

## **Fidelis returns to Rolex Sydney Hobart 50 years on from line honours victory**

In 1966, Jim Davern sailed his beautiful Knud Reimers designed, Auckland built, sloop *Fidelis* across the Tasman to compete in the Sydney Hobart and at their first attempt, the pair took line honours – and 50 years, on her present day owner, Nigel Stoke, is back to contest the race.

At 61 feet long, but with a beam of only 10 feet and low-slung topsides, many Sydney yachtsmen suggested she wasn't suitable for such a rugged race. Well, *Fidelis* showed them; not only did she win line-honours but she also won by a then record margin of 17 hours and 27 minutes.

Under various different Kiwi owners *Fidelis* returned to the race in 1967, 1969 and 1982. Then in 1994, Sydney yachtsman, Nigel Stoke was looking to charter a classic yacht in which to contest the 50<sup>th</sup> race. He found *Fidelis* sitting out of the water in Gulf Harbour, New Zealand and ended up buying her. Since then, Sydney has been her home port.

In the 50<sup>th</sup> Sydney Hobart, *Fidelis* won line honours in the 30 Year Veteran division. She was first boat out of the Heads – thanks to the early start given to the Vintage and Veteran Yachts. Stoke and *Fidelis* again competed in the 2006 race to celebrate '40 years on' from the original line honours win.

Stoke has added many, many miles to *Fidelis*' log. He has raced her to The Solomons, sailed to the Whitsundays for Hamilton Island Race Week, won the Mooloolaba and Gladstone races in division and not missed many Wednesday races on The Harbour.

The Sydneysider has cruised to Hobart three other times for the Australian Wooden Boat Festival and made several trips back across the Tasman to race with the Classics in Auckland. He has competed in several Lord Howe races and *Fidelis* is the only yacht to have participated in all 14 Classic Australian Barbecue Cruises, also to Lord Howe.

Under Stokes' ownership, *Fidelis* has been meticulously maintained. She has undergone one major refit and has been subtly modernised without losing any of her elegance.

While he appreciates it will be tough to repeat the line-honours win of 50 years ago, Stoke and his experienced crew of eight good friends will be taking the race very seriously. Their attitude is perhaps best summed up on their crew shirts, they read, 'Winner 1966, Grinners 2016'.

## **Fidelis media**