectacle. I could not imagine a better choice of yachts for us 'first-timers' to sail on and winning the TransTasman Cup capped off a Regatta I shall not quickly forget.

Having never visited the North Island before, Jenny and I spent Monday in Devonport (mostly in and out of the bookshops) making a few purchases to add to the library. On Tuesday we hired a car for the day and drove to Rotorua to see the boiling mud and smell the sulphur and the very next day we were on our way back home to Melbourne loaded down with photos and fond memories.

It started to rain in Auckland on the way to the airport; a fitting end to an amazing week in New Zealand.



Photo: Roger Dundas

Mark Chew, sailing on and making time to smell the varnish

MARK CHEW

DAMIAN PURCELL

It would be difficult to find anyone who truly loved old style wooden boats more than the retiring CYAA President, Mark Chew. His genuine love for the form and the function of wooden boats led to his magnificent contributions in the development and success of the Classic Yacht Association from its inception. In the head versus heart battle that many of us sailors recognize, Mark's heart is easily won by almost any floating wooden object, but his head is usually very firm in preference of boats that are clean and simple. But fortunately for us his heart usually wins out over his head and he has thrown himself into numerous complex initiatives for the great benefit of the CYAA.

My first encounter with Mark was on the water back in 1997 around the time that Doug Shields and Col Anderson were forming the Classic Yacht Association of Australia. Back then, there were no organized races or activities for Classic Yachts and we sailed beloved older boats with the frantic club-racing herd and simply tried to stay clear of trouble. On a sunny afternoon sailing on *Scimitar* on what might have been opening day, we saw Mark's beautiful *Sparkman* and *Stevens* yacht, *Cotton Blossom*, over from Brighton and were drawn to sail over to take a closer look. Like two 45 ft eagles meeting

in the air, soon admiring maneuvers, led to sailing in company, then to pacing each other. We came to the realization that we were evenly matched pair and when the first Melbourne race of the Classic Yacht Association started, *Scimitar* and *Cotton Blossom* sailed a close competition.

It was back on the lawn at RYCV in Williamstown after one of the first races, that I met Mark and his lovely wife Sally Ann and kids; Archie and Harriet. I soon realized that Mark and I were also matched Classic Yacht tragics who had the same views on most things except for one – varnish!

While we both loved varnished detail on boats, Mark was emphatic that he preferred looking at it on other people's boats. He wanted sparse amounts of varnish on his own boat, because it stopped him from sailing, which he enjoyed above everything else. I couldn't persuade Mark that with clear time and good weather varnishing could also be almost as enjoyable as sailing.

Doug and Col were shrewd to harness youthful enthusiasm on the early CYAA executive committee, and Mark and I were honoured to sign on. Getting involved with the organization and administration of the CYAA led to a great camaraderie between the principles of most of the yachts and made the racing and other events so much more enjoyable. We developed a strong sense of community and common purpose in promoting the preservation and use of classic yachts, which became our mission statement. Mark embraced the CYAA and was keen to do whatever he could to help. Like most

of those involved at that time he didn't want any leadership title. Mark brought a huge amount of skill and talent to the CYAA and with the eye of an artist he had a vision of a vibrant and contemporary organization.

Marks first initiative was to change the newsletter and logo from something resembling a 1880's boys annual, to the form that we have now. The logo we have today was an evolution of what Sally Ann had developed for Cotton Blossom. Mark had long discussions with Col Anderson about the sheerline on the hull shape, but Mark managed to win the argument that a dead straight deck was a practical choice. Mark and Sally Ann made the newsletter into a beautifully crafted document with lots of fresh perspective on classic yachts, their racing, cruising, maintenance, and the people that fit classic yachts into their lives. It became a high quality production and a very good read. While these newsletters had a thoroughbred design Mark wasn't too concerned about putting on layers of editorial varnish. He was happy for the newsletter to speak in a raw and powerful way from the contributions of any member who was willing to put forward their written material. Sometimes as editor he had to write on unfamiliar topics to fill space, and his written contributions are always insightful and warm.

Mark was interested to develop the CYAA website. He and I put the first crude site together but it was pretty inert and not updated frequently enough. Mark wanted to solve this by spending some of our hard won resources to fund a more professional web site. This was a hard sell with the committee but he argued the case against resistance from some, such as Col Bandy who thought that website was no more valuable than driving around with a sign in the back window of his car. Mark won that discussion and at the same time converted Col Bandy to a prolific user of email and the Internet.

Mark guided the construction of our current web site and has faithfully updated its content over the past several years. He also started an email newsletter that collated news of interested to Classics sailors and this also went onto the web site.

Another initiative from Mark was the interaction with Classics events in other states and in New Zealand, and the instigation of the Melbourne Cup Regatta in the first weekend of November. Mark traveled to Classics events around the country and in New Zealand and made the connections that made invitational events one of the best-loved parts of the CYAA. He was pivotal in coordinating all the components that make an event work. All the time trying to protect time to sail his own boat and compete successfully.

After selling Cotton Blossom, Mark had a short foray into the world of plastic where he realized that sailing, even in the picturesque waters of Sydney, wasn't the same without wood beneath your feet. So he bought an Olympic gold medal winning Dragon, Paula, once owned by Jock Sturrock, to quell his yearning for wood and a classic design. But few two-boat relationships work, and he sold both and bought his lovely Rhodes 43ft centerboard yawl (converted to sloop), Fair Winds. He sailed her out from Auckland and competed

her extensively in CYAA events, and other regattas, events up and down the coast, such as the Hamilton Island race week. He had Fair Winds largely rebuilt with new frames and deck, but resisted all my encouragement for large tracts of varnished timber. Mark wanted to sail, not to spend time on maintenance. He raced her hard in a regatta he promoted for the visit of the Volvo 70's to Melbourne and sailed Fair Winds to Auckland to compete in the Southern Trust regatta with a crew of mostly Aussies. With his boat in NZ rather than at his home yacht club, his sailing time was increasingly given to running the CYAA and organizing events. The CYAA administration and other duties had turned into that dreaded never-ending varnishing job keeping him from sailing.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mark for his outstanding service to the CYAA and for his great initiatives during his time on the committee and especially as President. He served us tirelessly and with great enthusiasm and effect. We are a stronger and deeper organization for his time at the helm. But now it's time for Mark to get back behind the helm of Fair Winds and recommence sailing. He is also undertaking some more major works on her in New Zealand. Maybe with this next refit of Fair Winds Mark will uncover some painted surfaces and discover the joy that can come with smelling the varnish and seeing it gleam as the salt water beads on it in an early morning work to windward. We look forward to welcoming him back as an active sailor.

THE AGM WAS HELD RECENTLY

Mark Chew and Roger Dundas retired. Mark after 10 years devoted service, Roger will continue with editing the magazine. Articles please to www.dundas@melbpc.org.au

Two new committee members were elected:

- Col Anderson [ACROSPIRE 111] was one of the foundation members and his return is most welcome.
- Cameron Dorrrough [BUNGOONA]. Cameron's new found love of "classics" and enthusiasm will be very helpful.
- Peter Lloyd -[elected president by the committee]
- Pip Todd -secretary
- Stuart Stubbs -treasurer
- Col Anderson
- Peter Costolloe
- Cameron Dorrrough.
- Damian Purcell.
- Martin Ryan.

The committee is intent on fostering and improving it's current activities.

Two further areas to be specifically addressed are interstate liaison-Col Anderson, and the formation of the "Classic Yacht Trust" [copy attached] working group formed - Damian Purcell, Martin Ryan, ex-officio help is sought to further this vital cause. Mark Bergin has volunteered-any others who have interest and enthusiasm please contact Damian on dfjp@unimelb.edu.au



All photos by Shelley Crisp

Left to right: Brighton, Nerana, Altair, Milsonia, Galatea

MESSING ABOUT IN WOODEN BOATS AT GOOLWA

WENDY WATSON

The 2011 South Australian Wooden Boat Festival held at the river port of Goolwa over the weekend 26 and 27 February was a huge success with more than 40,000 people enjoying the event.

Goolwa is a historic river port on the Murray River near the Murray Mouth in South Australia, and joined by a bridge to Hindmarsh Island. The name 'Goolwa' means 'elbow' in Ngarrindjeri, the local Aboriginal language.

The river port of Goolwa is recognised for its historic river trade, preservation of heritage and culture and beautiful location. It has a highly talented community with boat builders, skilled artisans and all things wood and wooden boats, which enhance community development.

Since 1980, Goolwa has celebrated SA's rich history of the river trade, maritime craft, music, art and heritage and held the South Australian Wooden Boat Festival which has established a reputation as a unique event in Australia. Held biennially at the river port of Goolwa at the historic wharf and surrounding precinct, it's a cultural festival, where people mix with boats of all

shapes and sizes, sharing their skills, history and adventure, love of music and regional produce.

The 2011 SA Wooden Boat Festival celebrated the important history of Goolwa and its wooden boats and was a great opportunity to celebrate the return of the high flows to the river and the joy and fun of owning a wooden boat!

The historic wharf was jam-packed with wooden boats, all shapes and sizes, vintage sailing yachts, traditional riverboats, putt putts, steam boats, clinker boats, rowing boats, canoes and model boats on display. There was a record number of 260 wooden boats registered, a boating spectacular with parades and racing events all weekend!



Left to right: Foreground - Nautilus, Nerana, Altair, Galatea

A Festival tradition has patrons jumping on a boat and chatting to a boatie, sharing their passion, history and magic of wooden boats!

