



Journal of the
**Wellington Classic
Yacht Trust**
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Your subscription of \$30 per year goes directly toward the restoration of Wellington's historic vessels



An interesting shot of Mawhiti on Oriental Parade, in front of where the RPNYC Clubhouse now stands. November 1898

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From the Chairman

Welcome to the latest issue of our journal.

There hasn't been much sailing for Lizzie in recent months – but work on her on the hard at Evans Bay is continuing very well. She is now decked over, with much more done (see fleet update below). She'll be a different boat come the new season.

Our cover this month show the Mawhiti at Clyde Quay just prior to her launching. She was built By William Moore and his friends. William's great-grandson Malcolm Moore, in doing a house renovation has donated the Trust with some nice kauri boards, for which we are very grateful.

A little more can be read about Mawhiti [here](#).

Also received this month are several sheets of 3mm meranti from Abe at [Plylab](#).

Our subscriber numbers remain low, so if you think of anyone who may be interested in supporting our work, please encourage them to subscribe. Our bank account remains as follows. New subscribers will need to send us their email address so we can add it to the distribution list.

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Gavin Pascoe

Fleet Update

Atalanta

We have received some material donations which inch us ever closer to getting the deck work done for *Atalanta*: some 12 boards of NZ kauri from Malcolm Moore, and several sheets of 3 mm meranti ply from Abe of the Ply Lab in Wellington. This will be perfect for laminating the curved forward edges of the cabin.

We are still seeking donations to add to savings to let us get *Atalanta* out of the water to replace her deck and build her house. We need something over \$10,000 to do this comfortably. The Trust currently has douglas fir for mast and spars, and plenty of kauri boards for hatches and fitout. We are stalled by the issue of the deck, so once this difficulty has been overcome, Attie may see a huge transformation quite quickly.



Lizzie

David is still working hard on *Lizzie*, and since our last issue, the deck has been replaced, glassed and is being painted. The cabin top has had the old hatch rails removed, and been repainted. The toe rail cap has been reshaped and sanded and sealed with a coat of varnish and masked while the deck gets painted, plus sundry bits and pieces. Put this way, it doesn't sound much, but it's been a massive effort. David is now working on finishing painting the deck plus topsides, but work has been slowed in recent weeks due to the adverse weather conditions. Meanwhile, Peter has completed the new hatch of mahogany, and has reshaped one of *Oyster's* spare bowsprits into a new one for *Lizzie*. Both have been varnished in Peter's shop along with the new hatch rails and rudder block. If you think you may be able to contribute some labour to the *Lizzie* project, please contact David at morgan.fisher@xtra.co.nz.



Nigel Blair

With the recent articles we had of Wellington's history of the Sanders Cup, and the return of Oyster to Wellington waters it seems appropriate to fill out our knowledge of Nigel Blair, who was a Sanders Cup champion, and owner of Oyster during the 1920s.

Below is the text of a letter he sent to Marguerite Parson, a Club member who worked in the social area of the Club. The letter pretty concisely outlines his career in yachting. Parson drew a series of portraits of notable senior members over several years in the early 1980s, including the one of Nigel Blair, which is included in his scrapbook. Parson corresponded with Blair in the time running up to his being made an Hon. Life member of RPNYC, and collated a scrapbook of his clippings, which can be found on our website at the link below. Anyone who remembers the TV show "This is your life" will appreciate the idea behind it.

The scrapbook contains a great many interesting photos, clippings and interviews which reveal Blair's influence in the sport during its greatest heyday from the 1930s though to the 1960s, plus more.

Missing however, is any information on his naval career, which appears to have been quite distinguished. This extract comes from the book *The Royal New Zealand Navy*, by Sydney Davy Waters, part of *The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–1945* published in 1956.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2Navy-c25.html>

"When Task Force 37 arrived in the fuelling area on 31 July, the ships' companies of the *Gambia* and *Achilles* found HMNZS *Arbutus* with the Fleet Train and gave her a rousing welcome. The New Zealand Naval Board's offer of this little ship had been accepted by the Commander-in-Chief British Pacific Fleet in May, and she was sent to Sydney and fitted out for radio and radar repair and servicing duties. The *Arbutus*, which was commanded by Lieutenant Nigel Blair, RNZNVR, of Wellington, left Sydney on 4 July and, after a call at Manus Island to embark a New Zealand radar officer and three radar mechanics, joined the Fleet Train in Japanese waters on 28 July. In one period of three days the *Arbutus* went alongside no fewer than forty ships to tranship stores and spare parts and service their radar equipment. On 8 August the *Arbutus* and two other small ships left the Fleet Train to escort three supply ships back to base at Manus Island. When she arrived there on the 17th, the *Arbutus* had completed a continuous period at sea of 33 days and steamed 7600 miles without a stop of her main engines. From Manus Island she escorted supply ships to Hong Kong, where she arrived in time for the Japanese surrender of that base on 16 September. When she finally returned to Auckland on 1 October, the *Arbutus* had steamed more than 20,000 miles in 77 days since leaving Sydney. In a message to the New Zealand Naval Board, the Commander-in-Chief said he was 'most grateful for the contribution of HMNZS *Arbutus* to the effort of the British Pacific Fleet.'"

The Nigel Blair Scrapbook:

http://www.wcyt.org.nz/abode/getAdminCategoryProducts.do?_siteId=708&method=getCategoryProducts&_categoryId=5425

Letter to RPNYC dated 04 January 1981

I joined the PNYC in 1916 as a junior member at the age of 14 and was attending Wellington College. I have been a member ever since, so that makes my period of membership 65 years and my age 79 this month. From 1919 until 1950 I was engaged in all phases of the Club's activities, namely active sailing and administrative positions including Commodore in 1933.

