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A chance meeting leads to a happy boating reunion

The champion 14' X Class Bettina is now back with the Mason family

The story of *Bettina* finding her way back to the Masons is a good old boat yarn with a happy ending. It goes like this:

One day I was out the back of my car wash business, on Ti Rakau Drive, painting the tender for my launch *John Dory*. Tom Mason called in to wash his vehicle. After he had finished, he came over to talk to me. My international 14 footer stored in my container workshop caught his eye. He told me that his father and



Yachts competing in last year's Classic Regatta

uncles all sailed small boats. When I asked him their names, Tom replied "Tom, Mick, Guy and Sam Mason". They were names that rang a bell with me, since my father, Howard Pascoe, had mentioned the name Mason many times to me over the years.

I went home that evening and went through my father's old regatta programmes and photographs. Dad did not sail in the X class, but he had struck up a close friendship with Sam Mason when he was working at Percy Vos's boatyard during World War Two. Sam was a few years older than Dad and became one of his mentors. I found a photograph of Dad and

Sam in a staff lineup in 1943. All this then fell into perspective. I have known Tom Mason (Jnr) for quite a few years, but had never associated him with the "yachting Masons".

The next day Ian McRobie called in for a chat. Ian sailed on *Bettina* in the early 1950's, when she was owned by his brother. I mentioned to him that Sam Mason's nephew, Tom had called in. Ian immediately said, "I know where *Bettina* is". When I said that this would greatly interest Tom, Ian made a phone call to Jack Hughes of Bland Bay (Northland) who was the current owner of *Bettina*. Ian told him of Tom's likely interest in purchasing

her and returning her to family ownership.

I then called Tom and told him about the discovery. He was almost speechless at first. His next words were, "I want her back in the family. How do I go about this?" I was about to make a trip north to Kerikeri to visit my mother at Christmas so I rang Jack Hughes and asked him if I could inspect *Bettina*. He agreed.

So my wife and I made the long trip to Bland Bay to inspect *Bettina* and found her in remarkable condition considering she had been outside under sheets of flat iron for 17 years. There was no rot in her hull, but the

Launching a Christmas cruise to the Bay of Islands



After many years of sailing to the Bay of Islands in *Prize* and completing the journey either by racing through the night or seldom taking more than two nights on the coast, the Christmas of 2003/2004 represented a great

opportunity to take as much time as the weather conditions would permit in the big launch *Lady Gay*.

Steady south westerly breezes and a sea breeze set in with a regular pattern later in the week, enabling us to

spend five nights on the coast closely investigating many of the nooks and crannies in Pickmere's Atlas. What a priceless guide for anyone keen on cruising north of Whangarei is that large tome! We owe to the shade of

Hereward Pickmere a great deal of thanks for undertaking this labour of love as well as to his daughter Janet Watkins for her work in completing the editing and final preparation.

After a slow start to the holiday caused by the

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seasonal temperature changes had taken their toll in a few places. In essence, she was well worthy of preservation and did not require a major rebuild. Jack then explained to me that he had her spars, rudder and most of her original fittings. What a find!

At first Jack and his son were not sure that they wanted to part with *Bettina*. However, a few days later Jack called me and said he was delighted that *Bettina* would be returned to the Masons and that he would release her. A few weeks later, Tom, Chris Bennett and I drove north with a suitable trailer and packing. This was a most enjoyable event and we had a great "boys' day out". When we arrived at the Hughes residence, Jack and his wife made us feel most welcome. I could sense Tom's emotions when he first saw the beautiful 14 footer his uncles and father had sailed in with

Sam Mason lived at 108 Calliope Road, Stanley Bay and did his boatbuilding in Jack Logan's shed on Ngataringa Bay. He built Bettina in 1946 as an improvement on his Davina of 1940 in which the Mason brothers had won the Sanders Cup in 1946. They regained the Sanders Cup with Bettina at Dunedin in 1948. In 1949 Sam built another X class boat, Lamina, but she did not have the success of the two earlier boats.

so much success and joy. For me it was a very moving moment.

Bettina is now back in Auckland at Tom's place and will be stripped of her paintwork. My brother Mitch will then take her home to the family workshop at Whitianga to carry out the necessary restoration work so that she can not only look the part, but be raced as hard as she was in her early years.

The boating world is interwoven with such multi-level connections in services and activities. Not only did my Dad speak of Sam Mason, but my Mum, who ran ZLNS Whitianga, the shore station for 15 years, also knew Sam Mason, not only as a

boatbuilder, but as the guy who ran the ship to shore radio on Kawau Island in the 1950's and 1960's, and who was also associated with the early days of the Kawau Island Big Game Fishing Club. Closely linked, but totally separate: all to do with the sea, and those who work and play on the water.