Highlights of the weekend included the Restricted 21ft class of yachts. Goolwa has the largest fleet of these historic yachts in Australia and all weekend there was constant action on the water close to the historic wharf, which made exciting viewing.

The Festival was thrilled to see David Payne, Curator of the National Register of Historic Boats from the Australian National Maritime Museum attend and share his intimate knowledge of the origins and history of the Restricted 21ft class and bring down the Forster Cup.

The Forster Cup, a pre-war trophy for interstate rivalry between the Restricted 21 class was on display. On loan from the CYC in Sydney, it was the first time it has been seen in Goolwa which now has the biggest fleet of these historic yachts in Australia.

A photographic art exhibition highlighting historic wooden boats in Goolwa—Goolwa and Wooden Boats—The Passion— was on display in the wharf shed featuring over 50 local boats and their owners including the Restricted 21s.

The Governor of South Australia, His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce opened the 12th South Australian Wooden Boat Festival and joined in our celebrations along with the traditional land owners, our Ngarrindjeri community.

The local Ngarrindjeri people are an important part of the history of Goolwa and the lower reaches of the Murray River. We thank the Ngarrindjeri for using their traditional land and visitors were welcomed by a number of artists and crafts people at the Ngarrindjeri Culture Tent. There were exhibits and interactive workshops, traditional raft building using traditional fibres, youth art demonstrations and a display of arts and crafts. This highlight brings to the Festival educational and cultural benefits for future sharing and reconciliation.

The 2011 South Australian Wooden Boat Festival was free entry with great entertainment for the whole family. Visitors were able to indulge in the atmosphere with maritime and static displays, on water and land action, arts and craft workshops, music performances for the whole family, puppet palace and regional wine and food tent. There were paddlesteamer rides on the PS Oscar W from the new Oscar W Interpretative Centre at the wharf shed and patrons could take a ride or arrive to the Festival by the Steamranger Cockle train.

The lone piper under the spotlight on the paddlesteamer Oscar W followed by a spectacular fireworks display from the Goolwa Hindmarsh Island Bridge was another unforgettable highlight of the weekend.

Another great attraction was the presence of the Navy Sea King 817 Squadron. The Sea Kings of 817 Squadron have been the backbone of the Navy maritime support, search and rescue since being introduced into service 35 years ago.

Goolwa hosted 80 sailors and three helicopters. Highlights included a historical re-enactment of the Freedom on Entry ceremony, a memorial service and ceremonial sunset including helicopter rescue demonstrations over the weekend. The Squadron—from air station HMAS Albatross at Nowra—is preparing for its final year of service with the aircraft due to be decommissioned.

There are significant challenges and opportunities with organising a Festival and being a not-for-profit organisation the 2011 SA Wooden Boat Festival has a group of volunteers on the committee who have a shared vision and an enthusiastic approach. The Festival is indebted to the all the Wooden Boat owners and support from the Alexandrina Council, SA Tourism Commission, and major sponsor—AVJennings and Riverbreeze, Woodstock Wines, Ecostar, all other sponsors, partners and community associations who contribute to the success of this event.

The 2011 South Australian Wooden Boat Festival celebrated two days of colour, spectacular on water and land activity, themed maritime events, music concerts, flavours and fun for all the family. The next SA Wooden Boat Festival is planned for 23 and 24 February 2013, put it in your calendar and come and visit the river port of Goolwa and don't forget to bring your boat!

For more information, phone the Festival Office Ph. 8555 7240 or contact SAWBF Marketing - Wendy Watson M. 0412 757 209 or visit www.woodenboatfestival.com.au



St. Elmo



William Randell Oscar W

THE LEDA ENCHANTMENT 2

BRIAN REID

WIDER HORIZONS

Leda's performance in the White Island race was a huge boost to the Wilsons' confidence and ambition. Less than a month after the finish of the first White Island race, Leda was entered in the second post-war TransTasman race from Auckland to Sydney.

The Wilsons now knew, from their White Island experience, that *Leda* was a definite chance for at least a place, but she would have some very stiff competition, not only from some of her keenest Auckland rivals, but also from Australia, principally from the crack Sydney cutter *Solveig*, whose builders and owners, the brothers Trygve and Magnus Halvorsen, were to make their distinctive mark for many years in the annals of the classic Sydney-Hobart race. They had already won the 1948 TransTasman in *Peer Gynt*. Later, *Solveig* won line honours in the 1953 Sydney-Hobart, and was to become overall winner the following year. Also considered a likely contender in the TransTasman was the Queensland yacht *Southern Maid*.

But before they could even consider entering *Leda* for the TransTasman race the Wilsons had some big and essential projects to complete. They had to build bunks, lockers, a workbench in the wireless room, a folding table, a chart table and racks for sails. A stove had already been installed. Now *Leda* was fitted with an engine, sails were re-cut and new ones ordered. Life-saving gear, rubber dinghies, rockets, flares, emergency lights, navigation instruments, lifelines, warps—all the essentials for deepwater ocean racing had to be supplied and installed, and food and water to feed a crew of nine provided. Most of the building work was done by Dooley with *Leda* on the slip at Tauranga and finally, she was able to sail up to Auckland for the start of the race.

The 1951 TransTasman race generated enormous interest in Auckland, and for no entrant more than *Leda*. The early focus of interest for the Auckland press was the fact that for the first time, two women were taking part in the race. They were, of course, sisters-in-law Kit and Erica Wilson on *Leda*. Reading the newspaper reports of this phenomenon is a classic reminder of the way gender issues were handled in those days. There were prominent photographs of the two and long-winded interviews with them, designed to find out their plans for feeding the crew, what they were going to wear, and how they were going to protect their complexions.

The Wilson women's participation in the TransTasman race was to have more dramatic effects when they reached Sydney.

When the nine contestants started off Orakei Wharf on the morning of 27 January, thousands lined the waterfront and a huge fleet of spectator craft of every kind crowded the waters of the lower harbour. *Leda* had a crew of nine including four experienced volunteers from the Auckland yachting fraternity. The day was fine, crisp and sparkling with a brisk south-westerly breeze, which meant the yachts would set spinnakers for the run out of the harbour. First over the line was *Solveig*, but by the time the fleet had passed North Head at the harbour entrance, *Leda* was the front runner, a position which she held until the afternoon, when they were well on their way north, and Rangi was slightly ahead of her.

HELP FROM ABOVE

Next day, Leda was in front again, but the entire fleet was becalmed off the northern tip of New Zealand. These conditions persisted, with the boats rolling about in very light winds and uncomfortably confused seas, their sails slatting about uselessly. In these conditions, the smaller boats were able to make up considerable distance, and Leda's navigator and radio operator, Terry Hammond, reported to the Cape Reinga lighthouse, New Zealand's northernmost beacon, that the disposition of the fleet was almost as it was at the start of the race.

New Zealand-born Terry, who had been working in Australia, already had a reputation as a highly competent operator and he was now on first-name terms with lighthouse keeper Sid Schofield through their radio contacts in previous races. Terry had sailed as navigator in many ocean races, including the 1948 TransTasman, and was still navigating and skippering yachts on long ocean voyages well into his eighties. His radio skills and Sandy Wilson's journalistic background led to Sandy's appointment as TransTasman race correspondent for the New Zealand Press Association, sending regular progress bulletins back to New Zealand newspapers. Terry's skills were soon to project *Leda* into the centre of an incident that has passed into New Zealand ocean racing and aviation history.

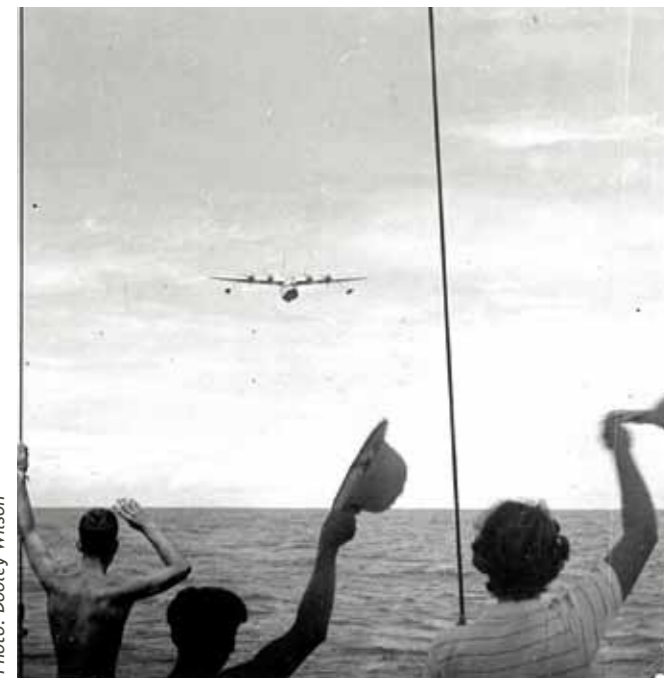
The prelude to this was the breaking of a can opener when Erica Wilson was opening a tin of green peas. They had no other and faced the prospect of having to hack at cans with knives for the rest of the trip. For time being, the pocket knife of crew member Arthur Wratten was worked very hard. But help was at hand—from above.

Sandy's appointment by the New Zealand Press Association had called for a more powerful radio than normally carried by small boats of that time—long before the days of compact solid state transmitters. Most small radios could transmit on only a few fixed frequencies, but *Leda* had acquired a powerful ex-aircraft system, a Collins Autotune, which could be set on any frequency within its range. This was to prove vital in what eventuated.

