

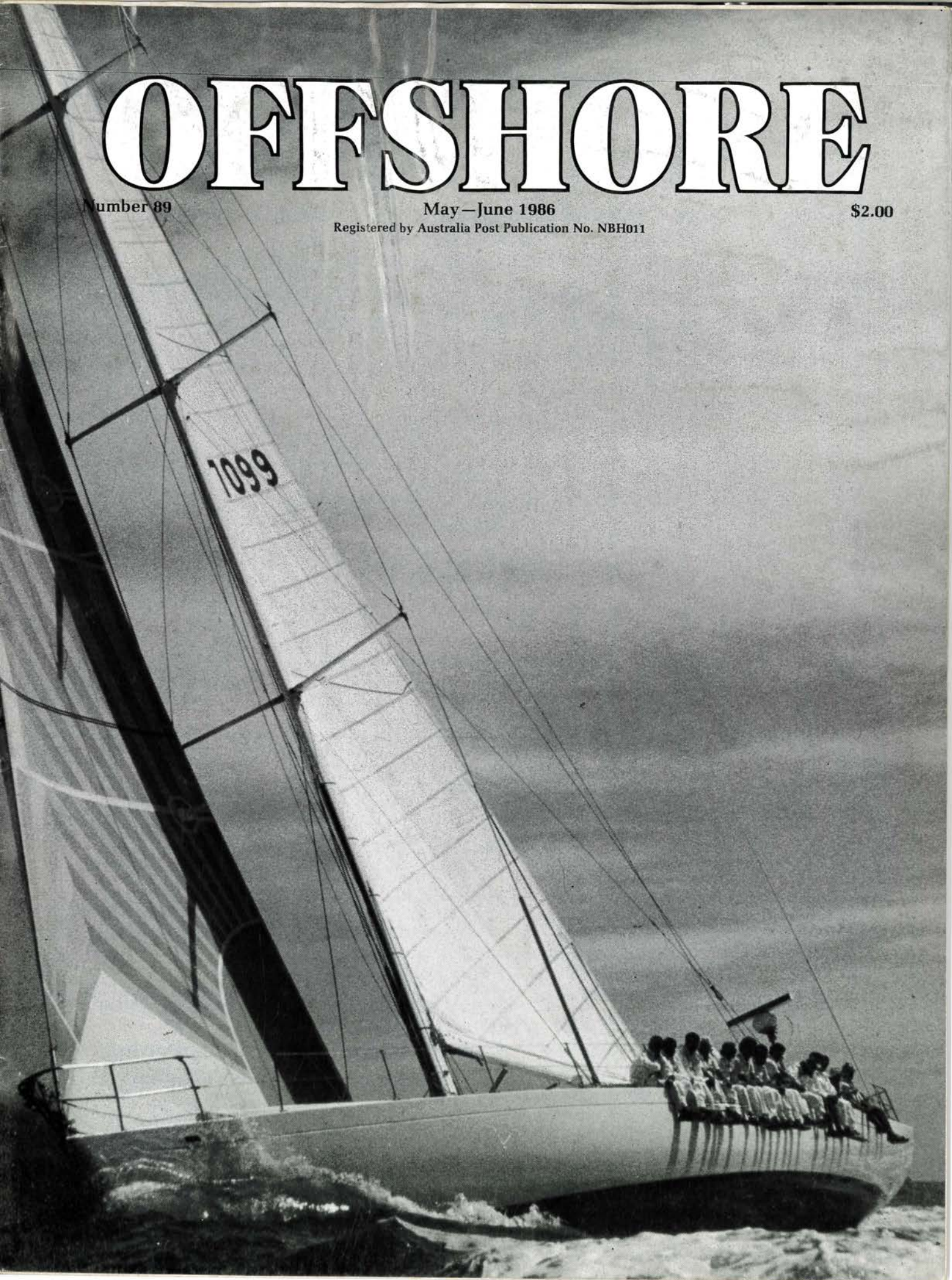
# OFFSHORE

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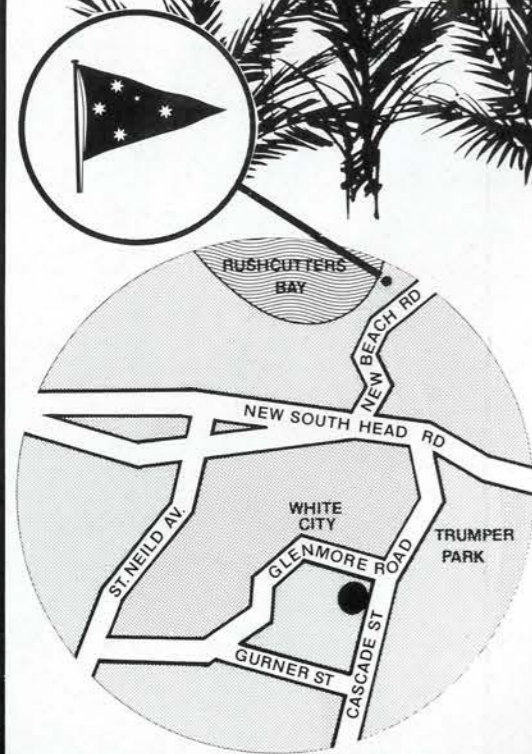
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**Cover:** Hamilton Island Race Week was a highlight of the recent series of races which began with the Club Marine Sydney-Mooloolaba, the TAA Brisbane-Gladstone, and the Gladstone-Hamilton Island races. Rod Muir's Windward Passage, featured on this issue's cover with her crew on the rail in typical IOR style, enjoyed her role as the only maxi in competition, taking line honours in the Mooloolaba Race and, during Race Week itself, showing the fleet nothing but the whale on her tail end. In this issue we have two reports on Race Week, by Robin Copeland (page 12) and Tony Cable (page 19), which deal with different aspects of this very successful series in the beautiful Whitsunday Passage of Queensland's central coast.

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Help Spread the Word. See Ad on page 23.

# Offshore Signals

## Mooloolaba and Gladstone

(From Peter Campbell). This year's races northwards — the Club Marine Sydney—Mooloolaba and the TAA Brisbane—Gladstone — attracted near record fleets, but produced some frustrating results once again for owners of expensive state-of-the-art ocean racers.

If nothing else, the Mooloolaba Race can best be described as a benefit for the media. Line honours went to 2MMM's Rod Muir, sailing *Windward Passage*, while the overall winner was the half tonner from Geelong, *Nuzulu*, skippered by *Australian Sailing* magazine's Editor Bob Ross, with Network