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Peter Brookes wants to give back to CYA

By Penelope Carroll

The CYA's new Yacht Captain, Peter Brookes, has had a love affair with classic wooden boats for the past 50 years – ever since he sailed his first gaff-rigged clinker dinghy on the Blackwater estuary at Maldon on the Essex coast, where he spent much of his childhood.

Born in Auckland in 1963, Peter moved to the UK with his family in 1969 for three years (his father Colin was from there), then returned to Auckland for the next three before the family settled back in Maldon.

"I was so fortunate to grow up in Maldon. It has a whole culture of old wooden boats; it's like going back in time."

During his three years back in Auckland, Peter sailed the family's aluminium Parker tender and an old wooden P-class – both gaff-rigged – on the Tamaki Estuary.

Back in Maldon, where his father acquired and restored an old Essex fishing smack and bought a little clinker sailing dinghy called *Betty* for his son, Peter was soon following in his father's



Peter Brookes (right) in his happy place at the helm of Rawhiti with the opposition behind.

footsteps, restoring, sailing and on-selling various small wooden boats.

Maldon is renowned for both its graveyard of Thames sailing barges (the equivalent of NZ scows) and its small fleet of restored barges. When 16-year-old Peter began his apprenticeship as a shipwright with local builders and in his father's boatyard, the first vessel he worked on was a Thames sailing barge.

Through the '80s and '90s he restored and refitted various classic yachts, setting up his own yard in 1990.

When he returned to NZ in 1999 – "vowing never to work on another wooden boat" – his European clients caught up with him and he was soon asked to restore the 30 sq. metre *Vivi*, built in 1923. The boat was shipped from Cowes on the Isle of Wight and became the first in a string of

projects for international and NZ clients. Peter was once again working fulltime with classic wooden boats.

In his Waimauku yard at present in varying stages of restoration are the classic yachts *Impala*, *Tawhiri*, and *Cezanne* and the launch *Amakura II*, along with his own 'fleet' – *Ladye Wilma*, *Matia* and *Kotiri* and the Logan launch *Kenya II*. There is also a 50-ft solid kauri new-build, *Hannah Mae*, a replica of an 1898 Bristol pilot cutter, bound for Melbourne.

While he has undertaken several new builds throughout his career, Peter says his passion is restoring old boats.

"I love all the detective work, and the feeling of giving a boat a new lease of life; cutting out the rot and putting a new piece back, although we are really lucky in NZ that we had kauri for

boat building. It has lasted so well. You look at our classic fleet, and so much is original wood."

His favourite restoration was the 1905 Logan, *Rawhiti*. "She took six years of my life from 2005 to 2011. A couple of years ago, I was very fortunate to be able to buy her back in partnership with Andrew Barnes.

"She's the one. I love wooden boats and I love racing. I'm very competitive and she's the fastest on the Waitemata," says Peter.

As if to emphasise his claim, *Rawhiti* took A division line honours in the December 3 passage race to Patio Bay, the final CYA race for 2022.

Peter hopes, as yacht captain, he can help the CYA in some way. "I have got so much out of belonging to the CYA and I hope I can give something back."

Right: Iain and Glenn Forsyth show their winning hand at the conclusion of the Patio Bay Poker Run.
Below: Meola.

Meola plays her cards right to win at Patio Bay

Ten CYA launches and their owners took part in this year's Patio Bay poker run, with cards needing to be picked up from each of five collection points to make up a poker hand: firstly from Maya Daniels at Islington Bay, then Jill Hetherington on *Tuna* off Kennedy Point, from Antony Smit on *Waikaro* at Rocky Bay, Dennis and Sue Rule on *Summer Wine* in Awaawaroa Bay, then lastly from Mike Mahoney on *Moerangi* at Patio Bay.

And the winners this year, with a low straight, were Iain and Glenn Forsyth from *Meola*.

The Forsyths joined the CYA classic launch fleet four years ago. Their 42' 6" 22 tonne vessel was built in Dunedin in 1961 by Miller and Tunnage for the Ministry of Works 'buoys and beaconage' division. She plied the East Coast of the North Island from East Cape to North Cape, towing barges and carrying freight, says Iain.

She was sold to the Navy in 1978 – and sank after hitting a rock off Motutapu that same year, on her way back to Devonport Naval



Base following the attempted salvage of an F111 fighter plane, which had crashed into the sea off the eastern end of Waiheke Island.

Meola in turn required salvaging. Once she was safely back at the naval base, it was Navy shipwright Iain who carried out the extensive repairs. "She had a bloody great hole in the bottom and had to be rebuilt," he says.

Meola was then decommissioned and was purchased by Cal Crookes, who took her to the Bay of Islands where he did a lot of work on her. While in the Bay of Islands she served as the start boat for the annual Tall Ships race on several occasions. *Meola* was then sold to Bram Cone, who owned her for 15 years before the Forsyths purchased her in 2015. That was almost four decades after Iain had rebuilt *Meola* following her mishap.

"Since I've owned her

I've done a bit of trim and niceties, but she is basically very sound. She is built of kauri, with jarra deck beams and spotted gum ribs," he says. "Her hull is copper-sheathed to the waterline to protect her from the teredo worm.

"She's a great boat. Not a week goes by when we are

not at sea, cruising around," says Iain.

The poker run is sponsored by the Milford Slipway, with prizes for the best poker hand including a no-charge haul at the Milford Slipway, wash and three days on the hard, as well as wine and additional mystery prizes.

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