

RUSSELL BOATING CLUB

THE FIRST 20 YEARS.

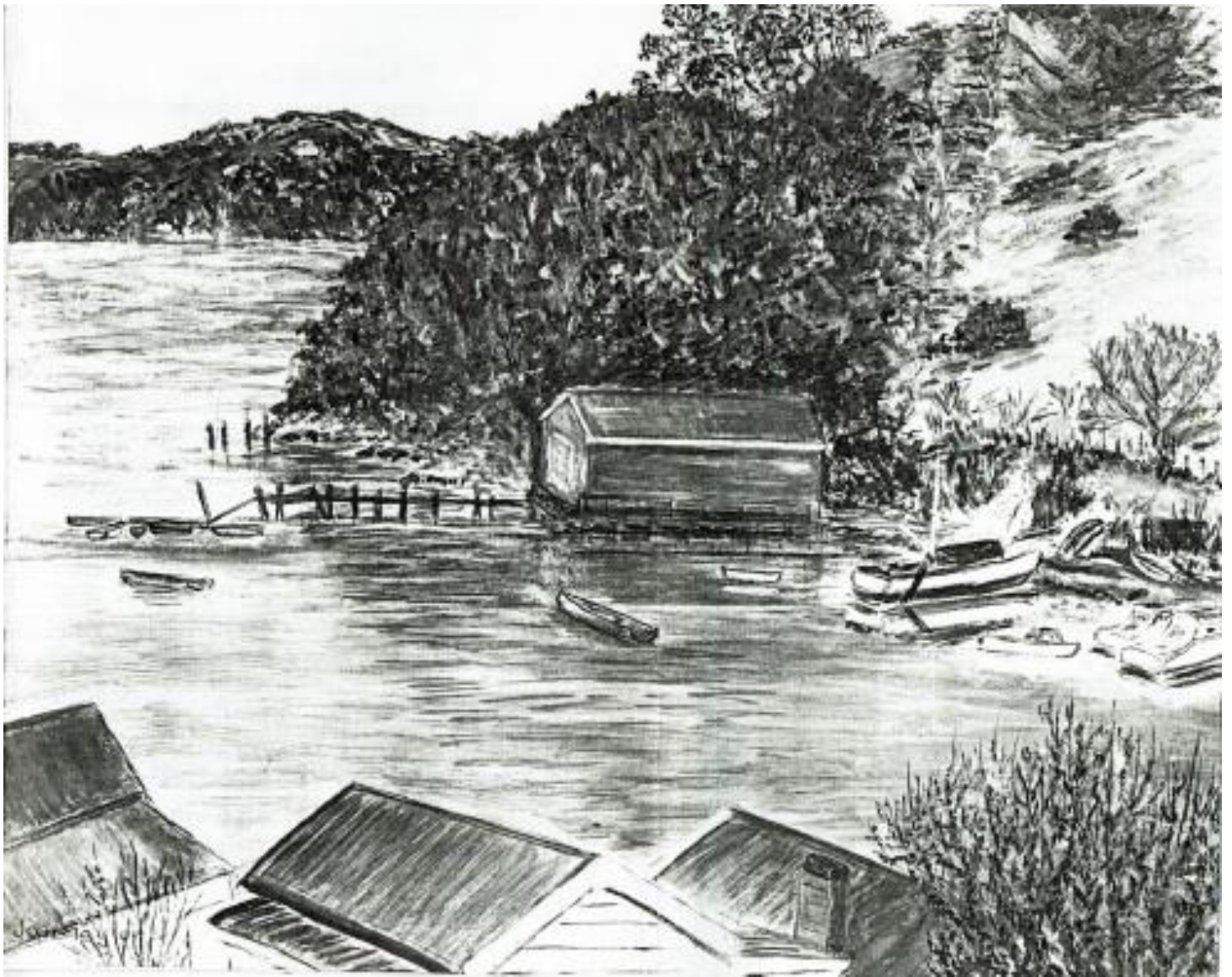


Compiled by DON BEATTIE

SLIPMASTER

R.B.C. 1990

With special thanks to all those Russell  
Residents who subscribed word of these  
interesting details of the past.



