

PLAIN SAILING

MARCH 2026



RICHMOND
YACHT CLUB



FROM THE FLAG

BY JACKY BUSH
RYC COMMODORE



Welcome to the first edition of Plain Sailing for 2026!

It's been a busy start to the year at the club. January and February have seen significant progress on the refurbishment of the upstairs office space following the departure of our long-term tenant LOMOcean. A huge thank-you to Richard Limbrick, Keith Bekker, and David Chashmore for the tremendous amount of work they've put in so far. Many of you will have seen the results of their hard work during the SailGP weekend. There's still more to do, so if you're keen to get involved and lend a hand, we've got a few Working Bees coming up. We're also on the lookout for a new tenant, ideally someone connected to the marine industry. If you know anyone who might be a good fit, please encourage them to get in touch with the office.

The SailGP weekend itself brought plenty of activity and a great atmosphere around the club. You'll find more about that later in this edition, but I want to take a moment to thank our Vice Commodore, Mike Matthews, for everything he did behind the scenes to help make the weekend such a success.

As I write this, we're putting the final

touches on preparations for Route 66 and the Gulf Triangle. The Route 66 T-shirts have arrived and several have already been snapped up. Stories and photos from the weekend will feature in the next edition of Plain Sailing, so if you've got photos or a tale to tell, please send them through to the club.

On the topic of T-shirts, our merchandise shelves have been looking a bit sparse lately. We're bringing back three of our popular past designs, so keep an eye out for those in the office. We're also exploring ways to expand our RYC merchandise range, so if there's something you'd love to see, let us know.

Let's make the most of the remaining summer season with some great racing in these final events:

- Friday Night Special – 13 March
- Wednesday Night Series – 18 March
- Passage Race – 20 March
- Closing Day Regatta – 11 April
- Single-Handed Series – 18 April

Here's to smooth sailing and a strong finish to the season.

See you out on the water and around the clubhouse for that post sailing debrief over a drink. ■



THIS ISSUE

BY DERYN WILLIAMS
EDITOR

Welcome to the March 2026 issue of Plain Sailing.

From Sail GP to Great Barrier, single-handed sailing, social cruising and racing with a muddle of multis, lots has been happening over summer.

Jeremy shares the delights of exploring Great Barrier, while Damon encourages everyone to give single-handed sailing a go, Keeley heads to Wakalabubu, and Mike enthuses over the Sail GP technology.

Thanks to all the contributors and photographers who help me fill this magazine,



Please submit articles and photos to magazine@richmondyc.org.nz ▶

UPCOMING CALENDAR & EVENTS

March 2026

- 4th Pot Luck Lunch
- 4th Wednesday Night Series Race 10
- 6th-8th Marsden Cove Route 66 + Gulf Triangle - Short-handed 3-Race Regatta
- 13th Victoria Friday Night Special Race 9 (TBC)
- 18th Wednesday Night Series Race 11 (Final)
- 20th Passage Race (Orapiu) + Single-handed Series - Race 8

April 2026

- 1st Pot Luck Lunch
- 11th Closing Day Regatta (Haystack) + Single-handed Series - Race 9 (Final)

May 2026

- 6th Pot Luck Lunch
- 10th Winter Series - Race 1
- 24th Winter Series - Race 2



COMMITTEE REPORT

What has the Committee been up to?

The committee gets regular updates on sponsorship, membership, use of club rooms, building maintenance, bar management, as well as, finance.

Specific items discussed at the November, December and February meetings include;

- Safety with follow-ups on a recent MOB incident.
- A new working group to engage with other Westhaven clubs and Auckland Council, to ensure the ongoing presence of the clubs on the seawall.
- Planning for Route 66 and the Gulf Triangle, and SailGP events.
- The upstairs refurbishment with regular reports on progress of the essential pre-tenant work needed to make the space safe and presentable being undertaken.
- The details and design of refreshed outside boards was approved.
- Decisions to increase T-shirt stock and explore new RYC-branded items, including a small number of higher-quality burgees for club swaps and special occasions. ■



WELCOME



New Members

Chris Baxter

General

Real MacCoy (Alan Wright Marauder)

David Evans

General

Highlight (Beale 33)

Dan Alderson and Jenefer Bilkey

General Family

Drop Dead Fred (Ross 930)

Tobias and Chiharu Tohill

Associate Family

Solaise (Lidgard Demon 10)

Chris and Kathryn Collings

Associate Family

Puff (Bullseye)



New Crew Members

Chris Nannig - Crew

Rob Skerten - Crew

Bryan Turner - Crew



U.S. SAIL GP VISIT

BY MIKE MATTHEWS

U.S. Sail GP comes to town - and to Richmond Yacht Club!

