



Story of the month: October 2008
By Cheryl Barnett



Maori Lass

Roscoe Barnett and his wife Cheryl are the seventh owners of Maori Lass a 30' sloop which you might just have noticed moored slap bang in the middle of Constitution Dock at the last Festival. There could be two reasons for this extraordinary event of "mooring karma" – not only is Roscoe the Dockmaster for the Festival, but back in September 1950 it's the spot where Maori Lass was launched. Below is a potted history of the boat's owners and travels, direct from the keyboard of Cheryl Barnett. Over to you, Mrs B.

("not easy to see the detail of ML, but a lovely shot of the glassy calm waters of Constitution Dock at the 2007 Festival, thanks to one of the volunteer photographers, Keith Carroll", says Mrs R)

Maori Lass was built in 1949 at New Town, Hobart by the Late Ron H Andrewartha to a design by a fellow New Zealander, H E Cox, A.I.N.A. and launched from Constitution Dock on 16 September 1950. She is a 30' sloop, constructed of Celery Top Pine on Tasmanian Blue Gum with Tasmanian Myrtle used extensively inside the main cabin. Tasmanian timbers were chosen then as they were heavier than New Zealand timbers.

Until 1970 she was a consistent and successful racer in club races and regattas on the Derwent out of Bellerive Yacht Club and the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania with Ron Andrewartha and then the second owner Bill "Wobbler" Read. Dr Terence Horne, a former Surgeon in Hobart, was I believe the third owner and used Maori Lass mainly for cruising.

The fourth owner, Christopher Small moved Maori Lass to Port Hacking (south of Sydney) in the early 1970's and raced her regularly and successfully with the Port Hacking Yacht Club. In fact, I believe she still holds the record for the Port Hacking to Lion Island (Broken Bay) and return race. Apparently it was a broad reach up and back. Maori Lass was originally listed on the British Registry on 6 June 1972. Roscoe met Chris Small in Hobart many years later whilst both were attending a subsequent Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

The fifth owners, the Late Jim Tabler and Jan Tabler spent five years (1974-1979) circumnavigating the world on Maori Lass with a very varied, sometimes dangerous but ever challenging life-style. We have a repository of amazing stories, letters, photos and conversations thanks to Jan Tabler and many other Hobart folk, that some day may be documented for future generations. Jan Tabler visited Hobart in February 2005 for the Festival and also met with Tom Andrewartha – son of Ron Andrewartha. Tom well remembers (as a young man) assisting his father in building Maori Lass in the backyard of their New Town home.

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In 1979 Maori Lass returned to Australia, was sailed around the Great Barrier Reef, spent some time in Mooloolaba (southern Queensland) until she was relocated to Pittwater (NSW) and was found by the sixth owner Mick Souter, who in turn handed her on to Roscoe and I in November 1993.

During the 1996 Sydney Wooden Boat Festival, Tom Andrewartha (who was visiting friends in Sydney) paid a visit to Darling Harbour. After walking down the gang-plank and along that arm of pontoons he came upon Maori Lass quite out of the blue and couldn't believe what he saw. After recovering and introducing himself as "the son", and being invited on board, the two men had a lot to talk about. Tom very kindly gave many early photos and copies of documents on the history and construction of Maori Lass to us.

The Barnett Family and like-minded wooden boat friends have spent many wonderful times aboard her in and around the environs of Pittwater, Broken Bay and the Hawkesbury (Sydney). There were many trips down to Sydney Harbour for Wooden Boat Festivals at Darling Harbour and she also participated in the ever popular twilight races on Pittwater. Then, after we re-located from Sydney to Hobart in early 2003, Maori Lass duly followed but arrived June 2004 via a somewhat different mode of road and ship transport.

After some 34 years of absence she was now back in Tasmanian waters again. Extensive restoration work on Maori Lass was carried out by Roscoe, on a cradle set up behind The Wooden Boat Centre Tasmania at Franklin under the guidance of Principal Boat Builder and Tutor, Terry Lean. This was an important opportunity at that time, as it gave all the students a chance to see and learn first-hand the specialised art of repairs and restoration to an all timber vessel.

Ross was also ably assisted by Llew Sweatman a former graduate of the WBCT and now a Tutor. Maori Lass was re-launched down at Franklin on 1 February 2005 after seven long months of hard work (which unfortunately was on a part-time basis) and she arrived back up in Hobart just in time for the 2005 Festival. Another interesting fact is that the first big boat built by diploma students at The Wooden Boat Centre Tasmania, the Lady Franklin, is the only other H E Cox-designed, one-design cruiser like Maori Lass ever built to our knowledge.

Do you have a "Story of the Month"?

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The Australian Wooden Boat Festival is supported by the Tasmanian Government through Events Tasmania