Copy of original painting by JANE TAYLOR, R.B.C. 1975

## RUSSELL BOATING CLUB

### THE FIRST 20 YEARS.

In a recent research into the foundation and first twenty years history of the Russell Boating Club, interesting aspects of earlier Matauwhi Bay have emerged.

It is noted that the first Club for boating enthusiasts was established as the Russell Sailing Club in 1936 and it continued until 1938. Unfortunately there is no documented evidence to indicate its' full activities, and it seemed to fade from the scene.

However, there was still activity in the Bay with L & G Warne Bros. Boat building business. Their boat building shed was erected on the site of the present boat club and at least four well known boats were launched from there. In 1934 the "KNOXIE II", which was sold to Fullers and renamed 'HISS RUSSELL'. Then in 1939 came the 'KNOXIE III'. This was also sold to Fullers and renamed "MISS IDA". Then came the 'PIRATE' which was built for Mr Otto Sommers. It was surveyed and skippered by Mr Jim Whitelaw and was used extensively for game fishing. After the 'PIRATE' the "MARLIN" was built for one of the Warne Brothers - it likewise was surveyed and is now used for game fishing out of Tauranga.

In the period 1946 to 1952 the Russell Yacht Club was in being, and was a very active club throughout these years. They chose as their future sailing fleet an American Cat boat design, 15 foot in length and had 7 boats built. The cost of these at the time was 31 pounds per hull. The Club conducted sailing races, log trials for power boats and staged fun races and picnics.

Among their ambitious projects was the staging of 2 One Act Plays - ("The Willing Horse" and "Birds of a Feather"). To do this they had to write to London to obtain production rights and were advised that a royalty of 10/6 (ten shillings 6 sixpence) would have to be paid per performance. Gowns, wigs etc had to be obtained from Auckland and the Plays were finally staged in the Russell Town Hall on November 20th 1947. One hundred and eighty nine tickets were sold resulting in a nett profit of ten Pounds.

In 1952 the momentum went out of the Club and it finally went into recess leaving their small clubrooms still on the foreshore of the inner Bay.

Following the closure of Warnes' boat yard in early 1940, their old shed was abandoned until it was later taken over by a Mr Bill Hopkins and used as a Fish Receiving Depot. This only operated for 12 months or so then closed. The shed remained empty once again for a period until Mr Mick Clifford took it over also as a fish depot. This too failed to last and the building was once again abandoned. Hikurangi Fisheries who were trying to get established in the Bay of Islands, took the building over and established their Fish Factory there - this lasted until approx 1971-72 when they closed in Matauwhi Bay and moved to Opuā.

A little before this time, Mr Joe Bosanquet and his wife established themselves here and commenced a business known as Marina Services, principally to cater for all visiting and local yachties. He established several moorings in the Bay, did a lot of Jetty reconstruction with floating pontoon, built a side walk access around the old shed, also put in place a shower, toilets and wash room at the rear of their premises in what is now the Garden centre in the old Port and Starboard building. He had a bore sunk to obtain water which he piped out to the jetty. This bore incidentally is still supplying water to the club. After selling his business he took a very active part in the development of the club, and did so right up to his death. He was one of the Founding Members and was appointed Club Captain at the inaugural meeting.

In the absence of any organised boating activity over a period of years, it was felt by many that another club should be established. This was reported in the 'Advocate' on the 3rd August 1971, that a meeting of interested parties was held in the Russell Town Hall on that date, to establish a club to fulfil the development of water sport in the area, and improve boating facilities, and so at this Inaugural Meeting, the \*RUSSELL BOATING CLUB' was officially founded with Dr Ramsey elected Commodore.

The next couple of years was given to a period of consolidation. Drawing up club rules, establishing a constitution, organising sailing events and activities, and entering into practical negotiations with the Harbour Board for the establishment of shore facilities and the taking over of the old fish factory for proposed club rooms.

A visual scene of the area in those days show an old rusty tin shed abandoned by Hikurangi Fisheries, a jetty in need of repair and the beach cluttered with old mooring poles, slips and cradles.

The club finally received approval to lease the old shed and immediately set about clearing it out ready for upgrading. Early members recall that this was one of the dirtiest and messiest jobs they had been involved in - removing old tarred cork from the chill room, removing old pieces of machinery and rubbish accumulated over the years, replacing rusty iron and repairing gaping holes in the floor.