Back in November 2025 RYC received an email out of the blue, from the US Sail GP Team no less - and they wanted to get to know RYC when they were in town for the Auckland Sail GP. With the Auckland regatta being planned for Valentine's weekend, a Zoom call was arranged in December with the Head of Partnerships & Hospitality - Alta De Leon. They wanted to develop a relationship with a local club and that was Richmond Yacht Club! So first up was Thursday evening when we had two of the team come along and speak at the club, scheduled for an hour. The US Sail GP team members were Andrew Campbell - Strategist (ex-America's Cup sailor from 2017, 2021 and 2024) and then Peter Kinney or PK as he was referred to - and he is the grinder facing the stern - escorted by Conor Cashel (team Chief of Staff) and a photographer.

After they settled in, a very attentive RYC audience started firing questions at them - which they handled excellently in an expert, friendly and articulate manner - so well that we all learnt a lot more about the sailing, the

boats (I think they are still called that), the technology involved, the speed and stability, the league and so much more - and we started to get an understanding on how busy they are when they are in town at a regatta.



The 60-minute Q&A session became 90 minutes, but then they managed to break free from the club - and honestly, I expect we could have gone on for another couple of hours if time allowed it and still be held enthralled by their presentation about what these F-50 teams do.

The feedback from all was it was an excellent event, so thanks go to Andrew, PK, Conor and photographer and then Alta for setting it all up.

Did you know that all 13 boats are exactly the same - no differences at all (though I guess you could say that does not apply to the Black Foils right now - yes probably a bad joke!) and that they have access to all of the same information coming off every boat as well as from the control room. Essentially what you see on TV they see - but with a lot lot more detail. Also, they get all the data from every team after every race and are able to review each teams' performance - so in a 4-race day that means they are reviewing 48 races in total from the other 12 teams.

Next was the base tour on Friday, and the lucky 10 met at the club to catch a van to the Sail GP entrance. After a lovely stroll along North Wharf to take



in the sights and the vibe of the viaduct, we eventually ended up at the right place at the Auckland Viaduct Centre.

Conor (Chief of Staff) was there to show us around. While the teams were disappointed that practice had been cancelled due to the threat of lightning - that meant the wings were in storage and not rigged for practice - we got to see it all!

Several teams shared the space in the Viaduct Centre, and the catamarans were all on their trailers, so we were made welcome to look around and inside the US Sail GP's F-50. Then we got to see a team (Brazil) on the simulator practicing races - all the teams share this one simulator, and it sounds like it is much in demand - and when we were there, they were doing a debrief of their simulation race - what was good and what needed improving on. Hard to do with a bunch of RYC members gawking at you.



After that we went over to a central control container, which is the hub for all the data coming off the boats. This is manned by 6 Sail GP team members and a lot of serious IT equipment linked to the cloud. The Sail GP organisation arrives in each port city with 85+ 40-foot containers with each team putting its boat and wing in 3 containers and then there are another 40+ containers for all the other gear and equipment - a very serious and

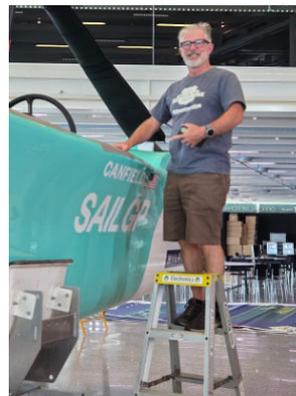


impressive exercise in logistics!

Finally, we got to see the wing shed, and the wings were very serious and technical bits of kit. Inside the base of the wing is a display that provides all the telematics and data being broadcast while racing. It felt more like you were looking at pieces of jet aircraft with all the technology - but then again, these F-50's are almost flying.

So having recovered Keith Bekker for the second or third time - he was like a kid in a candy shop - our time on the tour came to an end.