As required by you the following is a list of the boats I have owned or been connected with during my period of membership. I actually started my boating career when living at Karaka Bay and was given an 8ft new kauri dinghy for my 6th birthday. Then in 1912 my father bought me a 20ft keeler named *Nikau*. I kept her moored at Karaka Bay and spent my weekends and holidays sailing around the harbour with school mates, learning the rudiments of the game. I never raced in her and we sold her in 1916 when we purchased the 22ft keeler *Rawene* from Fred Kiernan. She was an excellent little ship having been built by Ralph Millman who had also built the ill-fated *Windward*.

I kept the *Rawene* moored in the boat harbour as we found it too dangerous to keep our boats moored at Karaka Bay, although we kept a mooring there which I used for her during school holidays. Bob Murie still a member of the Club, was a partner with my father and me in *Rawene* for about three years.

I sailed the *Rawene* regularly in all the RPNYC 2nd Class Keeler races from 1916 until 1926, also in three then call Ocean Races to Port Underwood and back, as well as regular cruises to the Sounds for annual holidays.

Before making my first crossing of Cook Strait in *Rawene*, however, my father D. K. Blair, suggested I should serve as a member of the crew in a larger yacht with an experienced skipper. Accordingly, in 1918 I joined the crew of the *Kotiri II* owned and skippered by Professor J. E. L. Cull and in that year, and the next, made three cruises with him to the Sounds including one to Nelson and Tasman Bay. Prof. Cull who was Designing Engineer for the Public Works Department and was one of the stalwarts of the Club during the First World War period when many earlier members were serving overseas and their boats laid up, was the father of Lorna who is now the wife of Jack Maddever. I also sailed with the Prof. in *Kotiri* on many occasions during school holidays, in harbour cruises. I owe much to Professor Cull for my early training with him which has stood me in good stead during my yachting and naval careers.

In 1924 we bought the 32 ft ketch *Oyster* from J. Glasgow and I sailed her from Nelson during Easter that year. My father then took over the *Rawene* and one of my old crew sailed her for him in the races, etc until after D. K.'s two terms as Commodore in 1927 and 1928. Incidentally, my father, David K. Blair, and I as far as I know, were the first father/son combinations who had held the Commodore post until Noel Manthel and his son, Roger, did so.

I did not race the *Oyster* as she was purely a cruiser with her ketch rig and auxiliary engine, and I used her for regular cruises to the Sounds and Tasman Bay. From 1924 until the end of 1930 when I got married, I made at least two cruises a year to the Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds plus two long trips to Nelson and Tasman Bay. I sold her to Gray Young, well known Wellington Architect who kept her at Lowry Bay but later Ralph Millman took her over and added a keel to her and renamed her *Ariki*. However she is now named *Oyster* and again re-rigged as Bermudan ketch and fitted with a new engine. She is back in Nelson again and I believe still as sound as a bell in spite of her age. She was built in 1902 by Chas. Bailey.

In 1926 I decided to take on Centreboard Class racing as it was much more exciting than the Keel Boat racing with such a varied size and boat type.

As interest in the Sanders Cup contest was growing, I decided to join the "X" Class and got into the crew of the Wellesley Club's boat *Wellesley* as mainsheet hand with Bruce White as skipper.

From then on I set out with the ambition to win the Sanders Cup, but it took me over ten years to ultimately achieve that goal.

I sailed in *Wellesley I* for one season and then *Wellesley II* was built by Joe Jukes for the Club and I then sailed in her again as mainsheet hand and represented Wellington in the Sanders Cup contest at Stewart Island in 1928, but did not win a race.

From then on for the next 3 years I sailed the *Wellesley II* as skipper for the Club (Wellesley Club) and sailed in all the RPNYC Club races also Easter Regatta races at Paremata, and Sander Cup trials.

Then in 1931 Sandy Coleman and my father had the *Lavina* built to try and win the Cup for Wellington and I skippered her in all RPNYC, Evans Bay Club, Sanders Cup trials, also Paremata Regatta and Wellington Regatta races for her Class. We were selected to represent Wellington in *Lavina* at Lyttelton in 1933 when we won 2 of the races (7 races sailed) and again in 1934 also at Lyttelton when we won only 1 race in the 6 race contest.

Jack Coleman took over the *Lavina* from me for the 1935 season and I had a spell from racing until 1936 when Bill Wagstaff asked me to sail the *Kitty* for him in Club and trials races. We missed selection for the 1937 contest but were successful for the 1938 one which was held at Dunedin and we won 3 races and had 2 seconds and won the Cup. Jack Coleman actually won the Cup in *Lavina* in 1937. In all I had represented Wellington in the Sanders Cup 5 times, namely in 1928 (in crew), 1933, 1934, and 1938 (all as skipper) and 1952 at Timaru (as manager of the crew).

During the last War I was away from Wellington serving overseas and in N.Z. waters in the Navy for 5 years. After the War I served for another 5 years in the Wellington Division of the R.N.Z.V.R.

Nigel Blair.



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Support us

Wellington Classic Yacht Trust happily accepts one-off donations of materials or money. We are a NZ-registered charitable trust. Payments may be made directly into our bank account. A tax receipt will be issued for each donation received. No amount is too small!

We are all volunteers, and retain no staff, so all donations received go directly to our core task of caring for the vessels held in our trust.

If you want your donation to go toward a specific project or vessel, please let us know.

Bank **BNZ**

Account name **Wellington Classic Yacht Trust**

Account number **02-0536-0138286-000**

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