

WEST WIND

Newsletter of the Zephyr Owners Association

March 2026

SECRETARY/EDITOR

Brian Peet

This issue of West Wind is a catchup issue for the 2025-26 season. It contains all summer's events, with the results now residing in one place in our class archive.

All four major Zephyr regattas have been impacted by extremes of weather, with the North Island and Auckland Champs struggling at the lower wind range. Then the South Island and Nationals were afflicted at the other end, with races lost from too much wind. We may well be approaching a climate future where, some events could be decided after having only one race sailed...

NORTH ISLAND CHAMPS

LTYC Nov 2025

Steve Pyatt

It was definitely a light regatta, just about their minimum of 3-4kts. I didn't hike once which is a rarity. Saturday had bands of wind coming down the lake, then Sunday had an even breeze across the lake so we managed to get the full two lap course in. On the first day, to save going into the light bands, the RO either shortened at a mark or sent us on the one lap course. Rod Dawson was consistently in the right place and going fast. Greg (Bubble) Wright is always fairly consistent in that sort of stuff. Gorgeous weather and nice to be in a holiday resort. I started the weekend with a mountain bike ride in the craters and finished it with a paddle down the mighty Waikato. There are some good pictures online on the LTYC FB page.



▲ Zephyrs and a Sunburst waiting patiently between races for the Taupo breeze to fill in. Even standing up didn't help Giles Grigg sailing, #8 *Radiant*, spot the non-existent wind.



▲ Sailors' collective eagerness to get away before the wind died resulted in the only general recall of the regatta. Ian Watson #103 'Nauti Girl' an early adopter of the 'must conserve energy' concept.

Zephyr Class

Sailed: 4, Discards: 1, To count: 3, Entries: 26, Scoring system: Appendix A

Rank	Class	Sail Number	Club	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total	Nett
1st	Zephyr	708	Manly SC	Rod Dawson	1.0	(3.0)	3.0	1.0	8.0	5.0
2nd	Zephyr	190	Worser Bay BC	Greg Wright	3.0	(5.0)	1.0	3.0	12.0	7.0
3rd	Zephyr	702	Manly SC	Steve Pyatt	(6.0)	1.0	5.0	5.0	17.0	11.0
4th	Zephyr	523	Manly SC	Mark Orams	2.0	(9.0)	7.0	2.0	20.0	11.0
5th	Zephyr	8	TYC	Giles Grigg	4.0	2.0	(16.0)	8.0	30.0	14.0
6th	Zephyr	12	Manly SC	Glen Sowry	(10.0)	6.0	6.0	4.0	26.0	16.0
7th	Zephyr	88	Tauranga YPBC	Jessica McDowell	(15.0)	4.0	9.0	6.0	34.0	19.0
8th	Zephyr	172	Tauranga YPBC	Hansie Eichholz	8.0	7.0	(21.0)	7.0	43.0	22.0
9th	Zephyr	303	Worser Bay BC	Brett Linton	(20.0)	12.0	2.0	10.0	44.0	24.0
10th	Zephyr	71	Worser Bay BC	Keith Fraser	(13.0)	13.0	4.0	12.0	42.0	29.0
11th	Zephyr	701	Point Chevalier SC	Brian Peet	5.0	14.0	(18.0)	11.0	48.0	30.0
12th	Zephyr	704	Tauranga YPBC	Andy Knowles	7.0	10.0	(19.0)	13.0	49.0	30.0
13th	Zephyr	501	Worser Bay BC	Ed Ballard	(21.0)	8.0	11.0	14.0	54.0	33.0
14th	Zephyr	709	Point Chevalier SC	Robin Simpson	16.0	11.0	8.0	(18.0)	53.0	35.0
15th	Zephyr	32	Tauranga YPBC	Patrick McDaniel	11.0	(20.0)	17.0	9.0	57.0	37.0
16th	Zephyr	89	Worser Bay BC	Glenn Tassicker	9.0	17.0	(23.0)	19.0	68.0	45.0
17th	Zephyr	253	Point Chevalier SC	Rob Neeley	12.0	16.0	(24.0)	17.0	69.0	45.0
18th	Zephyr	14	Manly SC	Mark Tillett	14.0	19.0	14.0	(21.0)	68.0	47.0
19th	Zephyr	525	Evans Bay YMBC	Chris Hargreaves	17.0	15.0	(25.0)	16.0	73.0	48.0
20th	Zephyr	195	MCC	Pierre Harrison	18.0	(21.0)	20.0	15.0	74.0	53.0
21st	Zephyr	205	Manly SC	Peter Busfield	19.0	18.0	(26.0)	20.0	83.0	57.0
22nd	Zephyr	103	Tauranga YPBC	Ian Watson	(27.0 DNF)	25.0	10.0	23.0	85.0	58.0
23rd	Zephyr	609	Worser Bay BC	John Kiffen	24.0	22.0	12.0	(27.0 DNC)	85.0	58.0
24th	Zephyr	144	Point Chevalier SC	Bruce Craies	22.0	(27.0 OCS)	13.0	27.0 DNC	89.0	62.0
25th	Zephyr	92	Worser Bay BC	Joanna Kempkers	(25.0)	23.0	15.0	24.0	87.0	62.0
26th	Zephyr	605	Point Chevalier SC	Brian Baker	23.0	(24.0)	22.0	22.0	91.0	67.0

