



# The Spinnaker

The official magazine of the Evans Bay Yacht & Motor Boat Club

April 2008



Clockwise from top left. Cushla Hume-Merry at the Laser Youth Worlds, Andrew Morrison sailing round the North Island on Blue Magic, Vitamin Sea beached at Matauri Bay and EBYMBC club members survive an incredible ordeal in the Tasman Sea.

## Racing and Events Calendar

Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> April  
*Autumn Series racing*

Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> April (Anzac Day)  
*Special racing event*

Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May  
*End of season fun race*

Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> May  
*End of season BBQ & prize giving*

Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> June  
*Start of the Winter Series*

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**The Spinnaker** is produced bi-monthly, contributions (written and photographic) are welcome.

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## Commodore's Report

It has been an exciting month and there are much good news to report. Gary and I attended the Wellington Yachting Association meeting, which was a very positive meeting. We had a presentation on the Regional Talent Development Programme which was most interesting. The aim of the programme is to introduce sailors to sport science and coaching support at a young age, and on a regionalised basis. The programme is open to youth sailors competing at national level. The programme will provide five core services which have the most significant impact on performance. SAIL SMART, HIKE HARD, SAIL FIT, EAT WELL, and COACHING.

This sits well with the Yachting New Zealand Vision, which is TALENT DEVELOPMENT + TALENT IDENTIFICATION AND REFINEMENT = SUSTAINED OLYMPIC SUCCESS. Our club, through the excellent work of our Learn-to-Sail team, has been successful in signing up students generally – and recently this included a number of keen university students. We should take every opportunity to make LTS participants welcome, and have already taken steps in an effort to keep these sailors in our club.

Two options which may encourage LTS graduates to stay with Evans Bay is for them to look at trailer sailors and our cruising fleet as a way of continuing their sailing. The problem here is that most of our regular race participants in these divisions have settled crews. We must make our sailing exciting and challenging and this can be achieved by increasing the number of boats on the water. Easy to say but not so easily achieved.

### Other Issues of note

Recently we have seen an increase in members attending our Friday evening club nights, particularly new members. Long may this continue!

Graham and Mary Mantel launched their motor sailor on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March, and I was honoured to be asked to say a few words on behalf of our club. Mary then named their pride and joy *Tiua* (which means "ride the wind"). The long hours spent building this craft, and the difficulties encountered with all such projects, made the launching very special to Graham and Mary and for everyone present at the launch. We wish them well for the future. Like all boats, it is a project not yet complete.

John Seggie  
Commodore

## **Cushla Hume-Merry reports on her busy start to 2008**



I have just come back a few weeks ago from the Australian Circuit where I have competed in four regattas.

Overall I am very happy with my results as I have brought home two Gold medals for Youth titles. Sadly however in the Nationals I broke my top section before the last qualifying race and was unable to make the start in time. Who said Laser Radial campaigns were cheap???

However I still managed to stay in the top 30's so I am still very happy! I have attached my results from the regattas also.

My highlight of the trip was Sail Melbourne as this was a big mental and physical test as it was the last regatta and most of the top Europeans and Olympic selected sailors came to compete. The conditions varied with light winds, which was very hard indeed but I learnt a lot and was able to see where I stand in the way of light wind technique. It was also very windy at times with large waves which was extremely fun on the down winds! I finished 1st Youth and 19th overall. I am very happy about this as I exceeded my goals, which I had planned before leaving.

I have now just come back from Taupo where the New Zealand Laser Radial Nationals were held, I finished 7th overall, 5th New Zealander, 2nd Youth and 1st Female Youth...wow that is a long list haha. So now I am happy to say that I am in full training again for the Worlds in Auckland next Month.



### April Update

Cushla sailed at the Laser Radial Youth Female Worlds sailed in Takapuna, March 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. In a field of 38 sailors, the series was won on a countback by Gabrielle King of Australia, who scored two wins on the final day to overtake Cushla Hume-Merry.

*Photo of Cushla at the Worlds (front cover) is copyright & courtesy of Richard Gladwell.*

Just recently a well known 5.9 sailor, now sailing in cruising division, went fishing with a well known "Ballcock" and "Wig". When they pulled up the net, ho ho ho, in the net was an eel!

Back at base when cleaning up the net the eel bit the well known sailor on his boot. I understand he is now taking up Irish Dancing...EEL and TOE

Well done Mark Ranum, Jocko and Rick Martin.



## AROUND THE NORTH ISLAND WITH BLUE MAGIC

Blue Magic has just completed a splendid adventure sailing around the North Island, in three segments, and charged back through Wellington Heads at 3am on Friday, 29 February to rejoin the fleet. Blue Magic is a stock Davidson 35. We have enjoyed great racing on Wellington Harbour in recent years. This season started with the ISAF centennial in August, completed all early season races, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Brothers Race in most categories, and it seemed a good idea to sail around the North Island.