Early on the day after the start of the race, they were well out of sight of land when they heard the sound of an aircraft's engines, and high above recognised one of TEAL's flying boats. TEAL (Tasman Empire Airways Limited), now Air New Zealand, operated the Trans-Tasman route from New Zealand to Australia with Short Solent flying boats, continuing a long tradition, dating from before World War II, of flying boat operation.

Terry thought it might be interesting to try to contact them by radio, but the problem was that aircraft and small yachts work on different frequencies so they would not hear them if they called. However, by a lucky fluke of memory, Terry could recall the frequency used by Auckland air traffic control. He quickly tuned the transmitter to 6557 kc/sec and started 'calling the flying boat that just passed over a yacht'. They assumed that the aircraft could have seen them, as it was flying below 10,000 feet, not being pressurised, and *Leda* had set a large brightly coloured spinnaker.

To their surprise, the reply came back, 'Hello *Leda*, this is ZKAMA, flying boat *Ararangi*, receiving you loud and clear'. Unfortunately, Terry also heard another signal, from Auckland air radio, telling him in no uncertain terms to get off their frequency. He obeyed immediately but not before telling the aircraft *Leda's* proper marine channel, and getting their normal operating frequency, so they were able to continue their contact. By this time the flying boat was a hundred miles or more away but it was reassuring to talk to them.



The flying boat *Awatere* makes her "bombing run" to drop a can-opener and the Sydney morning papers to *Leda* during the 1951 Trans Tasman race from Auckland to Sydney.

They asked if there was anything they could do for *Leda*, in the way of passing on messages, and as a joke, Terry suggested that they could do with a new can opener. There was no comment from the aircraft but before closing the contact Terry arranged to

keep a schedule with the west-bound flight the next day. Because it was about a seven-hour flight from Auckland to Sydney, the flying boats normally did not fly at night, so it would be a different aircraft leaving Auckland the following day. However, they said they would pass the message back to New Zealand. This they must have done, because right on 9 am the next day, after Terry had transmitted 'calling a TEAL flying boat', back came the answer '*Leda*, this is ZKAMN, *Awatere*, replying.'

The contact continued:

'*Leda*, have you got an accurate position?'

'Yes, we got some good star sights this morning and so have a good position.'

There was no such thing as satellite-based GPS then, and the sextant was the only way to fix a position with reasonable accuracy. Terry passed on their latitude and longitude, and got the reply 'OK *Leda*, we'll come up and have a look for you.'

And right on time, there they were, high up in the east. *Leda* saw them first, called them up and gave them their compass bearing.

'OK *Leda*, we've got you now, and we're coming down to have a look.'

Down came the huge aircraft, until it was just above *Leda's* masthead height, then it circled round the yacht in both directions so the passengers on both sides could have a good look. It would have been a spectacular sight on a beautiful sunny day, with *Leda's* huge coloured spinnaker set.

Then came the surprise.

'Oh, by the way *Leda*, we've got your can opener for you!'

And off the *Awatere* flew to the north, then came back across the yacht's bow. Just before they got to them *Leda's* crew were amazed to see a small parcel come out of the plane, with a long streamer attached to make it visible. It was a beautiful shot. The parcel landed in the water dead ahead of them, less than fifty feet away. They fished it out of the water with a boathook, and there it was—an old lifejacket for flotation, and a small plastic wrapped parcel. There was great excitement on deck as they opened it—not one but two can openers, and a copy of the morning paper from Auckland.

With *Leda's* thanks, and a wiggle of its wings, the giant flying boat climbed away on its course to Sydney.

Years later, sitting in an Air New Zealand jet flying across the Tasman, Terry asked the steward to find out if the captain had ever flown flying boats. An invitation to the flight deck quickly followed and it turned out that he had been a junior officer on one of the paper drops.



Photo: Dooley Wilson

A major factor in *Leda's* Trans Tasman win was her power and speed to windward.

For *Leda*, a sudden change of weather after the paper drops ended turned out definitely for the better. In gale force winds, thrashing through short, steep seas, she raced towards Sydney under trysail and spitfire jib—just her sort of weather. It seemed that *Leda* and *Southern Maid* were fighting out the lead with 375 miles to go, lightning flashes and rolling thunder drowning the howl of the wind through the rigging, and vicious gusts of up to 50 knots.

The big blow raised genuine hopes of their finishing the race in first place, and they did, crossing the finish line on Sydney Harbour at 3.20 pm on 7 February after 300 hours of sailing, nearly seven hours before *Tara*, with *Southern Maid*, the scratch boat, next at 10.55 pm and *Solveig* fourth home at 4.26 am the next day. But *Leda's* margin was not enough to offset the time handicaps she was conceding to the others, including about 3 1/2 hours to *Tara* and 21 hours to *Solveig* which ended up the winner. *White Squall* was placed second and *Hope* third.



Photo: Dooley Wilson

Leda's crew gives a victory wave as she crosses the line first in the Trans Tasman race.

As first boat home, *Leda* got plenty of press attention, but not just for her sailing performance. Her crew placed the members of Sydney's august Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, which had sponsored the race, in a serious quandary—what to do about the two women on board when the official welcome to the crew was held? In more than fifty years, no woman had crossed the threshold of this male bastion.

The decision had to be made quickly—were Erica and Kit Wilson to be admitted to the sacred halls? To their credit, the RPAYC behaved like the gentlemen they were, and a special membership was created for the two women, who were heartily welcomed along with the rest of *Leda's* crew. This historic concession, however, was extended only to female crew members. Wives, women relatives and friends were still denied admission to the yacht club's hallowed precinct. This did not stop Noreen Halvorsen, wife of Trygve, meeting and befriending the Wilsons and sharing some social occasions. She was especially close to Erica, and was a truly supportive friend to her in later years.

There were many other people out to welcome *Leda* on her arrival. I was one of them. Much had happened to me since I said goodbye to *Leda* and the Wilsons and left Auckland for Wellington and the South Island in October 1948. After returning to journalism with a job as a reporter on the *Christchurch Star*. I then left for Australia to join the staff of Associated Newspapers as a writer for their periodicals department. In Australia, I lost touch with the Wilsons, but was enormously excited when I learned of their participation in the Auckland-Sydney race, which I followed closely through the Sydney newspaper coverage. When it became apparent from the reports that *Leda* was going to come home first, I slipped away from the office on the afternoon she was due, and made my way to Rose Bay.

There, I hired a small rowing boat and sculled out to mid-harbour to greet *Leda* and her crew, who were gratifyingly astonished. A day or so later, I met them again at their berth at the Royal Prince Alfred, and suggested we sail up to the Hawkesbury River and down into Pittwater, near where I lived nearby at Mona Vale. That trip was my first and last sail on *Leda*, and I savoured every minute.

I saw neither *Leda*, nor two of her crew, again.

On the voyage back to New Zealand after the metropolitan delights and lavish hospitality of Sydney, *Leda's* crew decided to call at remote Lord Howe Island, 600 kilometres east of the Australian mainland. They spent six indulgent days there as the guests of the owners of the island's only accommodation house, fishing, walking, climbing and surfing before, somewhat reluctantly, heading back to New Zealand.

Just to put the question of *Leda's* sailing qualities indisputably beyond doubt, she followed her TransTasman performance in the same year with her second successive win in the White Island race at Christmas, again winning both line honours and first place on handicap.

But there were bigger, more challenging issues facing *Leda* and the Wilsons.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

They were yet to realise it, but the end of the TransTasman race and *Leda's* return to New Zealand marked the beginning of the end of the Wilson brothers' boyhood dream. The signs were already there.

Despite the rosy picture the newspaper and magazine articles had painted of the harmonious and cooperative relationships aboard *Leda*, the reality was somewhat different. Since their return from Australia after the TransTasman race, the yacht herself still delighted them, particularly with her racing performances in the White Island races and some Tauranga Harbour events, but family difficulties were emerging. There were two principal factors in this—a shortage of money for both couples and a growing disaffection between the two wives.

Eventually, after a great deal of soul-searching and prolonged discussion, it was decided sadly that *Leda* had to be sold, and that with the proceeds of the sale, each brother would build or buy his own boat and the couples would sail separately. Their boyhood dream was about to end, but one last promise to themselves still had to be fulfilled. They must make a world cruise.

In the event, it was only half a world—but far enough to satisfy the dream. The idea was to sail from New Zealand across the Pacific to America and sell the boat there, where they felt confident they would get a better price for her than in New Zealand. Plans were laid for the preparation of *Leda* and her people for the long haul, with San Francisco as her destination. As the process of getting the yacht into shape for her 11,250 kilometre journey proceeded, the Wilsons were able to fix a date for departure—29 April 1953.

But before then, a crew had to be assembled who were capable of handling the yacht through every sort of weather on a voyage that would take many months. Sandy and Dooley, of course, were well and truly capable, but two of them could not be expected to handle *Leda* alone. Dooley was still not confident of his navigation skills over such a long trip, but he was able to find the solution to the problem in Dave Woolf, whom he had met in Tauranga as a fellow member of a skindiving club.

Dave, English-born, had been a navigator in RAF bombers during the war and although he had never before been on a sailing boat, believed he could fulfill the navigator's role satisfactorily. He turned out to be quite right, and he was also able to bring his fellow crew members up to scratch in the art, including Erica.

It was always without question that Kit would accompany them, but she now had three children. Kit gave birth in Tauranga to the youngest, Nicholas, in December, 1952 while *Leda* was competing in the White Island race. Four months later, snuggled down in a baby basket, he was accompanying his parents and his sisters Janet, aged 6½ and Ruth 5½, on an ocean cruise in a 54 ft yacht which would leave Auckland with a complement of eight souls.