Handicap winner was Hansie Eichholz sailing #172 *Alma*.

2026 SOUTH ISLAND CHAMPS

NPCL 31 Jan - 1 Feb

John Boraston

Climate change is real! It took two attempts to get the South Island Champs completed at Lyttelton. The first in early December 25 was commenced in a strong and gusty easterly with an outgoing tide, which for those who know Lyttelton Harbour it is a difficult mix. The R.O. wisely determined to move the course down the harbour to where the tidal influence should be less, but unexpectedly this placed us in a wind zone with far stronger gusts, average wind speed would be exceeding 25knts, whereas gusts would have been 30+. The seas were less but still a handful for a Zephyr.

The first race was completed but with a number of boats needing support to return to dry land and the Club's support boats fully utilised. The gap between the first finisher and those at the tail end that managed to finish was in the range of 20-30 minutes. It was survival skills that counted. The R.O. abandoned racing to return to shore and we waited out the rest of the day for some easing of the conditions which didn't eventuate.

Unfortunately, the next day had turned to a Northerly gusting over 30 knots and after waiting some time to hopefully get at least two races completed for a series, called it quits.

Fortunately, we were able to reschedule the abandoned series, completing two days sailing with five races in pleasant easterly sailing conditions with enough variety to meet everyone's needs and seamanship skills. What a joy to have what was the previously relied upon as normal conditions.

We had 13 starters with good racing amongst the fleet with some very tight finishing amongst the top 8. The top 3 were Hamish Atkinson # 101, Tim Bird # 29 and Steve Edwards # 152.

Place	Boat	Sail	Helm	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total	Nett
1	Mint	101	Hamish Atkinson	1	-2	1	1	1	6	4
2	Wild Child	29	Tim Bird	2	3	-8	2	2	17	9
3	Zonda	152	Steve Edwards	4	1	2	4	-8	19	11
4	Wave Dancer	254	Richard Ineson	3	4	5	7	-10	29	19
5	Mistress Overdone	521	Richard Mackay	5	8	4	-9	5	31	22
6	Frontrunner	256	Don Le Page	-7	6	6	5	6	30	23
7	Alcyone	321	Cameron Jones	-10	9	3	8	4	34	24
8	Limit	74	John Boraston	6	5	-7	6	7	31	24
9	Strawanzer	147	Peter Metka	14.0 DNC	14.0 DNC	14.0 DNC	3	3	48	34
10	By Golly	107	Gavin Bird	9	7	-10	10	9	45	35
11	Blue Mule	90	Tony Park	8	10	9	11	-12	50	38
12	Windbag	39	Brent Pulley	11	12	12	-13	11	59	46
13	Flippant	175	Peter Channings	12	11	11	12	-13	59	46

AUCKLAND CHAMPS

PCSC - Mar 2026

Bruce Craies

Congratulations to Andrew Mikkelsen on his well-deserved victory in the Auckland Zephyr Champs over the weekend of 7-8 March. It was a trying time weatherwise at Point Chev with very light and variable breezes and all praise to race officer Steve Pyatt who did an extremely good job in enabling three races sailed. The highlight though was Andrew's speed and consistency in the light with a 2, 1, 1, score indicative of his dominance over the fleet. Also impressive was Mike Renner's top 10 finish that firmly cemented him as the winner of the handicap trophy; all that sly practice time proving that time in the boat is the critical component. It was also great to have boats from Nelson and Christchurch racing in the event, so thanks for turning up lads.

Our thanks go to Pt Chev Commodore Peter Fletcher, and Club Captain Ian Dobson, for doing their best to host a great event. Light winds and limited tide availability certainly restrict the racing options, but the crew did a great job to get us away. As a transient fleet we Zephyrs are totally at the mercy of our local clubs being willing to host us - so please support the Zephyr Class and remember to help out our supporting clubs whenever you can.



▲ Twenty six Zephyrs waiting for the breeze to arrive so the 2026 Auckland Champs could get underway at Pt Chev Sailing Club.

