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Ivor Wilkins Photo

Magnificent CYA Southern Trust Regatta

By Colin Pawson

While many yacht clubs throughout the country struggle to maintain fleet numbers, our annual Southern Trust Regatta continues to go from strength to strength.

Perhaps the increasing awareness and popularity of our yachting heritage is the key factor. There is no doubt that the sight of the gaff rig fleet in particular stirs the emotions of even the youngest

of our sailors as well as those that can still remember the heyday of such majestic craft.

This year's regatta, held from February 10 to 12 on the Waitemata harbour, attracted a fleet of 46 boats from Greg Lee's magnificently restored *Rawhiti* to Shane Appleton's tiny (by comparison) E Class *Happy Days*.

Friday dawned a beautiful, sunny but windless day which saw the fleet drifting aimlessly around the start

area near Northern Leading and Race Officer Chris Collins constantly scouring the harbour for any signs of a developing breeze.

His patience was finally rewarded early afternoon as a light WSW breeze filtered across to the race area from the southern shores. Little time was wasted getting the fleet away on a short course that would see the majority sail a course up to Orakei, out to Saltworks, to Northern

Leading and to the finish off Orakei.

Not surprisingly, Ian Cook's *Ranger* recorded the fastest time around the course with the ever consistent Tony Blake and *Thelma* the second fastest. The large gaffers certainly enjoy reaching conditions and it's not hard to see why when such huge mainsail areas can work so well once the sheets are eased.

Saturday's racing saw a

few extra boats competing with the Stewart 34s having sufficient numbers to have their own division as did the H28s.

Also making an appearance for the first time was the recently restored 26ft mullet boat *Corona* and the diminutive *Happy Days*.

The wind gods were a little more co-operative for the second day's racing and some real battles were starting to emerge throughout the fleet. Two good races were held in light to moderate southerly quarter breezes.

Rod Marler and his crew on *Little Jim* were starting to establish a winning pattern in the A Division bermudan class, *Rainbow* in the A Division gaff, *Tucana* and *Gleam* in the B Division bermudan, *Wairiki* in B Division gaff and *Tropic Bird* and *Panacea* in the H28 and Stewart 34 classes respectively.

Similarly, Mike Webster's *Northerner* in A Division Modern and John Macfarlane's Townson *Talent* in B Modern were dominant.

The canniest start of the day came from David Glen in *Rainbow* with a perfectly timed run along a biased line on starboard with a last minute tack to port and a clear jump on the fleet.

The most memorable event of the day was, however, Greg Lee and crew really getting *Rawhiti* to find her legs and show her counter to *Ranger* around the course and more importantly, across the finish line. I believe Greg now has a framed picture on his lounge wall for future inspiration.

To balance the wind equation, Huey decided that Sunday would bring fresh easterly quarter winds, and



Alan Houghton Photo

Heather nicely sorted in the breezy conditions

many of the fleet struggled to make the start area on time with the result that the start was delayed.

The start, from a committee boat perspective, was somewhat traumatic. With a slight boat-end bias on the line, the sight of 40 classic boats under marginal control trying to trim the duckboard off the Corsair was alarming to say the least.

But it did provide the opportunity for some great photographs for the on-board photographer, CYA Launch Captain Alan Houghton.

The stronger winds turned the tables in some divisions with *Ta'aroa* showing the huge power of this S&S classic under these fresh conditions, which also meant

that some of the smaller and/or more fragile yachts did not take part.

Handicapping this diverse fleet is a challenge, especially as the boats' performances vary so much with different conditions.

It is interesting to see the difference in performance between the gaffers and the more modern bermudan rigged boats. Under some conditions this difference is not as significant as might be expected.

Getting the best out of the gaff rig would appear to be quite difficult and full credit to all the skippers and crews who put in countless hours to bring these fine craft up to their potential.

The regatta base this

year, courtesy of Waterfront Auckland, was a marquee on the eastern side of the new Events Centre in the Viaduct with berthage on the new pontoon in front of the centre. This gave the public a chance to see, close up, a cross section of the fleet at the end of each day's racing.

The after-race prizegiving and dinner was held each night in the marquee and all crews had the chance to socialise in a relaxed environment with Tony Stevenson keeping everyone happy with a steady flow of sponsors' products.