Kit and the children would sail as far as Fiji whence they would fly back to New Zealand.

Living in the interior of a sailing boat of *Leda's* size is like living in a tunnel tapered at each end. Add to this the burden of looking after three young children, and you have a potentially explosive situation.

Around 10 am on the day of departure, *Leda* left the Auckland Harbour slipway, where the final shipboard preparations had been made and motored round to the Admiralty Steps in the city.

When she tied up at Admiralty Steps, there was already a large and growing crowd to greet and farewell her, swelling to around a thousand as the departure time drew near. They included many of Sandy's and Erica's colleagues from the *Auckland Star*, among them staff photographers who later moved to various vantage points to shoot *Leda* as she sailed down harbour. Moored next to *Leda* was another big Auckland yacht, *Blue Water*, which was leaving the same day for a cruise to Tahiti. The crews of both yachts were hoping to meet in Tahiti for the Bastille Day celebrations in July.



Photo: Dooley Wilson

A crown of 1000 gathers at the Admiralty Steps, Auckland, to farewell *Leda* on her final voyage from New Zealand in 1953.

As *Leda* pulled away, the crew of *Blue Water* sang the familiar Maori farewell *Now is the Hour*. For Erica, this was the adventure of a lifetime. At the age of 21, married for just three years, she was about to leave her native country for the first time, with untold possibilities ahead for her. But as departure time approached, she had a change of mood, as many of her own old friends arrived to see her off. She was in tears, as she caught a glimpse of one of them in the crowd, and for a brief moment wished she were there beside him.

About 8.30 next morning, after a night of easy sailing with winds gradually shifting to the east, *Leda* arrived at the historic town of Russell in the Bay of Islands, on the far north-east coast of New Zealand, one of the country's most popular tourist and holiday destinations. After a day spent between fishing and meeting local friends and contacts, they left Russell at 9.30 pm and spent an uncomfortable night, encountering big seas with variable winds and discovering that the deck was leaking badly from around the mast, decklights, portholes and other deck fittings. The sail locker had become drenched, bedding was so wet that some bunks were

unusable, and tempers were short. The conditions continued for the next five days, until the wind dropped, the seas calmed and they were able to get all the wet bedding, sails and other material on deck to dry.

At 6 am on May 13, Dave Woolf, on watch, woke Erica to see Awa Island off Tonga.

For Dooley Wilson, the Tonga visit was a nostalgic reunion with the scene of some of his most exciting wartime experiences—not military, but maritime. While stationed there with the Royal New Zealand Air Force, he became close friends with a Tongan named Cookie who earned part of his income by hunting the whales which passed through Tongan waters in huge numbers. Whaling was then, as in most parts of the world, a perfectly legitimate pursuit and in fact, was outlawed in Tonga by royal decree only in 1978. (Known officially as the Kingdom of Tonga, the country is ruled by a monarch who, with an extended family and appointed representatives, controls the government of the kingdom.)



Photo: Dooley Wilson

Whaling in Tonga. This picture was taken by Dooley Wilson from a whaleboat when he was serving in Tonga with the RNZAF in World War II.

Dooley and Cookie were reunited joyfully and life continued at this leisurely pace as they visited their friends, fished and swam and sailed their little dinghy in the lagoon.

Three days after they arrived in Tonga, Sandy, Dooley and Dave Wolf had an encounter which elevated them considerably on the Tongan social scale. *Leda's* crew had not yet done any fishing and lying at anchor in the lagoon they hankered for something fresh from the sea for dinner. On an impulse, Dave and Sandy got their flippers, diving masks, snorkel tubes and spear guns and paddled the dinghy across to the nearest reef. They had been diving for about ten minutes without seeing anything worth catching, and had climbed back into the boat, when two Tongans in a little red

canoe who had been watching them, paddled past. One of them, a big thick-set man, called, in perfect English:

'Caught anything?'

'No, they're all too small and too quick,' Sandy replied.

'You'll find it much better over there,' the big man said, pointing to a beacon on a reef about a mile away. 'I'm going over there now.'

Dave and Sandy rowed back to *Leda*, picked up Dooley and his diving gear and rowed back to where they could see the canoe. The big man was diving while the other kept the canoe alongside. The diver was using a snorkel tube much longer than the ones used by the *Leda* crew, kept on the surface by a small rubber lifebuoy. The big man surfaced, smiled at them, then dived again. After Sandy, Dave and Dooley had spent about two hours diving without success, they were rowing back to *Leda* when the canoe intercepted them and they struck up an animated conversation with the man in the bow about spear fishing and spear fishing tackle.

The big man said he had taken up the sport three months ago. He also asked them if they had any spare rubber tubing for spear guns. His had perished and it would be months before he would be able to get more from Australia to use for his best gun. There was plenty of spare tubing on *Leda* and they invited him to come on board to get some.

The big Tongan climbed aboard and introduced himself. 'They call me Tungi,' he said. When the roll of rubber tubing was produced, Tungi offered to pay for it. The Wilsons said they wouldn't dream of it, but he was scrupulous in taking just enough for his needs. As he was leaving he asked if his hosts would like to go fishing with him one day in his yacht. They would go further out where the fish were bigger and tamer. The Wilsons were engaged to go to Cookie's feast on the coming Saturday, so the following Saturday was fixed for the expedition.

On deck, as Tungi prepared to climb back into the canoe, Sandy gestured towards a nearby island, and asked whether that was where they would go to fish.

Tungi nodded, saying it was a good fishing spot, then added, rather diffidently: 'Actually, I own that island there, and there is a good beach, but the fishing is better at those two distant islands—I own them, too.'

Back on board, the Wilsons discussed Tungi. Very nice bloke. Must have a fair bit of cash...

'Probably some sort of prince or something,' Dave said.

Prince! The penny dropped. They dived for the bookcase and grabbed the Pacific Island Year Book. They turned to Tonga:

"The Crown Prince and heir to the throne, Tupouto'a, succeeded to his father's title of Tungi in 1945," they read. "Matriculating from Newington College, Sydney, he took an honours degree in jurisprudence at Sydney University in 1943. On his return to Tonga

in the same year he was appointed Minister of Education and was subsequently given the additional portfolio of Health"...Of course! In the absence of his mother, Queen Salote, in London for the forthcoming coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Tungi was the reigning monarch of Tonga.



The Tongan Royal Palace. Tungi would have lived here

BOILOVER

Sandy did not go with Dooley and Dave on the fishing expedition promised by the Head of State, from which they returned late that night, having been treated royally by Tungi—lots of feasting, but no fish.

The tensions on board *Leda* came to the boil the next morning. Sandy, Dave and Erica had stayed in bed, in a mood to lie down and read. About 9 am, Dooley came into the cabin to announce that the dinghy had broken loose and that getting it back would be a good pre-breakfast job for the boys. Sandy disagreed, saying it would be better left after the tide came in as the little boat was high and dry on the coral. This seemed to have provoked the subsequent explosion and acrimony. After which Dooley, Kit and the children went ashore for the day. That night, after the rest of the family had returned, dinner was eaten in stony silence.

The next day, hostilities resumed, with hours of recriminations leading eventually to what Erica described as a 'pow wow.' According to Erica, Kit and Dooley eventually backed down and agreed to continue the voyage as planned, if Erica would get up each morning at seven to get breakfast.

In everyone's defence, it has to be recognised that Kit would have been under great strain caring for the children in the confines of the yacht. For his part, Dooley would have felt he had responsibility for the safety of everyone on board, including, and especially, his entire immediate family. Someone had to take charge of yacht and crew but because *Leda* had been the joint project of the brothers right from its conception, the line of command could have become blurred on occasions.

However the situation might be analysed, the last acrimonious confrontation meant that relations between the two couples

could never be the same. There was, by tacit consent, a surface suspension of hostilities, but the underlying relationships never improved for the rest of the protagonists' lives.

Next morning, 27 May, at 7 o'clock, farewelled by Cookie and his wife on one side of the wharf and some of the Wilsons' European friends on the other, they set sail for Tonga's next largest group of islands, Vava'u, some 200km north of Tonga, punctuated by visits to other small islands.

By now, *Leda's* company had learned to expect hassles with port authorities on arrivals and departures, and Vava'u was no exception. When they applied for clearance, the authorities told them they couldn't leave until the next day, 1 June. Dooley eventually got them to agree to 2 pm but more arguments followed, and *Leda* finally got under way an hour later heading for Suva.

BREAKERS, REEFS AND REVELS

On 2 June 1953, the world was celebrating the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, but *Leda* and her crew, on their way to Suva, were too busy coping with a rising wind and sea, and navigating what seemed to be a maze of reefs and breaking waves, to stop for patriotic observances. They were about to get their first serious encounter with a tropical storm at sea and were twice close to being wrecked on a reef.

In early afternoon, the cloud lifted, and after an anxious half hour of scaling the mast and scanning the horizon with the hand-held bearing compass, they were able to take bearings to fix their position. The wind began to subside, until at 5 pm the engine was started and *Leda* motored toward Suva in a flat calm, though still riding heavy swells. They picked up the leading lights to the harbour, and anchored in the medical examination area at 8.30 pm. The crew had a few beers then turned in for a well-deserved sleep.

In the morning, the usual argy-bargy started when customs, immigration and medical authorities came aboard at 8am. The Agriculture Department official quizzed them closely on their previously ports of call, fearful of the presence of rhinoceros beetle which can devastate coconut plantations.