▲ Steve Pyatt doing a pre-race drive-by in the diminutive PCSC 'Race Control' vessel ironically named *Maximus*.

2026 AUCKLAND CHAMPS

	Boat	Sail	Helm	R1	R2	R3	Total	Nett
1	Phantom	608	Andrew Mikkelsen	2	1	1	4	4
2	Bucket	708	Rod Dawson	1	3	4	8	8
3	Anitra	3	Stew Taylor	6	6	3	15	15
4	Nora Doone	702	Scott Leith	12	2	2	16	16
5	Daedalus	701	Brian Peet	7	5	6	18	18
6	Goldfinger	220	Dennis Conway	4	4	11	19	19
5	Quandary	523	Mark Orams	8	8	5	21	21
8	Taikata	602	Brent Jeffries	3	12	8	23	23
9	Big Worries	705	Mike Renner	9	10	10	29	29
10	Ebb Tide Express	253	Rob Neeley	20	7	7	34	34
11	Gwene	144	Bruce Craies	5	15	15	35	35
12	Radiant	8	Giles Grigg	11	13	13	37	37
13	Blue Rinse	160	Graeme Henry	13	11	14	38	38
14	Mistress	109	Pierre Harrison	21	9	9	39	39
15	Taranui	66	Ben Freedman	14	18	16	48	48
16	Tinker	709	Robin Simpson	17	20	12	49	49
17	Zeppy	713	Iain Aitken	15	19	17	51	51
18	Look right, Go left	315	Andy Neyle	19	16	18	53	53
19	Jet Stream	225	Tony Walker	22	14	21	57	57
20	Alcyone	321	Cameron Jones	18	22	19	59	59
21	Vave	301	Colin Maddren	10	24	27.0 OCS	61	61
22	Technique	21	Dave Rivington	16	26	20	62	62
23	Reva	703	John Schellekens	24	17	22	63	63
24	Elite	61	Tony Gable	23	21	27.0 OCS	71	71
25	Resort	120	Tony Taine	25	23	23	71	71
26	Uptown Girl	235	Les Gallagher	26	25	27.0 OCS	78	78



Tony Taine sailing *Resort* at the 2026 Nationals

2026 NATIONAL CHAMPS

Howick Sailing Club - March 2026

Bruce Craies

The 2026 Zephyr National Championship was held at the Howick Sailing Club over the period 12-15 March. Four race days were planned with a buffet dinner on the Saturday night prior to the final days racing. The regatta coincided with the 70th anniversary of Des Townson completing the Zephyr design in 1956.

With all boats requiring measuring prior to the event, scrutineering and weighing was conducted early to provide for four clear days of racing. The weigh-in proved that the majority of our boats were very proximate to our 58kg limit. Unfortunately, high winds curtailed any chance of racing on day one. Instead, a sailors' forum was held immediately after the official race briefing. Generally, sailors were happy with where the class is headed, with little the members sought to change.

Day two saw a light fluctuating NE that permitted a full line up photograph of all boats in numerical order along the beach prior to launching. After a slight delay as the breeze filled in racing commenced into a light breeze and a sloppy sea that challenged the maintenance of momentum at times. Racing throughout the fleet was close and it was Mark Orams and Rod Dawson who were tied at the top of the 52-boat leaderboard at the end of the day.

Saturday saw the breeze turn to the south and increase with enough drive to test the temperament of the best of the fleet. Two races, in winds hovering toward our upper limits, were completed and still only a point could separate Mark and Rod. Multiple capsizes occurred throughout the fleet as thirteen knots of boat speed often became zero around the gybe mark. Howick's race officers did a fantastic job in getting racing underway in such demanding conditions and the very good support boat fleet were kept busy but in general things were very well handled.



Day two of the 2026 Zephyr Nationals at Howick Sailing Club. Fifty boats lined up in numerical sequence with Alan Retter's #1 *Zephyr* on the right and the most recent version, Dan Middleton's #716 *Mad Max* on the far left. Very few classes can boast a continuity of use extending seven decades with boats from the class beginnings still actively racing.

Photo: Suellen Hurling - Live Sail Die

Murray Thom emceed the evening dinner at Bucklands Beach Yacht Club for around seventy guests to fine effect. The positive fun vibe of the regatta continued to be shown and a very convivial night was enjoyed by all.

The last day of racing started early with an extra two races added to catch up on those lost earlier in the week. A solid eighteen to twenty-three knot breeze with gusts into the mid-twenties prevailed, and while it provided great rides there was also a bit more swimming for a few. Rod completed a magic 2, 1, 1 finish to take overall honours from Mark and in doing so, become the first champion in a Mackay Boats GRP Zephyr.