Ten television yachting commentator Rob Mundle as his co-driver. Also in the crew was Dave Lawson, who has sailed in every race to Mooloolaba (this was the 23rd). All are CYCA Members, of course, although *Nuzulu* is owned by Bill Dodds from Royal Geelong Yacht Club. Adding insult to injury was that Dodd's second member of the Kel Steinman designed 'Zulu tribe', *Ruzulu*, skippered by Mark Peelgrane, finished a close second overall with third place going to last year's winner *Flying Circus*, another half tonner. In fourth place, after looking the likely winner, was AWA Sydney—Hobart Race winner *Sagacious*.

Even more of a shock must have been overall result of the TAA Brisbane—Gladstone. *Windward Passage* led the fleet almost from the start (she broke the start and had to return) to sweep up the Queensland coast before a rising southerly to set a race record of 28 hours 57 minutes 06 seconds for the 308 nautical mile course. Her time was 50 minutes faster than the record set in 1982 by *Apollo*, which this year was a non-starter for the first time in many years. Her Hobart Race skipper, Warwick Rooklyn, skippered the Brisbane 66 footer, *The Office*, with *Apollo* now up for sale.

Overall winner was a yacht that cost the owners a mere \$3000 to buy two years ago, the converted Diamond class sloop *Saltash II*. While owners, shipwright Ian Wright (one of the famous Brisbane family of boatbuilders) and solicitor Greg Chapple, have spent some \$25,000 and a lot of time in bringing the yacht up to ocean racing standards, their total outlay is probably less than the cost of a mainsail for a maxi.