From this humble beginning has evolved a progressive club with a membership of 286 (at time of writing) fine spacious clubrooms and deck space. A large modern kitchen, bar and chill room together with all comfort amenities. It is ideally situated with adjacent beach and park-land with service facilities for all craft, and now must rank as one of the foremost boating and recreational clubs in the Bay of Islands.

The feature event each season is the staging of the Tall Ships Regatta, which this year (1990) provided one of the most spectacular sights ever to be seen in the Bay.

Thirty two large yachts and seven square rigged ships competed in the event, with hundreds of smaller spectator boats all in the Bay. The sight of 7 square-rigged ships racing almost abreast under full canvas made a stirring and Impressive panorama of sail.

Square Riggers:    Soren Larsen  
                         Spirit of Adventure  
                         Spirit of New Zealand  
                         Young Endeavour (Aust)  
                         Tradewind  
                         R. Tucker Thompson  
                         Breeze

RUSSELL BOATING CLUB  
FORMED AT PUBLIC MEETING  
RUSSELL TOWN HALL  
3RD AUGUST 1971

1971-72

COMMODORE - DR. RAMSAY

PATRON - F. MILLER

VICE COMMODORE - J. LAIDLAW

Items of Interest: First Newsletter - "MATAUWHI SOUNDINGS"

1972-73

A.G.M. 26/07/72 RUSSELL TOWN HALL (19 members attended)

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON - F. MILLAR

VICE COMMODORE - IVAN ANDERSON

Items of Interest: F. Arlidge's slip purchased & refurbished. Start made on erecting grid & grid poles.

1973-74

A.G.M. 22/08/73 RUSSELL TOWN HALL

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON - F. MILLAR

VICE COMMODORE - IVAN ANDERSON

Items of Interest: Club rules and constitution drawn up and adopted. Affiliated with N.Z. Yachting Federation

1974-75

A.G.M. 2/8/74 HELD: CHURCH HALL

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON - F. MILLAR

VICE COMMODORE - IVAN ANDERSON

Items of Interest: Approach made to Northland Harbour Board re leasing old Fish Factory for clubrooms. Lease granted 1st October 1974. Metal Pontoon re-tarred and upgraded.

1975-76

A.G.M: JULY 1975 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (70 members & supporters)

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON COLIN - TOWNEND

VICE COMMODORE - IVAN ANDERSON

Items of Interest: Club Incorporated. Renovations & Clean up - reported by old-timers as the dirtiest job ever undertaken. Commenced septic tank, toilets & shower Power Installed Jib and Mast gantry erected by B. Sellers. Big Ships (later Tall Ships) Regatta first held

1976-77

A.G.M: 17/07/76 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx 75 Clubmembers)

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON COLIN - TOWNEND

VICE COMMODORE - IVAN ANDERSON

Items of Interest:

1975-76 Tall Ships Event - won by "FEARLESS"

1916-77 Tall Ships Event - won by "DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH"

Club application under the Sale of Liquor Act to sell liquor to Club Members only.

1977-78

A.G.M: 20/07/77 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx 50 members attended)

COMMODORE - JIM LAIDLAW

PATRON - COLIN TOWNEND

VICE COMMODORE - VIN HILL

Items of Interest: Club will apply for liquor licence to cover Fri, Sat, Sun, and all Public Holidays 3-10 pm Kitchen upgraded to Health Dept standards. 'Tall Ships' Trophy to be displayed in Museum. Northland Harbour Board ordered Matauwhi Bay clean-up. All old mooring piles, slipways and cradles to be removed.

1978-79

A.G.M: 15/7/78 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx. 50 members attended)

COMMODORE - JOE COTTON

PATRON - CAPT. C. TOWNEND

VICE COMMODORE - JIM BRUTON

Items of Interest: Retiring. Commodore J. Laidlaw awarded Life membership. New slipway carriage completed by J. Nightingale. To be used on present sight of slip - new rails to be put in place. Job completed June 1979 New slipway and cradle working well First Boat Club Ball held at Town Hall in April 1979. Approx. 200 attended.