The real highlight of the regatta was the spirit demonstrated through the class. Rod described the rivalry versus friendship relationship to a tee in his victory speech. The camaraderie, friendship, belonging and competitive interaction, is what sets the Zephyr apart as a true class act of New Zealand yachting.

This ethos was ably formulated by the fantastic support of Marc Frewin and the team at Howick Sailing Club. Their enthusiasm to host the event and to be immersed in a fleet not represented at their club level was infectious. Their race management was spot on, with hosting and support beyond compare.

The Seventieth Anniversary was worthy of a record for future generations, so Brian Peet meticulously compiled an up-to-date history of the class in an Anniversary booklet. This can still be purchased either through this website, or by contacting Brian at peetfamily@orcon.net.nz. We were also very honoured to have Suellen from Live Sail Die provide world class photography coverage of the complete event. High resolution on-the-water and drone footage is available of each boat and these can be purchased for a very reasonable \$25 ea through: - <https://livesaildie.photoshelter.com/gallery-collection/2026-Zephyr-Nationals/C0000XLY8IJ5ugik>

Another highlight was regatta guest Sue Currie, who as a teenager attended the 1968 Zephyr nationals at Maraetai, Auckland. Unfortunately, her journey from Lyttelton Harbour was far from straightforward. She had the misfortune to embark on the Interisland ferry *Wahine* which sank in Wellington Harbour. Sue had to swim ashore to the Eastbourne shoreline in hurricane strength winds, huge southerly swells and freezing rain/hail. Fifty-one other passengers weren't so fortunate, succumbing to either drowning or hypothermia.

The following morning Sue and fellow Zephyr sailor Geoff Beaumont flew to Auckland to compete in the class nationals. Sue's story is on page 12 of this West Wind issue. It's also included in the ZOA's 70th Anniversary Booklet and in the January issue of NZ Boating. This is a 'must read' story of human determination set against extraordinary circumstances.



▲ A race start on day two. Rod Dawson #709, Mark Orams # 523 and Scott Leith just in view on far right.
. Photo: Suellen Hurling - Live Sail Die



▲
Rob Neely sailing *Ebbtide Express* receiving Howick's ebbing tide delivered like a fire hydrant facial.
Photo: Suellen Hurling - Live Sail Die



▲
Rod Dawson looking for weed on his centreplate midway through a 30kt gust. None found, so Rod resumed racing and rather surprisingly the masthead feather stayed dry.
Photo: Suellen Hurling - Live Sail Die