### *Up the East Coast*

On 22 November we set forth (Andrew Morrison, Matt Brien, Dave Bowden, Adrian Mullan and Ben Morrison) and encountered all sorts of weather, mainly headwinds all the way, and had lots of fun.

We were double reefed in 38 knots of angry norwester outside Wellington Heads. Ferocious gusts exceeding 50 knots caused us to drop the jib at Turakirae Head but we were hurtling downhill. The wind moderated as we plugged around Cape Palliser then progressed steadily up the Wairarapa coast on a delightful day; superb venison meatballs for dinner watching a glorious sunset.

We saw dolphins, seals, flying fish, albatross and all sorts of other seabirds. Past Cape Turnagain ...a long uneventful day up the Hawkes Bay coast. Hawkes Bay was lumpy but boring, approached Mahia at dusk. Dawn came with winds, rain, squalls.

The weather and seas grew as we approached the East Cape ... winds 30+ ... big seas; saw a big shark in the grey light on the surface and more dolphins. We reached East Cape around dusk; awesome and ominous, a spectacular and stark cape with a large tooth-like rock some distance out from the towering cliffs, violent and energetic waters, mixed waves and surges. We made slow progress.

A south-east breeze sprang up late in the night; dawn had us off Cape Runaway making slow progress. It was a beautiful day but only a light gradient breeze; nice to get some sun after grey rainy spring weather ... spinnaker up ... wind slowly faded. The day grew hotter, the wind grew lighter - a long, long way across the Bay of Plenty - 130 miles from Cape Runaway to Cuvier light; 60 miles out, not much happening.

The forecast had a big southwest gale developing which arrived in the late afternoon. It made for exciting night sailing in big seas towards Cuvier Island and Colville Channel; we approached the light in complete blackness and big confused seas; Blue Magic dancing through the big waves, beautifully balanced, light on the tiller.

Past Channel Island straight into a 40 knot south-westerly - double reefs again. In and out of double reefs, single reef, back to double; the sun was bright but it was a heavy slog all the way to Auckland. Berthed at Orakei Marina on 26 November at 9.30pm.

We had lost all the wind gear in the heavy seas approaching Cuvier light, the perspex windows suffered badly under the strain, part of the famous Harken traveller system broke in heavy winds; everything else functioned perfectly, including the crew, who were wonderful, competent and efficient.

The trip took 5 full days and 4 nights, running 4 hour watches (1 hour alternatively on the helm) and then 1 hour watches throughout the day, which worked well. The food was great, meals produced in strange conditions and we discovered the great joy of "baby wipes".

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We were amazed at the long, long distances, the remote coastline, and the almost complete absence of houses and habitation along our lengthy coastline.

### *The Christmas Phase*

We arrived too late for the Coastal Classic due to the volatile spring weather, so treated Blue Magic to a splendid cruising summer holiday around the Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Islands catching snapper, seeing lots of boats, and wondering at the early return so that 95% of all Auckland boats were back on the mooring by 11 January.

### *Around the top ...*

We flew to Auckland on 30 January and jumped aboard Blue Magic – marvellous new replacement wind gear, new toughened glass windows, renovated Harken traveller, engine checked and serviced, and a slight change of crew. Dr Dave Bowden of NIWA had left for Antarctica, and Ben Morrison to his legal practice and wedding preparations. The team comprised Andrew Morrison, Adrian Mullan (now a distinguished retired Principal from Nelson, having intelligently left a position of service as a very fine example of what a great contribution primary school Principals can make to the community to concentrate upon sailing seriously, playing in his rock band "Reflectionz" and living life), Kate Robinson, Matt Brien, Gary Turkington and Laurie Hope, also of Nelson.

We set off at 7.30pm, soon leaving the brilliant lights of the city of Auckland slowly fading as we headed for Tiri ... found Flat Rock (light flashing every two seconds) on the beam ... on past Cape Rodney ... headed for Tutukaka for breakfast in the grey dawn.

Light winds and engine on near Cape Brett – then a terrible clanking noise, engine off ... the condenser bracket had fractured causing urgent concern over loss of refrigeration when only a day into the trip. We managed to disconnect the condenser, and lash the entire refrigeration unit to the side of the engine box and successfully secure it. It remained there for the rest of the trip.

Off again, rounded Cape Brett under spinnaker in a fine south-easterly breeze – bowling along toward Cape Karikari; surging on, set a new course for North Cape; huge bang on our trolled lure, and the entire line snapped off at the boat (80 pound breaking strain) ... what was it?

Friday 1 February saw us rounding North Cape, sailing along in moderate seas and light breezes towards the spectacular meeting of the seas at Cape Reinga; the Pandora Banks waters are very tumultuous. The scenery is spectacular around Cape Maria van Diemen, with huge sand hills. The day settled into pleasant weather as we sailed on out of the tumbly waters into lighter seas; the day grew hotter, progress was not brilliant.

