



AUDI HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK

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Fair Winds celebrates 60th at Audi Hamilton Island Race Week

by Lisa Ratcliff

Over the past decade the modernisation and expanding waterline length of boats competing at Audi Hamilton Island Race Week has been an obvious progression. In contrast the homebuilt and the classics among the glamorous production fleet and multiplying multihulls have become rarer sights.

There's the historic pearl lugger Ruby Charlotte, the magnificent Sir Thomas Sopwith, which has graced the last couple of Race Weeks, and this year, Mark Chew's Philip Rhodes designed 43-footer Fair Winds, which is celebrating its 60th birthday this year.

The timber classic, which lives in Victoria, was designed by one of the most underrated American designers from the 1930s-50s and built by Abeking and Rasmussen in Germany in 1956, where shipwright labour was cheaper than the USA.

Originally mahogany planks over oak frames, Chew replaced the planks on the outside to kauri. The internal structures are the original big bronze ring frames, which take the load, and portholes, gimbaled timber fold-out table and timber lattice cupboard doors, for ventilation, are all genuine. As Chew says, "she's massively built; big and solid".

So far Audi Race Week has been a light air regatta and races like the one on Tuesday, in 6-8 knots, are a nightmare for a boat of Fair Winds' weight. "Trying to drag 14 tons around the course is really hard work," Chew tells, "sunset was 5.54pm and we finished at 5.52pm...it was a little stressful but we got a result in the end."



Fair Winds' interior has a sweet aged wood smell and unlike many restored floating showpieces, it is a simple fit-out. There is no flat screen TV, dishwasher or coffee machine. "It's very basic; we have one foot pump operated water tap, no heating, television or auto-helm. Very minimal, beautiful and comfortable," Chew says.

Racing a boat of Fair Winds' bulk requires a decent size crew and there is a tendency for the boat to fight the helm if the balance isn't right. Chew says once the boat is balanced the helm can pretty much be let go and it will sail itself. If the balance is wrong "she really arcs up".

Perceptions of owning a classic boat include endless upkeep, varnishing and dollars spent, but Chew believes it's only expensive if the boat isn't well used. "We are not precious about this boat; it's for sailing and enjoying. The most important thing for us is the friends you sail with. It's my boat but it's not really, we are all looking after it."

On the Race Week layday, Wednesday August 24, 2016, Fair Winds' fourth only owner marked his boat's 60th birthday with drinks and cake shared among sailing friends at the Hamilton Island marina.

Chew recalled the last time he was at Hamilton Island's popular offshore regatta 12 years ago there was a separate classic boat division, something he'd love to see again.

"Having a cache of classic yachts would be great for the regatta; it would be a great new visual direction. We might speak to owners and try to give it a push...it would be really cool."

All information relating to AHIRW is on the [regatta website](#)

Media images for editorial purposes [can be downloaded here](#).



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