

THE NEW ZEALAND CLASSIC YACHT JOURNAL



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Chad Thompson recounts ...

10 YEARS OF CYA ACTION!

Who would have thought back in the early 1990s that the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand would be the organisation it is today? Back then, the 'old clunkers' were changing hands for very little money. The friends of the wannabe owners looked at them as if they had lost their marbles and were busily counselling them to enjoy recreational sailing on some other vessel, any vessel other than a tired old yacht.

Fortunately, the passion for these old boats was overwhelming. The restorations of *Ariki* in the late 1970s and of *Tawera* in the late 1980's had been very singular events. The new blood of Hamish Ross, who had bought *Little Jim* in 1994, Greg Scopas, the new owner of *Ngataranga*, and John Gorter, the owner of the little C-Class *Thelma* since 1987, was mixed with that of the writer, Chad Thompson, who had enjoyed

a lifetime of sailing on *Prize*. The group was spurred on by Ron Copeland, the then Commodore of the Ponsonby Cruising Club and owner of *Nomad*, a beautifully restored 26' mullet boat.

The classics had dropped off the racing scene after the change in rules governing the size of spinnakers in the mid 1970s, and the older owners of the pre WWII keelers were getting to the stage in life where racing was just a bit too hard. There were also these modern light displacement keelers making the racing a little one-sided.

When John Gorter bought *Thelma* in 1987, he wanted to convert her back to gaff rig. Hamish Ross wanting some serious racing with *Little Jim*; *Ngataranga* and *Prize* represented some reasonable competition, as did the other old keelers. If

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only a programme of racing could be put together that the classics could participate in without being knocked around by the modern yachts. Old heavy displacement yachts with long keels and, in some cases, no winches, do not race around the harbour in the same way as the newer fin-keeled confections.

The first meeting of these like-minded skippers was in the workshop of the NZ National Maritime Museum where they, along with a number of Greg Scopas' friends, had gathered to review the work in progress on the restoration of *Ngataranga* in January 1995. The remainder of that season saw more of the classics get together in ever-increasing numbers. Word was spreading amongst the owners of old yachts and, after a late season meeting in the saloon of *Prize*, a meeting was called for 8th May 1995 at the Ponsonby Cruising Club.

Twenty-three owners of old yachts gathered that night and within a very short time there were 50 expressions of interest in participating in an association.

By October 1995, an event programme had been established for the 1995/96 season and the number of members was growing weekly. Initially, most of the active yachts were the racing keelers, although an increasing number of cruising yachts were showing interest in participating. It was also great to see the number of early owners and their crews



taking up subscriptions in the association in order to keep abreast of news of their old rivals and the progress of the ever-increasing number of restorations.

Racing in the following seasons saw all of the above out on the water along with *Moana, Rawene, Tamatea, Iorangi, Rawhiti, Teal, Victory, Lexia, Yum Yum, Spray II, Scout, Undine, Matia, Aorere, Irene, Reverie, Katrina, Ranger, Hinemoa, Waione, Francis, Aronui, Ta'arua, Tucana, Dolphin, Jonquil, Gleam, St George* and *Alia*. The list goes on.

By 1996, the profile of the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand was way out of proportion with the number of yachts it represented. The committee was now looking to create financial security and independence for the association. Sponsorship was essential for the growth of the association and a very natural fit was identified with Logan Clothing. With the assistance of Mark Bartlett, who had been co-

opted onto the committee, Logan Clothing (marketed by Specialty Brands Ltd) became the association's sponsor for the next five years. Their very generous sponsorship included \$10,000 cash for administration and \$10,000 worth of prizes for each season's race programme. At the same time, the Ponsonby Cruising Club, which had generously provided the Association a home, became the official host of the Classic Yacht Association.

With the added incentive of generous prizes and an ever-increasing number of classic yachts changing hands, the association flourished with regular publication of a magazine brought together by Sandra Gorter, monthly social gatherings at the PCC and an event programme built around the traditional feature races of each of the major yacht clubs around the Auckland Harbour.