But the hard-running conditions suited the Diamond, originally designed by Englishman Jack Holt as the round-the-buoys harbour racer. The Diamonds have also been noted heavy weather performers, and *Saltash II*'s crew of ex dinghy sailors had the boat on the plane almost for the entire second 24 hours of the race. *Windward Passage*'s boat speed never dropped below 10 knots from 4.00 p.m. on the afternoon

the start until she finished just before 4.00 p.m. the following day.

On corrected time *Saltash II* (and there was no age allowance in this race) won comfortably from the top Brisbane Farr 40, *The Gambler*, skippered by Ian Kenny, with third place going to another veteran half tonner, *Scampi A* (Ross Perrins). Best of the interstate boats was *Singapore Girl* from Sydney, which finished fourth, and *Nuzulu*, this time skippered by Airlie Beach sailmaker Chris Wallis (fifth). •

## BOC pace quickens

The two confirmed Australian entrants in the BOC Challenge solo around the world yacht race are facing the realisation that the start of what has been described as the world's most gruelling sailing event is now less than 12 weeks away (August 30, Newport Rhode Island).

Ian Kiernan, 45, the skipper of the Lexcen 60 ft *Spirit of Sydney* finished his 2,600 miles qualifying voyage on May 7th making his New Zealand to Tahiti leg in 17 days. Sailed mostly in light airs (except for three days with 45 knot headwinds) Kiernan said that the voyage was trouble free until two days from Tahiti when he discovered a large split in one of the hull plates. After plugging the split and receiving confirmation from the race committee in Newport that he would not be jeopardising his qualifying voyage, Kiernan motored the remaining 150 miles to Papeete to minimise the chance of further damage.

The yacht will be repaired in Tahiti and then sailed to the USA in time for the start.

Meanwhile, fellow competitor John Biddlecombe, 42, has secured a new 60 ft yacht to replace the original *ACI Crusader* which he wrecked last month on a coral reef in the Tonga Group. ACI will continue to support John in the French built boat designed originally for another BOC competitor, Claire Marty, whose sponsorship hopes

fell through forcing the boat onto the market. 'Biddles' will sail his new boat on a qualifying passage from the Azores to Newport.

The latest count on entries for this year's around alone challenge is 35, more than twice the number of entries in the 1982 race, although there may be a few drop-outs before the start due to the absence of sponsorships. Fourteen entries are 50-60 footers, with half of them designed and built for the race. Both Australian entries are in this Class I group.

France dominates world short-handed racing, and that country will have six entries in the Challenge. Four are maximum length (60 ft) purpose built yachts, all sponsored. This is in contrast to the campaigns of many other nationals, who are either paying out of their own pockets or are still seeking sponsorship. For example, British entry, Robin Davie, has been running the 336 miles around his native Cornwall in a ten-day effort to raise the Pds Stg 40,000 he needs to campaign his *Double-O-Two* group.

Favourite on past form must be 34 year old Philippe Jeantot, who won the last BOC Challenge. His sponsor, Credite Agricole, is again backing him, this time in a new maxi designed by Ribadeau Dumas, who says of the new yacht launched in April: 'It is very much a development from what we learned in the first race, but we tank-tested the hull to improve stability under self-steering gear'.

Guy Bernadin, who was also a finisher in the last Challenge, has had a model campaign to date. With the sponsorship of General Biscuits, his 60 ft *Biscuits Lu* was built and launched last year, he sailed it across the Atlantic on a shakedown and then back again single-handed for his qualifying trip of 3,400 miles — in 17 days. Bernadin is reportedly relaxed and virtually ready to go. •



Ian Kiernan waves goodbye from the cockpit of his *Spirit of Sydney*.



(Above) The annual 'Sail for Cancer' fleet earned some \$31,000 for cancer research, thanks to skippers who made their yachts available. (Below) An MSB fire tug was out to entertain the fleet.



ROBIN COPELAND PHOTO

## Sail for cancer

The annual Leo Leukaemia & Cancer Research Trust 'sail for cancer' was again a great success this year with some 130 yachts taking part carrying some 1,400 guests, most of whom did not know the difference between a bowline and a hair ribbon. The Race raised more than \$31,000 with the generous help of boat owners and an enthusiastic mob of sailors.

