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Large gaff riggers making a comeback

Since the early 1990s there has been an ever-increasing number of classic yachts being restored and sailed together in Auckland. Our extensive seasonal event programme climaxes in mid-February each year with the three-day Lindauer Regatta

now based in the Viaduct Harbour.

The first of these regattas was held in 2000 and attracted more than 80 entries from around New Zealand, Australia and from further afield. That regatta may have seemed to some

to be the climax of classic yachting's rebirth.

That does not appear to be the case, however, as we are now confronted with even greater interest in the classics from the next generation of minders. Either through a strange set of

coincidences or, more likely, because the enthusiasm has grown exponentially and the fleet has reached a critical mass, the big classics, those over 50' LOD, are being eagerly snapped up. This is not to say that the other classics, both yachts and launches, are diminishing in appeal, as that is simply not the case either.

It was probably the return of *Waitangi* to Auckland from Melbourne in 2003



A plea to seize the opportunity and



that was the trigger event. She is in such magnificent original condition and is a real spectacle sailing up the harbour, especially when she is alongside the other big gaffers *Ariki*, *Waione*, *Frances* and *Rawene*.

Now we have the news that *Rainbow* is to be restored. Very recently bought by a syndicate led by Hamish Ross and David Glenn, *Rainbow* was designed by Arch Logan and built by Logan Bros in 1898 (50'10" x 34'6" x 8'9" x 6'9") as a 36ft Linear Rater. Since the 1950s, she has been owned by the Dimmock family who bought her from Leo Bouzaid.

She was the first of the more modern, stronger bilged, short keel, *Britannia*-type hulls launched in 1898. As the first of four of this style of yacht built, she is considered by some to be the sweetest or most pure in line of Arch Logan's larger yachts,

although it is hard to rate any one of the four, *Rainbow*, *Iorangi*, *Ariki* or *Rawhiti*, above the other.

Rainbow was followed by *Iorangi* (52'2" x 36' x 9' x 7'3") in 1901, a little longer, with more beam and draft. She was saved from export in 1999 and underwent a rebuild with a modern rig being placed in her. *Ariki*, built in 1904, has always been regarded as Arch Logan's most powerful racing yacht and, under the recent ownership of Warwick Jones, continues to be a crowd pleaser under her original tall gaff rig.

Arch Logan's last 36 foot Linear Rater was *Rawhiti* (54' x 37'6" x 9'8" x 7'6") launched in 1905. She was sailed to Sydney where she remained until the end of WWII. Prior to her return to competition in Auckland she was rerigged as a bermudan cutter. She remained in that

condition under the care of the Marler family until, from the early 1970s, she went through a series of extensive modernisations.

Purchased by Greg Lee and Sam Stubbs in October 2003 she is now out of the water to be restored to a flush-decker. Greg is hoping to take her all the way back to gaff rig and is seeking ways of doing so without spoiling the family cruising aspect. It always used to be done by using trisails and smaller headsails. Nothing is impossible.

The last of the large gaff classics still afloat is *Thelma*. Designed by Arch Logan and built by Logan Bros. in 1897 (60' x 40' x 12' x 8'3"), she is now racing in the South of France under gaff rig. She is for sale and, if she were returned to Auckland, the fleet of large original Logan yachts would be as complete as we can make it, although

we would have to await the replacement of a few of the bermudan rigs to make the picture authentic.

And in the background all the while has been *Viking* (64' x 49' x 12' x 9'). Launched in 1893, she is the largest surviving early Bailey racing yacht. She is now rigged for cruising as a ketch and in magnificent condition. Sadly, her longstanding owner, Sir Gordon Tait, recently passed away. We hope the Tait family continue to use her and participate in the Association's event programme.

And what about *Matia* built in 1939 by Lidgards (50' x 34' x 10' x 7') whose designer is a moot point, but it can safely be said that Arch Logan's ghost could tell us. She was the very last large gaffer ever built and is still in good condition in the Bay of Islands, although somewhat modernised. A restoration of her back to gaff is not impossible.

Imagine these yachts in a fleet race up Auckland Harbour under gaff rig. Include in this fleet *Rawene*, *Waione*, *Frances* and *Aorere* (all gaffers) and we have the makings of a spectacle not seen since the early 1930s, New Zealand's yachting heritage in all its glory.

To grow the fleet further we only need to inject large quantities of lucre into the bank accounts of the owners of any classic that was a gaffer, but is now under a bermudan rig. For example:

► *Prize*, designed and built by Chas Bailey Jnr in 1923 (43' x 33'11" x

recapture the gaffer heritage

9'5" x 7'4") for William Endean and owned by the Thompson family since WWII. The Thompsons would be prepared to take her back to gaff if funding were available.

