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STAR OF SYDNEY

With her distinctive stepped sheer, canoe stern and racing pedigree, the Aussie yacht *Caress* is a star in Sydney Harbour. Now, after a full restoration, she's racing again

WORDS IAN WARD

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Designed by Wally Ward in Sydney for a family friend in 1948, sisterships *Caress* and *Camira* were a development from his original very successful designs, *Janaevey* 1937 and *Jasnar* 1944. *Caress* and *Camira* were the first of the CAs which hold a distinguished place in Australian yacht racing history as subsequent developments *Carmen*, *Cadence*, *Calliope* and *Castanet* all proved highly successful in ocean racing, including winning the Sydney-Hobart Race in 1966.

Caress was the second of the CAs built and is identical to *Camira*. Launched in 1961, she was built from Wally's original plans, 13 years after *Camira* by spray painter Keith Newland in a workshop in Leichhardt, Sydney. During the rebuild Simon Sadubin and his team found that the quality of the workmanship to be of an extremely high quality, evidencing that at least one highly skilled craftsman assisted Keith with the original *Caress* build. After *Caress* was launched, Wally Ward teamed up with a young boat builder, Ron Swanson to build *Carmen* the first of the Carmen class yachts, leading to speculation that it was probably Ron who helped Keith build *Caress* in 1961.

Caress was next owned by Robert Coventry and used as a harbour racer. She was moored off their home at Shell Cove Mosman from 1963 to 1976. Interestingly, Tom Coventry, Rob's son, assisted Simon Sadubin in the *Caress* restoration including installing all the electrical systems. George Lees and then Jens Skdy-Christensen owned her for short periods in the 1970s and early 1980s, until she was eventually sold to Graham Nock in December 1982. Nock, who had previously owned her sistership *Camira* for a short period, raced *Caress* with the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club (SASC) Classic Division fleet for 36 seasons.

Caress has enjoyed long sprints in the hands of Sydney's sailing families since her launch in 1961. Bought as a daysailer in the late 1960s by Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron (RSYS) member Bob Coventry for his wife Ann and their four children, the yacht was used constantly by the family to explore the nooks and crannies of Sydney Harbour.

Moored off Mosman's Shell Cove near the family home, *Caress* became the centre of the family's weekends and annual summer holidays for over a decade. Annual Christmas trips up the coast to Pittwater saw the yacht anchored in Careel Bay for well over a month for the family to enjoy and use. Youngest son Tom, who was not quite 10 when the boat was sold in the mid 1970s,

Below, top to bottom: Bob Coventry and family aboard *Caress* in the 1970s: The opening of the Sydney Opera House: Graham Nock



remembers that all family birthday parties and anniversaries were celebrated onboard *Caress*, describing the yacht as 'so beautiful to sleep and sail on'. The yacht was a great source of happiness and joy for the family with many memorable occasions onboard captured brilliantly in black and white. Bob Coventry's untimely death a few years after he sold the yacht has amplified the importance of *Caress* for the family, with the boat still talked about with great fondness.

Caress was also owned for over 30 years by Sydney businessman Graham Nock, of Nock & Kirby hardware retail fame. As the only son of Sydney Lord Mayor and avid yachtsman Sir Norman Nock (acknowledged as introducing the Dragon class yacht to Australia in the 1950s) Nock had spent a lifetime 'messing around in boats' by the time he purchased *Caress* in his sixties. As a member of RSYS, Graham and his son Rick enjoyed great success racing against the SASC fleet on Sydney Harbour every Saturday. *Caress*' distinctive double-ended lines and oversized rig became a familiar sight criss-crossing the harbour course. Reputedly unbeatable downwind, Rick Nock remembers the yacht being perfectly balanced and 'really just able to sail herself, often surfing at great speed across the finish line'. The combination of a seamless design, skilled crew and a fiercely competitive skipper saw *Caress* win many more races than not, and her name can be found on a number of the perpetual trophies held by the SASC. These weekly father/son sails were greatly enjoyed and rarely missed.

One of *Caress*' current owners, Michael Paull, crewed with the Nocks for close to seven years each Saturday, learning the ways of the boat and proudly taking over custodianship of *Caress* in 2020 in partnership with Julian Sexton and David Kenyon. Graham Nock, now an impressive 96 years old, was invited to climb aboard his old yacht after her extensive restoration and spend the day sailing on Sydney Harbour in 2023. His turn at the helm was bittersweet for family and friends who acknowledged that with his encroaching mobility issues this was to be Graham's last sail. How fitting that this milestone was spent on board his lovely *Caress*.

Michael Paull purchased *Caress* from the Nock family in 2019 and in 2020, formed a syndicate with two of his former University of Sydney colleagues, Julian Sexton and David Kenyon to restore *Caress*

back to 'as new' condition, the mandate being given to Symon Sadubin and his team 'let's put a brand-new classic, with another 60-years racing ahead of her, back on the harbour'.



Clockwise from top left: Apprentices James Bishop (left) and Joe Street (right) priming the new cockpit framing; The completed cockpit and deck layout; Completed galley, stairs and bunks; Finished companion way, sliding hatch; Interior forward

PHOTOS: SHERRY COLLIER



The restoration of *Caress* has been undertaken by Simon Sadubin of Sydney Wooden Boats in Mona Vale and is now complete. After 60 years of constant use, the entire boat has been stripped back to bare inside and out as shown in the images on the previous page.

All the frames have been repaired, where necessary and the boat refastened as needed. All butt blocks have been replaced and refastened and the keel has been re-bedded with the keel bolts all checked. Once all the structural work was completed every seam had the original corking and putty removed, each seam then being filled with wedge shaped red cedar, glued into place to make an extremely strong hull even stronger – effectively becoming a monocoque construction. This was then sheathed with bi-axial glassfibre adding further strength and integrity to water ingress resistance. The fully restored *Caress* was relaunched on Sydney Harbour in mid-2022. She is kept at the Cruising Yacht Club Australia (CYCA) in Sydney and is currently competing in the SASC classic yacht division winter series.