Next day dawned warm and quiet ... the wind kicked in and sailing under spinnaker commenced at 7am but the wind died within 2 hours. A huge pod of orcas surged past, looking like a herd of sea buffalo as their great backs rose out of the water, plunging and charging across our bow. There were albatross, a huge sunfish (which we nearly ran into) and several large sharks.



The night was dark and rather too quiet, far out of sight of land. Around midnight the wind began and by 5am, up went the spinnaker ... wonderful sailing all day, increasingly aware of the predicted southerly gale that was developing and moving rapidly north along the coast.

The wind began to fade and the spinnaker had been dropped after 10 hours, and the jib was on its way out when great fishing excitement occurred. Suddenly our lure was bouncing on the bungy, Gary rushed astern but could make no progress with the weight on the heavy line ... someone saw a shark ...

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the line was slowly pulled in. Eventually the head of a fish appeared ... and on the back of it a shark. A great big tuna head emerged from the sea but little else ... the shark must have grabbed the large fish just as it seized our lure.

We sailed on for 30 minutes before the lure pulled tight again, and a skipjack tuna was rapidly pulled aboard and placed in the fish box. The lure was returned to the water and a second large skipjack tuna (about 15 pound) caught and quickly brought aboard. I climbed onto the wash board of the boat outside the stern lines, in order to cleanly fillet the large fish on the bait board which just fitted onto the narrow wash board platform. I was just completing the first beautiful fillet when I noticed a large eye with a grey head about six inches from my left hand, which was holding the fish. Instinctively I jabbed the filleting knife straight into the head, and told it to leave my fillets alone. The crew demanded my instant return inside the safety lines ... and fortunate it was, because within two minutes the shark, a five-foot Mako, which had dived on being stabbed, was seen attacking the stern of the vessel. At all events, fresh tuna was a magnificent dinner that night.

Our progress was slow and the southerly storm was approaching rapidly; the warning made it clear that the south-easterly would rise to 45 knots. We concluded that we could not reach D'Urville or anywhere else to the south before encountering a gale with very high seas, so we decided to head for New Plymouth. The wind storm was interesting, because the anticipated action of two large highs dissipating the low trough did not occur and instead intensified a serious southerly wind centre, which moved rapidly north along the coast and seemed to centre in the Taranaki Bight for several days.

The Taranaki Harbour Board and its Harbour Master, Ray Barlow, were marvellous; we found ourselves tied up in the middle of the night to the seawall against a large black rubber sausage, surrounded by huge tugs and fishing boats, and a seawall upon which thousands of iridescent crabs were climbing. I don't know why.

The following day the Harbour Master's office put us in touch with the Master of the *Yo Tide*, a ship serving the Kupe oil rig, and Captain Perkins explained there were huge steep seas in excess of 3 metres, winds well in excess of 40 knots with gusts vastly exceeding that, and it would be extremely unwise to put to sea ... so we flew home to our humble occupations.

### *The final surge ...*

It took nearly 3 weeks for weather and crew availability to coincide for the final leg of the trip. Our new crew (Andrew Morrison, Kate Robinson, Gary Turkington, Matt Stechmann, and Andrew Saunders) boarded a 7.05pm flight on Wednesday, 27 February and flew to New Plymouth, where a wonderful aging sailor, Joe Davison (now aged 82 and who sailed around the world alone in his 33-foot sloop *Sail-Ho* in 1990, and has done three solo trans-Tasman crossings) met us and very kindly insisted on rowing each of us and our bags out to the boat. Joe is a legend in New Plymouth, and he kindly watched over our little vessel, tying any loose gear, throughout the days we had left the boat on his mooring in Taranaki.

We departed at 10pm into the blackness of the western sea from New Plymouth, a lumpy, light sea and little wind. We were fooled by a potential "rural community" that seemed to be in the wrong place; it transpired to be a new oil well wherefrom the natural gas is burnt off, creating a large orange glow across the sea.

We headed out to sea on 323 degrees and then bore away to Cape Egmont for some 30 miles, before we turned to port onto a course of around 162 True, and maintained the same course virtually all the way from Cape Egmont down past Stephens Island, to a point off the Brothers light, then to a point off Karori light - we veered very little from the straight line course.

A slow, bright and brilliant day; nothing happened until 2pm when a breeze allowed us to hoist the gennaker ... 6 hours later the spinnaker was up and drawing full ... the wind began to rise, and in a brilliant dusk we hurtled south until we were abeam of the Brothers light at 10pm (where discretion dictated dropping the kite). On through the night through the dreaded Terawhiti Rip, remarkably at slack water, winds gusting up to 30 knots; the boat revelled in the seas.

We experienced the most remarkable fishing moment of the trip under spinnaker south of Stephens Island; suddenly our lure was grabbed by a large albacore tuna. It was hoisted aboard into the bottom of the fish box and suppressed with a large cloth, beneath which the fish was swiftly despatched,

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guttled and washed clean, and deposited (without its tail because it was too big) into our large chilly bin.

At 3am we sailed past Barretts Buoy, dropped the sails and motored quietly and privately into our berth at Chaffers Marina at 4.30am and unceremoniously went home to bed.