- ▶ *Matia* (mentioned above).
- ▶ *Moana* designed by Arch Logan and built by Logan Bros in 1895 (46'4" x 32'6" x 9'1" x 7'2"). She was among the first NZ *Britannia*-style yachts launched in 1895 with a cut away forefoot and more powerful bilges. The Smith family would be prepared to see her back to gaff rig.
- ▶ *Aoma* designed by Arch Logan and built by Logan Bros in 1899 (41' x 30' x 8' x 5'6"). She is currently in Melbourne and for sale.
- ▶ *Culwulla* designed and built by the Logans in 1901 (40' x 27' x 7'9" x 5'6"). Currently in Melbourne.

- ▶ *Ladye Wilma* designed and built by the Logans in 1895 (43' x 34' x 9' x 6'3"). Owned by Peter Brookes, a boat builder, and being made ready for restoration in Kumeu.
- ▶ *Windward* designed and built by the Logans in 1896 (37' x 27' x 8'2" x 5'6"). She is being made ready for restoration in Riverhead
- ▶ *Ngatira* designed and built by Chas Bailey Jnr in 1904 (40' x 28' x 8'6" x 5'10"). She is currently under restoration at the New Zealand Maritime Restoration School in the Bay of Islands.
- ▶ There then remains *Frances'* near sister ship *Victory*. These Logan designed and built sisters were launched in 1906 (38' x 29'3" x 9'6" x 6"). While *Frances* has always been gaff rigged, *Victory* would need to be converted back

and demodernised above the deck.

- ▶ *Marangi*, of similar size, now in Picton, was designed and built by Ted Le Huquet in 1910.
- ▶ Two Bailey Bros 5 raters are in Sydney. *Heartsease* is for sale. *Ida* probably is too well entrenched there to come back.
- ▶ *Uira*, a 5 rater built by Bailey Bros in 1896 for Melbourne is for sale in Oz too.
- ▶ And we need not stop there for there is an even greater number of smaller classics capable of being taken back to gaff. *Loloma* may sport a topsail this season, we are told!

And if replication is of interest there is always *Onelua*, designed and built by Chas Bailey in 1911 for the King of Tonga. (53' x 32' x 11'9" x 8"). Said to have been a serious match for *Ariki*, racing between these two would be quite something to behold. And there's always the serious 36ft Linear Rater designed by Walter Bailey that was never built!

A quick count of the yachts mentioned above and other smaller classics already gaff rigged would potentially give us a fleet of over two dozen gaff rigged heritage vessels sailing on Auckland's Harbour.

The CIM handicapping system, used extensively in the Mediterranean, encourages authentic restorations and penalises the hotrods, ie the classics with restored hulls, but modern rigs. This handicapping

system has now been used in the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand's annual three day classic yacht regattas in Auckland since 2000 and is proving to be a well thought out system for handicapping the diverse size and age of these yachts. There are always knockers of any handicapping system, but if we are in the business of promoting authentic restorations then that's the way to go. After all, would you expect to see a Model T Ford with a V8 Chevy engine in a Vintage car rally?

When reflecting upon the situation of the yachts mentioned above we have to be very grateful that so many are still around. With an appropriately sized chequebook these fine survivors can be returned to Auckland and restored as gaffers where necessary.

A number of members of the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand have enjoyed the experience of syndication of vintage aircraft as well as experiencing the pleasure of rebuilding vintage cars. All of the above yachts will require the commitment of substantial funds, the assembly of a large pool of wannabe crew, a thoroughly professional and clinical approach to the restoration and a high degree of dedication.

The rewards, however, that result from such synergy and teamwork will be as great as those of the early Team New Zealand efforts. The skills both to carry out the restorations and to sail the big gaffers are available





aplenty in this town!

This is not merely a nostalgic expression of the desire to see these wonderful large gaff rigged yachts sailing on Auckland Harbour. It is a call to action while the opportunity to restore them is still there.

Joyce Talbot, the secretary of the Classic Yacht Association of New Zealand (ph: 09 836 4747 or email, joyce@classicyacht.org.nz) can direct any enquiries to the right people. Pick up the phone and talk amongst your old sailing mates, or gather around the 'Round Table' in the bar of the Squadron, or at Port Nick, Richmond, Ponsonby, Bucklands Beach, Evans Bay, or wherever and work out how you can be involved. There's only money, passion, plus good standard business practice between you and rebuilding your maritime heritage.

Our unique New Zealand heritage is worthy of your commitment and passion. The rewards will come from the completion of the projects, the pleasure of the days on the water and the spectacle of the Gaffers' return to Auckland Harbour.

Chad Thompson

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CLASSIC YACHT ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

GENERAL ENQUIRIES: Joyce Talbot (09) 836-4747 or joycetalbot@classicyacht.org.nz
CLUB CAPTAIN YACHTS: Jason Prew (09) 575-4517
CLUB CAPTAIN LAUNCHES: Ron Jamieson (09) 521-3553
www.classicyacht.org.nz