Our heartfelt thanks to the US Sail GP team who were the most hospitable and gracious hosts taking time to show us the base in what is a very demanding schedule in Auckland - and if you get a chance to hear a team speak or take a tour of the base, jump at it. Watching the racing on Saturday and Sunday was so much better having heard US Sail GP speak and having a small insight behind the scenes of Sail GP. We hope to continue our relationship with US Sail GP in future Auckland Sail GP regattas. ■



GREAT BARRIER ADVENTURE

BY JEREMY COPE

TIME OUT



A perfect weekend at Great Barrier Island

Last weekend I ticked off one of my long time sailing goals, Great Barrier Island. I'd been once before way back in the eighties on the ferry and remember it being very beautiful..

The plan was to leave Thursday evening, overnight at Kawau Island, head to Barrier on Friday and spend the weekend over there, leaving on Monday. We just needed a good weather window. The first planned weekend was cancelled as the weather was unfavourable (like most of January), but the second, 29th Jan to 2nd of Feb looked ideal. The forecast was for a light Sou'westerly on Thursday evening and similar on Friday, no wind Saturday, Sunday and a northerly Monday. It looked perfect.

With the cruising gear on board, the diesel and water tanks full, and RIB in tow, we departed Westhaven on Thursday evening, rounded North Head and put the kite up in a light Sou'westerly. We ducked into Gulf Harbour to pick up our 3rd crew member and continued into the night, kite up all the way to Kawau, arriving just after midnight. Champagne sailing on a moonlit, warm night.

After breakfast we headed through the Kawau channel and hoisted the kite. The breeze was similar to the day before and, contrary to the forecast which said it would die in the afternoon, it increased to over 15 knots on the beam so we changed down to the Genoa. We went close to Little Barrier to take a look and surprise, surprise, contrary to it's name, it's quite big!

Covered in thick bush with steep sides it looked tricky to access; besides Little Barrier is a DOC reserve and landing is by permit only. As we sailed past we took the opportunity to practice a heave-to. Yep, that worked.

Something I hadn't seen before as I've always sailed relatively close to the coast, was that the mainland completely disappeared which was quite unsettling. Reassuringly, we could



see Little and Great Barrier so no one panicked. Five hours after leaving Kawau we passed through the narrow Man-of-War Passage into Port Fitzroy.

David Thatcher's book, *New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf*, is an excellent resource for cruising around the Gulf and I had read the pages on Great Barrier and Port Fitzroy several times so sort of knew what to expect. What surprised me was that all the surrounding land was completely bush-covered with very few visible man-made structures.

We motored past Smokehouse Bay and dropped anchor in Kiwiriki Bay. The water is pretty deep in the bays, I think we were in about 9m with all the chain and plenty of line out, or so we thought. We had a swim, a couple of rums and told some great jokes and laughed like excited kids. There was the occasional gust coming down the bay and we were keeping an eye on the lovely blue yacht on our Port and a dead bush to starboard to check we weren't dragging the anchor. All was good until a Scottish voice from the lovely blue yacht, which was now well in front of us - how did they get there? did they move? - politely asked if our anchor was ok. Obviously it wasn't, so we sobered up slightly and moved well up into the bay and put more line out - crisis averted.

The breeze dropped completely that evening as forecast and we had an absolutely wind-less night, not even the slightest sound of water on the hull.

The next day we motored around to Kaiaraara Bay and decided to do a walk up Mt Hobson. Little did I know that this would be a near-death experience! It's a beautiful walk but ideally you need a good level of fitness, which I quickly discovered that I didn't have, but my crew did. It's about 3.5 hours mainly up and it progressively



gets more challenging. Whilst separated from the others I began scheming that I'd just stop and hide but annoyingly they kept waiting for me so I just kept plodding on slowly with lots of cursing and recovery breaks. After about 3 challenging hours we made it to a hut with stunning views and after a short break we went for the summit, well, why not we're almost there right?

If you've done this walk before you'll know what comes next. If you haven't, just imagine hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of wooden steps on a never-ending staircase to a hidden platform high in the sky. If you're unfortunate enough to have a similar level of fitness as me, then you'll have to stop every 10 steps cause you can't breath and your legs are crying and your lungs are screaming and you feel like dying. Being a stubborn fellow like me you just keep repeating this cycle until eventually you drag yourself to the top where I collapsed and had to be resuscitated, well almost! Thankfully the view is out of this world. You can see the surf beach on the east coast and Port Fitzroy on the west so it was sort of worth it. On the way down, I counted over 700 steps so I wasn't exaggerating.



