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The A-C Class Reunion ...Saturday 13th June '98

Thanks to Ian Hutchinson, crew on Kahurangi, A80, more than 300 people gathered at the Royal New Zealand Yachts Squadron at Westhaven on the 13th June, to relive the early halcyon days of New Zealand's yachting history. It was a grand opportunity for the many friends and rivals to meet up with the sailors they had crossed tacks with in the past.

It has been a very long time since the 'A' Class, as it was known up until the late 1960s, got together for a reunion. Racing stories of course abounded: There were those of the round the buoys racing in fresh conditions under Gaff Rig, of wild rides across the Firth of Thames and on up to Canoe Rock in the Balokovic Cup, of skippers who were told to go aloft and retrieve the gaff topsails themselves - as it had been their decision to carry it for far too long! The tales of cruising after the race to

Te Kouma and yes, those glorious Christmas cruises to the Bay of Islands that seemed to go on for ever. The memories came to life again.

It did not matter who you met with on the night, there was an old experience to be relived or an interesting tale to be told. For example, from Mr Patrick, the son of Rainbow's owner from 1937 to 1947: During the recommissioning of the Rainbow after the war, the family went to a lot of trouble to research Rainbow's original rig configuration. In the search for an extra fraction of a knot of speed, no stone was left unturned! Nothing is new.

After the initial welcome, everyone had the opportunity to view a montage of photographs compiled by Bill Wilson of the New Zealand Herald and enlarged by Mark Newcomb at Nevil Newcomb Ltd. They were also invited to autograph the head of the yacht Prize's mainsail that will be hung in the Squadron as a memento.

After adjourning to the Great Hall for food and further beverage under signal flags and spinnaker ('A' Class of course), music and frivolity reverberated around the room. The writer has it on good authority that the revelry was still underway after 3:00 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Chad Thompson



photo Terry Fong AFA Photography

**Classic
Yacht Assoc.
•AGM•**

*Ponsonby
Cruising Club*
11th August, 1998
7.30pm

When I first set eyes on "Katrina II" in late 1992 it was love at first sight.

KATRINA II



I had always admired the lines of the classic yachts, but this one looked different. She was sleeker, lower to the water and looked better balanced and more beautiful than any other yacht I had seen before, or since for that matter. I resolved to buy her on the spot.

Upon approaching the brokers, I discovered that the sale was being handled by Frank Coggan, an old mate of mine, and further that the current owner was a bit choosy about who he was going to let Frank sell the boat to. There was an interview process and a very definite vetting of prospective purchasers to go through. Frank told me that John (the owner) had already rejected a cash offer (!!!) because he didn't like the cut of the bloke's jib, and wanted to ensure that the boat was going to be "looked after properly".

So I set about convincing John that I was/am a classic yacht nut, and that I had genuine intentions of furthering the restoration of "Katrina II". This wasn't difficult in the end, as the wiring on the yacht was completely original (John made no claims to electrical skill) and was basically a fire waiting to break out. The wires were all single-core copper strand with cloth lagging and insulation, all rotted away, and the switching was old bakelite switches with the brass toggles like you used to find in Nana's back porch. Connections and earthing were dodgy to say the least, and I couldn't believe that the system had worked in recent years without bursting into flames. However, virtually everything else on "Katrina II" was in excellent condition, excepting the paintwork on the hull.

I told John the yacht badly needed rewiring, and I designed, built and

installed a new switchboard and fusing system before taking delivery of her, mainly because I was terrified to start the motor and any systems with the existing wiring! I told John that if the sale didn't proceed for any reason he could have the wiring and switchboard free, for the sake of Katrina's future. That settled it - she was to be mine as far as he was concerned.

"Katrina II" was one of the last RNZYS K-class yachts, and was first registered as a ship of the Admiralty in January 1958.

The K-class was the result of a design competition held by the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in the late 1940s. They were intended to be a "one-design" luxury cruiser/racer, and became an elite fleet in the 1950s.

The rules of the competition stated that all K-class boats were to be no more than 40' long on a 27'6" maximum waterline, had to accommodate five in comfort (including a comprehensive inventory of cruising gear - crockery, cutlery etc which had to be on board when the boat was measured), and had to exceed Lloyd's A-1 specifications in the scantlings and hull strength. All of them broke the length rules by a few inches "poached" here and there.