He left, but was followed soon after by another official who said they would have to anchor in the stream every night. After vigorous protests from the crew, he eventually compromised by demanding that they scrub the boat out completely and if, after inspecting it next day, he found it satisfactory they would be permitted to berth. They spent their first day in Suva on hands and knees wielding scrubbing brushes and mops, until they were able to satisfy the Agriculture Department's standards.

They were still cleaning up the boat for the official inspection while Sandy went ashore to the post office to pick up the mail

from friends and family. They read hungrily. He then went visiting other yachts anchored nearby, and returned with two RNZAF men stationed at an air base just out of Suva. One of them, Gordon Kells, was the owner of the former Auckland yacht, *Tempress*. The stage was set for some serious socialising and hospitality, beginning with a beer at the Suva Yacht Club and that night, a Coronation cocktail party at the Defence Club, where they met up with the crew of another ex-Auckland yacht, the A class *Tamatea*.

Their perils at sea were not yet over, however. On 12 June they set sail in company with *Tamatea* for an expedition to the Nukulau and Makuluva Islands, only a few kilometres from Suva, and on their return just approaching the entrance to Suva harbour, *Leda* struck a reef with a horrifying crunch. Immediately, Sandy put the helm over to try to sail her off, and at the same time, the engine was started, and they managed to free the boat and motor safely into harbour.

Next morning the damage turned out to be mostly to the lead keel, with very little of the timber touched, apart from some minor damage to the rudder. They found a slipway for the damage to be fixed, and stayed there for the night on the boat because a gale had come up outside and they could remain in shelter.

About 8 o'clock the following morning, Kit, Dooley and the children left for Singatoka, where Kit and the children were to stay with friends before leaving by air for the return to New Zealand. Dooley would stay with them for a few days. Erica's diary entry leaves no doubt about her relief.

For the next four days, the three remaining crew members indulged themselves with the usual round of hospitality until, after Dooley's return on 22 June, they eventually sailed at 4.30 pm for Ngau Island, about 50 miles away, where they were to rendezvous with Gordon Kells' *Tempress*. On the way to Ngau, they encountered light head winds, but had an easy sail, punctuated by Dooley catching a dolphin fish, a species which can grow to more than 2 metres long. Erica described their catch as 'huge and beautiful—all yellowy blue and changing colour as it came out of the water. Tons of meat on him.'

At Ngau, they careened *Leda* in shallow water with a soft mud bottom and began two days of cleaning and repairing her hull.

The weather took hold of *Leda's* plans for departure from Ngau when a full-scale storm developed. But a couple of days later, the weather had improved enough for them to set sail again.

On their first two days out, they met light head winds, making it hard for *Leda* to make more than 70 miles a day, until the weather took a turn for the worse, with the easterly trade winds blowing hard in their teeth, forcing them to keep on starboard tack to take the most favourable course for their destination. But this was also taking them north towards the islands of Samoa, about 800 miles from Fiji. When they came within easy distance of Samoa they

decided to call there. Pilot guides and atlases were pored over, a reef was shaken out of the mainsail and the course set.

They reached the Samoan capital, Apia, at 10 am on 12 July, tying up to a convenient buoy to await the usual official inquisition.

Afterwards, they met an old friend of Sandy's who had worked with him as a journalist in Auckland and was now editor of the *Samoan Bulletin*. Erica spent some time visiting the hospital to have treatment for a cut on her leg which had become infected. The nurse in charge treated the wound with penicillin, only then becoming widely used. After three days in Samoa, they left Apia about 6 pm under motor, picked up a favourable breeze and sailed quietly up the Upolo shore. Next stop: Tahiti.

Before they had left Fiji, the pundits had been advising them not to take a direct easterly course to Tahiti into the teeth of the trade winds, but to sail south to latitude 30, almost back to New Zealand, then pick up a westerly wind. The trade winds, they said, were good servants, but bad masters.

But *Leda's* crew knew just how good the boat was in sailing to windward and decided they would take the direct course and hope for favourable wind shifts. *Leda* proved them right. Twenty-eight days (including three days in Samoa) after leaving Fiji, they were anchored in Papeete Harbour, having covered the 2000 miles at an average of around 100 miles a day, but sailing some 2700 miles in tacking against the easterly.

As they sailed into Papeete Harbour, it was calm at the anchorage, but ashore, the Bastille Day celebrations were still in progress. The *Leda* crew had a drink in the cockpit, watched the lights and listened to the music across the water. Next morning, they looked out at hundreds of boats of every sort and size—launches, yachts, schooners, trading boats, most of them tied up at the treelined quay around the shore line.

Wandering the streets of Papeete, they were fascinated by the French Polynesian ambience, particularly the abundance of small cafes and restaurants serving coffee and rolls, ice cream, meals and, wonder of wonders, wine. It is easy to imagine the culture shock after the restrictions and proscriptions of 1950s New Zealand, where serving wine at restaurants was almost unknown and mostly illegal, and the average meal served was steak and eggs or roast meat and vegetables.

Tahiti then, as now, was a Mecca for yachts from all over the world and they soon made friendly contact with the crews of a number of yachts. This led to even more hectic round of socialising, parties and meals both on board and at various onshore clubs and restaurants.

For the rest of their stay in Tahiti, the pace of nightly entertainment continued at much the same level, interrupted in daylight by a bike riding expedition, much swimming and spear fishing and shell hunting. Eventually, they decided to leave Papeete for the

neighbouring land of Moorea for relief after the heavy round of festivities of the past week. At 11 am the next day, they sailed from Moorea through the reef passage into a light east wind, dead ahead on a course for Fakarava in the Tuamotu Islands group, 240 miles away.

Over the next month, they followed a leisurely course through the Tuamotu Archipelago and the Marquesas, with occasional landfalls which usually called for more festivities. They left the Marquesas on the evening of 17 September, headed for Hilo, in Hawaii.

A fresh and favourable breeze allowed *Leda* to average 141 miles a day, for the next four days, but on the fifth, they slatted about in a flat calm, the swell heaving the boat into a stomach-churning roll while the crew lay below doing their best to cope with the motion.

The next morning, the wind had strengthened considerably, but now again dead ahead from the north. *Leda* forged along to windward under storm jib and mainsail, and the day closed with a weirdly colourful sky—upper clouds of a sullen, soft grey, with below, a mass of puffy grey balls and just above the sea, a beautiful blue and white. As the sun set, rays of soft orange and pink briefly brightened the sky before darkness closed down. In the morning, the wind had died again to a flat calm.

This was *Leda's* introduction to the Doldrums, the band of low pressure 5 degrees north and 5 degrees south of the Equator, where the heat causes the air to rise, producing flat seas and a humid atmosphere, as well as some of the world's heaviest rainfalls.

The pattern of alternating flat calms and fierce rain squalls continued. During one period of windless rolling, Dooley conceived a solution—the spitfire jib hoisted up the permanent backstay to the top of the mast where its resistance to the wind generated by the rolling proved very efficient in reducing the motion.

Eventually, *Leda* worked her way more than 600 miles north of the Equator when a gentle breeze from the north-east came in, freshening slowly until again, stately galleons of trade wind clouds set sail once more across the sky and *Leda* was well and truly on her way again.

They saw Hawaii on 8 October. The wind freshened and *Leda* was making 4 to 5 knots as she skirted the southern coast and headed for Hilo, where they tied up at 2.30 pm.

If French Polynesia had been a cultural awakening for them, Hawaii was a genuine culture shock. Erica, in search of stores, had her first experience of a supermarket. No such thing then existed in New Zealand, where you still bought meat at the butcher's, groceries at the grocer's, fruit and vegetables at the fruiterer's and bread at the baker's. 'What a place!' Erica wrote. 'Two huge fridges holding quick frozen and fresh foods. All the vegies and fruit were in these open freezers. The tinned goods

and made-up puddings, biscuits, sweets etc were all wonderful, but what a price! We have to go very canny.'

They left on 16 October for Honolulu 200 miles away. There, the wonders of American urban society were multiplied. They were astonished at being able to buy a milkshake without getting out of your car, other places having a juke box in each cubicle with a selection of 50 records. They were bemused by the American practice of serving iced water before every meal—even ice cream or a milkshake.

They also saw their first television—New Zealand did not have it until seven years later but it had been commonplace in the United States for more than a decade. The program they saw was a re-run of an old film made in the 1930s based on a Dorothy Sayers novel.

They were also able to put *Leda* up on a slipway to scrape off the huge carpet of weed encumbering her hull, and have the hull repaired and repainted. They left Honolulu at 2 pm on 26 October and immediately caught a brisk north-east Trade wind. By next morning they were out of sight of land, blithely starting a voyage which was to prove the wettest, coldest, stormiest, hungriest and longest of all they would undertake.

MOMENTS OF TRUTH

Before they left Honolulu, yachtsmen with long experience of the waters between Honolulu and San Francisco had warned them that they could hardly have chosen a worse time to make the voyage—2200 miles as the crow flies, but considerably longer as the yacht sails. By October and November, the onset of winter in the Northern Hemisphere, those northerly latitudes are dangerous for yachts, with a constant succession of cold depressions and galeforce winds sweeping across them. Four other boats in Honolulu chose to remain there rather than risk the voyage.

The *Leda* crew listened to the warnings, but they had a very compelling reason to ignore them. They had run out of money, in particular, dollars, because New Zealand's Reserve Bank had not allowed them to take any at all. They just had to get to San Francisco. The last of their funds was spent on the part payment to the sailmaker and what stores Erica was able to buy for a month at sea.