*And the aftermath ...*

Eating our tuna was exquisite. The sheer adventure of sailing around the North Island was exhilarating, stimulating and demanding.

Our coastal climate is volatile and potentially very dangerous, so that sailing up the east coast in the spring is an uncertain and challenging experience. I was delighted to have technically competent yachtsmen of experience and judgment aboard the vessel, all of whom operated superbly, and enjoyed a marvellous mental and physical experience together for a few days.

The most illuminating truth is that each of us has such difficulty in extracting ourselves from our daily obligations and lives, at any time, in order to pursue adventures of any sort. It is difficult for ordinary busy people to overcome the obstacles of ordinary daily life, even just enough to sail for a few days around the North Island of New Zealand ... no wonder we get little opportunity to exploit our adventurous whims.

The sea is always intriguing, and the sea life is abundant offshore – we enjoyed enormous numbers of dolphins, but also saw sharks of different sizes and shapes, seals, flying fish, orcas, albatross and many wondrous sea birds. The extraordinary sight of dolphins surging in full phosphorescent glow out of the sea and blackness one night off the northern Taranaki coast was amazing.

The food is easy, especially deep frozen casseroles (which stayed remarkably well frozen even without a functional refrigeration unit) served with instant rice or pasta, or the many tins of wonderful food to mix with the rice quickly in heavy weather. Our most useful discovery is that simple dog bowls make the best meal platters in heavy seas ... and that baby wipes are a miraculous form of personal cleanliness device.

I prepared our passage plan in great detail and committed each leg (whether five miles or 30) to a laminated page, so we had 33 legs from Wellington to Wellington, and it was easy for the crew to read each "leg sheet" on deck with particulars as to course, relevant positions, relevant lights (with details), other relevant navigation features, available shelters, radio channel references, and NZ pilot book references.

*Conclusion*

Blue Magic performed admirably, and seemed to get better as the seas and wind got bigger; we found plenty of wind at sea, although we had not particularly looked for it. That is the nature of the New Zealand coast, which is both beautiful and dangerous at all times. For all that, it is a wonderful coast, and it produced a fine adventure. Our favourite sport of sailing does not engender great publicity or news, but within our quiet sport there is endless opportunity for excitement and adventure. It was surprising to see virtually no small boats at all, all the way from Wellington to Auckland, and then from Cape Brett until we reached Wellington, we never saw another yacht. At all events I am quietly pleased that we made the effort.

### **HAVE WE GOT YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?**

Lots of stuff goes on around the club that isn't always on race programmes, notice boards, or schedules. The best way to find out what's happening is via our occasional email updates. Your email address is totally safe, used only for club purposes & you can unsubscribe at any time. So if you think you're missing out, drop us a line at

[kokamo39@clear.net.nz](mailto:kokamo39@clear.net.nz)

# *The Spinnaker*

## **Evans Bay Yacht Club Sounds Weekend - May 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

This is an opportunity to cruise the Marlborough Sounds and enjoy some extra boating, it is not a full on sailing weekend and there will be time available for walks, visit to scenic reserves etc. The weekend is suitable for non sailing friends and partners

We will be hiring yachts based at Waikawa Marina (10 minutes from Picton). The boats come fully equipped with cooking facilities, showers, toilets etc, and typically sleep between 6 to 8 people.

The format of the weekend is, for those who can take Friday off work, travel to Picton, provision the boats while the Skippers carry out the safety checks, go for a sail and be moored up in a bay by nightfall. (The charter boats cannot be used at night). For those who cannot get the day off work we will have a water taxi meet the InterIslander that arrives in Picton at 9.05pm to take you to the boats.

**Cost:** \$220.00 covers boat hire, fuel, food but excludes travel to Picton and insurance bond

**Friday Morning,** We expect to be leaving Waikawa by 2.30pm

Options: Sounds Air. No later than the 1.45pm flight

9 am InterIslander (preferred option) or 8 am Strait Shipping BlueBridge Ferry

**Friday Evening.**

Options: 6.20pm InterIslander arrives 9.20 -Please have a meal before arriving in Picton

Also note, the cheaper fares are already gone.

1 pm BlueBridge Cook Strait Ferry or 2 pm InterIslander or Sounds Air 4 pm arrives 4.25.

Could you please advise when you will arrive so that we can arrange a water taxi for the group. This may mean a 5hr wait for the last people to get of the InterIslander.

**Sunday Evening** – We expect to be back in Waikawa by 4.30pm although one boat can come back earlier to meet the last Sounds Air flight at 4.45pm if necessary, But we need enough people and one skipper to fly back to warrant this.

Options: Last Sounds Air flight at 4.45pm

7.00 pm Strait Shipping BlueBridge

6.00pm InterIslander (preferred option)

**Insurance Bond**

Each boat will have a nominated skipper who is experienced in handling this size of boat. However you are hiring the boats, not the yacht club. **All** those on each boat are responsible for its return in good condition. An insurance bond of \$1500.00 per boat is payable to the hire company. It is up to those on each boat to arrange for his payment. This can be done by cash, credit card or cheque (cheques must be presented 7 days beforehand).

