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Tidal wave of enthusiasm for the 2003 Classic Yachts Regatta

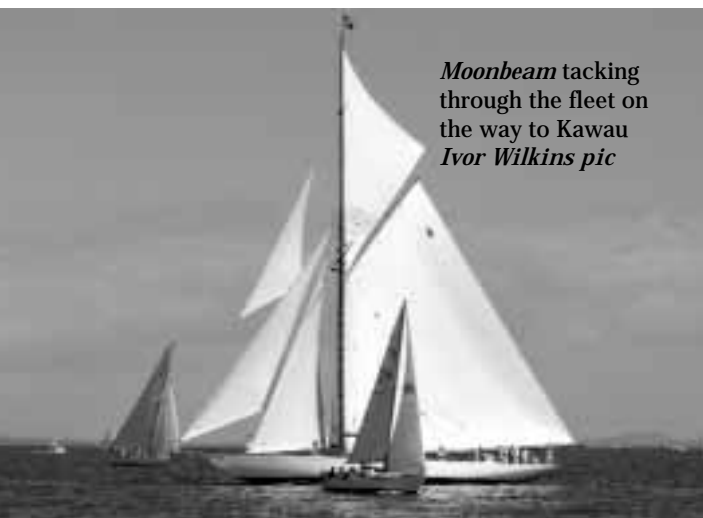
By Chad Thompson

After all the planning, the anticipation of a great Regatta, the enthusiastic responses from yachties all around the country and overseas, the 6th February came around with a rush.

The tidal wave of enthusiasm steadily grew as the week approached. It was as if that wave rose up over the first sand bar during Anniversary Weekend with the marvellous spectacle at the annual Mahurangi Festival, went quiet as the wave passed over the deeper water in between that and the beach, and then rose up again before sweeping the 86 entrants

before it to Kawau in a spectacle of sail, varnished spars and wooden hulls.

Joyce Talbot and her merry band of helpers saw to everyone's needs, answering countless questions about all and sundry. Joyce ensured everything was in place for the event and shielded Chris Smith, the handicapper, as best she could. Chris' diligence in ensuring the fairest possible handicaps was amazing and appreciated by all competitors. The only thing none of the organisers could control was the weather. Ten days before the event we were all staring at the weather maps hoping like hell that the tropical cyclones passing to the north of New Zealand would do just that.



*Moonbeam tacking through the fleet on the way to Kawau
Ivor Wilkins pic*

And thank heavens they did Wednesday evening at the Welcome, held at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, provided a beautiful still night, an indicator of what lay ahead. It also was an indicator of the spirit with which people had come from near and far to enjoy. There were the out-of-towners: *Tuahine* from Whangaraei with the Dickson twins once again on board, *Yum Yum* temporarily back to her hometown from Wellington with *Carli*, *Helen*, *Reverie* and *Marangi* also from Wellington. *Rona* was here from Nelson, *Leda* and *Wairiki* from Lyttelton. And greatest of them all was *Moonbeam*, fresh from her restoration in Burma. What a sight she was! The

scene was set for an event the likes of which we have not seen for a very long time.

Thursday's race was a quiet one. The start off #9 Buoy was relatively orderly with the fleet soon splitting, sailing on the western and eastern sides of the Rangitoto Channel. Those that went across to Rangitoto seemed to get the jump on the rest of the fleet; however once past Rangi Light the skippers had to work out where to go next.... straight across to Long Bay... up the rhumb line to Whangaparaoa Passage... or go east. *Lesson #1: on board our yacht Prize, don't go out to the east.* The middle course seemed to pay off with the yachts making landfall off Gulf Harbour, lifting up on port tack

Continued overleaf ...

Summer and the America's Cup are gone, but paradise remains at our doorstep

Summer is almost gone but the demands of America's Cup charters and participation in the Classic Regatta have frustrated my lifelong annual thrill of cruising our Hauraki Gulf this season.

Now that the America's Cup is over, there will at last be time for late season cruises with guests on board *Tawera* or *Lady Gay*. If we are very fortunate, we will have yet another circumnavigation of the Gulf. More realistically we will be able to steal a few days cruising to the bottom end of Waiheke and maybe across the Firth of Thames. The prospect of fresh south westerlies and having to confront the long slog back across the Firth for the sail home is always a dampener. We have therefore taken, of recent times, to sailing around the outside of Ponui Island to its eastern shore bays between Bryant's Bay and Third Bay.

There you have to share the anchorages only with Kahawai birds, Gannets and the occasional Wood Pigeon. A walk ashore on Ponui, always respecting the landowners' hospitality, is a great way to rid any seasonal over indulgences.