For a week, things went perfectly. *Leda* was making good time in brisk winds at the rate of 150 miles a day to the north, and even when they encountered a cold front lasting 24 hours, she continued to handle the conditions well under reduced sail. If this was the worst they were to experience, they felt, they had little to worry about.

They were wrong. Eight days out of Honolulu, they had reached latitude 37 degrees and had picked up the westerlies which were intended to blow them effortlessly on to San Francisco. Overnight

the barometer dropped 35 points, steadied during the morning, then ominously, fell again. The wind whistled shrilly through the rigging even though they were running dead before it. The sea started to roll and breakers roared past.

Leda was like a sitting duck waiting for the weather do to its worst. The meteorological notes in the Pilot Book were not encouraging: a barometric fall of 50 points or so was likely to indicate a hurricane, with wind speeds in the region of 120mph!

Darkness came early, and *Leda* raced on through the night under trysail to port and staysail boomed out to starboard, planing down the huge seas like a sailing dinghy. On watch, Sandy found the boat was still easy to steer, and oddly began to enjoy himself in an apprehensive way until there was a sudden loud report from for'ard. The staysail had blown across the forestay, and was flogging heavily from its halyard.

Sandy called down below and Dave and Dooley scrambled up on deck to rush forward to take the sail in. They had barely finished and were stuffing the sail down the fore hatch when a tremendous comber crashed over *Leda's* quarter and flooded into the cockpit. The force knocked Sandy sideways and held him down while huge volumes of water poured through the open companionway into the cabin.

For a second, as Sandy clung to the tiller with the water engulfing him and roaring in his ears, *Leda* felt lifeless, like a small boat at the point of no return in a capsized. This time, it was a thousand miles to shore and there was no rescue boat. But as soon as the self-draining cockpit had rid itself of the water, *Leda* came to life again and resumed her exhilarating planing down the great combers.

By this time, the wind was blowing so hard that they set the staysail on the forestay, dropped the trysail, and still planed down the occasional sea, an experience Sandy found less exhilarating than before but considerably less nerve-racking. Next morning, they found that, even under the greatly reduced sail, they had covered nearly 200 miles in the past 24 hours.

But if the crew of *Leda* had thought the wind could not get any stronger, they were much mistaken. About mid-day, it blew with hurricane force, and Sandy began to recall phrases like 'mountainous seas' and 'scudding under bare poles.' By evening, they were shivering proof of the adage that a boat can stand more than the crew. The temperature was down to 52 degrees F (11 degrees C), the surface of the sea was almost entirely covered with thick froth, and spray from the heavily breaking wave crests was being blown at them like lead shot.

They decided to take the staysail down, then swung round with the wind abeam and set the little spitfire jib, (previously used as the patent anti-rolling device in the Doldrums), and under this sail, *Leda* settled herself, the crew hunkered down below and the tiller lashed with some of their spare spear gun rubber. In the

cabin, all was peace and quiet. They had saved some dry clothing and they spent most of the next two days snuggled down in their warm, dry bunks.

Then, on the morning of the third day, there was another loud report from for'ard as the gallant little spitfire jib succumbed to the fury of the wind and blew out like a paper bag. Now, they had nothing to give the boat speed and hold her steady and on course. They lay wallowing broadside on to the seas for the next 36 hours, watching the barometer anxiously. When it finally seemed to be rising, they ventured up on deck to double-reef the trysail, but the wind rose still further, until it was difficult to breath and almost impossible to see.

They estimated, trying to be conservative, that it was blowing up to 70 mph with waves between 35 ft and 40 ft high. These conditions are quite enough to sink boats of *Leda's* size or more, but she seemed to be in no danger whatever. It is probable that *Leda's* design, giving her much more displacement, with much more of the hull below the waterline than in a modern light-displacement ocean racing yacht, was responsible for this seaworthiness. Then by 2 am the wind had dropped to 40 mph. They set the double-reefed trysail, lashed the helm and climbed back into their bunks.

Taking stock next day, they discovered a serious problem. With 1300 miles still to go to San Francisco, the water tanks had burst, and of the original 180 gallons, they had just three gallons left. Food supplies too were low, except for a few tins of meat. They had no cigarettes (all except Dave were smokers) and a small tin of boiled sweets were rationed out with great care. Their main standbys were lentils and split peas, so they settled down to a steady diet of soup made with salt water. They were nearly out of flour which meant that Erica could not bake bread, which had been their dietary staple. Their clothes and bedding were damp with salt and above all, they were bitterly cold. Inexplicably, while still in the tropics, they had used most of their warm clothing to wrap collections of shells to send back to New Zealand in the hope of selling them.

And the wind had not yet finished with them. They spent 24 of the next 48 hours sailing under bare poles with little more than the letter and numbers of the trysail exposed to the wind, yet they still averaged 120 miles a day. On the third day after the big blow they hoisted the full trysail again, but yet another front hit them that night, during which they suffered one of the worst mishaps possible in those conditions. At midnight, they did a standing jibe. The double manila fore guy was snapped like string and the boom crashed into the outer backstay, snapping the bronze release hook. Miraculously, they were able to find a replacement for the hook, jibed the sail back again and carried on, with the motto : 'San Francisco or starve!'

They had a brief respite when the wind dropped again, allowing them to do some superficial cleaning up down below, then they

scudded along under the full trysail again with a 15 knot wind and the seas decreasing. They even hoisted the big Genoa jib and were powering away to the south out of the path of another deep depression, but the tail end of it was enough to rip the trysail across. They continued under the staysail, until on the morning 19 November they managed a sight in a break in the fog, which placed them 24 miles from San Francisco, and an hour later they sighted the outlying Farallone Islands, just 27 miles from the great Golden Gate Bridge.

By this time, they were seriously short of food. Erica managed to cook hot cakes for breakfast, three each, about 4 in across. At lunch, it was soup of split peas, lentils and onion cooked in salt water. They had no fresh water left and were feeling desperately thirsty. As a last resort, Erica opened their last tin of milk and made everyone a hot chocolate drink.

They ran down the California coast under mainsail and motor, marveling at the sight of thousands of houses, most painted white, and at last sighted the towers of the Golden Gate rising like sentinels out of the grey, misty air. Erica was mildly disappointed they were orange, not gold but whatever colour they were, they meant safety, warmth and food. Now, she was full of wonder about the biggest city she would ever have visited.



The Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, was for Leda's people the symbol of safety, shelter and the prospect of civilized food.

Sandy handed the tiller to Erica to steer *Leda* under the Golden Gate, then they headed for the boat harbour they were looking for, as directed by a friend in Honolulu. They went in, looking for a vacancy in the line of boats berthed at what they took to be a houseboat yacht club. At last, *Leda* came to rest with her bow against the railing. A voice asked:

'What boat is this?'

'This is *Leda*, from New Zealand,' Dooley replied. 'Where shall we tie up?'

'Well you just stay right here and don't go away. Will you have a cup of coffee?'

Leda's timing couldn't have been better. That night, the Golden Gate Yacht Club was holding its Annual Dinner to which, with

typical American hospitality, the crew were invited, after hordes of the guests had briefly left the festivities to come aboard and marvel at what they saw. The crew changed into their shore-going gear which luckily was still dry. At dinner, Erica didn't speak until she was on her third plateful.

When the annual meeting of the Golden Gate Yacht Club was over, Sandy and Erica went to bed upstairs in the club room after having a luxurious hot shower, but all the excitements of the day kept sleep away for an hour. As she wrote in her journal: 'What a welcome to San Francisco. If this is an example of what it is going to be like, I shall never want to leave!'

In fact, it would be more than 20 years before she left.

Leda had drawn plenty of attention on her arrival in Honolulu, but it was nothing compared to the reception they had in San Francisco. Within days of their arrival, they had two appearances on television, a long radio interview and stories and pictures in two of the four local newspapers. From the moment they landed at the Golden Gate Yacht Club, they had scarcely a moment to themselves, with a constant stream of visitors to the boat. Nearly all of asked if they could come aboard and end up asking the crew out to their homes—for a meal, for the day, for a week. They were invited to a chinchilla farm in Santa Cruz, a ranch in Texas, another in Oregon and a university in Illinois.

But they had some significant problems. They needed money and to get it, they had to stay in the United States at least until *Leda* was sold. This proved harder than they had expected. The bottom had dropped out of the boat market and prospective buyers were not easy to find. Sandy and Erica tried for jobs in their own profession, and succeeded, not in newspapers, but in the medium they had experienced for the first time not much more than a month before—television. They were, however, able to get the coveted American Green Card—the document which grants an alien 'permanent lawful residence' in the United States, with the important side benefit of being able to undertake permanent employment. Sandy's work, however, was only part-time or casual and they were by no means well off.

With a few months, Sandy and Erica were the only members of *Leda's* crew left in San Francisco. Dooley had to return to his family in New Zealand. Dave Woolf was unable to get a Green Card and also went back to Tauranga. At last, Sandy and Erica were alone with *Leda*, free to enjoy themselves by themselves. For a while, at least, they lived on the boat and in spite of Sandy's precarious financial state and the constant worry of finding a buyer for *Leda*, must have been very happy.

Occasionally, Sandy would be able to take on a professional sailing job, crewing on yachts for delivery or perhaps as a paid racing hand. One such job was in April 1955 aboard the ocean racing yawl *Suomi*, which had just been bought by a wealthy San Francisco businessman and was to be sailed from Newport, Los

Angeles, to her new home port of San Francisco. Sandy was one of a crew of five, including her owner.