**You will need to bring;**

A desire to have a good time

Sleeping bag, (pillows are supplied), warm clothing, your own alcohol, suntan lotion

Wet weather-clothing leggings and jacket (this can be hired from the Charter Company if required)

Music CDs unless you are on Mashava which has joined the CD revolution

Walking shoes if you like to go for a bush walk, and a plastic bag to put them in before you get back on board (please do not wear black soled street shoes as they can mark the decks)

**Spaces will be limited and will be filled as deposits of \$100.00 per person are received.** However so bookings for the boats can be confirmed I would ask that all deposits are paid ASAP. Balance of payment to be made by May 3. Payments to be made to Evans Bay Yacht Club, PO Box 14 496, Kilbirnie, Wellington.

If you are able and willing to take charge of one of the yachts could you please let me know. Also could you please fill out an application form (available on the Club Noticeboard & from myself) and submit this with your payment.

Regards

Remy Thomassen

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## Middle-Aged Adventure Tourism



One wintery night Ross came home exclaiming "Every day sailing north is a day warmer and nearer to paradise." And so we bought *Silhouette II*, a 43 foot Ron Given designed catamaran.

Lying in Brisbane, there were logistical problems as we injected buckets of TLC in readiness to sail across the Tasman and make her our new home in Wellington. Finally, we flew into the dawn for the "big trip".

11 February: 10am Customs came to sign off the departure; 1pm we motor down the Brisbane River for the last time. Consuming lunch we headed up Morton Bay checking the charts and weather; 15 knots and light seas - excellent.

Hmmmm - not quite what we found as we headed into the Tasman! Rough seas with winds of 30 knots rising 40 were the reality. Avoiding the lee shore we sailed north east into the night, all of us sea sick and struggling.

Ross earned "Hero of the night" award as he coped with his own sickness, took his place on the helm, helped repair a broken reefing line, looked after me (sea sick plus bronchitis), and unblocked the toilet!!

Day two: calmer seas, rest and less stress; a better day actually heading toward New Zealand.

Day three: a little food all round and we began to feel human. Ross immersed himself in the port bilge to sort out an alarm problem, Russell set the sails and headed for his bunk, Graeme took watch, I scanned the sea and rested. The wind rose and fell, the sun and rain played, the sea moderated to a 2-3 metre swell.

3.30pm: Russell leapt from his bunk shouting "What the hell was the bang?" Ross looked blank. A creak and a groan later the starboard centre case imploded! Lifting the floor board Russell found the engine submerged.

Ross stuck his head through the cabin door "Put on full wet weather gear and prepare to abandon ship. We're taking water and going down." Graeme, talking on the satellite phone, "Sorry, got to go. A bit of drama here." Understatement of the Day award winner!

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With *Silhouette* listing heavily to starboard the EPIRB was activated, a Mayday issued; numbly, we clutched our accessible valuables, fetched the grab bag, and lifted the life raft out of the cockpit locker.

Hanging off the outer port side Ross exclaimed "The port dagger board is missing! Just a jagged line at the base of the hull." The rest of us were stunned mullet watching the sea rushing into the cockpit and filling the cabin. The power of the water was frightening as it wrecked havoc inside and sent chain, rope, everything in its path crashing.

Slowly *Silhouette* evened up as water filled the port hull. We crawled back into the cockpit and stood knee deep in water. Thanks to the satellite phone we knew help was coming.

5.30pm: darkness approaching; we launch the life raft. Snaffling the strobe light off the life buoy I dived in first followed by Ross, Graeme and Russell. A line to *Silhouette* attached, the EPIRB arranged, VHF (submersible, fully waterproof model) in my top pocket, and satellite phone at the ready we settled into a space no bigger than a small dining table.

Ross snatched my camera as he left and took a final shot of *Silhouette*, waves breaking over the cabin top. Russell and I battled with the contents of the life raft and issued sea sickness pills to everyone.

Darkness, and the ultra bright strobe was activated - Russell and Graeme took turns holding it above the raft. We waited for the distant sounds of the plane coming from Canberra. The waves washed over us; everything was sodden.

8.00pm: the VHF crackled into life "Calling *Silhouette 2, Silhouette 2*. This is Rescue Flight 417. Over." Channel 16 commanded our undivided attention for the hours to come as we communicated with Rescue Flights 417 and 418, and the merchant freighter *Alltrans*.



The first attempt: lines were successfully thrown to the raft but we were dangerously close to the props of the ship. *Alltrans* made a second unsuccessful pass. With the third pass it all came together; six ropes were thrown from the bow of *Alltrans*, two landing in the tiny opening of the raft. 12.30am: we were being rescued!