The fifth anniversary of the Association was focused around the first defence of the America's Cup in February

2000. The Logan Classic (12th – 14th February 2000) was a huge success with more than 70 competitors.

The 1999/2000 Season was also the start of Joyce Talbot's enduring support of the affairs of the association. She joined in as the regatta secretary for the Logan Classic Yacht Regatta and has been the secretary of the Association ever since. With her ever-increasing activity the membership has grown to over 200 members in this our 10th Anniversary year.

Sponsorship by Logan Clothing was not renewed in 2000 and the Association was left with the reality of running a very busy events programme coupled with the increasing demands revolving around keeping in touch with the membership. The substantial costs of the magazine were also overwhelming and conventional sponsorship dollars were no longer available after the America's Cup had consumed almost every dollar available. While the Ponsonby Cruising Club had been a very generous host, it was time for the association to move on.

The Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron had been the traditional home of the old keelers up until the mid 1970s. The club's offer of financial support for the journal, coupled with there no longer being a clash of sponsorship between the Squadron's major sponsor, Line 7 and Logan Clothing made the move to the RNZYS a natural return

to the classics' traditional home in 2002. The generous support of the Squadron saw to the publication of the New Zealand Classic Yacht Journal in the Squadron's bi-monthly *Breeze* magazine, as well as its independent distribution to members of the association. Under Harold Kidd's expert editorial control the journal has developed into one of the most well read sections in the *Breeze* magazine.

After the success of the International Classic Yacht Regatta in 2000, there was a lot of support for an ongoing event of a similar size. The Squadron, as the association's new host, enabled the planning of such a regatta based at RNZYS's Kawau Island facility to commence. The setting was idyllic and it was a great disappointment to all competitors when the race management was not up to scratch.

Nevertheless the event was the first of what has now become the major annual event of the association. The 2004 regatta was held at Motuihe Island in the Hauraki Gulf. Without the support of the weather gods, the regatta was blown away, not once but twice, when a second cyclone passed over Auckland during the second attempt to stage the regatta. The 2005 Classic Yacht Regatta earlier this year, based in downtown Auckland's Viaduct harbour, was the success everyone had been wanting and the scene is now set for this regatta to be staged from this location for the foreseeable future.

Until 2003, most of the original founders had overseen the affairs of the

ANNUAL PRIZEGIVING & 10th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

WEDNESDAY 25 MAY

Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron at 7.00pm

7.00 - 8.00pm: Drinks and gourmet finger food
8.00pm: Prizegiving

All welcome to join us to celebrate this special occasion
Tickets available from Joyce Talbot: 09 836 4747 or
joycetalbot@xtra.co.nz
\$30 per person

association. Times were changing and so too were the interests and needs of members. It was well recognised that it was necessary to expand the events programme to entice the launch owners who were following the racing yachts to many of the Hauraki Gulf destinations. This enthusiastic group were keen to be more involved, if only we could accommodate their particular needs and interests. The 2003 Regatta at Kawau was the first time the launches were involved by providing important support for the smaller yachts racing the long passage races to and from Kawau Island. It was also the first time they enjoyed their own log rally.

To grow the association from being a group of racing keel boat owners to a more all inclusive association offering owners, crew and classic 'boat' enthusiasts a more appealing

event programme and giving it the wherewithal to pursue its other goals, the committee could no longer be run by the founders. New blood in the form of Russell Brooke, as chairman, supported by an almost entirely new committee, set about taking the association to a new level. Not only were all of the old values maintained, but the differing interests of launch owners were satisfied; and greater appeal was offered to cruising yacht owners. Through the efforts of some of the committee, the classics that were under threat of trashing are now being saved on an ever-increasing basis. Those classics that are afloat have also been protected from their possible loss to would-be owners off shore.

The membership of 200 now also consists of 54 launch owners. Up to 40 members attend the monthly meetings and the three

day 2005 Classic Yacht Regatta enjoyed more than 50 entrants. The interest in classic yachting in New Zealand is ever-increasing and what the association has to offer its members is broadening all the time.