Walking back was a matter of just keep going and think of how good the swim is going to be. Needless to say we survived. For dinner we checked out the Port Fitzroy Boat Club which is 400m up a hill from the boat ramp, another hill, the skipper was grumpy. We had fish and chips and let's just say I don't think the fish was caught locally as it had an unusual shape. Anyway, we were supporting the boat club which is community run so it's a good cause. We borrowed a mooring in the bay for that evening and again not a breath of wind overnight.

On Sunday afternoon, we visited Smokehouse Bay which is well worth a



visit. It's got a shed which has the perfect combination of a library, a hot water bath and sea views. There's a pizza oven, rope swings, fish-smoking facilities and, of course, a beautiful view of the bay. All of this is provided by the owners free of charge for visiting boaties. Apparently it gets very busy in the summer but there was only us and an elderly couple there from Whitianga. They were tidying the place and complaining about the mess left by the launchies. When I asked the guy how long they'd been going there he said 35 years, haha. They go every year for a couple of weeks at a time and have been doing so for that long.

We left Port Fitzroy Harbour late that afternoon and motored 2 hours south to Whangaparapara Harbour and tucked in by a little cemetery. We

shared the bay with the Spirit of New Zealand and a sprinkling of other boats. As darkness settled in, the water around us became covered in forest debris and some quite large logs quietly floated past. Possibly on the change of tide and the fallout from the storms a few weeks before. Another windless night was enjoyed.



The next morning we waved the Barrier farewell and started the return trip to Auckland. Kite up in the Nor'easterly which progressively got stronger as the day went on, and after rounding up a couple of times we changed down to the Genoa, then the No. 2. As promised to my crew, dolphins visited about half way across, and as expected, it started raining as we entered the Waitemata Harbour.

Great Barrier Island is most definitely worth a visit. It's very beautiful and is like stepping back in time to how I imagine New Zealand used to be 100 years ago. Get the weather right and the sailing is incredible. Check your anchor and it's perfect. Well almost, try not to die walking up Mt Hobson!



Thanks to my crewmates Matt and Sarah for an unforgettable trip. ■

SIR PETER BLAKE MEMORIAL RACE

BY KEELEY SANDER
PERCHANSE

We set out for the Sir Peter Blake Memorial Race on a day that could only be called stunning – bright skies, warm air, and a forecast that promised a bit of everything.

The run down the harbour was gentle, with pockets of breeze teasing us along. Rounding North Head, spinnakers filled with fresh hope, but that stretch turned into a game of snakes and ladders as boats surged forward then slipped back again. Thankfully, by the time we rounded the Torbay buoy, the breeze settled in, giving us a good run to the finish. Taipan was ready and waiting to sound Rapid Ride across the line for a well-earned first place, followed by Crocodile and then Visage.

The rest of the fleet wasn't far behind, and Waikalabubu Bay made the perfect spot to cool off while we watched our single-handed friends – Ora Rosa, Cool Change, Penury and Monotone glide home.

The social gathering that followed was just as good as the race. Chico Too, Acquiesce, Predator, Noumenon and Heatbeat joined in, and it was great to



swap stories, share food, and relive the highs and lows of the day.

In a fun twist, the spot prize was repurposed as an award for the boat that best overcame adversity. And it turned out almost everyone had a tale to tell. There were yarns of engines giving up, missed starts, boats that could only get home in reverse, hourglass spinnakers, sheets wrapped around props – you name it, the fleet faced it.

The clear standout, though, was Perfect Storm. Their day took a turn not long after North Head when a spinnaker wrap sent things sideways. The sail came down straight into the water, transforming itself into an impromptu fishing net. After a fair bit of hauling (and no fish harmed), they got it back aboard, reset and pushed on. Then, during a gybe, the spinnaker sheet slipped under the hull. At the Torbay mark they stopped to recover the sheet, only to discover it wrapped neatly around the prop. A quick dive to untangle the prop, with



the skipper barely on board, shouting, “Hurry up, we’re still racing!” Great sports to share their story and manage so calmly with all the family and children on board! ■



A CALL FOR SINGLE-HANDED SAILING

A journey into single-handed sailing

It begins, as many good sailing stories do, with a quiet moment at the dock.

The boat is familiar. The Hauraki Gulf stretches invitingly beyond the Westhaven breakwater. But this time, there's a difference. There's no crew. No friendly banter or flurry of pre-start tasks shared among mates. Just you, the boat, and the sea. That's the starting point of the journey into single-handed sailing — a personal challenge that tests, not just seamanship, but self-reliance, focus, and resilience.

