

# "VIKING" VOYAGE

By JOHN W. LESLIE.

With her former owner at the helm, the reconditioned 67-foot and most seaworthy keeler slid easily out of Auckland harbour under tow. With sails hanging limply, this calm windless northern day, she made for the South Channel, passing en route the long, sleek, grey cruiser "Black Prince" lying in battle-weary repose at Devonport. At Home Bay she dismissed her launch airily and flapped about waiting for wind. Sir Ernest Davis and party, who had come so far to bid adieu, returned to Auckland. Ultimately, sufficient breeze for steerage way enlivened our sails and we made mild progress out into the gulf proper, skirting the Noises closely.

At 5 p.m., alas, we became well and truly becalmed. Thus the first day gave time to take stock of ourselves and our craft. After fifty-five years it was apparent that "Viking" was sound. Her two masts carried jib, staysail, mainsail and mizzen. A spinnaker, too, was available if required. Skipper Lionel Moore, well known in Wellington yacht circles, had not spared himself in providing for the trip. A small cabin up in the eyes contained an effective rock gas stove, crockery and appliances. Amidships, one long cabin of standing height and centred by a table on gimbals, bordered by port and starboard settees with collapsible top bunks, gave fairly generous space for a yacht. The after cabin contained two bunks and navigation table, etc.

As for ourselves, we were seven—Lionel Moore I have mentioned; Reg. Langford, of Auckland, was the only foreigner. The remainder—Bill McKay, Jock Holmes, Russel Kerr, Jim Heaven and myself, all from Wellington—though not ashamed of it. In passing, I would mention that Jim Heaven, besides being an experienced yachtsman and bursting with general versatility if not vitality indeed—was an all-round master of cooking. In this voluntary role he turned out meals that would have put many a restaurant to shame.

Round about 2 a.m. in the middle watch of Thursday, Lionel and I were

pleased to see the limp sails respond to a coaxing breeze. Soon we were away for Channel Island and, with a slight freshening, managed to maintain a reasonable speed which could almost be classed as yachting. The imperturbable and solid four-to-eight watch, consisting of Reg. and Russel, took her past Cuvier at about 7 a.m. This was the last report our owner, Mr. Bryan Todd, of Wellington, had until Palliser.

With light and indifferent easterlies we crawled across the Bay of Plenty all afternoon, obtaining a fix from Aldermans and Cuvier before nightfall. Our little hand azimuth compass was worth its weight in diamonds. Gradually, throughout Thursday night, conditions deteriorated, and with freshening easterlies, tending southwards, the helmsman's lot in his open cockpit was not a happy one. Soon it started to blow, and we took a fair buffeting through the night as we beat it out to sea. Home seemed far away as we lay over with lee rail awash. All Friday we needed no meals, even had it been possible to prepare them on the lively stove. Yes, Friday was most unpleasant, wet, damp, wild, and our spirits were not of the highest. As best we could we tacked in the general direction of East Cape, but with further decline in sailing conditions we made tracks for the lee of Cape Runaway. Allowing our dead reckoning we were pleased to pick up the cape at about 7 a.m. next morning—Saturday. Here a few hours of morale-building respite enabled us to drift about and repair a few slightly chafed sails. In the late hours of the grey and foreboding Saturday afternoon, "Viking" headed out easterly and stood on and off rather miserably all night till we were clear of East Cape. Changing sail during the night was at times exciting in the Bay of Plenty—dark—wild—wet, with all hands on the job and throwing their dinners about with reckless abandon and discomfort. Talk about confetti at fiesta time!

A couple of nights of oceanic tossing did not boost morale too highly, but "Viking" proved herself capable of

## YACHT DESIGNING

Don't build a boat that is not pleasing to the eye and is consequently low in value. Materials are expensive, so consult a good designer or builder.

Send your requirements to S. A. MASON, and obtain satisfaction in performance, combined with beauty in appearance.

### S. A. MASON

108 Calliope Road :: Devonport, N.I.  
AUCKLAND

Designer of all Types of Craft,  
Pleasure or Commercial

standing up to anything that Neptune could turn on. Apart from shipping some green stuff over the helmsman in his open cockpit and a very odd dollop down the skylight, we suffered little but the resulting dampness made for some introspection. Jock Holmes took a header out of his bunk on one occasion, and Jim Heaven got somewhat damp when he got under the skylight at the wrong moment. After all it was winter-time.

