



*Admirers gather round to celebrate the relaunch of *Mystery* in Wellington*

*The launch of *Mystery**

Since The Wellington Classic Yacht Trust was formed in July/August 2010, a weather eye has been kept out for a planked Idle Along, the classic Wellington-designed centreboard class. In May, we acquired *Mystery* from her owner, Auckland-based boatbuilder Gary Matthews. This came after a tip off from John Logan, an IA enthusiast, who told us that the ex-Wellington champion *Windhover III* might be available for purchase – but it turned out she wasn't.

Mystery was built in Nelson by the most successful and prolific builder of IAs, Joffre Kroening, in the early 1950s. In 1956 she competed in the Moffat Cup, that year held in Wellington. She came second to the *Lorraine*, another of Kroening's boats, sailed by Hugh Poole.

Kroening used kaikawaka (also known as NZ cedar or kaiwaka), which is very light, but somewhat brittle. She had a few narrow cracks in the hull planking, and the topsides and transom had suffered a bit of iron sickness and stress around the rudder and chainplate fittings.

These were cut away and replaced with red cedar. This is a departure from designer Alf Harvey's insistence that boats be planked with native NZ timbers, but our attempts to source air-dried kaikawaka proved fruitless.

Someone had taken some power sanders to her hull, which meant that she wasn't very fair. This required a lot of work in filling, fairing, filling, fairing, painting, fairing, (you get the picture), until we were reasonably happy.

This has been very much

a 'get her in the water and sailing' restoration, rather than showroom finish. The deck at some stage was redone in ply (not accepted in the class until 1960), and the coamings aren't quite of her era. The ply was in good condition, though stained, faded and highly discoloured, so the decision was made to keep it for the time being.

We managed to contact Kroening's daughter, who supplied us with what information she could, along with copies of photographs and newspaper clippings, which was fantastic.

Mystery was relaunched on 22 October, and she proved very slippery (photos at www.facebook.com/wgtnclassic). Her maiden voyage was an absolute joy, and we later decided to push her further afield during a 20 knot

southerly. It was then that the decision about the deck was made for us because, on a tight lead crossing Evans Bay on a return trip from Kau Bay, a lashing on the chainplate failed and we lost the rig over the side.

We were very fortunate in the lack of damage to the boat: there is a hole in the ply deck, and the box for the mast (they aren't stepped in the usual fashion) broke cleanly along one side – an easy fix.

As I write, we have purchased replacement decking, and by the time you read this *Mystery* will be redecked (or very close to) with class-approved planked deck and coamings appropriate to her era.

Roll on the Idle Along Regatta in Taupo next year!

By Gavin Pascoe.