For some, this is old hat. For others, it's an intimidating idea. Yet each year, a growing number of sailors answer the call, participating in the Richmond Yacht Club's Single-Handed Series — ten races across the summer season, split either side of the New Year. And each year, sailors emerge with stories of growth, grit, and genuine achievement.

The call to adventure



Many of us spend our sailing lives crewing, racing in teams, or enjoying relaxed weekend cruising. Single-handed sailing can seem like another world entirely, one

reserved for experts, thrill-seekers, or retirees with oceans of time. But the Single-Handed Series is different. It's structured, local, safe, and above all, welcoming. It's designed for everyday sailors to push themselves, to learn and improve, and to take on the unique challenges that come with sailing solo.

The courses vary in length and complexity, taking in everything from harbour marks to deeper Gulf routes. Some races are fast dashes under pressure; others are longer hauls that test planning and endurance. But they all share a common thread: they're achievable with the right preparation and mindset. The moment you commit to your first race, you've already stepped into something special.

Doubts and decisions

Of course, hesitation is part of the journey. Most first-time solo sailors wrestle with doubts: Can I manage the spinnaker on my own? What if I make a mistake? Am I fit enough? The answer, universally, is: you learn, you adapt. And you're never truly alone. Richmond's Single-Handed community is supportive and the season briefing, scheduled before the first race, is not just about rules and safety. It's a forum for sharing tips, stories, gear hacks, and battle-tested wisdom. Ask any returning sailor what got them through their first race, and they'll say: "The advice from others."

The challenge begins

Crossing the start line solo is exhilarating. Everything happens faster, and yet, more calmly. There's no yelling, no finger-pointing, no confusion. Just deliberate choices: when to tack, when to reef, how to navigate traffic and wind shifts. You become intimately connected with your boat's trim, balance, and rhythm.

And yes, you make mistakes. Everyone does. A fouled sheet. A missed mark.

A headsail flogging while you fumble to drop it. But that's the process. The first few races are about learning the boat again, learning yourself anew.

Over the course of the season the challenge rises with races that demand greater preparation: checking forecasts, planning tide gates, provisioning snacks, and knowing when to conserve energy. The satisfaction of finishing these races is immense. The sense of independence — of having handled everything from sail trim to safety gear, navigation to nutrition — is unmatched.

Personal growth under sail

Ask anyone who's done the full series



what they gained, and the answers will vary. Some say confidence. Others cite boat-handling skills or tactical sharpness. One sailor described it as "a form of meditation." Another said it helped him trust himself more, both on and off the water.

The series fosters more than racing ability, it nurtures a deeper connection with sailing itself. Without the noise of a crew, you begin to notice the subtleties: the sound of wind pressure changing, the way a wave pattern telegraphs a shift, or the quiet satisfaction of a perfect tack.

The camaraderie off the water also deepens. Back at the Richmond clubhouse, finishers swap stories over a beer, compare war wounds (mostly minor rope burns or bruised egos), and pass on knowledge to newcomers.

The solo sailor community, while independently-minded, is collaborative at heart.

Your season starts here

The single-handed series promises ten races across the summer — each with its own rhythm, challenges, and weather window. It's not about perfection. You don't need to win, or even finish every race. What matters is showing up, learning, and giving it a go.

There will be a series briefing to kick things off. If you're curious, that's the perfect place to start. Come with questions. Come with doubts. Just come. There's also a designated WhatsApp group, perfect for sharing tips, asking questions, and staying connected throughout the season.

You don't need a cutting-edge boat, high-tech autopilot, or decades of offshore experience. All you need is a seaworthy vessel, a bit of prep, and a desire to challenge yourself. The rest comes with time, miles, and the gentle mentorship of fellow sailors who've been there before.

Your journey awaits

If you've ever wondered whether you could sail solo — this is your moment. Not in some distant ocean, but here on your doorstep, on the Hauraki Gulf, supported by a Club that knows how to bring people along for the ride.

So cast off. Set the mainsail. Trim the headsail. And discover what it means to sail not just with wind and tide — but with purpose. Because single-handed sailing isn't about going it alone. It's about finding something within yourself you didn't know was there—and returning with the quiet satisfaction of a journey well made. ■



RYC UPSTAIRS

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