Baden Pascoe

obligatory over-indulgences of Christmas, we took off in *Lady Gay* from Oneroa on Waiheke late on 30th December. In a fresh SW wind and under clear skies, we avoided Kawau and its quite debilitating rounds of socializing, and kept in close to Cape Rodney, Pakiri, Te Arai Point, Mangawhai Heads and came out into the large following sea only when it was time to cross Bream Bay. *Lady Gay* was in her element doing what she has done so well for the past 69 years of cruising up and down this beautiful coastline. Once under the lee of Bream Head we stuck close into the shore inside Mauitaha Island, past Ocean Beach, around Taiharuru Head and into the bay on the northern side of Pataua Island. With the offshore weather conditions

we enjoyed a quiet and steady anchorage. A tour up the Taiharuru River in the rubber duck was rewarded with three kahawai from the local campers. The river entrance is very narrow and passable only in bigger boats with shallow draft and with local knowledge.

After a late breakfast of fresh fillets, pan fried, the weather forecast reassured us of more of the same weather conditions, so off we went up the coast, keeping close in to view the coves, beaches and headlands. Unfortunately some of these are now adorned with grandiose mansions. Past Ngunguru River, which we were sorry not to have the time to call into, and past Tutukaka we went, a usual stopover during many

pilgrimages to the Bay of Islands. From here on the coastline was very much more familiar even if most of my time on this coast was spent surfing when this geriatric teenager was into the more active water sports. We definitely want to call into Parangarau Bay, just east of Matapouri Bay next time. Our mid afternoon destination though was Sandy Bay, where we were to pick up an old family friend of ours for New Year's Eve at Mimiwhangata. A late run up the coast inside Elizabeth Reef, past the Motutohe Islands and inside the Wide Berth Islands was just beautiful in early evening. The passage inside Otawhanga and Rimariki Island was interesting to say the least with a few careful

bearings needed to establish appropriate turning points. After some careful checking of the course to the next turning point, we were able to explore one of the most beautiful areas of the coast. Setting the anchor down at Mimiwhangata was a fitting end to a great day on the coast and the end of 2003. A good walk on the beach, a few bubbles and some more fish was an appropriate way to bring to a close a year which has seen the writer spending more time on a launch than he has in the previous 53 seasons.

Chad Thompson





Wicked weather forces postponement of classic regatta

As we go to press, the Classic Regatta has just been postponed a week as a result of the wicked westerly weather we have been experiencing. Indeed, unless fortune smiles, the regatta may yet have to be cancelled because of the Squadron's other commitments.

Fortunately, we classic buffs have other pursuits as well as racing and cruising. Rescues and restorations are another element in our culture. Baden Pascoe's article on *Bettina* in this issue shows what is afoot.

One Friday night recently, a plaintive call from Joyce Talbot that *Colonist* had sunk at her moorings in Half Moon Bay Marina, and was about to go to the tip, got the adrenalin flowing enough to launch International Rescue from Tracy Island and secure her for restoration or, at least, examination and lines-taking and transport her to Colin

Brown's property at Riverhead.

Colonist has been rather nastily modified in the usual fashion, raised sheer, huge deckhouse, spoon bow grafted on etc, but underneath it all still displays her ancestry as an honest 33 ft straight stem, counter stern centreboard gaff cutter of 1911 vintage. She was built by Fred Mann of John Street Ponsonby, a high quality, low volume boatbuilder who built mullet boats like the two *Mistletoes*, keelers like Lincoln Wood's Harrison Butler *Memory*, 18 footers like the M Class *Maratea* and numerous launches, including *Phyllis M*, later Clive Power's *Wainunu*. *Colonist* was commissioned by Cashmore Bros, the timber merchants, so her timber was top grade kauri.

Any member interested in joining International Rescue should contact Virgil (Ooops) Harold Kidd @ 4180418.

Continuing the Manowai saga

Boat builders are a funny breed. When you ask for a price they play a game called hedging around, saying things like "Oh & ah, this could be expensive", or, "You never know what you will strike once you start". Never, "It looks worse than it is", it's always, "It may be worse than it looks", which certainly scares all the fish out of the net.

Some owners want the real quick fix, while others go for the major restoration. This is where you have to take stock of the situation, if possible walk away, go on holiday, do some gardening (well not that drastic) but really think about it. That is when I met Colin Brown, a first class shipwright who is easy to talk to, helpful, and honest in his endeavours to carry out those repairs which require a tradesman.

Colin said one thing which convinced me that I was following the right course, and that was, "You must remember that we are only guardians of these old craft and if we can succeed in keeping them afloat for following generations then we have done a good job."

Colin got stuck in and pretty soon Manowai had a brand new laminated inner stem, with all the forward rotten planking spliced and staggered into position – no more dreaded sea water entering through the bow.

Well, if you recall last month, the Loch Ness Monster was waiting in the estuary.

Manowai's shaft is supported by a bronze skeg that was bolted through the planking. We found that if you gave this a push and a pull the planking flexed like a Rolf Harris wobble board (if you know what I mean), which in turn allowed easy entry for the wet stuff every time one applied pressure to the shaft. Now we all know that, without pressure to the shaft you don't go anywhere, so large new floors were installed that could spread the weight over a larger portion of the planking thereby totally reducing the flex.

In the meantime it was my job to remove the rubber flange which, if truth be known was a jerry built system, but had till now done a satisfactory job of the turning part of boating.

Next month, guess what takes six hours, skinned knuckles and choice language to remove? No prizes for this one.

Ralph Power

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