

Out to give Merlin magic touch

JANE IGOE

CHOWDER Bay boat restorer Simon Sadubin has just completed and launched his latest heritage project – an 18ft, half-deck, gaff-rigged, centre-board sloop called *Merlin*.

Merlin has been on the slips at Chowder Bay for the past six months being professionally and lovingly restored to its former glory by Mr Sadubin and his partner Ian Smith.

The boat was built for the grandfather of current owner Don Taylor by shipwright James Hayes, of Careening Cove, who was “probably the best boat builder in Sydney in the early 20th century”.

Mr Sadubin said: “This was typical of the half-deck cruisers that the Sydney Amateurs used to race on the harbour but most were up to 25ft long.”

“It was a very common boat in the 1920s and this seems to be the only one that has survived in original condition,” he said.

Merlin has been out of the water for the past 50 years and the restoration has been commissioned by Mr Taylor, who has been storing the boat in his carport at Wahroonga.

“It’s like *Merlin* has been in a time capsule – she is original and

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– Simon Sadubin

now she is going to sail on the harbour again.”

The two boatbuilders have been working on a number of heritage projects at the Chowder Bay site for the past two years.

They both honed their craft over many years in places such as Balmain and Glebe before moving to Mosman.

“It’s really been fantastic to restore these old boats,” he said.

“We put about 1000 hours of labour into *Merlin* and we are hoping it will sail for another 50 years.”

He said many of the boats were “luxury items” that needed a lot of time and skill to put back together.

The Chowder Bay boatshed was built in 1892 and is open to the public on weekdays.



Ian Smith and Simon Sadubin with *Merlin*.

Picture: DANIEL GRIFFITHS