2026 NATIONAL CHAMPS - HSC

	Sail	Boat	Helm	Age	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	Total	Nett
1	708	Bucket	Rod Dawson	50-59	1	2	-5	3	1	2	1	1	16	11
2	523	Quandary	Mark Orams	60-64	-5	1	2	1	2	1	4	4	20	15
3	702	Lorna Doone	Scott Leith	50-59	2	3	4	4	-6	5	3	3	30	24
4	8	Radiant	Giles Grigg	50-59	12	6	-19	2	4	3	2	2	50	31
5	190	Jellytip	Greg Wright	60-64	3	5	-9	6	9	4	5	5	46	37
6	606	A to Z	Mike Drummond	60-64	4	4	6	11	5	7	56.0 DNF	7	100	44
7	605	Zoe B	Dean Salthouse	50-59	-33	12	18	13	18	6	6	6	112	79
8	711	Wai	Murray Thom	65-69	19	8	21	5	7	8	12	-25	105	80
9	700	Spectre	Glen Sowry	60-64	9	15	-31	20	12	12	8	11	118	87
10	701	Daedalus	Brian Peet	70-74	6	29	8	7	3	56.0 DNF	17	18	144	88
11	160	Blue Rinse	Graeme Henry	65-69	20	10	12	9	14	10	21	-26	122	96
12	101	Mint	Hamish Atkinson	65-69	16	19	14	17	56.0 DNC	11	9	10	152	96
13	253	Ebdtide Express	Rob Neeley	50-59	27	14	13	18	56.0 DNC	9	7	14	158	102
14	524	Flotsam	David Lyford	60-64	21	17	-29	10	26	15	11	13	142	113
15	185	Blue Max	David Hazard	<40	8	7	1	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	17	18	8	171	115
16	177	Mirage	Alastair Campbell	60-64	-29	11	15	21	23	14	20	12	145	116
17	709	Tinker	Robin Simpson	60-64	14	21	10	56.0 UFD	25	19	22	15	182	126
18	31	Sayonara	Polly Wright	<40	10	-35	11	19	22	23	13	30	163	128
19	71	Murihiku	Keith Fraser	65-69	17	16	22	14	20	22	-30	24	165	135
20	508	Wedgy Man	Craig Moss	60-64	18	56.0 UFD	34	8	15	42	10	9	192	136
21	602	Just Add Water	Brent Jeffries	50-59	-39	13	38	12	8	24	15	31	180	141
22	519	Haruru	Pete Dawson	60-64	-38	26	27	16	17	18	24	17	183	145
23	608	Phantom	Andrew Mikkelsen	50-59	7	9	3	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	13	19	56.0 DNC	219	163
24	205	Corino	Peter Busfield	65-69	23	38	-49	28	13	35	14	19	219	170
25	501	Weta	Ed Ballard	50-59	26	28	-44	25	19	26	25	23	216	172
26	3	Anitra	Stew Taylor	50-59	15	31	7	26	56.0 DNC	44	28	22	229	173
27	144	Gwene	Bruce Craies	65-69	25	36	23	24	10	25	35	56.0 DNC	234	178
28	315	Look Right Go Left	Andy Neyle	65-69	24	23	28	-33	28	21	32	27	216	183
29	609	Ngake	John Kliffen	60-64	-48	42	45	15	24	27	16	21	238	190
30	172	Alma	Hansie Eichholz	65-69	-37	34	20	29	21	31	29	28	229	192
31	321	Alcyone	Cameron Jones	<40	35	-43	43	22	27	20	34	16	240	197
32	109	Mistress	Pierre Harrison	<40	13	22	16	30	56.0 DNC	32	31	56.0 DNC	256	200
33	192	Solo	Mat Dunne	40-49	32	24	40	23	11	16	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	258	202
34	27	Indy	Mark Andresen	60-64	30	20	25	34	29	33	-36	33	240	204
35	117	Trivial	Nathan McSkimming	50-59	44	37	30	31	56.0 DNF	29	23	20	270	214
36	525	Five to go	Chris Hargreaves	70-74	28	33	26	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	28	27	29	283	227
37	61	Elite	Tony Gable	70-74	41	27	17	27	16	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	296	240
38	225	Jetstream	Tony Walker	50-59	45	45	35	32	56.0 DNC	40	26	32	311	255
39	220	Glodfinger	Dennis Conway	60-64	31	25	32	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	30	37	56.0 DNC	323	267
40	32	Voodoo Doll	Patrick McDaniel	60-64	22	40	24	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	39	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	349	293
41	156	Chinook	Scott Elliott	50-59	11	18	42	56.0 UFD	56.0 DNC	56.0 UFD	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	351	295
42	21	Technique	Dave Rivington	65-69	43	39	33	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	41	33	56.0 DNC	357	301

43	517	Simon Novak	Simon Novak	60-64	42	30	39	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	36	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	371	315
44	705	Big Worries	Michael Renner	75+	40	32	41	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	38	56.0 DNS	56.0 DNC	375	319
45	171	Tanya	Hans Rasmussen	65-69	34	41	36	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	43	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	378	322
46	120	Resort	Tony Taine	65-69	50	49	48	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	34	38	56.0 DNC	387	331
47	178	Sirrocco	Russell Salmon	50-59	36	44	47	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNF	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	407	351
48	1	Zephyr	Alan Retter	65-69	46	46	37	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	409	353
49	716	Mad Max	Dan Middleton	50-59	47	50	56.0 BFD	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	37	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	414	358
50	235	Uptown Girl	Les Gallagher	75+	51	47	46	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	424	368
51	259	Zephyrus	Robert Allsopp-Smith	75+	52	48	51	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	431	375
52	140	Gloria	Patch Graham	65-69	49	56.0 DNF	50	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	56.0 DNC	435	379

Zephyr Championship Trophy	Rod Dawson
Zephyr Championship Runner-Up	Mark Orams
Zephyr Championship 3rd	Scott Leith
Zephyr Championship Female	Polly Wright
Zephyr Handicap Trophy	Bruce Craies
Under 30 years	Polly Wright
Zephyr 30 - 40 years	David Hazard
Zephyr 40 - 49 years	Mat Dunne
Zephyr Masters Trophy 50 - 59 years	Rod Dawson
Zephyr Masters Trophy 60 - 64 years	Mark Orams
Zephyr Masters Trophy 65 – 69 years	Murray Thom
Zephyr Masters Trophy 70 - 74 years	Brian Peet
Zephyr Grand Masters Trophy 75 + years	Michael Renner
Heavy Weight Trophy	Dean Salthouse
Fresh Breeze Trophy	David Lyford
First Townson Trophy	Giles Greg
Whanau Cup	Poly & Greg Wright
Most Improved Trophy	Ed Ballard



▲
L-R Scott Leith, Rod Dawson and Mark Orams. All three had previously won Zephyr National Championships.
Photo: Suellen Hurling - Live Sail Die

Zephyr Nationals Sailors' Forum

12 Mar 2026

Chair – John Kliffen

Meeting Secretaries – Brian Peet and Greg Wright

Location – Howick Sailing Club – 2026 Zephyr National Champs (following sailor's briefing.)

