



## **Women On Water Chairwoman's Report for 2011/12**

The 2011-12 Mills Reef Women On Water Series has been a record-breaker with the most number of WOW participants of 140 for Race 3 on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. It has also been disappointing as two races had to be cancelled due to extreme weather. Even though the average participant count was down on last year we still managed to cover costs and make a modest profit with the help of substantial funds carried over from last year.

The season started with nine race boats registered for the Racing Division, the same number as last year but many weren't able to compete in every race for various reasons. Firstly, Kaimai Flyer team had to find a new helmsperson then the boat quickly sold just before Christmas leaving the girls not only without a boat but no helmswoman either. We tried to transfer the team to Pterodactyl but without a competent helmswoman or boat helper they just couldn't stay together and have since disbanded onto different boats. Whatever then had a serious crash on 25<sup>th</sup> January and so couldn't do WOW but Carl Reinsfeld kindly offered Pterodactyl as a substitute boat for the WOW team who were extremely grateful as their points simply carried over. Whatever was still not ready by the following race and Pterodactyl was not available so the team transferred again to Otway 3 carrying their points over again. This is a unique rule for WOW and now that our start times are based on the Club Handicaps of the boats it is fair as long as the complete team transfers to the substitute boat. Rigmarole and Lynx went cruising north for February as did Ghia for 3 weeks and Fiddlestick missed the last race due to the skipper attending the Pacific Rim Regatta in Australia.

The Cruising Division started the season with 12 boats and then 14 on Race 3 but reduced to 8 after Christmas. It was my aim to get more trailer yachts for WOW this year, in particular, the Farr 6000s that park outside the clubhouse. This would give Mintaka some competition so with a little persuasion we managed to convince a visually impaired but very experienced sailor, Graham Wallace, to take Shipmanne out for WOW. Also, Charlotte was available if we could find a competent skipper so we asked Ross Sheerin to do the job. With two WOW ladies on each boat all three boats started together and competed on the same course as the other cruising boats with the ability to shorten it if necessary due to tide or daylight considerations. Unfortunately, Shipmanne got sold over Christmas and was no longer available to use. Ideally, we want to see these small trailer yachts compete in their own division with their own course but we need a few more to make it worthwhile. For next year, it would be good to find another Noelex 25 to give Say Please some competition.

From Race 2 Doug Lyon and Denise Arnold of Lyon O'Neale Arnold lawyers and also owners of Duty Free sailing in the Cruising Division became our 9<sup>th</sup> sponsor for WOW offering two more

bottles of Mills Reef wine for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> place prizes in the Cruising Division on the condition that this division becomes the No-Extras Racing Division. The extra wine was well received but were substituted for two sets of sailing gloves for each race following. Previously, this division was not considered to be technically racing so as not to distress our beginners but, of course, there's always a race when boats get on the water. Hence, the title has generally been accepted but further discussion is needed to formalize this.

For Race 4, our last race before Christmas, high winds and rain forced us to cancel all sailing. An early decision allowed me to email our WOW register encouraging them to still come to the club for some free sailing tuition and Christmas frivolity. I borrowed a winch and handle and a length of rope and, assisted by Nicole Harris, demonstrated the correct technique for winching and rope handling. Andy Kennedy showed us a new website which teaches Racing Rules of Sailing then Nicole talked about her recent delivery trip to Tonga from Nelson on a 30ft yacht. In summary, it was a relaxing but productive evening but it highlighted the need for a contingency plan for cancelled races which needs to be addressed if we hope to maximize WOW attendance and value for money especially for our WOW prepaid members.

For Race 7, I waited too long to cancel as everyone had gone to their allocated boats. Rain with not much wind was the situation but I'd hoped the rain would abate in time. The evening was disastrous as far as income to the Club was concerned so more planning is required.

The decision in 2010 to continue with the Mark Foy starting system but base the start times around the Club Handicap for each boat has proven successful and allowed boats with similar handicaps to start together such as with Kaimai Flyer, Sniper and Whatever. This has given the opportunity to improve on tactical and boat handling skills especially to the more advanced race crews and has even created a protest or two which all helps us to learn from our mistakes.

The overall Racing Division results proved early on that Jade Lady was headed for a win. Michele Kennedy retained the skills of her previous Ballistic/Frenzy crew transitioning easily onto Jade Lady to become a force to be reckoned with - even Rigmarole couldn't catch them. Tessa Denniston helmed initially but as Michele's confidence grew she took the helm in the last few races. They won the series on 12 points, 3<sup>rd</sup> place being their lowest result. High Point were second on 26 with Sniper and Whatever tied on 29 but after a count back Sniper came 3<sup>rd</sup> as they had a win and Whatever didn't. Congratulations to all the race crews for a great effort and we look forward to some more close racing next season.

Another highlight of the year was our entry of a WOW team into the Women's National Keelboat Championship held in May 2011, the first time since 1992 and the only entry outside of Auckland. Holly Farmer put the call out to WOW for crew a month out from the regatta and we quickly got it together. With Lisa Knapton, Tessa Denniston, and Jo Warren I called Leslie Goddard from BOPTYS and Nicole Harris to join me in what was to be a steep learning curve of windward-leeward racing on the Farr MRX fleet boats alongside such talent as Leslie Egnot who's team went on to win the regatta. We finished 7<sup>th</sup> from 9 teams which shows the caliber of what we're up against. This year Holly is choosing her own crew of WOW ladies and we're trying to form a second team at the moment. I see this as the pinnacle of achievement for WOW and aim to continue making at least one entry to the event each year. I hope more of our WOW ladies will stand up to the challenge in the coming years.

