



THE WOOLLACOTT ASSOCIATION

Quarterly Newsletter: Issue 1 January 2009

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter for the Woollacott Association. I would like to thank you for taking the time to become a member. I have heard a lot of people over the years say there should be a Woollacott Association and am very glad that it is now a reality at long last.

I would encourage everyone to attend the Devonport Yacht Club's Waitangi weekend cruise as I would love to see how many Woollacotts we can muster. For those that are outside Auckland then I know your thoughts will be with us, we will make sure we get some photos of a Woollacott line up to send out. I would also encourage you to attend the Classic Yacht Regatta and also the Duder Cup Regatta where the Woollacott Cup will be raced for.

There has been a huge team effort in getting the Woollacott Association and website up and running and I would like to thank Chris Leech, Dot Woollacott, Sally Teesdale, and Martin Foster for making all this possible. Now it is up to each of us to share information about the history of our boats so that we may gather enough information to have a book published, I agree this will take many years.

Each month I would like to feature one of your boats in the newsletter, for this to be possible we need you to write down what you know about her. The local team (ok, the old timers) will stretch their grey matter and see what gaps can be filled in and expanded if possible (if I receive large numbers then we can print more per issue). This will help us to collate a short history on each boat.

Please do visit the website and let us know if we have any incorrect details. And do please spread the word for Woollacott owners and friends to fill in membership forms and join our association.

Fair winds

Mike Strong
Woollacott Chairperson

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Friday 6 to 8 February 2009 - Waitangi Day Weekend Cruise
-This will be the first official event of the Woollacott Association, please contact Graham Pettersen 09 445 7481 who is co-ordinating this event for DYC and would like know numbers of people/boats expecting to attend, this will be a very fun cruising weekend based around Waiheke. (Details on DYC website - www.dyc.org.nz)

13 to 15 February 2009 - Classic Yacht Regatta (Details on The Classic Yacht Website www.classicyacht.org.nz)

Saturday 7 March 2009 - Duder Cup Regatta (For Woollacott Cup) (Details on DYC website - www.dyc.org.nz)

NOTICES:

We are now ready to start collecting any bits of history/stories on your boat. These can be sent to myself or to Chris Leech (dds@kcbbs.gen.nz)



Gloaming

Devonport Yacht Club Picnic
Sunday 22nd February 2009
1100 hrs

Venue is weather dependent and to be decided on the morning and
advised over the Club answer phone after 0730hrs
And VHFchannel 62 at 0800 and 0900hrs

Venue to be chosen from Sandy Bay, Home Bay, Islington Bay all on Motutapu
Calypso Bay, Motuihi, or Browns Island

Events will include:
Sandcastle competitions, Rowing races, Running races,
Sack races, Egg tossing, Tug of war,
Lolly scramble and ice creams

Everyone is invited to join in the fun

People without boats will be found a berth- phone Desiree 4899598

Cancellation by Newstalk ZB
Club answer phone
Blue and white chequered flag on DYC flagpole



Atarangi

FEATURE BOAT: Atarangi

Designer: Bert Woollacott

Design: May

According to Atarangi's AYMBA registration card

Built by John Gladden in Auckland and was first registered to DR Knight of Francis Street, Takapuna, Auckland on the 1st October 1950 and issued with sail number F-64. In 1969, when the registration system was restructured, she took sail number 964.

Entered in the Whangarei-Noumea race 1967 by DD Read of the Onerahi Yacht Club. Finished 35th across the line and 32nd overall and 12th on handicap in her division.

Dimensions

33'10" x 8'5" x 4'9"

582 sq ft sail

25 hp

Launched c1950

Painted white with buff deck and red bottom

NZ owners

- . RD Knight (Auckland)1950 +?
- . Roy Katterfeldt 19547-1964?
- . DD Read (New Plymouth at1.d Whangarei) 1963-1970+?
- . DD Bassett (Whangarei) 1971 +?

Information we (CP/TC) have traced in Australia:

Australian owners

- . Jim and Vicky Camp bought Atarangi in Devonport where she was moored in the Tamaki River 1978. They sailed her to Australia. She was moored at the Gold Coast.
- . Vicky Camp and Rob Pontil then owned Atarangi 1979-1993. They sailed from Australia to New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Solomons. Boat was eventually moored Mission Beach, North Queensland.
- . Michael and Gail May (Cairns) 1993-1996
- . Patrick and Sue Centurino (Townsville) 1996-2000
- . Christine Covich and Steven Smith (Townsville, Gladstone, Cairns) 2000-2007
- . Carolyn Pike and Tony Cuthbertson (Magnetic Island) 2007-



Atarangi

Martin Foster describes his first ocean race

This coming April marks the forty fifth anniversary of the first Whangarei to Noumea yacht race first held in 1964 organised by the Onerahi Yacht Club in association with the Circle Nautique Caledonia of Noumea. I had the dubious distinction of being the youngest crew member on the smallest yacht for this inaugural race.