Sandy never returned from the voyage. Soon after 4 am on 21 April 1955 the *Suomi* was run down at sea by the Swedish freighter *Parramatta* two miles off the California coast, drowning all of her five-man crew.

The collision occurred in rain and rough seas with waves 10 to 12 ft high. The ship's Master put the vessel about and searched vainly for survivors for more than an hour until the Coastguard arrived. Only one body was recovered. It was not Sandy's.

Erica's grief can only be imagined. She was alone in a foreign country, a widow at 24 after less than five years of marriage. She never ceased to mourn the loss of Sandy, whom she loved as she never loved anyone else, either before or after his death. Years later, even though she remarried twice, she would weep desperately at his memory and talk at length of him to old friends visiting her in the United States.

Now, added to her grief, she was faced with the sole responsibility of selling *Leda*. She did her best to look after the boat, arranging for it to be slipped and painted, and renewing the search for prospective buyers in a buyer's market. Eventually *Leda* was sold to a man whose name is not recorded, but who she said was a colonel in the US Army. The price was \$15,000 and when Erica wrote to tell Dooley of the transaction, he and Kit were very angry, believing she could have got much more if she had been persistent. According to Dooley, the \$15,000 would barely have covered the cost of materials for building *Leda*.

The sale of *Leda* was the last time the Wilsons and Erica ever spoke or corresponded. They never met again, but the mutual resentment smouldered for the rest of their lives.

Kit and Dooley built new lives with their children in New Zealand, he as a boatbuilder in their home town of Tauranga, she as a much loved and respected schoolteacher. Erica consolidated her career as a television writer and producer in San Francisco. It would be almost another 40 years before *Leda* revealed herself to them again.

In the next and final excerpt, Leda passes through several owners, falls upon hard times, and is miraculously rescued by someone who comes completely under her spell and restores her lovingly and meticulously to her former glory. And finally, her builder, Dooley Wilson, is reunited with Leda after 40 years.

THE NEW ZEALAND CLASSIC YACHT JOURNAL



Corona leading a bunch of 26 footers on the Waitemata

THE RESTORATION OF CORONA

HAROLD KIDD

Corona is the best 26ft mullet boat ever built. Now that's a bold statement, but I'm convinced it's true. For those Australians who are unfamiliar with the term "mullet boat" it refers to a centreboard yacht of fishing boat origins which developed in Auckland in the latter half of the 19th century along lines roughly similar to the Victorian 'couta boat, but there were two significant differences.

Firstly, while 'couta boats were developed for line fishing on the exposed coast of Victoria, the "mulletties" were developed for

mullet netting in the shallow estuaries in and close to Auckland's Waitemata Harbour, downwind from town in the prevailing westerlies. They needed to be good on the wind to get the catch back quickly to market, a trait they shared with the 'couta boats of course. But the netting function gave rise to a broad transom stern and the shallowness of the waters and the up to 3m tide range meant that they had to be able to take the ground frequently without problems. Thus the hull form was generally a bit broader and shallower.

Secondly, once their hull-form and high-peaked gaff cutter rig had gelled, they became, unlike the 'couta boats, a tightly restricted racing class, or rather a series of racing classes based on overall length in multiples of 2 feet from 20 feet to 26 feet. These



A look into Corona's cockpit racing

restrictions came into force in 1902 and were specifically designed to preserve the significant characteristics of existing fishing boats. With very minor amendments the restrictions remained in force throughout the heyday of mullet boat racing. The only remaining racing fleet is the 22ft L Class which races with Ponsonby Cruising Club from Westhaven right by Auckland's Harbour Bridge. The big 26 footers died out as a racing class in the 1960s and dissipated, several back to their roots as fishing boats, a function for which they remained viable, thanks to those restrictions.

Corona was designed by Charles Collings and built by his firm, Collings & Bell, whose yard was in St Mary's Bay, these days covered by the reclamation for the Harbour Bridge approaches. Collings was a trained engineer who had worked for Robert Logan Sr. and took over design work for well-established yard of James Clare in 1902. The firm Clare & Collings produced the best of the early restricted mullet boats of all classes but soon became deeply involved in launch work, especially after Collings became successful with his own style of hard chine planing hulls for racing, fast cruising, game fishing and whale-chasing.

By the mid-thirties however, mullet boat racing was the number one yachting participation sport in Auckland. In 1934 Collings succumbed to pressure to crack the hegemony of Arch Logan-designed 22ft mulletties. His firm, now Collings & Bell, produced the outstanding 22 footer Tamariki which was followed by the even better Taotane in 1939. Turning to the equally vigorous 26ft H Class, Collings launched *Corona* in October 1936 for the Nunns brothers. *Corona* was in a class of her own from Day One and remained scratch boat in the fleet during the 18 years the Nunns owned her. When the big 26 footers stopped racing, replaced by the huge post-war brood of nimble keel yachts, *Corona* drifted into the fishing industry, lost her rig and gained a tall deckhouse and a diesel.

Turn the clock forward 30 years and she had become an unwanted lump of tired fishing launch but still had her owner's respect for her past as a crack racer. He donated her to a group of three Ponsonby Cruising Club mullet boat enthusiasts who interested the fledgling National Maritime Museum at Hobson Wharf in Auckland in her restoration. Work started on her hull which was trued up and re-ribbed. But soon it became obvious that the Museum could not

support a restoration programme for the many historic craft it had accepted. Like many other Museum craft, *Corona* went into long-term storage, not deteriorating greatly, but going nowhere.

The two survivors of the Ponsonby trio negotiated with the Museum to pass *Corona* over to the New Zealand Traditional Boatbuilding School at Hobsonville, in the upper reaches of the Waitemata. School trustees Robert Brooke and Ian McRobie put in a great deal of research to ensure that *Corona* took the water as a faithful recreation of her original self. There were doubts over the cabin top. Serendipitously, Robert Brooke had a copy of Collings' hull plans which Robert's father Jack had saved. He sent them to Chris McMullen, a renowned Auckland boatbuilder for analysis. In a raking light Chris picked up the lightly pencilled outlines of her cabin top which were in complete accord with contemporary photographs.

Ian McRobie, a man of great humour and leadership, gathered a team of volunteers around him. Even though a young 80ish, Ian put in a minimum of a couple of days a week on the job with a core group of volunteers. The School obtained a modest amount of funding and there were extremely generous contributions of materials from the trade, but that hard-working voluntary labour was the key to the job and they worked hard because McRobie made it fun.

Corona was launched on the top of the tide on Saturday 12 March 2011 from the old RNZAF flying-boat slip at Hobsonville. It was an unusual and rather dramatic day. The weather was superb, brilliant sunshine and a light breeze. The crowd was much larger than expected. Civil Defence had warned of a tsunami following the earthquake in Japan the night before and recommended that people kept off the water. No effect was perceived during the launch but, in those early hours after the quake when its horrors were not yet known, the tsunami warning simply added spice to the event.

In the light breeze *Corona* sailed like a witch and got up to 7 knots to surprise everyone and gladden the hearts of her restoration team. It was a great culmination to a magnificent effort. Now, say the School's trustees, what will we do next?



Moments after Corona picked up the breeze after launching

All photos by Greg Paul



Bruce Tantrum in his garage studio

CLASSIC BOATS PRESERVED IN MINIATURE

BRUCE TANTRUM

As a young boy living close to Wellington and Plimmerton Harbours some sixty years ago, I developed a strong interest in boats and the sea.

I sought every opportunity to visit estuaries, mooring areas, yacht clubs, haul-out areas, anywhere I could find boats to look at, study, understand, admire, to imagine them in a seaway. While my inclination favoured yachts, I sought ways to be out on the water in anything that floated. With my brothers, we built our first boat, from an old sheet of corrugated iron folded along its centreline with ends nailed together and caulked with cooking fat. Two wooden spreaders amidships pushed the sides apart to enable us, one at a time, to sit in it and go for a short paddle before it either sank or capsized us into the creek's shallow waters. Seeking more seaworthy craft and to get out on the harbour, I ventured to the Centreboard Boating Club located on Petone Beach close to where the first organised English settlers in New Zealand came ashore some 120 years before in the *Aurora*.

My very first sail was crewing on *Lulu*, a 7 foot gaff rigged P class dinghy. By sailing on small centreboarders, observation, reading a wide variety of magazines and books, (from Arthur Ransome to

Uffa Fox), and keen interest, I developed an appreciation of hull form, design and boat building. Looking back, I was a motivated youngster who created and took opportunities to be on or near boats be they dinghies, yachts, motor boats, pilot boats, anything in wood that floated. I clearly recall the sight of the small purposeful commercial fishing boats with their sweeping sheerline, high bulwarks, flared bow and small wheelhouses that swung on their moorings so close to the rocky lee shore of stormy Cook Strait. While still at high school, I began my first amateur boat building experience, helping build a 36 foot double ended kauri planked cutter, which started with the lofting. I knew that this was important, a beginning, and confirmed something latent and very important, the thrill, the skill, the satisfaction of the creative art of wooden boat building.



Akarana, A H B pilot boat, scale 1:24



Dorade, Olin Stephens yawl, scale 1:25



Fishing boat, radio controlled scale 1:50

Commercial wooden boat building in New Zealand in the decade after the Second World War was virtually non-existent. I was unable to find an apprenticeship in Auckland and was advised that there was neither a future nor a job in the industry.

