

SPORT

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Idling:
Phillipa Durkin, left, and John Floyd tried out Mystery last Saturday.

Photo:
KATHARINA MONIEN

Porpoise boat revived

By JAMES HOLLINGS

Inspired by a porpoise and built like an aircraft carrier, they were a piece of Wellington backyard genius that became a national classic.

Mystery, an Idle-Along class centreboard yacht with a famous racing pedigree, took to the water at Clyde Quay Boat Harbour on Saturday after a loving restoration by members of the Wellington Classic Yacht Trust.

Trust chairman Gavin Pascoe said Petone man Alf Harvey designed the first Idle-Along in 1927 on his living room floor, after noting the need for a quick, fun-to-sail yacht that could be built by amateurs.

Legend has it he was inspired by a 12ft 8in porpoise he caught in Worsler Bay, then released, but not before carefully copying the body and fin shape that gave the class its speed.

The hull was very wide for the time, giving rise to the boat's early nickname – "aircraft-carriers". But it proved a brilliant solution. Boats from that class would zip along in strong Wellington winds that kept other boats in the sheds.

Pascoe, a yachting historian, said it was possible the design was the world's first such "planing" hull – earlier than those of Englishman Uffa Fox in the 1920s.

After early scorn at the unusual shape, the boats

soon proved their speed and became a popular class for the next 30 years, with annual national competitions for the Moffat Cup.

He said the class was enjoying a revival and the Moffat Cup was reinstated in 2009.

Mystery was built in the 1940s or 1950s in Nelson by Joffre Kroening and came second in the cup in 1956, narrowly beaten by another of Kroening's boats.

Pascoe said Mystery would be entered in the next Moffat Cup, in Taupo in March.

It will be kept at the Clyde Quay boat harbour.

Those interested can contact the Wellington Classic Yacht Trust at wcyt.org.nz.