The fleet gathered at Rushcutters Bay amid yellow balloons, signal flags and showers from MSB fire hoses. Among the fleet were Ann McRitchie who skippered *High Class Sleaze* with a crew dressed in fishnet, diamonds and scarlet. Bryan Griffin, on *Tic Tac*, flew the Jolly Roger and had a seven foot cannon on his poop deck. There were many colourful incidents, including some breathtaking dashes to the start. •

## Ocean racing record?

(From Tony Cable) Those who have read a copy of the last Gladstone Race program would have read of a remarkable ocean racing achievement, if not a world record. Three ketches competed, *Laurabada*, skippered by Ivan Holm, *Rudyard Kipling*, skippered by his son Peter, and *Ocean Venture*, skippered in turn by Peter's son, Peter Jr. The three of these skippers have sailed a combined 65 Races. Ivan built and launched *Laurabada* in 1953 and has sailed 38 Glad-

stones in her. Peter has done 22. Peter Jr, at age 19, has done 5. The *Ocean Venture* which he commanded is the flagship of the Ocean Youth Club of Australia. Also aboard *Laurabada* was navigator Doug Kemp who, with his skipper, has sailed every Gladstone Race. •



(Above) The Peters Holm, Senior and Junior. (Below) Ivan Holm (right) and Doug Kemp, veterans of all 38 Gladstone Races.



IAN GRANT PHOTO

IAN GRANT PHOTO

## Southport Race a 'goer'

The inaugural 1986 Bayview Harbour Gold Coast Yacht Race, run by the CYCA under the race direction of Peter Rysdyk, is looking like getting off to a flying start on August 16th.

Several weeks ago Rysdyk and CYCA Sailing Secretary, Brian Hayden, were in Southport for the official opening of the Gold Coast seaway approach to the Broadwater, which has done away with the infamous Southport Bar that has collected more than a scalp or two over the years. 'It's magnificent', Brian Hayden remarked. 'It was blowing SE 30 knots and boats were getting in with no trouble at all.' *Offshore* has obtained a copy of a letter from the Gold Coast Waterways Authority to the Queensland Yachting Association outlining several points of interest to yachtsmen. It states that:

Typical maximum tidal velocity in the new entrance, as measured on March 10-11 1986, spring tides, was 4.6 knots. With the new moon occurring on August 6th 1986, similar high tidal velocities may occur during early August.

Gold Coast Highway Bridge to opposite seaworld: 2.3 metres minimum low water depth.

Opposite Seaworld to New Entrance: 4.5 metres minimum low water depth.

New entrance to the 'Deep Hole' (dredges still in area) after June 1986 4.5 metres minimum low water depth.

## Offshore Signals

'Deep Hole' — 5 metres minimum low water depth.

Channel inside Crab Island to Runaway Bay marina, 2 metres minimum low water depth.

A new eastern channel is being constructed from the Southport Yacht Club to join to the new entrance channel works. This will provide a 4.5 m min. low water depth from the Club to the 'Deep Hole'. It is not anticipated rapid siltation of these channels will occur. Future maintenance dredging of the channels to maintain the design depth will be carried out by the Authority dependent on the Authority's financial limitations. It is expected that the sand-bypassing operation and tidal movement within the training walls will maintain the design depth in these areas.

Vessels may temporarily anchor for shelter from adverse weather conditions in the 'Deep Hole' area north of Bayview Harbour marina or adjacent to the new eastern channel opposite the northern portion of Seaworld, or for a short period in the basin area in front of the Wave Break Island.

Race Director Peter Rysdyk is very enthusiastic about the interest shown in the Race, having already received 30-odd confirmed entries including that of *Apollo*. The CYCA is assisting our host Club, Southport Yacht Club, in organising a four race series immediately following the race to Southport — The Quality Inns Gold Cup Series. •

## 1987 Noumea Race

The CYC in 1987 will again organise the popular Australia—New Caledonia Yacht Race. The last race (in 1985) was cancelled because of the uncertainties of the then unstable political climate. As it turned out, more than 20 yachts still went, had a good time and, in fact, were annoyed about the cancellation. Many sailed in and around New Caledonia, receiving the usual hospitality from Kanaks and French alike.