Fast forward fifty years (literally and metaphorically) self-employed in the construction industry. During those decades I built two keelers at home in the backyard, a 30 footer, and then a 36 footer which I still own after 35 years of cruising and racing in Auckland and the surrounding Hauraki Gulf, its islands and the northern coast, and to New Caledonia and Fiji.

As a young boy, I built a number of simple model boats, some rigged with sails to play with in some nearby sheltered estuary. Over twenty years ago, the desire to build model boats once again began to surface in my mind, having been suppressed as other more pressing responsibilities occupied my time. I carefully chose, and built in a span of a few years, kitset models of three diverse and detailed fishing boats that operated in the North Atlantic. This whetted my appetite (a frustrated 'would be' boatbuilder?) to build scale models of famous internationally renowned older wooden vessels from scratch. Subsequently, over the past twenty or so years, I have been building from scratch, using original detailed plans, models of the vessels I had got to know and admire some fifty years earlier. This would help to satisfy my long held desire to build wooden boats.

There are a number of construction methods that can be used in building full models, quite separate from the original technique of carving from solid to create half models to define hull form prior to the more contemporary method of line drawings.

I most frequently use a modified traditional method by building separate port and starboard sides. Using a fine 1.5mm plywood, I cut out two hull profiles which are pinned down on a flat surface.

Then half breadth moulds are set – like bulkheads – perpendicular at regular intervals along the hull profile. The port and starboard half hulls are planked then glued together. The hull is then sanded fair and a plywood deck is cut out and glued down. Laid teak decks are glued to the ply deck substrate. Clear varnished solid timber deck houses and skylights, toe rails, spars, etc are made as they were originally.

Included in this decades-long creative journey, in the modern era are yachts from the Americas Cup regatta, J class Endeavour, NZL 20 NZ challenger in San Diego, the TP 52 and latest NZ Volvo Round the World race yacht.

Ten years ago, I built a fully detailed 1:32 model of the schooner yacht *America* with excellent details from the definitive New York Yacht Club book, *The Low Black Schooner*. It was presented to the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron to accompany the Auld Mug during its tenure in New Zealand. It is very informative to build an authentic model of such an historic vessel built 160 years ago, using somewhat similar methods, to be able to appreciate the skill, innovation and technology that went into its design, build, and performance. The model was fully planked, with laid decks and is copper sheathed below the waterline.



Monique, L. Davidson design, scale 1:24



Rainbow, Arch Logan design, scale 1:24



Photo: Ferdi Darley

PMA workshop Williamstown, Victoria

RETURN OF A WOODEN BOAT WORKSHOP

FERDI DARLEY

F.J.Darley Traditional Shipwrights have recently moved in to shed No. 3 at the old Port of Melbourne Authority site in Nelson Place Williamstown Victoria.

The PMA site is an original shipbuilding and repair site with boat ramps, quay space and easy access for cranes and heavy transport.

Shed No.3 has 130m2 floor space with 6 metre roller door height for easy crane access.

In keeping with the sites tradition we have decided to offer 4 spaces to people who would like to build or restore their own vessels.

As we are an experienced team of time served shipwrights able to provide professional guidance, specialised woodworking machinery and access to a choice of timbers on hand.

Once spaces have been filled we will hold monthly classes in related skills such as selection of timber and steam bending, caulking, mast making, planking, wire splicing, etc.

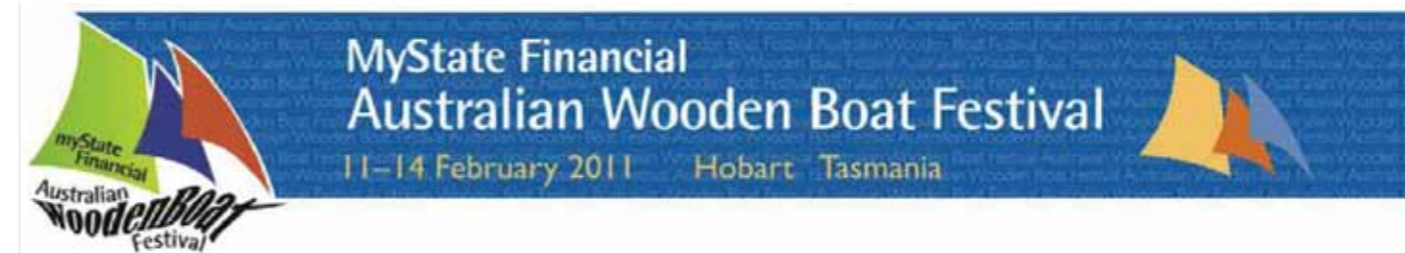
The shed will still have available space for professional work to be carried out both in and out of the water.

We believe the site has a lot to offer the boating public and hope that every one will get the chance to experience it in one way or another.

F.J.DARLEY
TRADITIONAL AND MODERN SHIPWRIGHTING
Contact Ferdi Darley 0421 340856



Google maps



THE 2011 FESTIVAL WAS CERTAINLY THE BIGGEST AND BEST YET!

MICHAEL GOODWIN

The accolades keep coming for what generally has been described as "the biggest and best Australian Wooden Boat Festival ever held."

Here is a small sample of what people said:

The extraordinary success of the Australian Wooden Boat Festival underscores Hobart's enviable reputation as the wooden boat capital of Australia. No wonder this (the Australian Wooden Boat Festival) is now ranked among the greatest maritime festivals in the world. Bruce Stannard
- 'Afloat' magazine



I would like to thank you and your team for a fantastic festival
- Email



Best (event) in Hobart since the tall ships race (in 1988)
- Email



It was a great success. I heard nothing but praise from all quarters, everyone loved it. Hobart and Tasmania obviously benefitted significantly from the vast numbers of visitors from both interstate and overseas, there were foreign tongues to be heard all over - it was lovely.
- Email



A magnificent festival
I just wanted to write and voice a lot of people's opinions that it was the best ever boat show! I felt so proud to be a Hobartian! My friends from Sydney kept saying 'We just couldn't get this atmosphere in Sydney'.
- Email



The most amazing event, the best four days I can remember. A brilliant wooden boat festival.
- Email



And the superlatives keep coming:

Well done! Spot on! Excellent! The best! Inspirational! A fantastic show! A magnificent festival!



FOR SALE "FRANCES" R 8 \$200,000

Designed to 8 Metre Rule
(Rated 8.14)
Designer and builder,
Ernest O Digby
Built at Victoria Street,
Williamstown. Victoria
Launched 1946

Overall Frances won Four Victorian championships. And won the Sayonara Cup for interstate competition on three occasions, 1951 and 1952 in Melbourne, lost to Erica J from Tasmania in 1953.

In 1954 Frances sailed to Hobart and won the cup back for Victoria. Saskia sailed down from Sydney and won the cup for NSW on Port Phillip in 1955. Frances sailed to Sydney in 1956, but failed to bring the cup back to Victoria.

Upon the death of Mr Ernest Digby in 1960, Frances was sold to a syndicate from RBYC and name changed to "Bridgett".

In 1971 Frances was sold to a Hobart owner, and the name restored. During this time the stern was shortened, and successfully used for ocean racing.

In 1981 she was purchased by Alex Morrison and sailed back to RYCV. In 2002 she was purchased by Capt. Michael Wood, who engaged shipwright Michael Hurrell to restore her to her original design, alter the self draining cockpit, plus other major work.

Frances is now in Top condition and requires only fine tuning to be a formidable racer again. Or a very comfortable pleasure yacht!

LOA. 51ft. (15.54m)

LWL 30ft. 9"

BEAM 8ft. 6"

DRAFT 6ft 5"

Displacement 9 tons

Keel/ballast. Lead

Construction: Planking NZ Kauri, Q/land White
Beech laid deck over 6mm ply

Contact: Anton Oxenbauer on (03) 9396 3399



FOR SALE HEATHER-BELLE

Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, Traditional Classic Gaff rigged Yacht

LOA 24'6" Beam 9'3" Draft 4'8" Carvel hull in Nyatoh, copper fastened, all spars clear Oregon, launched in 1999

Superbly appointed and equipped, 2 cyl Volvo MD7B, Marine VHF, full suit of sails, Heather-Belle has crossed Bass Strait regularly and is in search of a new custodian to enjoy the comfort and safety of this sturdy, capable craft.

She is presently pennned at RYCV Williamstown Victoria

Contact: Andrew Wilson (03) 9807 4156

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Return this completed form to the following address:

CYAA Membership Officer
65 Surrey Road
South Yarra
Victoria 3141
admin@classic-yacht.asn.au

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT - BECOME A MEMBER!

Your support makes all the difference, and costs so little.

To ensure you never miss another issue of this newsletter, why not become a member of the Classic Yacht Association of Australia. Full membership costs just \$75, or crew/ friends membership for \$50 including GST.

APPLICATION FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP

I
(Full name of Applicant)

Of
(address)

wish to become a member of the Classic Yacht Association of Australia and apply to have my Yacht accepted on to the Yacht Register for the annual fee of \$75

Signature of Applicant.....

Date

Please supply the following details:

Phone Number

Fax Number.....

Email Address

Boat Name

Designer

Date of Build

Construction

LOA Rig

Sail Number

Details of other Yacht Club Memberships:

.....

APPLICATION FOR CREW MEMBERSHIP

I
(Full name of Applicant)

Of
(address)

wish to join the Classic Yacht Association of Australia as a crew member / friend for the annual fee of \$50

Signature of Applicant.....

Date

Please supply the following details:

Phone Number

Fax Number.....

Email Address

Boat Name

Details of other Yacht Club Memberships:

.....