The passing of the anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the 8th May 1995 almost went unnoticed as the committee and members of the association were all too busy enjoying yet another season of Corinthian yachting. Long may they, the owners and crews, continue to do so. With air in their lungs, fuel in the engines of the launches, and wind in the sails of gracious yachts, may they all continue to beautify our fabulous harbours and cruising grounds

Hamish Ross, Patron

The Committee in 2005:

Chairman

Russell Brooke

Vice Chairman

Chad Thompson

Club Captain Yachts

Tony Blake

Club Captain Launches

Ron Jamieson

Journal Editor

Harold Kidd

Modern Classic Rep.

Mike Webster

Small Boat Rep.

John Macfarlane

Members

Dick Coughlan

Stephen Horsley

Bruce Tantrum

Secretary

Joyce Talbot

Founders:

John Gorter, Hamish

Ross, Greg Scopas and

Chad Thompson



TED FITZGERALD'S SWIFTSURE AWAITS A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

By Harold Kidd

The Rescue Trust has recently taken on another historic little centreboarder, Swiftsure, a yacht built in 1920 by George McLean at Birkenhead for himself.

Her hull shape is unusual, shall we say idiosyncratic? In effect, she is a miniature mullet boat, only 14ft 4in in overall length, probably because that was the size of the timber available.

Right from the start McLean used her for extensive cruising to Thames

and, almost every summer, to Great Barrier. His crew was Ted Fitzgerald who took the boat over soon after she was built and carried on her tradition of extraordinary cruises, later with his wife and two little girls, until the 1950's.

Ted also raced Swiftsure regularly with the Victoria, Richmond, Devonport and Tamaki clubs and was a fixture at the Northcote-Birkenhead Regattas. Initially, she raced with the



Fourteens, but was overlength and put up to the Sixteens as S62 at the end of 1922. In 1934, Ted chopped 4in off the stern and reregistered her as a Fourteen with the sail number T6.

Against the likes of Billy Rogers' fourteen foot fliers, Swiftsure was utterly

uncompetitive, but Ted Fitzgerald probably had ten times more fun out of his boat than anyone else!

In 2005, she is sad but eminently restorable and back at 14'4" because Ted tacked the bit on again when he stopped racing!

Any sponsors?

Gadgets Mander & Intrigue

In 1954, the crack 18 footer *Intrigue* came to Auckland with the things Aucklanders now feared – gadgets and Mander. In 2005, now very tired, and in need of major restoration, she has been put in the care of the Rescue Trust.

Designed by Peter Mander, *Intrigue* made its first appearance in 1952, but she was untried and unreliable. After a hair-raising series of races, and suffering on-going difficulties with the boat's equipment, Mander and his

crew retired to Canterbury to completely re-think *Intrigue's* inventory. In '54 she was back – a different boat having been re-shaped and re-equipped.

A great contest developed involving two of New Zealand's most able skippers, Peter Mander in *Intrigue* and Laurie Davidson in *Envy*. *Intrigue* won the J.J. Giltinan trophy against allcomers, including the

hot Australians, but it was Davidson's turn to suffer gear damage. He lost his mast on the last spinnaker run in the first race.

Intrigue was fortunate to have a life long after most of her contemporary 18 footers and, after conversion to a trailer sailer, won the 1973 National Trailer Sailer Championship, Open Division.

She is constructed of



(somewhat delicate) thin edge-glued cedar planks. As a much cherished trailer sailer she carried a keel and a cabin top. Few original fittings remain – but her transom name plate (a coat of arms) and her figurehead are still with us.

Jack Logan's crack eighteen *Komutu* is about to emerge from her restoration by my father Robert, and to take to the waters again. What a magic stable-mate *Intrigue* would be. These two boats represent a significant time of transitional design and redblooded sport in New Zealand yachting.

Anyone keen to put a CYA crew together to take on *Komutu*?

Russell Brooke

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