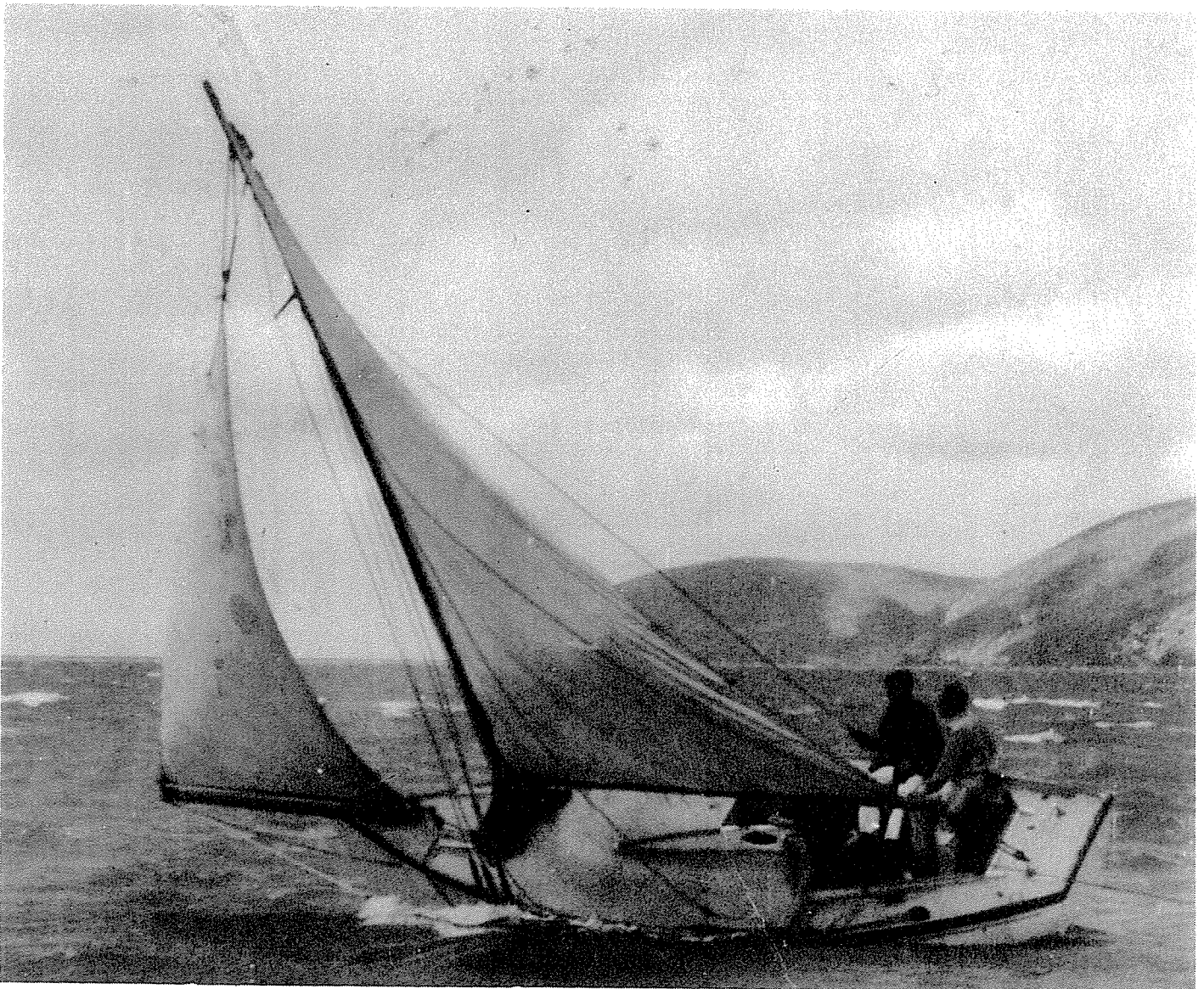


# TRADITIONAL BOATS

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THE LINNET

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## The Continuing Story of The Linnet

by Graeme Robertson

*The LINNET is a flat-sheered plumb-ended yacht of 22ft length, 8ft 2in beam and 4ft 6in draught. Afloat, her appearance suggests a straight-keeled yacht of English type, a Falmouth quay punt or a cutter from Itchen Ferry, until the absence of an outboard rudder is noticed. Below the water, her form is not what might be expected and, as Graeme Robertson explains, she did not always look like this.*

How can such a short-ended yacht as the LINNET date from 1908, a time when long overhangs were normal? The answer is that in 1908 her stern at least was not short.

When the LINNET was designed and built in 1908 in Auckland by Chas Bailey Jnr, she was five feet longer and had topsides lower by eighteen inches. It is clear that there has been quite a change.