Club Mediterranee will again be the main sponsor. Others are the New Caledonian Tourist Office, UTA Airlines and Euro Rent-A-Car. •

## AWA continues Hobart sponsorship

Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited is to continue its sponsorship of the Hobart Race until at least 1989. AWA became the major sponsor in 1984. CYCA Commodore John Brooks said, in announcing the continuing arrangement, that the Company had provided magnificent support and that the Board of the CYCA was unanimous in its decision to accept AWA's offer of a further three years of sponsorship. AWA will have the option to renew the agreement for a further three years. The Company will continue to sponsor the Southern Cross Cup series.

AWA has been involved with the Sydney—Hobart Race for the last 18 years, providing ultra-sophisticated communications equipment and operators for the

## Offshore Signals

Radio Relay Ship which escorts the fleet to Hobart. Mr John Hooke, Chairman and chief executive of AWA, said the Australian-owned company was delighted to continue the sponsorship of what he described as a vital part of Australia's sporting heritage. •

## New Product News

### New AWA naval degaussing range

AWA has joined the RAN's multi-million dollar mine warfare project with a \$3,000,000 contract to upgrade the RAN degaussing range in Sydney Harbour. Degaussing is the process by which a ship's magnetic 'signature', which it acquires when travelling at sea in the earth's magnetic field, is erased, thus rendering it more difficult to identify and less vulnerable to magnetic mines. AWA installed the current range, designed for steel hulled vessels, in 1984. The new range is specially made for the new generation fibreglass hulled mine hunting ships. It is a highly sensitive system because of the low magnetic characteristics of fibreglass. The range will incorporate the most sophisticated magnometry equipment ever installed in Australia.

The new degaussing sensors will be installed off Shark Island at the end of 1987, positioned at a 45° angle to the earth's magnetic field, which enables ships to be accurately tested while crossing the range in both N-S and E-W directions. AWA is also developing the software for the Navy computer that will analyse the data. •



### New 'Hotcan' promises to be 'hot stuff'

The problems of preparing hot food at sea can be considerable, particularly in a small boat in rough weather. The importance of good, regular hot meals to maintain crew performance and morale has traditionally been an unassailable truth (although, these days, advanced grand prix IOR crews function best, according to some experts, when underfed — see letter on page 6).

Now, from the people who brought you the meal-in-a-bag, which required only boiling some water, comes the completely self-contained hot meal — no billies, no boiling. Just pierce the can and wait for 10–12 minutes while it heats itself up.

'Hotcan' self-heating meals come in an insulated can which cooks by the old method of combining water and limestone gran-

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ules to produce heat. They have been endorsed by a number of yachtsmen making long ocean voyages.

Hotcans are available in 425 g cans (15 ounce) and in five varieties — beef casserole, chicken casserole, irish stew, turkey curry with rice and curried vegetable with fruit. Available at \$5 per can for CYCA Members from Meridian Holdings, PO Box 90, Mosman, 2088. Ask for Peter Hannan (29 3380, a.h. 969 5648). •

### 'Les Cascades'

The name has nothing to do with a Frenchman's shout in Hobart, rather *Les Cascades* is a new unit complex on the CYCA side of Paddington that may be of interest to Members both for its proximity to the Club and for the 'cosmopolitan life style with village atmosphere' of this unique Sydney suburb (see ad on page 9).

These new, ultra-modern units are now available in easy walking distance from the Club, in Trumper Park. Some of the two and three bedroom units have views over the harbour. All include the use of such facilities as security double parking, spa, gym, and they all have large terraced decks with floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors. Their central location and proximity to public transport, along with a price tag ranging from \$134,500 to \$197,500 (12.5% two year finance available) will make them an interesting prospect for Members looking for digs nearer to the Club. For more information: Peter Versi and Associates (909 3700).