Attendees – (50) John Kliffen, Brian Peet, Keith Fraser, Cameron Jones, Chris Hargreaves, Steve Pyatt, Hansie Eichholz, Dennis Conway, Polly Wright, Greg Wright, Graeme Henry, Hans Rasmussen, Mike Drummond, Robin Simpson, Brent Jeffries, Pete Dawson, Rod Dawson, Ed Ballard, Alan Retter, Stew Taylor, Giles Grigg, Mark Andresen, Patrick McDaniel, Tony Gable, Hamish Atkinson, Pierre Harisson, Nathan McSkimming, Tony Taine, Bruce Craies, Russell Salmon, David Hazard, Matt Dunne, Peter Busfield, Tony Walker, Rob Neeley, Rob Allsopp-Smith, Andy Neyle, Simon Novak, Pete Dawson, David Lyford, Brent Jefferies, Dean Salthouse, Mike Drummond, Glen Sowry, Scott Leith, Mike Renner, Murray Thom, Dan Middleton, Tony Miller and Ian Watson.

Introduction

John Kliffen welcomed members to the Sailors' Forum and explained the vital role these annual meetings have in either shaping change or maintaining status quo depending on the topic in question. Resolutions from the Forum are always discussed in detail at subsequent Executive meetings. The collective interest of the Zephyr class remains the overriding objective.

Discussion points:

Reduced rigs for older or lighter bodyweight sailors

Ian Watson, Tauranga, suggested the Zephyr have an alternate, cutdown sail with associated 'division' inside the Nationals framework. Similar to the full size and radial rig concept used in the Laser class. Pros and cons discussed, including the requirement to modify the spars to suit a new sail design, but no real support emerged. An alternative wind strength division was proposed – i.e. Sailors could opt into a division that wouldn't commence or would cease racing if a prescribed maximum wind strength was reached. This had more support, but no resolution tabled.

Minimum Wind Strength

Currently set at four knots in the National Contest Guidelines document. The 2026 Auckland Champs were held in conditions that never exceeded four knots, but four races were held and resulted in a successful contest. Discussion revolved around reassessing the Nationals figure. Mike Drummond suggested removing the minimum and Rod Dawson suggested dropping to three knots. Tidal influence would be critical to applying any sort of minimum, and the decision to race still made by the PRO weighing up all local factors. Remains an open topic for Exec consideration.

Mast Sleeve

The Wellington fleet continues to suffer bent masts at the deck collar load point. Currently damaged masts can be repaired with a 400mm long sleeve. It was asked if this sized sleeve could be inserted prior to damage occurring. This would require a rule change. General discussion around bend characteristic changes and performance changes from such a move. A stiffener from the mast base to the gooseneck was also suggested. A shorter sleeve inserted at the deck intersection to prevent spot load deformation was also proposed. Remained an open item for Exec consideration.

Nationals Entry Shutoff Date

Early shutoff – late entry fee. Is a tiered entry system possible?

JK suggested late entries make management in all areas difficult. SP spoke from experience how difficult it is for organisers. Weather has a large impact on entry – leaving to last possible moment.

Nelson 2027 Nationals

Graeme Henry reported Nelson Yacht Club have finalised the date for the 4-7 March 2027 nationals and an information flyer will be sent out very soon. Possible training prior to regatta. Storage good. Ferry bookings are already tight, so Graeme advised booking as soon as possible. South Island Zephyr champs at Nelson first weekend in December.

Meeting closed 1:29pm.

AN ASTONISHING JOURNEY TO THE 1968 ZEPHYR NATIONALS

The Platinum Anniversary of the Zephyr class at Howick in 2026 will host a guest with a pedigree like no other. Sue Currie came to recent attention by pure coincidence. She was a teenage Zephyr sailor in the 1960s during an era where female participation was not common, was shipwrecked on the way to the 1968 Zephyr nationals, then flew to Auckland the following day and commenced racing that afternoon – all within 24 hours of the sinking. At the time she was a graphic designer. In following years she established a career as a self employed fine artist, married, raised two daughters and currently lives on the shores of Lyttelton Harbour.

