



The restoration of *Wairiki*

WHEN *WAIRIKI* was badly knocked about in the October 2000 storm in Lyttelton which destroyed the marina, her whole fabric suffered considerably. Although she was fixed up at the time, sand had forced its way inbetween the diagonal layers of her kauri planking, she was well out of shape, and a difficult task to restore. So why bother?

Her relaunch on 17th September this year at Pier 21 made her the latest in a long series of landmark classic yachts to be restored in Auckland in recent years. The work was carried out in the astonishingly brief time of 17 months by Jason Prew, who had recently sold his old warhorse 1909 cutter *Loloma* to Wellington, and by craftsman

boatbuilder Marco Scuderi.

Jason bothered because *Wairiki* has a provenance as long as your arm. She is a Logan Bros crack from 1904 with a great racing record and a turn of speed that will undoubtedly make her a force to reckon with in Classic Yacht Association B Division racing from now on.

He went into the job with his eyes open. After his experience sailing Robert Brooke's 1908 Logan Bros 42-footer *Rawene* in recent seasons, Jason wanted to move on to a Logan thoroughbred of a reasonable size. Robert recommended that he buy *Queenie*, the January 1904 Logan Bros 36-footer which had been almost invincible in the Auckland C Class for years until the advent of the Jack

Brooke-designed *Gleam* in 1940. But *Queenie* was unavailable.

Robert knew that *Wairiki* was a twin to *Queenie*, but two feet shorter overall, and available in Christchurch, pretty battered and heavily modified, but restorable (just). Her Arch Logan design held considerable promise as a classic racer back on the Waitemata, so Jason did the deal with Andrew Gillies, her long-term Canterbury owner, and she was trucked to the NZ Traditional Boatbuilding School at Hobsonville in April of 2009. Jason had a support team consisting of Robert Brooke, who provided the technical advice and the bayonet in the back, Tony Stevenson of the Tino Rawa Trust, who housed the

final stages of the restoration in his Morningside facility, and Marco Scuderi, the hard-working, practical boatbuilder.

Wairiki's history

In early 1904 a group of Permanent Force soldiers at Devonport asked Arch Logan for a design for a harbour-racer/cruiser and clearly got a shortened *Queenie*, at the time his latest and most successful small keel yacht design. The syndicate included one Stitchbury and brothers R.F. and F.J. Bennett who built *Wairiki* on Cheltenham Beach right under North Head, and who appear to have had help from Albert Warbrick, son of the legendary

Above: *Wairiki* racing in her early years

part-Maori yachtsman, boatbuilder and rugby player, Joe Warbrick.

In the conventional Logan fashion, *Wairiki* was of double-diagonal frameless construction, 34ft loa, 24ft lwl, 7ft 4in beam and 4ft 9in draught, gaff-cutter rigged in the style of her day. Typically, Arch Logan would have kept an eye on the construction.

Wairiki was launched from Cheltenham Beach either in the last week of December 1904 or the first week in January 1905. Like so many of her contemporaries, *Loloma* for one, she got her name from a crack racehorse of the day. The Auckland stallion *Wairiki* had won the Auckland Cup in 1903 and as the yacht was nearing completion, he was at Flemington preparing for the 1904 Melbourne Cup in the November for which he was favourite. Even though *Wairiki* the horse pulled out of the race after slipping and breaking a shoulder, his name stuck to the yacht. The vets saved him and he went on to sire many winners at stud until his death in 1913.

Wairiki the yacht was a winner too. Her original owners raced her principally with the North Shore Yacht Club and the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, but also other clubs, and she was immediately very successful. In 1907 they sold her to S.G. Gilmour who continued to race

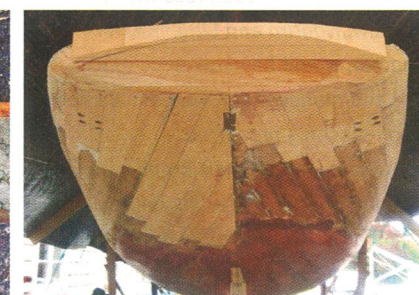
her with success. Subsequent owners were: T. L. Gedye, 1910; George Dennes, 1913; E. Urquhart and R. Schofield, 1916; W. Schratt, 1918; J.C. Arneil, 1920; J. Inwood and J. McWilliams, 1921; and S.R. Speight, 1922.

Jeweller Sid Speight owned her for many years and had a formidable racing record in the Auckland-Tauranga Ocean Race, coming second in 1923 and 1925, winning in 1926 and 1928 on handicap, and on both line and handicap in 1929. In 1930 Dane Macky bought *Wairiki* and won the 1930 Tauranga Race again. A.R. Stewart owned her briefly in 1933 at the height of the Depression but sold her to Lyttelton where she had several owners and, for a time, she was in Nelson.