Above left: The fully restored *Caress* was relaunched on Sydney Harbour in mid-2022. She is now racing in the SASC classic yacht division winter series

Above right: Owner Michael Paull at the helm

Below: Wally Ward and his son John

DESIGN

Caress was designed by Wally Ward (1888-1965), who was a keen amateur yacht designer. He created a series of yachts over a period of around 30 years from 1937 to 1965. Based on his own very successful design *Janaway* in 1937.

Wally designed *Jasnar* in 1944 (currently owned by Gordon Ingate) and then sisterships *Caress* and *Camira* in 1948 which became the inspiration for the Carmen class during the 1960s

In each of his designs, Wally sought to produce a well-balanced, easily handled yacht least wave making for her displacement length ratio. To achieve this, he used the Wave Theory of Colin Archer to reduce resistance and the Metacentric Shelf principle expounded by Admiral Turner to achieve excellent hull balance.

These same principles were applied to the design of *Caress*, very successfully.

A DESIGN PROGRESSION

Caress was significantly larger than her predecessor *Janaway*. She was designed as a comfortable day sailer and cruising boat suitable for four people.

Carmen and *Cadence* were a natural progression from *Caress* with distinct similarities and refinements to

meet the requirements of the RORC rating rule for offshore racing. These included a higher stem and finer topsides forward for sailing to windward, and a deeper keel for improved stability and sail carrying capability.

There were also some changes to the hull and keel shape. *Carmen* and *Cadence* had a cut away forefoot and longer stern overhang with shallower buttock lines aft.

The hull sections were quite similar, although *Cadence* has higher and finer topsides forward, shallow garboards, and a deeper keel.

NEW RIG

Originally designed and fitted with a single spreader three-quarter rig, with overlapping genoa on a tapered hollow timber mast. A larger masthead rig was designed by Wally in 1962, but was never built.

During the reconstruction of *Caress*, John Denton of Whale Spars was approached to come up with a rig which reflected the essence of the original but with some improvements. Capably engineered by Tony

Pearce, the double spreader seven-eighths rig has small upper jumper struts which stiffen the mast in the upper panel, maintaining forestay tension.

This meant the cumbersome runners could be removed, making it much easier to sail short-handed and without needing to adjust them during each tack and gybe. The spreaders and cap shrouds remain aligned with the mast, allowing the boom to sit square for best performance when running downwind, and the narrower spreaders and their location allow the genoa to be sheeted in at a closer angle for better upwind performance.

Every part of the construction and rigging has been overseen by John Denton at Whale Spars with meticulous care. The alloy spar has been painted

honey brown, and the white dacron North sails maintain the traditional look in keeping with the varnished timberwork of the boat itself.

A furling headsail was added for convenience and the mainsheet horse was replaced with a traditional sheeting system led to winches in the cockpit, allowing the tiller to be lifted clear for more space when entertaining.

When designing the new rig, particular care was taken to maintain the original helm balance of the boat. *Caress* has a delightful neutral helm which gains a

very small amount of weather helm as she heels, but the tiller remains light and sensitive. She does not tend to gripe or round up in gusts as do many modern boats, an attribute sought by Wally Ward in his quest for a nicely balanced boat.

It is clear that with the newer lighter materials, improved efficiency and larger sail area she is destined to perform even better than the original.

I am pretty sure Wally would have been impressed by each of these improvements. It will be very interesting to experience how she sails over a wide range of conditions. Not only pretty and well finished but seaworthy and a sheer pleasure to sail in all conditions.

DESIGN PEDIGREE

The racing success of *Janaway*, *Camira* and *Caress* at Middle Harbour Yacht Club (MHYC) and SASC led to Ron Swanson to ask Wally Ward to design a larger version, suitable to race offshore and in the Hobart race. This led to the design of *Carmen* and shortly after, a modified version *Cadence* and her sistership *Calliope* were built for Jim Mason and Lal McDonald.

Along with her many sisterships, these boats were highly successful ocean racers. *Cadence* winning the Sydney Hobart Race in 1966 and her owner Jim Mason also won all of the major offshore events during the season.

Very soon a whole series of boats were built by the Swanson Brothers for MHYC members including *Calliope* and *Carinya*. *Castanet* finished runner up to the famous *Rainbow II* in the 1969 Sydney Hobart Race was built by Lidgards in NZ.

Many sisterships to *Cadence* were built, known affectionately as the CAs by their owners, with names such as *Carinya*, *Carronade*, *Carousel*, *Cassandra*, *Castanet*, *Carefree*, *Cardinal Puff*, *Caroma*. Over 30 boats were built to this design and can be seen in harbours all over the world. Collectively they are also known as the Carmen class.

MOTIVATION

Graham Nock owned and actively raced *Caress* on Sydney Harbour at the Royal Prince Edward YC for over 30 years. He loved sailing this boat as she was so easy to handle in all conditions and was a perfect day sailing and racing boat.

As a keen crew member racing with Graham for seven years, Michael Paull took the chance to buy *Caress* along with co-owners Julian Sexton and David Kenton. Together they had the passion to restore her to original condition, keeping her place in history, along with sistership *Camira* as the first of the famous CAs, and predecessor to the Carmen class and Sydney Hobart winner *Cadence*.



CARESS

DESIGNED	Wally Ward
BUILT	Keith Newland, Sydney, 1961
LWL	23ft 11in (7.3m)
LOA	30ft 2in (9.2m)
BEAM	8ft 3in (2.5m)
DRAUGHT	4ft 9in (1.5m)