Sue's current connection to the Zephyr class was fortuitously triggered by the remarkable story of Mike and Finn Drummond's Cook Strait crossing in two Zephyrs. This was reported in our May 2025 edition of West Wind, followed by a similar article in Boating NZ's July issue. A photo of the Drummonds' sailing into Wellington Harbour on 10 April 2025 with two Interisland ferries in the background was the catalyst for further investigation, revealing a remarkable coincidence. Vague stories existed within the class of a Zephyr lost in the 1968 *Wahine* sinking, but it was actually two Zephyr sailors travelling on the ill-fated ship. Both survived – one was Sue Currie.

Exactly 57 years later, on the same day – almost to the same hour that Sue washed up on the Eastbourne shoreline, Mike and Finn Drummond sailed their Zephyrs into the same harbour, coming ashore at Worser Bay in relatively benign conditions.

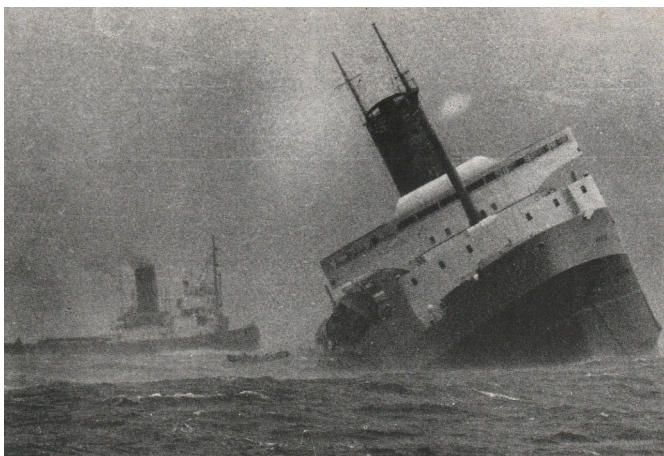
This is Sue Currie's *Wahine* story: -

Sue started her sailing as a seven year old in P-class, then to Zephyr #150 *Easterly* - a new, Des Townson-built bare-hull her father Ian finished at home. She was the first lady sailor at Charteris Bay Yacht Club.

The 1968 Zephyr nationals were scheduled to start on 11 April 1968 at Maraetai Beach Boating Club, Auckland. Sue and fellow Zephyr sailor Geoff Beaumont embarked on the *Wahine* in Lyttelton Harbour on the evening of the 9th as foot passengers—their boats were sent to Auckland a week earlier. The departure was in calm conditions, but by time they were off the Kaikoura Coast the wind had risen and sea conditions worsened. Huge waves continuously whacked the side of the ship making loud reverberating sounds, followed by hull shuddering. The noise was likened to the 'Gong' strike that preceded all Rank Corporation's 20th century movies. By 6.30am when the *Wahine* was approaching Wellington Harbour the southerly was hurricane strength - in excess of 100 knots, with huge accompanying swells. Heavy rain, hail, freezing temperatures and zero visibility added to the miserable conditions. Sue recalled she, '...wanted to die from seasickness.'

The realisation something was wrong began when, "...the engines were being repeatedly reversed, then cycled full ahead." Sue wisely overdressed in all her wool clothing. Many didn't, staying in light cotton, with some ladies even wearing high heels. Once the boat grounded, graunching sounds echoed through the ship, "...like thousands of tin cans grating on rocks. Out of lower portholes huge rocks could be seen within touching distance. Despite this, crew were saying everything was under control."

"The *Wahine* slowly started listing to starboard. As the listing worsened, there was a sudden jolt, with many passengers slipping, then becoming injured as chairs and tables began falling down the heavily tilted floor. Two hours after first reef contact, the abandon ship order given. Queues formed for lifeboats, but many crew members had already left on life rafts, leaving a few remaining crew and able-bodied passengers trying to launch remaining lifeboats. It was a shambolic evacuation. Only huge lifejackets with no crotch straps were available, unsuitable for smaller people and totally unsuitable for children or infants. There were not enough lifejackets for everyone." By this point the wind had dropped to gale force 40 knots.



◀ A lifeboat can be seen leaving the stricken *Wahine* while the tug *Tapuhi* looms in the background. Sailing through the air, just under the starboard wing of the bridge is an inflated liferaft. Book: 'The Wahine Disaster'

Sue believed her only option was to jump into the sea because all the lifeboats had gone. The hail had stopped but the water was freezing cold. On hitting the sea, her life jacket was immediately ripped off, but fortunately she was able to get back into it. "I couldn't see the far shore after I jumped off the stern because of poor visibility. Many passengers were floating around the heavily listing hull. No lifeboats or suitable rescue boats were in sight - only a huge tugboat in the distance, trying to pick people up." Sue thought this was more hazard than helpful, with the risk of being crushed by the pitching tug. She decided her best option for survival was to swim to the northeastern side of Wellington Harbour to escape the rocky shoreline to the south east. She thought her alternatives were remaining by the ship and being sucked under as it capsized or to die from exposure. She reasoned that the incoming tide and wind would helpfully push her up harbour if she swam across it.