Racing was fiercely competitive within the K-class fleet, and I am told that there was no sailor of the day more competitive than the late Jim Faire, who commissioned "Katrina II",

Jim had represented New Zealand in dinghy sailing at the Olympic Games and was (at the time) the Commodore of the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron. He was by all accounts a pretty hard man, and something of a tyrant when racing. Stories and anecdotes abound - my favourite being of the time that Jim had apparently come second in an Auckland to Kawanui race by less than a boat length. The crew were too frightened to speak as the yacht was sailed into Bon Accord Harbour and anchored, and Jim sat down below in a furious mood, staring at the bulkhead for several long, tense, silent minutes. Eventually he demanded that a screwdriver be fetched, and proceeded to remove the clock and barometer from the bulkhead, replacing them lower down the wall. It was the only thing he could think of to lower the weight in the yacht!!

"Katrina II" was designed by R.L.(Bob) Stewart, and was the last and fastest of his four 'K's. She was built in 1957 using traditional methods by the legendary Percy Vos, and has a triple diagonal laid heart kauri hull. When restoring the hull in 1994 my crew and I stripped it back to the bare kauri, and it looked just like a parquet dance floor - hardly a millimetre of putty to be seen anywhere between the planks. After nearly forty years there was no rot, loose rivets, or loose planking in the hull - an outstanding quality job. Framing is also heart kauri throughout, and somewhat over-engineered to exceed Lloyd's by a (we suspect) very healthy margin.

We don't mind the heavy scantlings - we have sailed "Katrina II" in some really rough stuff, especially at Cape Brett on recent Coastal Classic races, and she never ceases to amaze us with her seaworthiness and strength. She comes off a 10 wave with hardly a creak, and can carry too much sail (if we've been too gung-ho and haven't reefed) without rounding up, broaching or kicking at the helm. When balanced and trimmed and broad reaching in a gale, we have had her up at 14 knots (according to the GPS) and she still handles beautifully - a continuing endorsement of Bob Stewart's excep-

tional design skill.

As the Commodore's yacht "Katrina II" had an illustrious racing history, and was rarely beaten, even by the later lightweight Sparkman and Stephens K-class flyer "Sapphire". Further anecdotes tell of how Russ Hooper commissioned Olin Stephens himself to design "Sapphire" - he sent Stephens the parameters of the K-class and asked him to design one. Apparently Olin Stephens wrote back from New York and said he could design a dozen yachts within the rules - what did Mr Hooper want? Russ Hooper's reply was "a boat that can beat Katrina", and there followed the most expensive yacht building exercise ever undertaken in Auckland to that time.

When "Sapphire" was launched several months and many thousands of pounds later, she was alleged to be about half the weight of "Katrina" and had all sorts of innovations - solid bronze ring frames, american white oak stringers, single skin hull etc etc; but apparently she still couldn't beat "Katrina" consistently. The story goes that Olin Stephens himself came out to Auckland to inspect "Sapphire", and apparently declared that the rig was all wrong. The next week, "Sapphire" appeared with running stays as well as the jumper strut supporting the mast top, and blitzed the fleet upwind. A week later, the entire K-class fleet had all fitted running stays.

It is a continuing pleasure to own "Katrina II" and to race her on handicap against the larger, heavier and (mostly) masthead rigged A-class yachts. Under former owners, especially the late Jim Faire and then Graeme Fulton, she had an outstanding racing history - a fine tradition which we intend to (or try to) maintain. Unfortunately I have been very busy over the last couple of seasons, but with other commitments all but completed I intend to tidy up "Katrina II" and campaign her more regularly in the 1998/99 Logan Cup - we know she is capable of blitzing the CYA on handicap. See you out there.

By Mark Bartlett



The K-class design competition was won by the English designer Arthur Robb, but the yacht was never built.

The RNZYS K-class was:

K1	Helen	(Bob Stewart designed)
K2	Jenanne 1	(Bob Stewart ???)
K3	Thelma	(designer unknown)
K4	Gipsy	(Arch Logan)
K5	Kitenui	(Col Wilde)

K6	Penelope	(Bob Stewart)
K7	Dolita	(Col Wilde) (now in Canada)
K8	Anthea	(McGeuer)
K9	Wisomo	(Coudrey - originally an A-class, modified)
K10	Katrina II	(Bob Stewart)
K11	Kiariki	(Jack Brooke)
K12	Sapphire	(Olin Stephens, Sparkman and Stephens)

Thanks to Beau Farrell and former crew members for the anecdotes and information on the K-class.