Russell disappeared, my turn next. I emerged into the glare of flood lights and the sight of a four storey steel wall, a rope ladder up the side. "Oh, my God!" "Aaaaaaa. My feet are caught in the raft!" My fear almost tangible.

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Ross untangled me, removing my shoes. The rope swung down as the ship rolled. I caught the ladder and was off as the swell rolled the ship the other way. Ross came with the next roll and we made our way up.

"One more. One more." Ross coaxed me to keep going. Neither able to look up nor down I moved one hand, one foot. At the top someone clutched my jacket but I was unable to let go, totally pole-axed with fear. Ross crawled across the steel deck until he was certain it was safe, followed by Graeme.

Mark, Master of *Alltrans* had told us on the VHF he would attempt to rescue us and hoped there would be no injuries; he and his extraordinary crew had succeeded. The worst that had happened was me wetting my pants as I left the raft!

Treated to a roast pork dinner and dry clothes we sat in the dinning room stunned. Graeme went to the bridge to contact his wife and promptly fainted. I asked for the toilet and a "stiff drink". Postie, the Chief Steward, offered brown champagne or aspirin and took us to our various cabins where we had hot showers and real beds.

We awoke next morning to find the life raft had been winched onto the deck of *Alltrans*. It sat a tiny red speck out of place amongst the rusted steel pipes of the aluminium powder carrier (see front page photo).

We dressed in over-sized, orange boiler suits. Treated like royalty by all on the ship we were given guided tours of the bridge, told about the workings of the loading system, introduced to the role of a ship's pilot, shown instruments old and new for communication and navigation, presented with a copy of our Mayday call, fed and watered with grace and style.



It was our very good fortune to be rescued by people with the skill and patience of Mark and Patrick (First Officer); that *Alltrans* was headed for Gladstone, Queensland, not Korea or Russia; that the owners of *Alltrans* supported the Master and crew in believing sea rescues are seriously important for mariners from all walks.

During the three day journey we discussed the sinking, puzzled as to what happened. It seemed unbelievable that a solid, well built yacht would just disintegrate, more likely that we had played touch with a large sea creature - we had seen plenty on our scanner. Sadly, it will remain a mystery.

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Berthed in Gladstone we were greeted by Customs, the Police and Water Police. After convincing all we weren't refugees we were escorted into town to make travel arrangements back to Brisbane and on to New Zealand. Our bedraggled passports, lack of luggage and personal image raised eyebrows, authorities deciding we were harmless although a tad odd - "People loose car keys but loosing a whole boat ...!"

Now, we mourn the loss of our home, the loss of our initial dream for a life that was different, reflecting on a journey that was intended to take one path but veered onto another. Yes, there will be another catamaran but the rescue was a one-off.

### 2007 - 2008 Management Committee Officers

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**Many thanks to Ross Davies & Judith McDonald, Murray Thomas, Andrew Morrison, and Cushla Hume-Merry, and Steve Crawford for the content & photos in this issue.**

### **THE BLACK SHED**

*The ground level of The Black Shed is fully occupied, with the usual demand by one person or another for more ground space. There are some spaces on the second and third tiers and these would be good to store a boat if you were not sailing much just now. Sailability also have new boats, either coming or arrived, and these will need more space in the shed, so keeping everyone happy is quite a juggling act. Sailing activity seems to have been better so far this season, although I haven't had my favourite – which is to relax in the bottom of a centreboard and feel it rock and float across Evans Bay in a beautiful summer sunset!!!*

*To which end, who would like to run The Black Shed? I have done my stint now and would like a break from this role. I will, of course, keep it going until you turn up, but not for more than a few months. I will certainly help you in whatever way you want me to, feel free to contact me if you have any questions about what the job entails [dffox@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dffox@xtra.co.nz). Please contact the Club Captain, Matt McCullough, if you're interested in taking on this role - [mdlj@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mdlj@xtra.co.nz) or 567-2117 or just catch him down at the club.*

*I am still a member of the Events Committee as undertaken at the last Annual General Meeting.*

*My final plea would be – please be nice to one another!*

*Dorothy Fox  
Shed Controller*

## How do things work at the Coastguard



*After so many years of driving passed the huge concrete building signed "Coastguard", I decided it was time we found out a little bit more about what goes on with our nearest neighbour, so I had a chat to Terry Sampson, the President of Wellington Coastguard, and this is what he told me...*

An active volunteer within the Coastguard is someone who wants to get involved in learning, training, understanding and contributing to the rescue of people at sea. In Wellington, we are made up of eight crews who operate on a schedule of Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, between 9 am and 7 pm (6 pm in winter). This means roughly one day a month on duty, scheduled a year in advance. After hours is covered by selected crew members on pager.

We have a regular theory and practical training regime which is agreed by Maritime NZ and the various training bodies within the overall Coastguard organisation. We do help volunteers to obtain a Radio Operators License, First Aid certificate and a Boatmasters certificate within the first couple of years by contributing to the costs.

You need to be reasonably fit (in bad weather the boats can be a little hard on backs) and have normal driver license level eyesight.

