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'Fantastic' ... Ian Smith (left) and Simon Sadubin at work on *Sao*

Photo: VIRGINIA YOUNG

Makeover for a big birthday

A SEVEN-METRE gaff-rigged cutter built in 1905 is up on the slips at Chowder Bay boatshed, being professionally and lovingly restored to her former glory, ready for the 100th birthday celebrations.

Not that *Sao* is a fancy boat – she was “bobbing around the harbour” for many years until first restored about 1964 after being bought by current owners John and Ann Dark.

Simon Sadubin and Ian Smith, who are leasing the boatshed from the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, have been working on the yacht for four weeks and expect to complete the restoration in another month. The craft was built by W M Ford at Berrys Bay in Waverton.

“*Sao* is one of only about four Sydney boats that have survived from this period and are being restored to sail again,” Mr

Sadubin said. He said the trust hoped to re-activate its harbour sites with traditional activities such as boatbuilding. Both he and Mr Smith honed their craft over many years in places like Balmain and Glebe before moving to Chowder Bay. “It’s fantastic to be restoring a boat of this age,” Mr Sadubin said. The boatshed, itself built in 1892, is open to the public on weekdays. – JANE IGOE.