Once Sue started swimming, she saw no other passengers, eventually reaching the breaker-line abeam a sandy beach. Huge dumping waves were smashing on the beach, but were dangerously devoid of shallow water below the dumping waves - just beach and/or rocks. Her only option was to get dumped and hope for the best. Unfortunately, after the first dump, the swirling southerly undercurrent swept her back out to sea, and south - closer to a line of huge rocks. After another failed dump and getting washed back out, the third looked terminal. In front were the exposed rocks. Sue thought, "This is it, I've had it." Fortunately, the next dumper was larger than the two previous and swept her over the first rock line, tumbling like a pebble on the bottom of the wave. She landed on a small beach, gained a foothold and with adrenalin-fuelled energy scrambled to safety. Once above the breaker danger, she realised she was totally alone. There were no preceding passengers or rescuers anywhere in sight. Without a watch, Sue thought she'd spent about an hour swimming for the shoreline.

Sue started walking and eventually stumbled upon two policemen who told her to keep walking. Later, she stayed and comforted two elderly ladies collapsed on the shore who were hypothermic and in shock. A lifeboat came ashore nearby, and a local farmer with his flatbed truck appeared. Sue and a barely alive group of survivors were loaded on and were taken to the Wellington Post Office. If Sue hadn't been holding on to the two ladies either side, they would've fallen off. She thought two others were probably deceased.



Oblivious of their surroundings as a four-wheel-drive vehicle carries them to safety on the eastern side.

Book: The Wahine Disaster

Zephyr sailor Sue Currie is sitting upright on the flat-deck with her back to the cab.

"There was much waiting around in Wellington. I had a blanket lent by Red Cross. They were amazingly helpful – handing out blankets and giving out donated dry clothing. Only one phone was available for all survivors, so a very long queue formed. No food was given out and it was evening by the time I received dry clothes from the DIC department store which offered one free set of clothes per person. Passengers were then on their own. There was no support from any Government, Wellington City Council or Union Steamship Company staffers. I believe the reason I survived was because of my yachting background as well as lifesaving training from school days."

At the Post Office Sue reconnected with Geoff Beaumont. Sue's parents had arranged a family friend to pick the two up, then feed and house them for the night. At 8am the following morning Geoff phoned NAC about their booked flight to Auckland and was told the aircraft was fully loaded and awaiting their arrival at the airport. Soon after Sue and Geoff were airborne. On arrival at Auckland, they were collected by another family friend who drove them to Maraetai Beach Boating Club. On arrival, Sue and Geoff unpacked their boats and sailed the invitation race the same afternoon. It was not a good regatta for Sue, the strong winds followed them north for what became a heavy weather nationals. Unsurprisingly for what she'd been through, she came down with influenza and missed two races. Despite her horrendous experience getting to the nationals, Sue came third on handicap.

Sue requested compensation for lost luggage, but a Union Steamship Company manager sent a return letter of refusal - without supplying his/her name. The ticket fine print absolved the company of any responsibility for lost goods, personal harm or death. Passengers travelled at their own risk. Sue was never debriefed by either Police or any other statutory body. She wasn't offered the opportunity to provide a witness statement to the Court of Enquiry. The twenty-six-day Enquiry found numerous shortcomings and faults but nobody was prosecuted. This was considered by many passengers as a whitewash for an event so serious that 51 people lost their lives.

Clearly, Sue Currie and Geoff Beaumont were made of stern stuff – post traumatic stress disorder was yet to become a widely recognised disabling condition.



Sue Currie and Geoff Beaumont unloading their Zephyrs at Maraetai Beach Boating Club in preparation for the 1968 National Championship invitation race - 24 hours after being shipwrecked on the *Wahine*.



Sue Currie fitting a borrowed sail to her Zephyr #150, *Easterly*. Her original sail was hand luggage on the *Wahine* and was never seen again.

Photos: Sue Currie Archives.



The 70th Anniversary Booklet

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Only ten copies remaining

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1956-2026 History of Zephyrs, 42 colour and B&W images, Townson drawings, regatta info, President's welcome, regional summaries, reflections from last decade's winners, a dramatic journey to 1968 nationals on *Wahine*, list of 2025-26 ZOA members and comprehensive lists of all national trophy winners from 1959-2025.



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