The crews are made up around eight or so people, comprising a skipper, a 2IC (both certified) and experienced and lesser experienced crew members. We operate in the harbour and Cook Strait, using our 12.6 metre and 7.5 metre Naiads.

A supporter of the Coastguard is a person who has all the rights and benefits of an active member, but chooses not to be available to participate on the rescue craft. That means you will still receive the quarterly newsletter, and can participate in the CBES courses and have full voting rights at the AGM (held in August / September each year).

Your subscription goes towards the management and provision of the rescue service in Wellington that rescues people from the Wellington Harbour and Cook Strait areas. The Coastguard works closely with the other services in Wellington, especially the Wharf Police (who use Lady Elizabeth III) and also train and liaise with other Coastguard groups in the area.

The subscription cost is \$50 per year (for either active or supporter), going from July to June. We have a pro-rata rate for people who join part way through. Forms for joining are available at the base at the Marina in Evans Bay (the large hexagonal building with the rescue orange doors). We are open Saturday, Sunday and public holidays between 9 am and 6 pm.

Please take a look at our website found at [www.coastguardwellington.org.nz](http://www.coastguardwellington.org.nz) for more information.

I hope that you can see your way clear to join the Coastguard. It performs a valuable and sometimes strenuous service to the boating public of Wellington and your contribution helps us save lives at sea.

Kind regards,  
Terry Sampson

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*Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed there are many rewards, if you disgrace yourself you can always write a book.*

*- [Ronald Reagan](#)*

*Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.*

*- [Bill Vaughan](#)*

## ONE CHARMED BOAT

*When Wellington artist Steve Crawford sailed from Auckland on his 6m yacht Vitamin Sea earlier this year, he unleashed a bizarre chain of events which left him with only one conclusion: Vitamin Sea is a very lucky boat. Steve tells the story...*

I had been given a \$2000 quote for the boat to be delivered (by road) to Wellington. This was more than I had at hand. I opted instead to sail her home, around Cape Reinga and down the North Island's west coast. Having had blue water experience, including five Auckland -Wellington voyages, I had confidence in *Vitamin Sea*: she was well designed, professionally built, constructed from diagonal kauri planking, resorcinol glued and in apparently good condition.

After hearing the long range forecast predicting SE up to 30 knots over the next 48 hours, I elected to head NE over to Great Barrier Island. The trip started with a mild SW breeze which soon fizzled out, and the 3.3hp Mercury pushed the boat along at around 5 knots. When the easterly wind began to freshen, I decided against beating up The Colville Channel to Tryphena, and elected to continue sailing – a nice beam reach along the Barrier's western coast through the night. I caught a Bonito on a lure, but started feeling a bit queasy, so it remained in the cockpit ungutted for a few hours.

Around midday I dropped the main, leaving the #2 jib aloft, and reset the wind vane. The SE wind continued to freshen, and though stressed, the # 2 jib seemed to have an amicable arrangement with the wind vane. At 45-50 knots, with the seas mounting rapidly, I replaced the jib with the storm sail. This upset the wind vane. I also had to rehand the storm sail several times: the whipping and shivering kept working the springloaded pins open.

We were about 20 nautical miles north-east of the Poor Knights, and as I was concerned about a lee shore at night, I decided to see if the boat could 'lay a hull' in big seas. Whoops! *Vitamin Sea* started kicking and bucking like a kaimanawa horse. Still, I tied the storm sail into a bundle on the foredeck; climbed into the cabin, and removed my wet gear.

### **Knock-down**

As an afterthought, I climbed back out (without a harness) to lash the tiller. Just then, a big wave set showed up. We swung beam-on, then the gunnel I was sitting on went under. I grabbed the main sheet as the hull tipped over the top of me, emptying a fish bin of water bottles, anchor, chain, warp and fuel tanks around me.

When we righted, I quickly took stock – the patch of flotsam was already a considerable distance away. Checking to see that the life raft and deflated rubber duck were still secure, I noticed one eye blurred. It turned out to be gushing blood from a small cut above my eye. I wondered if it were serious. I was in shock and seasick; I couldn't function. I lay down on the leeward bunk like I was in an accident and emergency clinic. I had considered the big EPIRB but still believed the situation manageable at that stage.

The second knock-down was worse. The wave picked up the boat and dumped it upside down. Everything onboard smashed into the cabin top. I was trapped in the quarter berth with foamy water gushing in from the companionway. I felt claustrophobic, and realized there was a strong possibility I was about to die. I got back on deck to discover the starboard shroud had ripped from its swage. I considered using a spectra emergency halyard as a replacement I also pondered the idea of hoisting the storm sail, and keeping the boat on one tack (secured by the good shroud) and maybe squeaking in around Cape Brett.