Last Christmas, for the first time in 50 years, we headed south from the outside of Ponui to the volcanic cone of Pakihi Island. We anchored

between Te Tamuiti Point and the Sandspit, surprisingly not tide-ridden and unexpectedly serenaded by the island's tribe of wild peacocks. What a gem! There was 7m of water, good holding and, in spite of it being Christmas, absolute solitude. In the very fresh SW conditions we were experiencing at the time, we lay stern into the beach as if becalmed. And for the beat back to Auckland we could not have positioned ourselves any further to windward in readiness for the sail home.

Chad Thompson



Tawera in Third Bay on Ponui's eastern coast

Classic Yachts Regatta *continued from Page 1*

and making huge gains.

Ranger, Northerner and *Moana* showed us all the way. Once through the Whangaparaoa Passage, the slow tight reach across to Motuora Island and then the beat up to Kawau took its toll in a dying breeze. *Lesson #2: don't have a close off time for time keeping for a passage race.*

The night ashore was the largest gathering of classic yachties ever in New Zealand. Estimates range from 500 up to 700 Corinthians. The yarns, the tales of despair, the wine and beer all flowed freely throughout the night with not a few of the competitors a little the worse for wear in the morning. *Lesson #3 Berocca will be included in all skippers' bags.*

Friday morning turned on a light breeze from the SE. As with Thursday's race, the wise and skilful at the beginning of the race were humbled as were most competitors at some stage throughout the rest of the day. The first race was abandoned, leading to much testing of mental fortitude.

Lesson #4: stick to the sailing instructions and the designated methods for amending them.

The second race of the day was also sailed in very trying conditions. However, this time, the race was completed by all who stayed for it. Kawau Bay would have to be one of the best pieces of water in the Hauraki Gulf for sailing (when there is a breeze). *Lesson #5: never let a bad performance affect your next race. Get on with life; especially when you are in the company of great friends, yachties and their*

beautiful vessels.

While the yachties were suffering under the fickle breezes, the classic launches staged their rally. What a sight they made, gracefully moving throughout Kawau Bay. It is great to have them involved in ever-increasing numbers in the Classic Yacht Association's events.

Friday night was meant to be a quiet night, mixing and mingling on each other's boats and yet there was still much merriment to be heard in the early hours of the morning. Some of the skippers and crews had forgotten the lessons learned on the Thursday race relating to endurance, concentration and persistence being the winning combination. Heaven help the competitors if we turned the event into a five day regatta, they wouldn't be in too good a shape on the last day.

Saturday's race back to Auckland started off in light conditions once again. Everyone struggled to Motuora Island with a light easterly, then settling in for the reach through the Whangaparaoa Passage and East Coast Bays. One of the smaller yachts, *Jonquil*, humbled yachts twice her size with a blinder of a performance (at least until the wind change). Then all went very quiet for a frustratingly long period. So long was the period of calm that some gave up and motored home. The more patient were able to reap the rewards of a beautiful SW filling in to around 15 - 18 knots, providing a brisk sail around North Head and up the Auckland Harbour. *Lesson #6: never give up.*

All yachts that continued to race had their times taken in what was one of those special long races which are never



26' mullet boat Nomad owned by Ron and Michele Copeland

won or lost till the last boat crosses the finish line.

A good night's sleep ashore in a real bed restored everyone's *joie de vivre* on Sunday morning and had the competitors lined up for the Parade of Sail west of the Harbour Bridge at 0900 hours. Someone forgot to tell the gods of wind and water about the event and it got under way only after *Jessie Logan*, the leader of the fleet as the oldest competitor, was taken in tow by *Lady Gay*. What a sight the fleet made passing under the Bridge in an order roughly relating to the decade in which each vessel was built! *Lesson #7: Parades of Sail should not be held so soon before the start of an important race. At least not with wind and tide against you.*

The Sunday afternoon race was held in a good moderate breeze out through the

Rangitoto Channel, around a couple of marks, before racing back up the channel, around North Head and up the harbour to the finish off Princes Wharf. The good fast run back up the harbour was a great climax to the regatta. *Lesson #8 for any organiser of an event: if you are also there to win a yacht race, do so by spending as much time as possible on your yacht before the last race rather than worrying about the event from on board a launch.* Yours truly was insufficiently focused on the last race when he stepped on board 15 minutes before the gun. Now. No excuses.