Our association with the Bay of Plenty Trailer Yacht Squadron (BOPTYS) at Lake Rotoiti continued this year with two WOW regattas organized. The first one happened on the weekend of December 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> with 9 ladies participating. Adrian McHardy let me skipper his Noelex 25 'Wairua Express' without him, an unexpected experience for me and not one I'm accustomed to. Unfortunately, we couldn't make it move as quickly as he can but it was a great learning experience for me. The weather wasn't so nice on the Sunday as we raced down the lake and back for a late lunch. As we did for the same event back in April 2011, we had the pleasure of staying in Stuart Pedersen's bach on the Friday and Saturday nights enjoying potluck dinners and playing the board game called Scattergories. Since we all enjoy these events Jackie Holt, our own WOW member and BOPTYS Commodore, organized a second event where WOW ladies would do windward/leeward races then sail to a bay and camp overnight in the boats or onshore in tents then do more racing the following day. This was set for February 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> but unfortunately, numbers were too few so it was cancelled. We will be reassessing these events for the coming year with the possibility of just a one day regatta again to keep it simple. I am keen for more WOW ladies to enter other events such as the Tauranga Regatta in which Christine Headey and I competed in a Topaz Omega from Elements. We just need to nurture a 'can do' positive attitude and heaps of enthusiasm and with the help of some coaching WOW Tauranga could raise its profile in sailing circles nationwide.

Early in the season a young journalist from National Radio came along with the aim of doing a feature on WOW. Lorna Perry gathered information from two of our sailors and then interviewed me at home for 10 minutes. She sailed on Fiddlestick and intended the next time to record background sounds of women sailing but as Race 4 got cancelled that never happened. The feature went to air on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and was well received by many different people.

On the social side, WOW celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in December 2011 with a party at the Club. Although not well supported the ones that did attend had a great time dressing up to the theme of 'Wild, Whimsical, Water-loving Women' and dancing the night away to the music of local band 'Sparx'. My commemorative speech told of our progress over the years with Lisa Knapton telling us how women's racing started with the annual Ladies Race which required only a female helmsperson then slowly, as more women became involved, it developed into a fortnightly Thursday evening sail over the summer months. Thanks to the vision and perseverance of those ladies WOW has developed into the success it is today.

Since 2003, Mills Reef Winery has been our naming sponsor for WOW, supplying us with 54 bottles of wine for the season as well as a \$200 restaurant voucher for the winning race team. In return for their generosity we do our best to promote them and encourage our ladies to buy their award-winning wines. This year we trialed a scheme whereby the ladies could place an order on a prepay basis to WOW. We would then purchase the orders direct from the winery delivering them the following WOW night. This scheme was completely unsuccessful so we will be discussing other ways of promotion for the coming season. Meanwhile, please support Mills Reef by visiting the winery for tasting or dining out at the restaurant and don't forget to tell them you're there because of their support for WOW.

Thanks to Tina Jennen's enthusiasm for finding sponsors we gained more support this year. In addition to Aussie Butcher continuing to supply our subsidized meat trays to raffle we also had vouchers from Healthy Inspirations, Le Chat Noir, sPacific Landscapes & Gardening, Cambrian Meats, Mount Mellick and Hands On Health. Synergy Vitality Spa gave us vouchers in the beginning but the company got sold in January, however, the new owners agreed to honour the

old vouchers until the end of June 2012. We are very grateful for their support especially in these difficult economic times so please support them when you can and remember to say you're a WOW sailor. Wear your WOW shirt, jacket or cap wherever you go and spread the word over the winter months that WOW starts again in November so put it on the calendar now.

Finally, it goes without saying that we could not operate WOW without the support of our boat owners especially those that keep coming back year after year. Their good humour and patience makes for a most enjoyable experience which is important for beginners so they don't get put off sailing on their first time and hopefully come back to WOW for more. Delwyn Hodgson has done a great job of finding enough boats to meet the demand and on several occasions had more spaces available than could be filled. It's a challenging job but one that Delwyn has managed very well.

I'd also like to thank the rest of the WOW committee for their efforts and enthusiasm in helping to keep WOW moving ahead this year. It's definitely a team effort and I couldn't have done it without their support – thanks to Gill, Irene, Sue, Susie, Fi, Deanne, Diana, Nicole, Tina, Christine and Paulien. I hope most of you can find the time and energy to continue on the Committee next year but I'll understand if you choose to step down as it does require some commitment.

Further thanks go to Bill Whitiskie and Wayne Johnson in the Tower and to Steve and Toby at the bar for all their help on WOW nights. Thanks also to Ken the chef for serving such delicious food.

I have enjoyed the personal challenge of being chairwoman for such a good cause as WOW in my 8<sup>th</sup> year of being a committee member. In that time I have met some wonderful people who care about their community and want to be part of something good. WOW seems to meet that criteria for me so I feel proud to be a part of it and look forward to another successful year of WOW sailing.

Sincerely,

Megan Harris

WOW Chairwoman