Let us examine what is known about the LINNET and piece together her fascinating past. Little is known of her first twenty or so years except that she is thought to have been sailing in Wellington from soon after the first World War. Neil Beaumont, and possibly Arthur Lambert, owned her in Christchurch during the early thirties and it is in 1937 that our real knowledge of the boat begins.

It was in that year that she was bought for £125 by Cliff Heron who so left his mark on the LINNET that on Lyttelton Harbour she was identified with him for nearly fifty years. Harold Hardwicke says that Cliff Heron, who still lives in Christchurch, was so much part of the LINNET that he even had her name tattooed on his arm - how's that for affection for a boat?

Cliff Heron sailed her for a season in

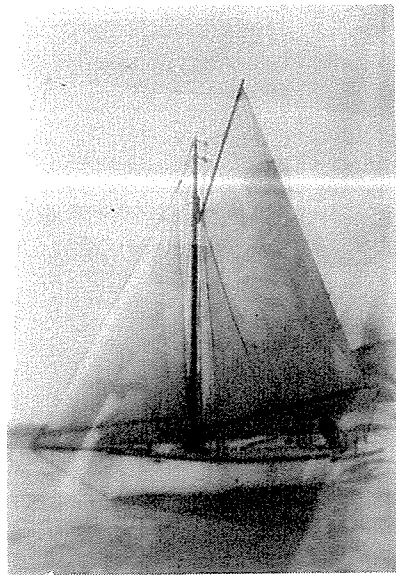
1937 then put her on the slip at Redcliffs on the Christchurch Estuary. He took out all the interior lining and found quite a few fractured ribs about a yard from the bow and the stern. He did not stop at replacing the broken ribs but ended up removing all the deck planking and beams as well as docking the counter stern. He took out all the ribs and installed heavier ones with copper nails and roves (the larger nails were hand made) and raised the topsides, making the LINNET a much drier boat and giving more room below; and rebuilt the gunwales. He also installed a 5hp ERD petrol motor which cost £25.

Cliff Heron lived on the LINNET for three years on the mooring at Redcliffs which cost only ten shillings a year in those days. He owned the yacht for twelve years, got married and had to sell her, something that often happened. It was a case of, "You marry the boat or me". Harry Collett then sailed her at Lyttelton for many years.

The next significant date in the history of the LINNET was 1968 when she was sold, along with her mooring in the inner harbour at Lyttelton, to Owen Tracey Gough who wanted only the mooring for a large boat he was having built in Auckland. He gave the LINNET to the Banks Peninsula Cruising Club to use as a prize in a raffle to raise funds for their club house extensions. Richard Johnstone, a Sea Scout still in his teens, won the LINNET and she was reborn with all the enthusiasm of youth. She was raced, complete with spinnaker, at Lyttelton with remarkable



Left: As a \$1 per ticket raffle prize in 1969.



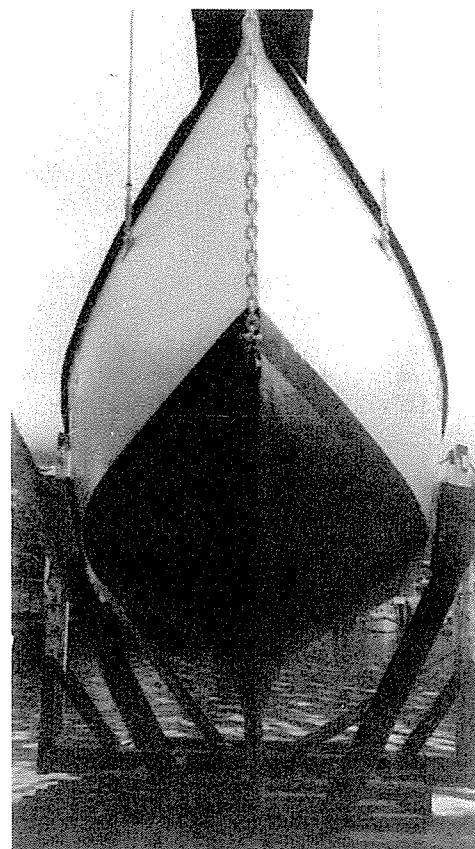
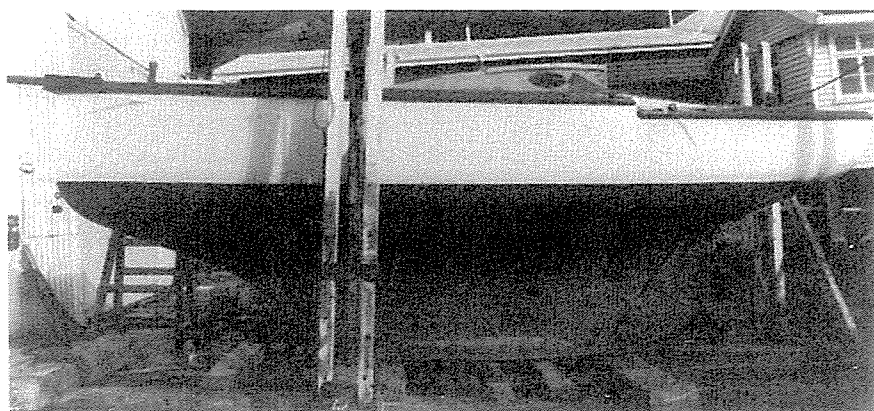
success. Trevor Burton, who did all the slipping for Millers, now Sinclair Melbourne Shipwrights, knew her well. He reported that on special occasions Millers used to slip her, remove the propellor and box the cavity with ply and "she used to to clean up everything on the harbour."