### Weatherproof Nikon

Nikon, one of the finest names in cameras and lenses, has recently released a 'weatherproof', feature-packed camera that won't be damaged by the worst that Bass Strait can heap upon you — it's weatherproof down to 3 metres (10 ft). Yachtsmen photographers know that getting decent pictures afloat is usually done only at great risk to normal 35 mm cameras, and proper underwater cameras have, up till now, been the only way around this, and up till now these have been prohibitively expensive. The Nikon L35AW solves the problem. Among its array of features are autofocus (infrared), auto exposure, auto film loading, auto film speed setting (it reads the film cassette), auto winding and re-winding. It is available in two models, the AWAf and AWAD, the latter which comes with a data back for automatic imprinting of frames with the date or the time. The data back and weatherproof features will have special marine application, for example, in sail evaluation exercises, or marine assessing (no more need to slip a yacht to get some idea of underwater damage) or per-



haps simply to record the time that the last patron fell over at the South Pacific Rum and Scallop Pie Tasting. The recommended retail price is around \$472 (slightly more for the data back model), but special discounts are being made available to CYCA Members and *Offshore* readers by Sam Lewis Photographics, Shop T54 Bankstown Square (ring 709 6694 or 709 2711 and ask for Jim Mason, who sails out of the CYCA and who will deliver to the Club). •



### And, a weatherproof lighter

When looking for something for the yachtsman who has everything, the weatherproof gas-refillable lighter pictured may make a much appreciated gift. Constructed in a plastic 'bullet' which screws apart and which is sealed with 'O' rings (so it really is waterproof), the lighter comes complete with a handy lanyard. Very reasonably priced at \$2.95, it is available at Dive Trek, just across Rushcutter Park, at 86 Bayswater Road, Rushcutters Bay (33 4481). •

### Small blocks from Gibb

Barlow-Gibb has just released a superb new range of small blocks ideally suited to small yachts and skiffs. They have a 34 mm Delrin sheave together with a swivel shackle head fitting. They have nylon shells for toughness and hard wear as well as concealed guide ribs which help prevent thin ropes slipping between the sheave and cheek. They will take up to 12 mm rope and have a breaking load of 950 kg. Weight is about 60 grams. Four models available are: single, and with becket (models G3311) and fiddle, and with becket (models G3322). •



**Copies of the 'Project 87' CYCA 16 minute video are to be made available for sale. The price, including mailing, is \$35. Send to:**

**The Project 87 Co-ordinator  
CYCA  
New Beach Road  
Darling Point, 2027**

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# BIGGLES' COLUMN

by John Brooks

One of the more interesting yachting columns, if you happen to be technically minded, is 'Off the Record', which appears in the RORC's monthly magazine *Seahorse*. It is written by Gary Mull who, as everyone knows, is a yacht designer. He is also a member of the International Technical Committee which I have heard described, unkindly perhaps, as the brains behind the Offshore Racing Council of the IYRU. More accurately it could be described as the brains behind the IOR, for it is the source of all technical adjustments, amendments, tweaking, rehashing of and apologies for, call them what you will, the 'Rule'.

I have been a fan of 'Off the Record' for many years, the most important reason being that Mull has the ability to explain, in terms that even I can understand, the reasoning behind the latest IOR gobbledegook and what it might mean to your average ocean wallower.

Another reason is that occasionally Mull lashes out at detractors of the IOR in a style that could be thought libelous when used by someone other than a labour politician. At such times the column adds considerable entertainment value to its educational con-

tent and makes me yearn for the days when Biggles' Column had similar freedom of expression.

On becoming a flag officer four years ago I was advised by a well meaning Member that anything I wrote could now be construed as being CYC policy, so I had better restrain my more larrikin journalist instincts. However, I digress.

In the March/April issue of *Seahorse* Mull writes on the development of the International Measurement System, which is touted as the handicapping system that will be fair to all regardless of race, colour or speed. It depends on even more complex yacht measurement than that currently required by the IOR; the only practical way to do it is to use the electronic measurement wand, a technique slowly coming into use.

A boat being measured for IOR could take the extra measurements required by IMS and then have both ratings. The main advantage claimed for the IMS is that it treats equally all yachts regardless of shape or vintage, being based on the Velocity Prediction Program developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The handicap is further modified through time allowance for the type of course being sailed.

