

THE NEW ZEALAND CLASSIC YACHT JOURNAL



THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CLASSIC YACHT ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

P.O. Box 69-172 Glendene, Auckland, New Zealand.

ISSN 1175-804X

www.classicyacht.org.nz

Issue 36 – May 2004

Classic regatta tests the fleet

The starter's gun was fired for the first time in the third annual classic yacht regatta on Thursday 26th Feb. The atrocious weather of February had delayed the start of the regatta from the previous week; and to compound the frustration the small weather window for holding the AIRCALIN New Zealand Classic Yacht Regatta was going to frustrate organisers and competitors alike.

Their patience was rewarded with a light southeasterly breeze, which through the day swung into the north occasionally rising to 12 knots in strength. The course for the first race took the competitors out around A Buoy in the Rangitoto Channel, outside Rangitoto and Motutapu Islands with the smaller yachts then heading straight to Motuihe Island and the larger yachts continuing out to the



*Powerful Tawera blasts
upwind – Terry Fong photo*

Northerner thunders downwind in blustery conditions



Terry Fong photo

Haystack before running back into Motuihe.

The fleet of 23 were to use the facilities ashore at Motuihe Island as their base through until Sunday 29th, enjoying the hospitality of Terry and Ronnie of Motuihe Island Ltd, enjoying live music and the camaraderie of their fellow Corinthians.

With many tales of luck, or lack thereof, sheer cunning, and blinding performances the competitors completed the first race late in the afternoon.

Tawera demonstrated incredible speed to windward, rounding the Haystack 20 minutes ahead of the rest of the fleet. She was the first over the line of the bermudan classics and second on handicap to Ngataranga. The smaller bermudan rigged classics were very closely grouped until Spray II hoisted her spinnaker at Billy Goat Point and sailed into the lead. Janet, in spite of racing without a spinnaker, was able to beat her on handicap.

The larger gaff rigged classics had the most incredible battle with Ariki, Waitangi and the smaller Waione all finishing within 11 minutes of each other over the line and within 7 minutes of each other

on handicap. They were so close at the Haystack turning mark that their race virtually restarted there. The final result came after numerous gybes running down close to the eastern shore of Motutapu in an attempt to stay out of the tide. The cloud of sail that Ariki and Waitangi carry certainly looked spectacular charging toward the finishing line in the late afternoon sun.

The forecast for Friday morning was not good with the rapidly approaching depression in the Tasman Sea closely followed by Tropical Cyclone Ivy. Race Two was to be an endurance event for those who dared to brave the elements: 25 to 35 knot easterlies with the winds increasing later to 35- 40 knots. The course was from Motuihe Island, rounding Browns Island, Navy Buoy, to Passage Rock in the Waiheke Channel, back to Navy Buoy and finishing off Motuihe Island.

Only a dozen competitors braved the conditions with Tawera being propelled out of the starting box first in the strong winds. She held on to her lead until shortly before Passage Rock only being

overtaken by the larger modern classic Northener and the longer Iorangi. Then followed the mad dash downwind to the Navy Buoy and a short beat into worsening condition to the finish. Reaching speeds of over 12 knots, these three sailed away from the rest of the fleet in spectacular style.

Regretfully that was the end of what had been planned to be an extended (four day) celebration of sail with all competitors running for home and shelter from Cyclone Ivy.

This is the first time that the International CIM Handicapping System has been used in its pure form. It has provided for some very close racing in spite of the vast age disparity and change throughout the design evolution of these beautiful yachts. Competitors tackled the challenge of winning at various levels from the single handed Tempo, to the two handed Northener, to the family crewed Totolo and, in the extreme, the large gaffers Ariki and Waitangi, which had to carry nine or 10 crew to cope with the clouds of sail.

The shortening of the AIRCALIN event has also postponed the prizegiving,

which will be held later in March. No doubt the cry will go out then for better weather next year for the celebration of New Zealand's yachting heritage.

Thanks also to Volvo and CRC for the provision of spot prizes and their support and especially AIRCALIN the events major sponsor

Chad Thompson

RESULTS:

Division #1 Large Bermudan Classics sponsored by Navman:

Line: Tawera & Iorangi
Handicap: Tawera 1st; Ngataranga & Iorangi 2nd equal; Little Jim 3rd

Division #2 Large Gaff Rigged Yachts sponsored by Coast NZ:

Line: Ariki. Handicap: Ariki 1st; Waitangi 2nd; Waione 3rd

Division #3 Small Bermudan Classics sponsored by Doyle Sailmakers of Nelson:

Line: Spray. Handicap: Spray II 1st; Janet 2nd; Heather 3rd

Division #4 Small Gaff Rigged Yachts sponsored by Lindauer:

Line: Wairere. Handicap: Wairere 1st; Jonquil 2nd

Division #5 Modern Bermudan Classics sponsored by Yamaha:

Line: Northerner. Handicap: Revery 1st; Northerner 2nd; Totolo 3rd

A fabulous event in atrocious weather

What a fabulous event...
.what atrocious weather!

I would like a dollar for every time I said, "I don't believe it" in response to the numerous weather forecasts I requested from everyone before and during the regatta.

My sincere thanks to both Doug Reid and Bob McDavitt in particular for their patience in my ongoing requests for weather predictions. I know they felt as bad giving them to me, as I did receiving them.

It was so disappointing to see our dreams of a fantastic three days of racing and nights under the big marquee at Motuihe literally blown away on the night of the race briefing – but, ever hopeful, I thought the following weekend would make up for it. We all felt so

much for those who had made such a special effort to attend – crew flying in from Hong Kong and other parts of New Zealand and who couldn't be around for the following week.