We look forward to next year's regatta in this superb venue and other planned events in the Viaduct Basin in the near future.



Alan Houghton Photo

The racing fleet and spectator boats tied up at the Events Centre, allowing for public gazing



Rawhiti and Thelma locked in close-quarters battle. Below: the Mahurangi fleet spread across the bay

Mahurangi is alive and well

As the wind and rain pounded Auckland on the Friday morning before Mahurangi, memories of last year's race being cancelled due to bad weather were all too present in my mind. Devonport Yacht Club had just called to say they had cancelled their race. With the weather expected to improve later in the day and an offshore breeze, we decided to press on and asked DYC to start our classic fleet anyway.

It turned out to be the right call as the fleet had a fantastic race to Mahurangi. The weather cleared as predicted and many completed the 18nm in less than three hours. All of the boats arrived in daylight, the first time I can recall this happening.

Saturday dawned fine, with a gentle SW breeze. What a sight Mahurangi harbour was, full to overflowing with boats

of all sorts. Sullivan's Bay was crammed with anchored yachts and launches and the beach littered with classic dinghies, kayaks, children and onlookers.

As the big boat racing wasn't to start until 1300hrs, there was plenty of time to catch up with friends, watch some of the rowing races, wander up and down the beach admiring all the boats and generally have a good old time.

The huge fleet of yachts paced backwards and forwards around the starting area and then we were off. The odd cruising boat entering around Saddle Island must have wondered what they had

struck, as yachts of all shapes and sizes came rushing out.

Two laps of exciting close racing with the fabulous backdrop of Mahurangi harbour and the large gaffers *Thelma*, *Waitangi* and *Rawhiti* at close quarters made for a spectacular scene. It was clear that, after a year off, Mahurangi was back and better than ever.

A cool SW breeze blowing into Scott's Landing meant some chose to stay rafted up on the sheltered Sullivan's Bay side, while others braved the weather for the prize giving at the infamous stump. BBQs were provided, tall stories were told and a jovial time was had by all.

As evening settled over the harbour, the twinkle of anchor lights resembled the Milky Way or a glow worm cave; the sheer number of boats would arguably make this one of the biggest regattas in the world.

Sunday's race back to Auckland promised to be another windy one with 30 knots forecast around midday. Many of the smaller yachts decided to leave early, forgoing the race in the interests of a safe trip home. For those of us who stuck it out, a brisk and somewhat bouncy beat into a building SW ensued with plenty of close racing to keep us on our toes and ending in a raft up and lit display of the classics in the Viaduct Harbour.

Prize-giving celebrations continued well into the evening, courtesy of O'Hagans Bar.

Steve Cranch

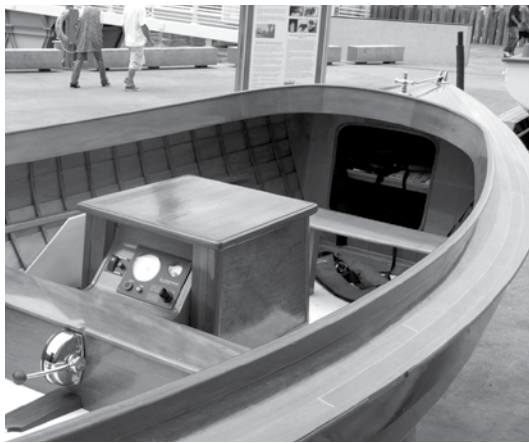




Ivor Wilkins Photo

The sinking of Gypsy

While sailing in the Auckland Anniversary Regatta, *Gypsy* was tee-boned and sunk by the large yacht *Antaeus*, under motor. It's too early to comment on the event, but it's not too early to express our heartfelt thanks that John Pryor and Jill Hetherington escaped with their lives, although Jill was very badly hurt. We must congratulate our members Robert Brooke, Jason Prew, Paul Tingey and Neil Chalmers, amongst many, who put their backs into the recovery of *Gypsy* and getting her to the NZ Traditional Boatbuilding School for repair, when all had seemed lost. – **Harold Kidd**



Sweet sights

This year's new Race HQ venue provided a stage for a static display of some of the CYA's smaller vessels pulled together by the NZ Traditional Boat Building School. Regatta sailors and visitors were able to get up close and inspect the craft.

Alan Houghton photos

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