

SAILOR PROFILE JOHN PITMAN

A member of NPYC since 1981, John now runs our Adult Learn To Sail programme and coordinates the maintenance of our clubrooms and learn to sail boats. Check out his profile below.

😊 **Name:** John Pitman

🎂 **Age:** 73

❤️ **Relationship:** Married to Alison, 4 children and 6 grandchildren.

🏠 **Hometown:** New Plymouth, originally from Auckland.

🚢 **Sails:** Paper Tiger and Bavaria 44.

⚙️ **Profession:** Retired engineering manager with a degree in mechanical engineering.

When and why did you start sailing?

Well, I had read a few books about sailing and cruising, so my Dad thought it would be a good thing to try out. After a 10min demo sail in a Flying Ant at the Manukau Yacht Club when I was 12, my dad built a boat for me over the following winter.

What do you love about sailing?

It demands some thought and attention to detail about what is going on both on and outside the boat. I also appreciate the physical challenge.

What boats have you sailed?

While still living in Auckland and growing out of the Flying Ant, I had a Cherub, then an OK Dinghy. I took a break from sailing during uni. Soon after marrying Alison in 1974, a mate and I bought a Javelin. That was great fun. In 1978 I bought my first Laser (now ILCA), gaining NZ selection to go to the Worlds in Perth in 1979. I came down to New Plymouth for a few New Year regattas, before getting a job down here and joining up with NPYC in 1981. I continued with Lasers until the fourth child came along. Twelve years ago we bought a Bavaria 44, which we still keep at Westhaven. At age 65 I got back into Lasers for the World Masters games in Auckland, coming second in my age group. On the strength of that, we went off to the World Laser Masters in Split, Croatia, where I came third in a full rig behind two sailors with Olympic pedigrees. I have recently passed my Laser on to Graeme from the club, so that I can concentrate on sailing my Paper Tiger. I'll see how it goes this season.

What are some of your favourite places to sail?

For racing, New Plymouth, Napier, Nelson and the East Coast Bays are all great. For cruising, it is hard to beat the Hauraki Gulf, Great Barrier and the rest of the Northland east coast.

Please share some favourite sailing memories?

Winning the first race at the World Masters. Beating some top sailors some of the time.

Why did you get involved in Adult Learn To Sail?

While we do a great job of teaching children to sail in Optimists and Starlings, there is quite a drop-off in their participation once they get to later teenage years. Some come back to the sport, but not enough. However, there are more 35+ year olds racing Lasers nationally than youths and many of those Masters sailors take up the sport for the first time when they are over 40 and can afford a boat. The club needs more members and families involved, with more adults sailing to keep the club vibrant. Forming a cohort of adults sailing together seems the best way to achieve this. I have met some great people in the process and it is a good way to stay in touch with younger people. I can make the time so why not do something useful?

What is your favourite boat to sail? Javelin**Remind us what happened when you were sailing your laser in Auckland in heavy winds?**

I went out for a sail in my full rig Laser from Tamaki Yacht Club on Bastion Point in 35kn of NE wind. It was slow going upwind but interesting downwind. After a few capsizes my mast sheared off at deck level. I dismantled the rig, hooked the top of the main over the ragged end of the bottom section inverted in the mast step and sailed home to be met by the boys in blue who had been summoned by concerned apartment dwellers in Mission Bay. The moral of the story is make sure that if you go out in poor conditions, make sure you can get back safely under your own steam.

What's special about sailing in New Plymouth?

Waves, swells, and great winds - unless there is a southeasterly.

How do you keep fit for sailing?

Since running is now off the agenda, I swim 2-3k three times a week, cycle 50-60k on a few other days, when it's not raining, and try to remember to do a few calisthenic exercises regularly. Squats, press ups, pull ups, bridges etc. More sailing would be good and pulling a boat up over the soft sand is excellent cardio training.

Have you got a dream within sailing?

Just to keep doing the thing I enjoy and maintain friendships in the process.

Photos: Paper Tiger Nationals in New Plymouth, World Masters in Torbay, Laser Nationals in New Plymouth, John with his granddaughter, John's Flying Ant in 1964, Auckland Champs for Flying Ants, back in the day the laser fleet was full of learners and the bottom mark always produced something to talk about back at the clubhouse at Tamaki Yacht Club (John isn't in this photo), Bavaria 44 and Cherub















