



WOOLLACOTT ASSOCIATION

JACOB DON - FEATURE BOAT



Designer: John Woollacott Design: Truant Dimensions: 22' LOA 19'6" LWL 7'0" Beam 4'0" Draft 2.20 tons Launched c???? Painted white

Harry Holthausen's claim to fame must be in undertaking an ocean voyage in the smallest locally designed and built yacht, when he sailed from Devonport to Fiji, New Caledonia, New Hebrides and on to Port Moresby in New Guinea in 1966. He was born in the Dutch East Indies, but his real story starts as a sixteen year old with three and a half years in a Japanese concentration camp in what is now Indonesia. With the Allied advance, the Japanese left and Harry took jobs as a Red Cross driver, truck driver for the army and later as assistant manager at a hotel in Bali for the army, catering for five hundred people for a year. Harry's health had deteriorated and he was evacuated to Batavia and then to Holland, where he suffered a stroke. On recovering he completed four years of education. Following a holiday job of two trips to Canada as crew on a Dutch emigrant ship, he emigrated from there to New Zealand. When he applied for naturalisation, his application was handled by Joe Gaunt, also a member of the Yacht Club, and the reply signed by Joe had a hand written addition: "Expect you round for dinner - That's an order".

Harry got to know Jim Moody before Jim started building the thirty three foot Woollacott design 'Nina' and sailed with him until he went in the Suva race. After that he gave Jim Oliphant a hand with 'Mamari', and sailed with him. When Harry decided to build his own boat, Bert Woollacott had a plan sheet with three boats superimposed for Harry to choose from. Harry would have liked to have built a 'Little May' but Bert wouldn't allow that. Instead he chose the lines of 'Calm'. Bert offered Harry the

partly built 'Calm' for the cost of materials, but Harry was determined to build his own boat. Bert's son John drew up a set of plans for Harry and the frames were built and set up at the back of the motor garage across from the Yacht Club. At this stage Harry suffered more heart problems and as Tony Willis had just finished 'Blithe Spirit' and was "between jobs" he tackled the planking job, working for a weekly wage. Planking was quarter sawn oregon on oak ribs. Harry had recovered sufficiently to complete the top two planks. In November 1960 she was moved onto the section for finishing.



When launched in February 1961 she was minus a mast and interior fitout. She was painted a medium blue colour and named Jacob Don after Harry's brother who had been killed by the atomic bomb, while a prisoner of war under forced labour, in Japan. On launching day there was not the usual panic bailing you get with a lot of single skin boats, but the gentle use of a household sponge. In fact, to get the caulking in between the planks there had to have been the judicious use of a busting iron to make room for the caulking. The first season was without a mast and the first sail was three weekends before Christmas 1962. In those early days of sailing, his visitors book shows names of yachting glitterati such as John Spencer, Ron Holland, John Lidgard and Tony Armit, but the very first entry is our own Martin Foster.

Harry took some of the young dinghy sailors from the Club and introduced them to keelboat cruising.

Some of the time he lived aboard and to play his favourite music, he had his record player on a plywood platform suspended by bungee cords up in the forepeak. The development of the boat saw a succession of engines and the wheel replaced by a tiller fashioned from an axe handle. When the time came for the overseas trip, the Safety Inspectors wanted even more strength, so bronze floors were cast and riveted into place. Harry wanted Keith Humphreys, his crew, to be skilled in navigation, in case Harry's heart problems became more than problems. He had even drawn up papers to cover such an eventuality and carried suitable canvas. Safety equipment included a Gibson Girl emergency transmitter which you could hold between your knees and wind a handle as well as a double sideband radio which they used to report to Musick Point.

Although they were too small to enter the Suva Race, they set off just after the fleet and had to put

into Port Fitzroy in a rising gale. There the boats that pulled out of the race were having a royal party, consuming the duty free 'stores' to avoid having to pay duty on return to Auckland. Here they picked up Ossie off another boat, as extra crew, partly to cover Keith's navigation skills. Two days on their way and another gale saw them trailing warps and hove to under a storm headsail for twenty four hours. All this time the boat was watertight and Harry was baking bread.



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