At 5 p.m. on Sunday night we got a snap bearing of powerful East Cape light; a heavy swell was running at the time but wind had changed and all was well. With some comfort and a hot meal inside us we made a fair passage with following breeze down the coast, clearing reasonably well out and mindful of Ariel reef. Next day in pleasant sunshine, we sailed easily past Gable End Foreland, our yacht garbed with wet clothes, blankets, etc., and our morale high. This was our best day to date. Some really good sailing was made past Table Cape and Portland Island sentinel that night, and, though we still had had no real yachting, the contrast from the Bay of Plenty was favourable. Next morning—Tuesday—we skirted fairly close to Turnagain, with ever freshening following breeze, and, apart from the fact that a heavy swell slowed us down a little, progress was good. Castle Point was made during the dark—about 9 p.m.—and from there we set our course a shade more easterly. One wished to make sure that Kahau rocks hadn't been moved. Literally, we smoked along now, our finest sailing en route. However, that spectacular watch, the 8-to-12, put on a most unintentional jibe in a

down to mainsail and jib she now laid her ears back, set her teeth and ran south-westerly. Some difference between inter-watch sailing records was expressed, but it was a fact that "Viking" covered 33 miles in 4 hours' run at least once to my certain knowledge. To read the log one crawled on the belly in wet oilskin and sea boots biting an electric torch and hoping for the best. During the middle watch the wind freshened and blew strongly. Visibility decreased, and wet drizzle and mist did not make it more pleasant as hard following blow and a fairly high sea. With no little difficulty things were straightened out and stripped we raced along. To play safe, we hauled her down a pit and were somewhat relieved when Palliser broke clear through the drizzle some four miles away. The middle watch keepers were wet and cold and had more or less "had it" by this time, but a shot of rum sent fire racing through the veins. A change of clothes was a gift from the gods. The solid and imperturbable 4-to-8 watch, who never could be hustled, took her clean in at high speed past Palliser. We were in the strait. Well and truly, for soon afterwards we were again becalmed. From the sublime to the ridiculous. Yes—Cook Strait was breathless. This greatly amused our Auckland shipmate. We finished as we began. All this day—Wednesday—we drifted wearily about Palliser with a deepening sense of frustration, as Wellington most inopportunately turned on for us a perfect winter's day. In the afternoon, consequent upon Palliser's report, Mr. Bryan Todd's "Rahemo" came out of the blue with a party aboard. She did not take us in tow for we hoped to sail "Viking" in ourselves. Having admired our beards and given us fair greeting they returned to Wellington.

Unfortunately we drifted all night and, believe it or not and in the light of the furious gale which blew all the following week-end, when we sat by our firesides, one actually had to blow out the matches which we lit for cigarettes. Windy Wellington, indeed. Not a puff to blow a match out.

All Thursday morning we flapped and drifted and occasionally sailed in a general up-strait direction. The heads were at times visible, but visibility was



The "Viking"

deteriorating and the strait, a main fairway, was not the place for becalmed and fogbound yachts. "Rahemo" again appeared in the afternoon after searching for us in the declining visibility. She took us in tow and made tracks for Evans Bay. We shed our wiry beards before Pencarrow and threw all livestock overboard. Wellington harbour was placid, calm, unrippled. A perfect night for almost anything but yachting. "Tamahine" flicked a playful bow wave at us as she glided easily past and inwards from Picton.

Safely moored at Evans Bay, we took time off to heave some sighs, then relaxed by splicing the mainbrace with our friends. Eight days from Auckland—fair enough for a winter voyage. "Viking" will grace Wellington harbour

for many a day yet. Such experience lends itself favourably to the development of good comradeship and self-reliance. In our own little world, bounded by "Viking" alone, we grew closer and our craft daily more familiar. I understand what Masefield meant—"I MUST GO DOWN TO THE SEA AGAIN"—but not too often.

---

### BUSES FOR HIRE

For WEEK-ENDS, PICNICS  
and EXCURSIONS of All Kinds.

**KELBURN-KARORI MOTOR  
BUS CO., LTD.,  
WELLINGTON.**

---