During the winter of 1963 I had been helping John Woollacott prepare his 28 foot sloop *Truant* for this ocean race. Unfortunately John later found he would be unable to enter *Truant* for the race so I was invited to crew on board the 27 foot Woollacott sloop *Landfall* owned by Devonport's veteran ocean yachtsman Fred Norris. Fred, a past commodore, past president and life member of the Devonport Yacht Club, was a most experienced blue water seaman and navigator having first sailed across the Tasman with George Dibbern in the ketch *Te Rapunga* in 1934. Later after the war he raced his own Woollacott ketch *Hope* in several Tasman races as well as making an extensive cruise to Tahiti and return. I felt privileged to have been asked to race on *Landfall* for this first classic.

Landfall was built by Fred to a modified *Nada* design. Unfortunately Fred lost his beloved *Nada* in 1948 whilst racing in the annual Balokovic Cup race organised by Royal Akarana Yacht Club. In those days this 90 mile Hauraki Gulf classic yacht race sailed across the Hauraki Gulf opposite to to-day's race course. In this race after rounding Flat Rock off Kawau Island the race fleet got caught in gale easterly conditions. Approaching the Cow Island off the entrance to Coromandel Harbour in pitch dark conditions *Nada* struck the reef off the eastern end of the island and became a total wreck. Miraculously all the crew survived. [see full story Devonport Yacht Club Centennial publication]

But to return to my story. Thirty six yachts were assembled after Easter in the Whangarei Town Basin for the start this race. The largest yacht was the 59 foot *Cutty Sark* and the smallest our own Woollacott sloop *Landfall* with an all Devonport Yacht Club crew consisting of Fred as skipper and cook, Ray Shaw, Phil Warring, Harry Holthausen and myself. The club organised a special farewell function for us prior to us leaving for Whangarei which was very well attended.

The weekend before the race Fred and some of the crew sailed *Landfall* up to Whangarei. But I went up later by train on the Wednesday to join the yacht. The organising club did a marvellous job with pre race festivities and the whole of Whangarei seemed to be behind the event.

The race commenced off Marsden Point on Saturday afternoon, 18 April 1964 and there was a precession of yachts motoring down Whangarei Harbour that morning for the start. There was quite a carnival atmosphere at the start with a good sized fleet of spectator craft on hand to escort the fleet to sea. Two of the Whangarei Harbour Board tugs played fire hoses high into the air and the tanker "*Caltex Madrid*" was dressed for the occasion.

The weather was kindly for the start as assisted by an ebbing tide we had a moderate nor'easter making for a good on the wind slog from the start, out past the Frenchman and out to sea before being tacking to clear Bream Head.

As darkness fell on in on the first night *Landfall* was abeam of the Poor Knights Islands making good speed north with started sheets in a moderate sea. Whilst most of the fleet had passed us by nightfall we were heartened to see some yachts astern. *Landfall* carried no radio with only a back up "Gibson Girl" transmitter for emergencies, so our position could not be reported. It was not till some ninety miles south of the finishing line that the schooner 'Kotiti' sighted us and reported our position. This long silence regarding our position was naturally to cause concern for our families back in Devonport.

Fred organised watches so that the four crew members each stood a watch of two hours on and six off but during the day we each did two and a half hours on the helm. Fred did not stand a watch but was always on call. Effectively this meant that the helmsman was on his own on deck most of the time with other crew members only appearing when a sail change was necessary.

On the second day the wind went into the east and then sou'east which meant that *Landfall* was now running flat off on the point of a jibe. With the big spinnaker set *Landfall's* motion was one wild roll from one side to the other with the main boom and spinnaker booms alternatively dragging in the sea with each roll. Sleep we found was impossible with the constant wild rolling. The next day Fred decided enough was enough so we started tacking downwind to ease the motion and this certainly helped and enabled the crew to snatch some sleep.

We heard on our transistor radio other yachts reporting their positions to one of the mother ships "Hamatana" and were excited to learn that we were by no means last and that some of the bigger yachts were well astern. This was very good for our moral. However from the first day out until two days before the finish we only sighted one other yacht.

For the next few days the little *Landfall* averaged well over 160 miles each day as she sped downwind to-wards Noumea. It was all concentration for the helmsman of course particularly at night and from time to time it was all hands on deck to drop the kite and snug the yacht down in preparation for an overtaking line squall.

For five days it was fast exhilarating downhill sailing in generally fine conditions but with an occasional rain squall. Two days out and we were aware that the weather was much warmer and that we were sailing back into summer. Five on board a 27 footer would be very cramped for an extended cruise around the Hauraki Gulf but at sea this proved not to be the case. Usually several off duty crew members would always be sleeping so it was usually only in the mornings around lunch time and at evening meal times that all five of us would be awake.