Letter from the Editor

Sorry there has been no 'Letter' in the last 2 issues - we've been squeezed for space with so many good things to report on.

Winter is traditionally the season when the captains haul the boats out and hone them up for an even better performance next season. I can tell you that there is an extra dose of that going on right now amongst the A class fleet. The results of this season's racing has shocked the skippers to a very close analysis of their tactics and equipment! The Logan series has been singularly successful in inspiring competition amongst the boats, next year may well see record entries with a large fleet following the Ngataranga, looking for any tactical error in the race to knock her off her perch as Logan racing yacht of the year.

See you on the water,

Sandra Gorter (Minimo)

WINKELMANN'S WAITEMATA - CLASSIC AUCKLAND YACHTING

WINKELMANN'S WAITEMATA CLASSIC AUCKLAND YACHTING



Robin Elliott • Harold Kidd • T L Rodney Wilson

ANNUAL DINNER & PRIZE GIVING

The Annual Dinner & Prizegiving for the 1997/98 Logan racing season will be held on:

22nd August, 1998

*Ponsonby
Cruising Club*

7pm

Phone John 2929100 for tickets

SECURE YOUR COPY

Henry Winkelmann is the greatest marine photographer this country has known, and here for the first time a broad selection of his classic boating images has been put together in a single volume. They range from the mid 1880's through the heyday of Auckland's mullet boat yachting in the years before the First World War, and end with images taken just before his retirement in the mid 1920's.

There are many famous yachts captured here - Ariki, Rainbow, Viking, Moana, Iorangi and others from the Logan and Bailey yards - and many of the images have never been seen in print before.

All 88 black and white photographs are selected from the Auckland Museum's precious Winkelmann Marine collection. All 80 pages are printed on 175gsm Japanese matt art paper.

Please send us your Name, return address and the number of copies you require. RRP NZ \$39.95. To the Classic Yacht Association is only \$30.00!!
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The Classic Yacht Association has a proud track record for fostering and maintaining New Zealand's yachting heritage, and for encouraging a racing and cruising fraternity amongst the owners of classic yachts. Please support the Association by coming along to the regular monthly meetings, and through your financial support.

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PO Box 47-010, Ponsonby

1998/99

← RACING & CRUISING SEASON →

There will be a skippers meeting to discuss the upcoming season. Bring any comments or suggestions you have to improve or fine tune the racing rules, handicapping, or schedules, or, the cruising calendar for the upcoming season.

Tuesday 13th July, 1998

Ponsonby Cruising Club
6.30pm

Bob Wharton working as
STILLS Photography ©

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Thanks to Bob for the photos in the last edition of CYAQ

DES TOWNSON & OTHER DESIGNERS

by Sandra Gorter 23rd May, 1998: extract

Des Townson: I didn't start work as a boat builder. I never had any formal training as a boat builder or as a designer. My grandfather had an importing business and I was being brought along to take over the business venture there. So I started off as a motor body builders apprentice and the idea was that I'd eventually go into the business which was a motor and trim supply company. Which was big business in those days. And... I'm not a business man. (both laugh) When I was coach building I used to be dreaming boats all the time. And I enjoyed watching the movement of boats. I raced, and I raced successfully, but that wasn't what it was all about. I just enjoyed the movement somehow. The watching of it.

I had a P-Class, I raced with Dad in his Frosty. (Frostbite), when I was quite small. I was terrified most of the time! Dad still had Nomad for several years after he got married, and so there were several trips on Nomad (ed note: now owned by Ron and Michelle Copeland) before I was two that I have quite clear memories of. People will scoff, but I can remind them of things... which are verified all right. I can remember living at Waimana Avenue... this is as a two year old, I walked down from the end of the road, down across the park and the reserve, playground there, and climbed down a wall and onto the beach and walked along the beach and there was a big boat, way up in the air. I looked at it and I liked it, and... and you know, I was interested in it. I found out a long time later it was actually Little Jim, prior to its launching. It was outside Bill Couldrey's yard. So it probably wasn't in a cradle. Bill used to apparently cramp balks of timber on each side of the keel and the boat would just sit there free standing. So there's that impression. The impression of Nomad comes from very, very early on of course. Nomad was just as immaculate in those days, but different from what it is now. In some things, the blue cabin top of Nomad, and the heavy dark line around the sheer, which is missing on Ron's Nomad, and it needs to be put there... I'll win in the end (laughs), those things have stayed with me right through, and influenced the look of the boats.