And then the Prizegiving. After the previous regatta, where only some 200 competitors dressed up in their best bib and tucker, the organisers were determined to make this in "Inclusive"

Prizegiving. It sure was. What a great turnout! The Great Hall of the Squadron was filled with the 500 or more marvellous Corinthians we had come to know over the previous four days. Old rivalries were relived. Plenty of lies, half truths and fantasies exchanged for more than a few glasses of beer and wine. And most especially, lasting friendships were created. The climax of the evening came when the Peters and May Trophy was awarded to the yacht that had sailed closest to its handicap throughout the event: *Wairiki*, who came all the way from Lyttelton in the South Island to compete. Anders Gillies and his crew entertained us during their victory speech as only Mainlanders can. It was a moment in the night never to be forgotten. Congratulations to *Wairiki*.

Thank you to everyone who made the regatta possible from the organisational point of view and a big thank you to the Corinthians who were there to compete.

Chad Thompson



The Robert Logan-built Five Rater RONA, January 1893, G.L. Watson design. First time back in Auckland for 110 years!

INTERNATIONAL CLASSIC REGATTA RESULT

PETERS & MAY CLASSIC TROPHY

WAIRIKI (Division 3)

Best performance overall on handicap

COL WILD CUP

WAIRIKI & MOANA (Arch Logan)

Best performed Yacht designer team

SERIES WINNERS

DIVISION ONE:

Line Honours: RANGER

Handicap: RANGER, ARIKI, NORTHERNER

DIVISION TWO:

Line Honours: MOANA

Handicap: WAIONE, MOANA, PRIZE

DIVISION THREE:

Line Honours: TUCANA

Handicap: JONQUIL, TUCANA, NOMAD

DIVISION FIVE:

Line Honours: PAHI

Handicap: PAHI, REVERIE, CARMEN

DIVISION SIX:

Line Honours: RESOLUTION

Handicap: SUNLIGHT, RESOLUTION, INCENTIVE



The race organizers for yachting events over Auckland's Anniversary Weekend must be becoming increasingly tetchy. Yet another weekend of high wind predictions was at least sufficient to cause the Devonport Yacht Club to postpone and then cancel the night race to Mahurangi.

The Second Division CYA entrants wandered off from the postponed 1500 start, but the staunch First Division entrants collectively decided to assemble on the start line, and if conditions permitted, race to

Mahurangi as scheduled. The DYC did start us, but it was each entrant's responsibility to take their own finish times.

The wind was from the west and came at us between 15 and 20 knots interspersed with squalls of up to 30 knots accompanied by heavy rain. A skipper's anxiety at the conditions was partially offset by the desire to get to Mahurangi and the compensation of a broad reach to Tiri passage giving fast passages to all.

Everyone reached Mahurangi before nightfall.

Mahurangi Regatta tests resolve

Ranger took line honours with a trip time of 2hrs and 36mins (a record?) with all yachts, except the brigantine *White Heather III*, finishing by 2042hrs. *Kitenui*, sailing very fast in the conditions, just managed to take out handicap honours from *Ranger*, then *Moana*.

The weather saw reduced entries for the very popular Mahurangi Classic Yacht Festival. Conditions for Saturday were even worse than Friday. Though Mahurangi provides relatively sheltered conditions in southwesterly winds, the trip down the outside of Saddle Island provided very lively conditions with the daunting prospect of gybing in a lumpy sea and 25knot gusts. *Tawera* suffered at her first attempt, mainsail flying off from the boom and causing her withdrawal. Conditions suited Hugh Gladwell's new yacht, the powerful *Hermes*, which gave *Ranger* a real contest for line honours

Overcast and squally weather didn't dampen the prize giving afterwards, with the Mahurangi Cruising Club providing barbecues and good cheer for the survivors in the lee of Scott's homestead.

Results for the racing are awaited.

A beautiful day on Sunday was capped with another enjoyable raft up during the evening. This was highlighted by the arrival of *Ariki* and *Marangi*. *Marangi* had sailed up from Wellington to participate in both the Anniversary Regatta and the International Classic Yacht Regatta. *Marangi* won the Anniversary Regatta in 1909. Her crew was hoping to emulate that feat again. Some wagers laid between the Auckland and Wellington crews added extra spice to the following day's race.

Anniversary Day saw heavy weather predictions yet again and these were borne out by 20 knot winds from the westerly quarter. Running and reaching in reefed mode turned the day into a waterline length contest with *Arcturus*, relishing the conditions, finishing well up with the front runners to take the honours on handicap. *Kitenui* took 2nd place followed by *Rawhiti*. *Ranger* took line honours again.

Chris Smith

Pictures: Above left: Arcturus. Below: Prize and Moana, well reefed.

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