And then, after an incredible amount of changed arrangements with all concerned, we had to shorten the event to two days and then unbelievably to TWO races! To Terry and Ronnie on Motuihe Island we owe you a huge thank you – I couldn't have managed without your amazing support.

As for the two races we did manage to complete, what an enormous amount of pleasure you gave us as you crossed the finish line with those huge smiles on your faces. It made everything worthwhile, so

thank you from the race team on board the Lady Emma. We loved you all.

There are so many people out there who assisted in putting this regatta together – Tony Stevenson for arranging such an amazing sponsorship from AIRCALIN and Novotel Surf Hotel in Noumea, and the wonderful prizes from Coast NZ, Navman, Black & Decker, Doyle Sailmakers Nelson, and the sponsors of the other numerous spot prizes.

And the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron for their assistance and their involvement as the Sailing Authority for the event, NZ National Maritime Museum for their assistance with the race briefing venue.

Rick Menalda from CRC

for the water taxi and Glenn Beaman from NetWork Visuals for the escort boat who travelled a hundred miles to and from Auckland delivering and picking up all our prizes and signage.

And last but not least – a huge thank you to all of the skippers and crew who entered – your patience, understanding and your support for us during such difficult weather conditions was so much appreciated – as was the support I received from the CYA Committee – thanks guys. I'm looking forward to the 2005 event with all our 2004 entrants, plus many more on the start line.

Joyce Talbot
Regatta Organiser

*Iorangi climbs to windward
under a large press of sail*



Adventurous expedition on Waihou River

The Launch Division's Waihou River Expedition was a notable challenge for the two launch crews that set off from Auckland on Easter Friday. Dire weather predictions and other factors resulted in the withdrawal of four other launches.

The Waihou River has a rich European history dating from Captain Cook's first voyage when he landed at Netherton on November 20, 1769. In the 1800s and early 1900s, the Waihou provided the only means of transport from Auckland to Paeroa and the surrounding settlements. The river suffered significant deterioration from being the depository of gold mining tailings entering through its tributaries and, over latter years, from the inevitable agricultural run-offs.

Lady Rae (Ron & Sheryl Jamieson, Ray & Dawn Palmer and Neville Polkinghorne, who flew in from Melbourne for the Expedition) and *Monterey* (Mark & Sue Edmonds and daughter Lauren) left their OBC marinas on Friday afternoon for the bottom of Waiheke, anchoring at North Harbour.

A combined crew dinner, drinks and briefing on board *Lady Rae* resulted in (general) agreement to weigh anchors next morning at 0630hrs and head for Thames/Waihou River entrance. Saturday morning saw both crews (mostly) up at the appointed time, passing through Ruthe Passage at 0640hrs and steering 140T through the best weather of the weekend, arriving at the Waihou river entrance beacon on the high tide at 1015hrs.

Those who have been down to Thames will know how little water there is and the importance of taking the high tides whenever possible. As it was, we took one river entrance navigational "stake" to starboard and quickly saw 3m become 0.6m. A rapid course correction ensued.

Transit NZ controls the Kopu Bridge (officially known as the Hauraki Bridge) and, through its agent Opus International Consultants, had originally indicated that opening the middle navigable span would be no problem. On later reflection, it was decided that Easter traffic considerations took precedence. For those who have legal minds there is interesting law around the bridge, as it is designated as a "navigable span". It can be well argued that the vehicles crossing the bridge are the hindrance and they should be making way for navigable river traffic.

Whilst the non-opening eliminated an otherwise certain starter

with too much top hamper, *Lady Rae* and *Monterey* were able to pass safely under the navigable span as soon as they arrived at the bridge, a little over half an hour after high tide, 1045hrs.

The next challenge was to navigate the 13.5NM upriver to our destination at the Puke Bridge (Paeroa Maritime Museum) without nudging sandbanks and other underwater entrapments. Three and some hours later, riding the incoming flood tide, we arrived at the Waihou headwaters (for us) without any problems other than dodging ducks and swans that inhabit the river in great numbers.

Some interesting facts; the river runs at around 3kts, has a flood time of two hours between the Kopu and Puke bridges, deepest depth encountered was 7m and most shallow recording was 2.1m. A real bonus was the hull cleaning impact of fresh water.

After tying up at the Puke Bridge landing, feelings of achievement and adventure were reinforced with the obligatory rum and cokes. A steady stream of interested visitors coupled with an informative visit to the Museum (hosted by Hilary Haysom) easily took care of the afternoon and well into the evening. Sunday morning was again fine but with gathering cloud and a growing breeze. Agreeing on tidal calculations, likely Kopu bridge clearance and the impact of the flood tide differential was interesting and no doubt affected by the previous night's hospitality.

We finally cast ourselves adrift at 1030hrs and headed downstream. The previous day's incident free experience, catching the start of the outgoing tide and the river current saw us charging along at a courageous 7knots. This changed abruptly at Turua, where we suddenly hit 0.6m by being too cocky and ignoring our local charts. Caution returned and we were soon passing under the Kopu Bridge and out into the Firth.

Leaving the river beacon behind us at 1330hrs, we encountered 22-25 knot winds coming from the west accompanied by sharp Firth seas. These abated somewhat after we got into the relative lee of the western landmass and we had a comfortable run back through Ruthe Passage and into North Harbour, arriving at 1730hrs.

The secret of our incident-free expedition was in preparation. Sheryl and I had, the previous weekend, visited Hilary Haysom (Maritime Museum) and Tom Hunt at his Kopu boatyard. Hilary and Tom provided local river charts and other invaluable information. Most importantly, the weekend was nigh on perfect for tide times, allowing for easy passage-making and entry/exit from the river. Expedition time is a minimum of four days with around 140NM needing to be covered.

Ron Jamieson
Lady Rae

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