1979-80

A.G.M: 14/7/79 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx. 55 members attended)

COMMODORE - JOE COTTON

PATRON - CAPT. C TOWNEND

VICE COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

Items of Interest: New entrance to Clubhouse and further extensions to be proceeded with by Bram Cone for estimate \$4,300 Emergency lighting installed.

1980-81

A.G.M.: 19/7/80 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx. 60 members present)

COMMODORE - VIN HILL

PATRON - CAPT. PAT WILLIAMS

VICE COMMODORE - BRAM CONE

Items of Interest: Cement 13,500 litre water tank constructed at rear of clubhouse.

1981-82

A.G.M.: 25/7/81 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (Approx. 60 members attended)

COMMODORE - VIN HILL

PATRON - CAPT. PAT WILLIAMS

VICE COMMODORE - BRAM CONE

Items of Interest:

Lower end of slip rails rebbeded. Support piles under club house renewed and other maintenance work. New motor installed in winch shed. Second Boat Club Ball held in Town Hall was great success - Profit \$315.11

1982-83

A.G.M: 31/7/82 CLUB ROOMS (Approx. 54 members present)

COMMODORE - ROY GRANT

PATRON CAPT. - PAT WILLIAMS

VICE COMMODORE - JOE COTTON

Items of Interest: New cement pontoons assembled and set in place. N.H.B. set in piles. New gangway to pontoon constructed. Flagpole erected on Clubhouse and general clubhouse upgrading.



1983-84

COMMODORE - ROY GRANT

A.G.M.: 6/8/83 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (48 members present)

PATRON - CAPT. PAT WILLIAMS

VICE COMMODORE - RAY TAIT

Items of Interest: B.B.Q. under construction by Warren Stone also Fire place brick facia in clubhouse.

1984-85

A.G.M: 28/7/84 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (53 members present)

COMMODORE - GRAEME WRIGHT

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

Items of Interest: New centre floor laid in clubhouse. Carpet to be laid around floor. Cobblestone laid at rear of club. Centre keel support fitted to slip to allow for fin keel yachts. Tall Ships night outgrown clubhouse, now to be situated in marquee on Park Reserve. New squabs and tables set in around centre floor of clubrooms. Third R.B.C. Ball held 25th May '85, net loss \$76.74

1985-86

A.G.M: 20/07/85 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (68 members present)

COMMODORE - GRAEME WRIGHT

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

Items of Interest: Causeway repairs completed Starting box incorporated in new wharf building A & P Stafford offered as gift to the Club the rescue Boat, as is and where is. New motor and complete overhaul undertaken.

1986-87

A.G.M: 14/6/87 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (65 members attended)

COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - MAURICE OTRIM

Items of Interest: Optimist programme in conjunction with school developing well. Old winch shed cleaned out and prepared to house Optimists. After months of negotiation with the authorities the plans for clubhouse alterations and improvements have been approved.

1987-88

A.G.M: 20/6/87 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY 58 Members present

COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - ADRIAN STEVENS

Items of Interest: Contract for building extensions granted to C. Watson as the successful tenderer. Piles on wharf strengthened by cross bracing. A Special Meeting of the R.B.C. moved that the N.Z. Breweries quotation for Cool Store facilities be accepted. Repayment over 5 years or less.

1988-89

A.G.M. 25/6/88 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (61 members attended)

COMMODORE - ROY HORNELL

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - MITCH PASCOE

Items of Interest: Clubhouse extensions completed with new decking. Installation of Burglar alarm. Very successful jazz weekend to be repeated next year.

Vin Hill and Joe Cotton were awarded Life Membership at A.G.M.

1989-90

A.G.M. 24/6/89 CLUB ROOMS, MATAUWHI BAY (65 members attended)

COMMODORE - ADRIAN STEVENS

PATRON - TREVOR GELDARD

VICE COMMODORE - GEAEME TOWNSEND

Items of Interest: South Seas Cruising Club Regatta finishes at Russell with a week of celebrations. (Oct/Nov'89). S.S.C.C. Regatta starting in Russell (May 1990)

Tall Ships for 1990 a huge success and brilliant spectacle.

Membership around 300 at present