Landfall did not have a log so every hour each helmsman simply recorded what he thought the average speed was for that hour in a little note book along side the course made good. Each morning Fred would add up the figures for calculating our DR position. This system of determining distance run proved surprisingly accurate.

Two days before the finish the wind started to lighten and our progress slowed right down. The night before we sighted land, *Landfall* was quietly sailing over a silent sea. Fred now had navigators' jitters. Fred who taught navigation in the Devonport Yacht Club during the winter months, used Norries Tables to fix his position and relied totally on sun shots taken with his trusted sextant. No GPS in those days of course so he became very anxious as we closed the extensive outer reef off southern New Caledonia. I had brought my own cheap plastic sextant with me and had previously taught myself, along with young Peter Blake, to navigate by using the Air Sight Reduction Tables to work out a position line. It was a lovely calm smooth sea as we approached the finish that evening so I was able to take a good shot of the planet Venus and the Moon's lower limb which gave me a reliable fix. When I had worked my sight out my position confirmed Fred's which immediately put him at ease.

The last day at sea was a very slow sail north and later in the afternoon *Landfall* was virtually becalmed and we could see the smoke rising from the chimneys of the Noumea nickel works. In the faintest of airs we finally crossed the finish between the French minesweeper "*La Lorientaise*" and the Balaria Pass and then proceeded through the Pass under motor to anchor for the night in the lee of the island of Armedié just inside the reef. The following morning before motoring on through the reefs to Noumea we all went ashore [probably illegally] and climbed the Amedié lighthouse, a rewarding experience.

Landfall's time for the race was 7 days and 4 hours although I did not record the minutes, but our average day's run over the course was 140 miles, which for a yacht of this size was very creditable. Despite losing the wind just before the finish *Landfall* still lead seven other yachts across the line. The overall winner of the race was *Truant's* old competitor the 36 foot ketch *Tarua* from Whangarei. *Landfall* however only managed a sixth placing in the C Division. This was due to the unfortunate penalty for losing the breeze on the last day of the race.

Such was the excitement of the race for the local population that a three day holiday had been declared for Noumea. *Landfall* and her crew spent a week tied up to the excellent facilities of the Circle Nautique and her crew had a wonderful time in Noumea, snorkelling out on the reef, day trips, a guided tour over the nickel works and of course excellent French cuisine. The yacht club also organised a regatta in which *Landfall* took part. I was able to practice my schoolboy French which was helpful as a few years later I was studying in the French speaking city of Geneva in Switzerland.

On *Landfall* we had rather a sorry story to tell about our return voyage to New Zealand. Four days out from Noumea, hard on the wind in fresh conditions *Landfall* sprung a leak around the mast step. At first Fred thought the leak was manageable and we pumped the bilges every hour. But on the fourth night at sea the leak became more serious requiring constant pumping. At this stage *Landfall* was about 250 miles south of New Caledonia or about half way to-wards Norfolk Island. Fred at first toyed with the idea of making for Norfolk Island for repairs, still some days sailing south. He had previously sailed up to Norfolk Island in his yacht *Nada* in 1946 and knew how to get in and anchor behind the reef in Emily Bay. However following a crew conference it was clear that the yacht would have to be slipped to get at the keel so reluctantly Fred decided the only prudent decision was to return to Noumea for repairs.

We hove to for the remainder of that night and at daybreak set sail back to Noumea. During the day the wind freshened to gale force and we lowered the mainsail and set the trysail for a fast run back to New Caledonia which only took two days. Once off the wind the leak stopped and we did not need to pump the bilges. But Fred's decision was the right one. Once back in Noumea *Landfall* was slipped and the area around the mast step recaulked.

In my own case due to some pressing work commitments back in Auckland I had to make arrangements to fly home. Interestingly on the way back in a four engined jet prop Electra we flew right over Norfolk Island and from 20,000 feet it was clear that the entire island was encircled in surf.

About ten days after my return I was at the Devonport Yacht Club one afternoon when *Landfall* sailed round North Head and headed up the Waitemata Harbour for Admiralty steps for clearance.

To-day the sailing exploits of Fred Norris are commemorated by the magnificent Fred Norris Memorial Trophy in the Devonport Yacht Club. This trophy incorporates Fred's beloved brass sextant mounted on a silver embossed pohutukawa plinth. This trophy was originally presented to Eric Wing and Dave Anderson for their win in *Marimba* in the first Two Man Round the North Island in 1977. Other recipients for outstanding feats of sailing and seamanship include Dame Naomi James, Sir Peter Blake, Gerry Clarke and Dr David Lewis.

Please send your stories and feedback to Mike Strong (mikes@hypower.co.nz)