



## Bringing a classic S&S Half Tonner back to life

By Peter Bourke

*Diablo* is a Sparkman and Stephens designed 29ft, Half tTonner, built in heart kauri by Keith Eade in 1970. To me, this ticks all the boxes.

S&S are said to be one of the most successful and influential yacht design firms in the history of yachting. The partnership was formed between brothers, Olin and Rod Stephens and Drake Sparkman in the late 1920's and the firm still exists today. Based at Rhode Island in North East USA, S&S has designed some of the most magnificent yachts for clients including names like Vanderbilt and Kennedy. Yachts like *Ranger*, *Dorade*, *Columbia*, *Intrepid*, *Kialoa*, *Courageous* and *Freedom*, were unbeatable.

S&S yacht design is based mainly on fine ends, generous mid sections and sweeping sheerlines. They seem to always be in perfect proportion. Not only beautiful, but fast to boot. Their designs led the 6-, 8- and 12-Metre fleets and, until the 80's, the America's Cup.

In New Zealand and Australia, S&S yachts like *Rainbow II*, *Stormy Petrel*, *Young Nick*, *Escapade* and others, were prominent One

Ton Cup campaigners.

The next level down was the Half Ton Cup. Following on from *Rainbow's* success, as far as I know three S&S Half Tonners were commissioned; *William Tell*, *Contender* (for Helmer Pederson) and her sistership, *Diablo*, commissioned by Russell Hume, the then Commodore of Royal Akarana Yacht Club.

All built around 1970, the S&S Half Tonners were very competitive when they arrived on the offshore scene in New Zealand.

But that was short lived. In 1972, the Farr designed *Titus Canby*, revolutionized IOR racing. Short ended, light displacement designs ended the era of the classic S&S styled, beautiful ocean racers. My heart remained in the classic design era.

I found *Diablo* a year ago, languishing on a mooring at Opuia. To me, she's a lovely example of fine design, superb New Zealand boat building skills employing the best boat building product – kauri timber. Worthy of saving from decline.

I sailed her back to Sandspit a year ago. Bits were falling off her, sails in tatters and the motor was big on noise, small on speed.

Over the past year she's lain on the hard at Sandspit,



*Diablo on her way back to former glory*

or the piles in the Matakana Estuary. The hull and decks have been given a thorough going over by Lees Boatbuilders and are now sound-as.

The old Shabaura donk has been replaced with a Volvo 20hp saildrive installed by Matakana Marine. The spars and rigging have been completely overhauled by Gulf Harbour Rigging. All new Harken deck hardware, and new upholstery.

She still looks like a

construction site but through this year I plan to have her repainted and a few new sails to replace old Hood sails from her original wardrobe.

At this stage, the pangs of buyer remorse are getting fewer and further apart. The budget is only what's ahead of me. My goal is to restore this classic little IOR racer to her original condition. My mantra is: If S&S didn't design it, or Keith Eade wouldn't build it, it has no place on *Diablo*.

# Last minute entry brings rewards

By Tobias Forsyth.

It was late Saturday night when we entered our race boat *Shearwater* in the Auckland Anniversary Day Regatta. We'd been in the Mahurangi Regatta launch parade and Jason Prew suggested we enter in the Classic Launch Race in Auckland too. "You'll probably do pretty well", he said.

It didn't take much to convince the kids we should race either, so the next day we launched at Birkenhead boat ramp and were on the harbour in time to see the Tugboat Race start. We dropped the family off at



the RNZYS to watch the live broadcast and went out to our line-up.

Classic launches were milling around, jostling for their place in the start line. Then the start horn went off and we were off too. I was looking ahead but understand there were a few surprised watching faces.

We were back at the finish line before many of the others had rounded the second mark. When we saw the drone footage afterwards, we knew we were well ahead

and the excitement of the family watching inside was ecstatic. "Dad won the race; Dad won the race."

*Shearwater* is 21ft x 5ft 4" at the waterline and the widest point on the foredeck is 7'3". She's 5/8<sup>th</sup> kauri planking – all full-length planks and stem, frames & seam battens are also kauri. Her knees are Pohutukawa.

Whilst we don't know much of her history, we do know that much of the main conversion to how she is today was carried out at

Murton's Timber Craft in Nelson.

We purchased her from Christchurch as a hull on a trailer in late 2015. Our part of the project began on Waiheke Island where we finished timber work and cosmetics as well as importing a brand new 330hp fuel injected crate motor from America.

Her lines are very close to the 21ft restricted class race boats of 1917 and if anyone has more information, we would love to hear from them.

## Auckland Traditional Boatbuilding School desperate for a new home

By Steve Cranch.

Since its foundation in 2005, the Auckland Traditional Boatbuilding School has provided education and skill development to many students. Originally based at Hobsonville in an old air force barracks, a number of restorations took place there including the 26' Mullet boat *Corona*. The late Owen Reid built a new M-class and a number of traditional clinker dinghies were built. Alongside all this small

craft were built in what was termed the hobby class.

In 2009 a change of government and education policy saw the end of apprentice training for NZTBS and then in 2013 we were pushed out of Hobsonville and into enforced recess by the great rush to build houses.

Nearly four years later, we leased a small factory in Te Atatu peninsula and began classes again. That was 2017 and since then we've run more than 30

courses for more than 100 happy students.

Just before Christmas in conjunction with Taikata Sailing club, NZTBS held a dinghy build for a group of 8-9-year-old girls. This was a huge success with the girls proudly launching two small plywood dinghies they built.

As we enter 2021, we once again face tough challenges. On one hand we have some new courses up and running and good ticket sales; on the other hand we are being asked to vacate our location

by the end of April and as yet have nowhere to go.

Covid 19 has been tough on the NZTBS and, like many other volunteer-run charities, we have been unsuccessful in getting additional funding to support our day-to-day operational expenses.

We would love to continue helping people to learn new skills, but the future looks uncertain. Unless a solution can be found, perhaps it's the end of the road for wooden boat building education in New Zealand.

CLASSIC YACHT ASSOCIATION CONTACTS – GENERAL ENQUIRIES: Joyce Talbot, [admin@classicyacht.org.nz](mailto:admin@classicyacht.org.nz)  
CLUB CAPTAIN YACHTS: Andy Ball, [yachtcaptain@classicyacht.org.nz](mailto:yachtcaptain@classicyacht.org.nz)