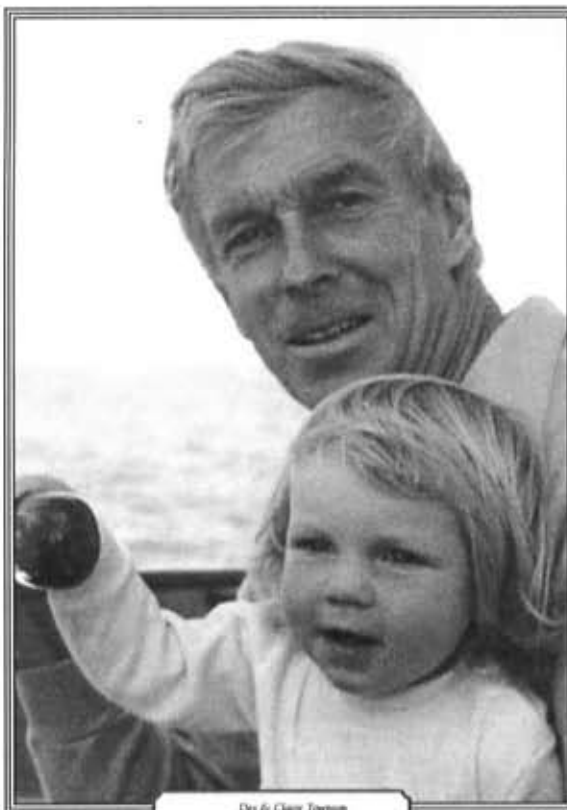
Later on, when I was probably sixteen or seventeen, going away on Ngati Awa with Harry Gillard and Dad, they pointed out the Logan boats to me. I began to see that yes, they really do have something that is different. One that sticks in mind is the little launch Coquette, which was in Hobson Bay. Dad pointed that out to me and it came to... grab me. The other was Rawene, sitting at anchor at Kawau, Harry Gillard said to me, if you watch it, as it turns it actually smiles at you! And the Rawene does, beautiful, it really it is an art piece.

Eric (Wing) was sensitive to the Rawene. Eric... I never could understand the boat he had in view of the sensitivity that he possessed (Marimba)

SG: He liked his rough weather sailing!

DT: Yes. He revelled in the... in life really. He was unafraid of life...

SG: He lived life to the edge didn't he?



Des & Claire Townson

DT: He did. And he did it with a sort of humour... I talk about Eric endlessly. He's one of the real losses to the world. A lot of people who worked for him didn't like him, and I can understand that. You know, he could be brutal. But... the brutality was a testing of you, can you take it, but he would never finally really hurt anyone. I don't think I'm unaware of that. He might hurt their feelings a bit. But a fundamentally kind nature I think. As was Jack Logan. Jack was similar. Get you on the back foot and keep pushing you!

SG: Did you know Jack Logan?

DT: Yes. In the early days, I'd started boat building. I'd built a couple of dingies, laminated dingies if you like, gluing timber, and Jack was the authority on them. Jack Brooke had run a symposium in at Seddon tech, on the qualities of urea formaldehyde glues and resorcinol glues. Jack Brooke was one of my mentors... it hurt when he died too, strangely enough... it was a real loss, something had gone. His argument was that the UF glues were a failure and the resorcinol's were the way to go.

Well, Jack Logan picked up on that smartly because he'd been using UF glues for years. And I think he might have asked me to go over and look over a segment of a dingy that he'd made, and put it out in the mud and let the kids play with it, and it was then nine years old and it was perfectly intact. There was nothing wrong with the glues. There was a lot wrong with the technique of using it.

He'd come over to have a look at one of the dingies that I'd built when I started boat building. We went in this old

shed to visit this dingy, and he walked around it and looked at it and said, 'It looks like a bloody carpenter's job!' (both laugh) You know, it wasn't all that encouraging! I think it might have been then that he said come over and I'll show you... or something like that. But I couldn't say that I knew him well or that I had a lot to do with him, but I felt that I had a fair handle on the man.

