

TIN-OPENER BY AIR FOR YACHT LEDA

The tin-opener asked for by the Tauranga cutter, Leda, when the T.E.A.L. Solent, Ararangi, was in radio contact with her yesterday morning, is now on the way. Her last tin-opener was broken.

This morning the Leda was slightly ahead of the fleet.

When the Awatere took off for Sydney shortly before noon today it carried a new tin-opener for the Leda. It was a combined tool—tin-opener, corkscrew and bottle-opener—and was packed in a special container for dropping from the air.

This was a canister 12in high, painted silver and attached to a wooden float by a length of rope.

Airways officials said the flying-boat could not be diverted from the course to pass over the yacht. Present weather indications were, however, that the Awatere would pass close to the Leda this afternoon.

In a Press Association radio message received this afternoon, W. A. Wilson, aboard the Leda, said the yacht was slightly ahead of Rangī and about four miles to windward. The Solveig was about 15 miles behind the Leda. The Tara, Hope and White Squall were to leeward and about 10 miles behind.

The wind this morning veered to a light south-westerly and the yachts are close-hauled on the port tack, just heading Sydney comfortably at the moment.

The yachts reported a quiet night in which they made little progress. Visibility was poor with a slight haze.

"A Tortoise Race"

Mr Sid Schofield, lighthousekeeper at Cape Reinga, said this morning he had had radio contact with the Tara at 9 a.m. The Tara said the Hope had been abeam at dusk last night but had taken the lead this morning. The radio operator aboard the yacht described the race as "less exciting than a tortoise race."

The commander of the Ararangi, Captain F. W. Kilgour, who sighted four of the yachts at 10 a.m. yesterday when bound for Sydney, said on his return to Auckland this morning that he had been in communication with the Leda by radio-telephone and by morse. Signals from the Leda were then weak.

From the Ararangi, flying at 6000ft, four of the yachts were seen about 160 miles west-south-west of Cape Reinga. At that stage it was thought that the Tara was in the lead, 20 miles north-west of the Leda.

The four sighted were the Leda, which was ahead in the group, the Rangī, some six miles behind, followed by the Solveig. The Southern Maid, thought to be tailing up the four, was about 15 miles behind the Leda.

THE DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

No one—least of all other competitors in the 1951 trans-tasman yacht race—will begrudge the Leda the honour of first crossing the finishing line at Sydney. The credit for the Leda's win largely goes to two men whose grit, application and skill, have made a dream come true.

The dream began when they were at school, developed while they served long years overseas during the war, and started to be realized about four years ago when the Leda's keel was laid in a Northcote backyard.

"Dooley" and "Sandy" Wilson, brothers and owners of the Leda, have never despaired of realizing their dream of building a big ocean-going yacht, and sailing her with credit in a big ocean race. For years every penny they could save, every hour they could put in, has gone into the boat and there were many occasions when it would have been so easy to throw the whole thing in and forget it.

Actually before the war, the brothers, did not intend to build a 54-footer. But when they came back and found prices had risen to such an extent, there seemed no option but build a boat if they still wanted to realize their dreams.

So about four years ago, in the backyard of the Northcote home in which "Dooley," his wife Kit and "Sandy" lived, the keel of Leda was laid and the gaunt skeleton of her ribs began to take shape.

"Dooley" was on the job practically full time—he would knock off now and again to build a bread-and-butter dinghy or other small craft. "Sandy," a reporter on the Auckland Star and well-known yachting writer, was only able to devote spare time to the task.

Volunteer Labour

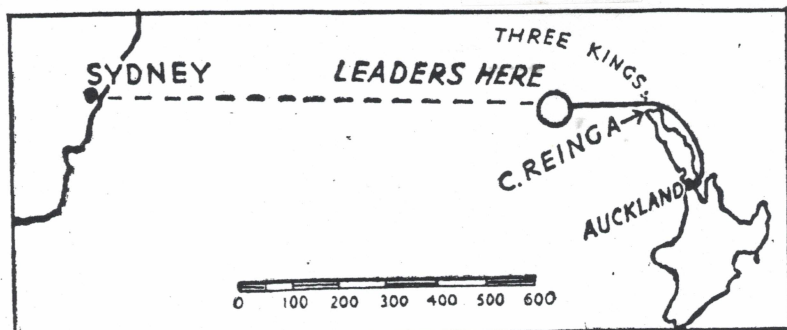
The two enlisted as much volunteer labour as they could—on some week-ends up to 10 unskilled enthusiasts were helping where they could. Mr Jim Young, a Northcote boat-builder, also gave valuable assistance.

Rib by rib, plank by plank, the beautifully-shaped hull took shape. Modelled on a design by the Swede, Knud Reimers, she caused considerable comment—not all of it favourable—in the early stages.

But the brothers had no qualms. Their yacht was sheer and sleek, but her draught was substantial with 14 feet of straight keel, and she had far more freeboard when launched than many of her critics visualized. The 70ft hollow mast was made up of four segments of 1½in spruce. It turned out to be immensely strong, yet it can be lifted by two men.

The hull was completed in October, 1949, and, in a nerve-wracking hour or two for her builders, was transported to Birkenhead and launched by the floating crane.

The Leda was rigged, and, virtually still a shell with no interior fittings, was sailed down to Tauranga, the Wilsons' home town. There "Dooley" worked on her for another year, building into the shell cunningly designed and up-to-date cabins and facilities. An auxiliary engine was installed—but not before the brothers narrowly escaped disaster when the wind dropped and an ocean swell carried them towards jagged rocks during a shake-down cruise.



LEADERS IN THE TASMAN RACE, Leda, Rangī, Solveig, Tara, Hope