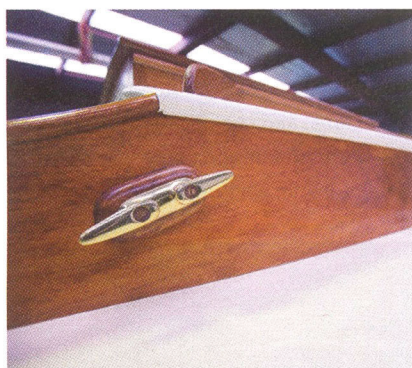
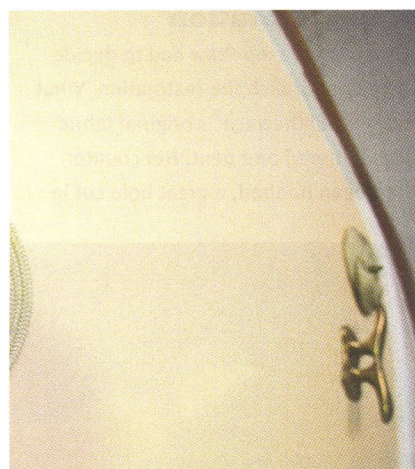
As so often happens when such a highly regarded yacht leaves Auckland, she was soon forgotten by Aucklanders. Prior to 1914 she carried the sail number 55 in Auckland, but after 1922 she carried C5 and, in Lyttelton, A10. After the massive damage she suffered in the 2000 Lyttelton storm, her future looked bleak.

The restoration

New owner Jason Prew had to decide how to approach the restoration. What was left of the yacht's original fabric was battered and bent. Her counter had been bobbed, a great hole cut in



Clockwise from top: Marco Scuderi at work inside *Wairiki*; hull restoration well underway; sand between the original diagonal hull timbers, damage sustained in the Lyttelton storm



Wairiki nearing completion at Tony Stevenson's Morningside facility, with the fine details showing the quality of the work

the underside for an outboard, she had lost her sheer, her deck and cabintop were replacements, and her rig was, of course, now bermudan.

To undertake a meticulous restoration to original, adhering as strictly as possible to the materials and techniques of the Logan and Bailey yards, to the standard we have seen recently in *Rainbow*, *Ngatira* and *Little Jim*, for example, would have taken so much time and money that it would have been beyond Jason's resources.

But Jason and Robert Brooke are pragmatic people. They made the decision to restore *Wairiki* to her totally original configuration in hull and rig as well as could be discerned from her plans (a copy of which Robert has)

and contemporary photographs, but to substitute some modern materials for the originals and use modern adhesives. This principally meant the use of laminations of marine plywood in the deck, bulkheads and cabintop, for example, instead of solid kauri.

All restorers have to take such measures these days, no matter how driven they are to recreate the yacht in exactly its original form. They all have to struggle with ethical questions and accept some compromises; it is just a question of the degree of non-originality that can be tolerated in every case. Jason and Robert decided to employ Marco Scuderi to carry out the bulk of the restoration work. Marco had been associated with the NZ Traditional Boatbuilding School for a while



Launching day at Pier 21 Auckland. Owner Jason Prew, above, and left, pictured with boatbuilder Marco Scuderi wielding the champagne bottle and Paul Tingey (partially obscured) between them

and had gained Robert's confidence – no mean accolade.

Marco was born in Sicily in 1974 and entered the Italian Navy aged 15, then studied geology and cartography at university in Italy, emigrating to New Zealand in 1997 where he did a Masters degree and worked for both North Shore and Palmerston North City Councils. After marrying a Kiwi girl in 2000, he took up a fellowship to do a PhD degree at Maryland University which he finished in 2005. While in the States, Marco's latent love of wooden boatbuilding made him start an apprenticeship at Alexandria Seaport Foundation in Virginia.

In 2006 Marco and his wife Alex got homesick for this country, and Marco joined Salthouse Boatbuilders in Greenhithe where he completed his apprenticeship in conjunction with the NZ Traditional Boatbuilding School. He is now doing a second apprenticeship in marine engineering with BITO, and is also finishing Year 3 of yacht designing by correspondence with Westlawn Institute of Marine Technology at Eastport, Maine.

Between Marco, Jason, Robert and Tony, *Wairiki* has been restored beautifully and is a joy. I am sure she is the first yacht restored in Auckland by someone with a PhD, but won't be the last yacht restored in Auckland by Dr. Marco Scuderi. ■

Background

In the 1890s, the attention of our yachtsmen and builders was on the 'raters', a concept imported holus bolus from the northern hemisphere. The two main types built here were the 5 and 2½-raters. So popular were they, and so many were built, that they constituted the bulk of New Zealand's racing keel yacht fleet until 1940 as the Auckland A and B classes.

However, the overseas rating rules changed so frequently that local disillusionment crept in and demand turned to wholesome fast yachts built to no particular foreign parameter. One of the first of the new breed was the pretty 26-footer *Niobe* launched by Bailey & Lowe in April 1900. A craze for smaller, freer, keel yachts took hold with a succession of yachts slightly larger than *Niobe* from Bailey & Lowe and Chas. Bailey Jr, of which the outstanding example was the latter's *Speedwell*. These yachts formed the core of the later C class. The best of these little thoroughbreds was *Queenie*, a pinnacle of Arch Logan's design genius. *Wairiki* was her slightly smaller twin.