My VHF was dead. I was shell-shocked with a rapid fight-or-flight cycling sort of paralysis. I threw the shards of glass that had been my coffee plunger out of the cabin, and activated the EPIRB. I set up the life-raft in the cockpit along with a grab bag with fresh water. I activated my second, pocket-sized EPIRB and donned an extra layer of polypropylene. We had a few more knock-downs, more like sudden, severe

## The Spinnaker

dunkings. In hindsight, my own weight (70kg) probably contributed to the full capsizes – I was sitting on the gunnel during the worst rollovers.

### Rescue

The NorthPower Electricity Rescue helicopter was a welcome sight, and the pilot and crew made it all look easy. They dropped a line with a bag containing a VHF radio, and then a line with the harness. These weighted lines were dropped in the water to windward then dragged along to the boat. Secured in the harness, I lifted off, dangling in the shrieking, 50-knot wind. Within 20 minutes, I was sitting in a bromeliad garden, having a cup of coffee with John Ecuyer, a friend in Whangarei. He'd collected me from the helipad. I swore off sailing, claiming it to be a form of insanity.

Next morning, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) rang to tell me that *Vitamin Sea* had rounded Cape Brett. According to the course plot from the boat's EPIRB transmissions, they estimated she'd been travelling at five-knots at times. Later that day Russell Radio called to say there had been a positive visual sighting. *Vitamin Sea* was now heading up the coast dragging its main bow anchor – as well as the anchor and warp that had escaped from the cockpit during the first capsize.

MRCC confirmed the visual sighting from their latest satellite fix. At around 8pm (after high tide) I received a remarkable call: *Vitamin Sea* was aground high and dry in Matauri Bay, beaching itself in soft sands, and looking lively. A small crowd had watched as the yacht beached itself. Locals donned wetsuits and rushed into the water to check if anyone was on board. There had apparently been some jostling for salvage among the holiday campers, but as it happened, a group of people (known to me only as "Peter's-family-and-friends") secured anything of value for me, expecting nothing in return. A local security company posted crews on watch, till we arrived the next morning.

Ropes were located. I frantically clambered around in waist-deep water securing the main sail, closing the hatches and connecting shorelines. A few locals arrived with an excavator, others with coffee in a flask. Soon the boat was secured on the grass. Apart from the keel looking decidedly stressed and in obvious need for refitting, there was no serious hull damage. Inside was a different story – total chaos. But remarkably, almost all the boat's inventory was saved. We headed back to Whangarei for the night, to organise some sort of transportation for the following morning.



### Arson

Later that night, however, the Matauri Bay security company phoned to warn of the boat's vulnerability. This was unsettling – and sure enough, later that night, they rang to say the boat had been set on fire. The 12mm Perspex forward hatch had been smashed, some sort of accelerant dropped in and ignited. Fortunately, it landed in a fish bin, producing a stinking, black smoky fire. Again, Peter's-family-and-friends had arrived to douse the fire with buckets of water. A police constable said to me: "You might want to get that boat out of here ASAP." I agreed.

Another good friend from Whangarei, Peter Metcalf, loaned me his triple-axle trailer and his next-door neighbour Phil loaned us his powerful vehicle to drag it out. We loaded the boat (heeled over) onto the trailer, and began the long delivery to Wellington.

## Desert Road Drama

Down in the centre of the North Island, as we were barrelling along the volcanic plateau, the trailer's front left wheel suddenly fell off (all the studs were sheared) and in the process it punctured the wheel just behind it. The whole rig was dragging along on the hub. Just when I thought things couldn't get any more surreal, a couple of army dudes popped up out of the bush next to us, from their machine gun nest. One of these characters proved to be an expert field mechanic. Following his advice (borrowing nuts and studs from other wheels) we restored the trailer – a little makeshift – but it got us to Wellington – at last!



*Postscript: Crawford says the experience has humbled him. Despite his earlier attempts at giving up sailing (in Whangarei), he's fallen of the wagon, and is now repairing Vitamin Sea. He's not sure about the extent of their next adventure. But with the experience has come a good understanding of small boat ocean seamanship and empathy for distressed mariners. He plans to get involved in the local volunteer coast guard in realisation of their importance, particularly in Vitamin Sea's new cruising grounds, the Cook Strait.*

## From our Esteemed Vice Commodore

### RACE SIGNALS

An interesting occasion occurred recently at the club where Code Flag L over Green was raised with the required sound signal.

A number of competitors came up to the Start Box and sought clarification of what was meant by the signal. They were told politely that the signal in fact did not apply to them and that it applied to Cruising Division.

The conclusion that I come to is that the people concerned are not fully aware of the signals and what they mean. As this is Olympic Year the rule book will be published later this year and it is hoped that all who sail acquire a copy. The current rule is RRS 25.

Gary Wagstaff.

PS The programme is as scheduled and on Friday 25th April, Anzac Day, a special programme will be circulated shortly. Likewise the 3rd of May. Winter Series starts Sat June 14 and fortnightly thereafter.

Dance like it hurts, Love like you need money,  
Work when people are watching - [Scott Adams](#)

2 is not equal to 3, not even for large values of  
2 - [Grabel's Law](#)