He was blunt, he was very... seemingly very self righteous, dogmatic... lacking in artistic ability. He didn't have the Logan touch at all. But a kind man. I've never talked to his wife, but I'd like to, just to have found out how she found him. Because I think a bit like Eric, while there was this rough, hard front, underneath was a guy that was decent... and just if you like. I liked him.

Jack was heart broken when the old house was finally sold. Old Mrs Logan, whom I met once, had a bit of a talk to, moved over and lived with her daughter in Kohi. When Jack was chucking all the gear out, sorting out that which should be kept and which to be thrown away, all the drawings were there, and all the patterns. Old Archie... or, the various designer Logans, used to make wooden patterns of the lines, and they were all in a heap. He was going to burn them all. He said they're not worth anything. They're a man's life, when a



Starlight



man has gone there's no point in them any more. I said well could I have a few of them and he said do, have all of them, have them all.

He said you can have all the drawings too if you like. And... so I took some of the wooden patterns and I took all of the drawings home. The whole Logan collection. I had them strewn around on the floor at Hawera road, where we lived in a big house, and Dad and I looked at them for days. The whole floor was just lined with Logan boats. I took them back to Jack, and said they're too valuable, I can't keep these. He said well, keep... you're right

he said, they should go to the squadron. Keep all the mullet boats, but I said no, if I may, I will go through it and just select one drawing. He said you go for your life, and I actually took out a little drawing of the Wairiki, a little keeler that's still going. The drawings eventually went to the squadron who lost them, then they'd turn up in different places, then they'd get lost again, and they are slowly being strewn around. I think (...) has probably got a fair few of them. I remember asking Bob Stewart where they were and he just looked at me with a little smile and said oh (...)ie's probably got them tucked away, he was a hoarder of history.

What you run into with all of the designers of course is an egotism. And that's bothered me because looking back I am aware that that was there with me. What I was trying to do was all that mattered. Anything that didn't fall in line with that picture or line of thought was junk and rubbish and tossed aside. Of course you don't make friends by knocking their work, and I did a fair bit of that. But they didn't see the other side and I was equally ruthless with my own work. I still am. If I look back, there's not many... there's a lot of them I can look at and think yes, that's got something, that's not too bad, but you never quite get it right. You never get the... how would I describe that...?

In music, the ultimate tearing piece of music for me, is the Albinone adagio. Claire played it the other day in the little string orchestra she plays in, and I went to talk to the teacher afterwards, and I said, that Albinone... you make me cry in front of all those people. It is a terrible piece of music. But I use the word terrible, not in a bad, but in hugely affecting. And... the Albinone, more than any other piece of music is funeral music. There is nothing comes anywhere near it. The Beethoven... what's it, the second movement of the Eroica I think it is... there's a funeral march there. And at Beethoven's own funeral it was the Hayden funeral march that they used there. And I've listened to them, and certainly the... the wrenching of the Beethoven is very real, but the total thing is expressed in the Albinone.

How did we get onto that? Probably trying to look for this definitive, what is it in some shapes? Why does the Rawene smile at you? Well the Rawene, if you have a look at it... and one or two of the Logan designs, instead of elliptical port-holes, has been brilliantly done. In that the ellipses are not complete. They run to points. What do women do to enhance their eyes...? So you have a look at the Rawene next time, you'll see it.

My upbringing was such that there is something immoral in admiring beautiful women. But I've also learnt that if you don't admire women they take huge offence, and damn you forever... (both laugh) But you just have to be careful who you admire, and when!

SG: And how you say it!

DT: And how you say it, I'm not that subtle (laughs). But in expressing form, there is... there is a certain rightness to things, and where that comes from I don't know. Archie Logan had it to quite a large extent, but I gather it was one of the other brothers... The Rawene... now I am slowly losing the picture of what happened with the Logans, but I think the Rawene and the Moana were not designed by Archie, and it was one of the other brothers who was more artistic, and apparently Archie, so Jack told me, was always very jealous of this... that there were these two other designs. I might come back to it, it might come up.

SG: John was it?

DT: No, John was the pirate. My Uncle John, Jack said, he was a pirate. He didn't do the work, he was always in the office, talking to the clients. Jack was a very... sarcastic, scathing, get you on the back foot and keep you there sort of guy. It wasn't John...

(Continues...)