In 1975, Bernie Wilson bought the LINNET and sailed her on the Harbour from a mooring in Purau Bay. He carried out a major refit, including new sails and the installation of a Stuart Turner 8hp petrol marine engine. In 1977 she was sold again, this time for the grand sum of \$3850, to the present owners, Graeme & Annette Robertson.

We kept her at Purau Bay and then at a marina berth in Magazine Bay. We removed the engine, chiefly because of the danger of petrol in a yacht, and because of the space occupied and the smell below, but also because there was no real need for it; there was nearly always enough wind to sail. Removing the propellor and filling in the aperture also meant improved sailing performance although that was not the prime reason for taking out the engine. In a 1985 we had a new suit of sails made by Norths in Auckland, reinstating the cutter rig with jib and staysail which I believe to have been the rig for the first twenty years.

*Top: Photographs from the Heron era showing the sloop rig with boomed jib and high-peaked gaff, the arrangement of the cockpit & companionway and the iron tiller.*

*Below & Right: On the hard at Sinclair & Melbourne, Lyttelton, 1985. For all her nuggetty topsides, the LINNET's underbody is very fine. The keel is relatively short for the period and the rudder well inboard. The discontinuity in the rubbing strake is disconcerting. (Graeme Robertson)*





In May 1986 she followed us to Auckland where she had been built seventy-eight years before, coming north on a trailer on the COASTAL TRADER. She went immediately to the Wooden Boat Workshop in Alten Road for a major rebuild. A few ribs were replaced but most of the effort was concentrated on new deck canvas, rebuilding the gunwales and the cockpit and completely fitting out below.

Jim Keogh and John Matheson did most of the work at the WBW. They removed the old deck canvas, repaired the one tiny patch of rot in Cliff Heron's deck (much more had been expected) and re-canvassed it. The gunwales, which had suffered a little rot and damage, were reconstructed, getting rid of the odd step in the rubbing strake, and toe rails were added. It had been intended to make the cockpit self-draining but that would have made it too shallow and we had it rebuilt at a more practical depth. Down below everything was stripped out, a few broken ribs were replaced and the cabin was fitted out anew in demolition kauri, varnished.

When the LINNET was launched again on New Years Eve last, she was probably looking as good as on the day she was first launched back in 1908. She retains what I believe to be her original spars in a cutter rig similar to the original but very little else about her appearance is the same. Gone are the long counter stern and the low topsides; in fact, it would be hard to recognise the hull afloat. On the hard, with the lines of the under-body exposed, her real beauty and strengths are apparent. She is the same ship - she just looks different.

The LINNET is becoming a familiar sight on the Waitemata, sailing from her mooring in Hobson Bay under tan-coloured sails. We are discovering how she copes with the Gulf in conditions quite different from those of Banks Peninsula.

The deep cockpit has not proved to be a problem. Even in a knock-down, it does not fill with water and although the LINNET takes water over the deck in rough weather, none has found its way back to the cockpit.



The working sail area of 275 square feet, just right for Canterbury where a twenty-five knot breeze can blow for week after week, is not enough for the often very light breezes of the Gulf. A larger mainsail could be carried easily on a longer boom and gaff (the former does not reach the transom) and severe weather helm would probably not result; with the short iron tiller the helm is quite light. The wind drops altogether often enough for the lack of an engine to be inconvenient, especially when it is a matter of getting back to work. The yacht is easily propelled in a calm by the sweeps of nearly fourteen foot length, but not against the ebb tide past Bean Rock. An outboard on the transom would answer this difficulty - there is no temptation to install another inboard auxiliary.

Whatever is required, one thing is certain - the LINNET will be able to adapt to her new conditions.