It is not clear whether IMS will ultimately do away with those ludicrous shortcomings of the IOR, which currently have whole crews perched on the weather rail all the way to Hobart, or which pay mere lip service to the philosophy that monohulls should be positively self-righting. I have heard it claimed that the only reason crews stay on the weather rail is that they are too scared to go below, such is the propensity of modern hulls to come unglued.

Mull does make one claim that I can take issue with however, that due to the efforts of yacht designers and the ITC, '... the IOR is undoubtedly giving the best ocean racing the world has ever seen'. If he had written fastest I could have agreed, but 'best'??? There is no doubt that modern yachts are faster than they were, say, ten years ago, let's say, one knot faster to windward just for the purpose of debate. Ignoring the fact that sail technology alone has probably accounted for some of that, if the IOR has bought that one at the expense of heeling stability and positive self-righting, then it is a knot I could do without since my competitor is subject to the same rule.

If the ITC had 'tweaked' the IOR to ensure stiffer yachts, even if that cost a fraction of boat speed, I, and many

other ocean wallowers, would be happier. It has evidently escaped the boffins in the ITC that there are a lot of practical ocean racers who are very unhappy with the IOR as it stands and who are convinced that the guardians of the rule cannot see the forest for the trees. Lately, the guardians' response to that theory is that it is all the boat owners' fault, echoing a popular response amongst forward hands since the beginning of ocean racing. Sorry, Gary, faster does not necessarily mean better, but I hope you are right about the IMS.

The saga of Rule 26 continues with a proposal currently before the RORC which would effectively separate the Fastnet Race from the Admiral's Cup. In its place is a long race from Cowes out to the Fastnet Rock and back via a Channel mark to a finish line in the western approaches to the Solent. All Admiral's Cup events would be 'open' events, with yachts permitted to carry advertising. However, they would be totally separated from the 'amateurs' and would not compete in the traditional races of Cowes Week. The Fastnet Race would remain with its normal finish in Plymouth, but would only be run in even years, i.e. 1988, 1990, etc.

It is at this stage only a proposal but it could have implications both for our Admiral's Cup team and for the format of the Southern Cross Cup. Can the Southern Cross Cup be separated from the AWA Sydney-Hobart Race? If we are to attract more international entries to the SCC, will we have to approve of advertising on yachts (shock, horror)? Whatever the answer to these hypothetical questions, the propositions wrought by the amendment to Rule 26 are only just beginning. ■

# SAFETY AND THE IOR YACHT

The following letters continue the discussion of Tony Cable's article and subsequent correspondence on the subject of the safety of the modern IOR yacht.

We open with a letter, which presents a differing view from the drift of correspondence received to date, from Peter Kurts, who is perhaps unusually well placed to speak from the viewpoint of the 'grand prix' ocean racer of today, having represented Australia in several Admiral's Cup efforts and being a twice (some might say thrice) winner of the Hobart Race.

From Peter Kurts

The Editor, *Offshore*  
Dear Sir,

Your December 1985 and March 1986 issues dedicated six of its pages to articles which were critical of the modern ocean racing machine, and basically questioned her rightful place on the blue water.

These notes are written in defence of these modern wonder boats. By good fortune I raced in all three races which are mostly used as examples of the modern ocean racer's inability to handle storm conditions, i.e. the '79 and '85 Fastnets and the '84 Hobart. This is stated simply to indicate that I am not writing from the shore or from the comfort of a cruiser/racer.

The main criticism I summarise in your magazine articles is that the modern IOR racer is uncomfortable and unsafe and there seems to be a plea for a return to the cruiser/racer concept.

In defence of the modern yacht:

1. A return to the cruiser/racer concept will be the end of what is a most successful high growth sport. So let us pray that the cruiser/racer concept is kept for the cruising/racing sailor, and the wonder machine (as Guernsey calls it) keeps its place for those who are inclined toward all out racing.
2. For all its (so-called) discomfort, the machine, given fine skills, has tremendous thrills and high speeds for the lovers of top IOR racing, all of which quickly overshadow any discomfort. To quote from Guernsey's own very critical article: 'She is a wonderful machine. She is fast, responsive, and interesting to sail, demanding constant attention and a high level of expertise'.
3. Proof of the desirability of the trend is that there is no shortage of owners and certainly no shortage of dedicated crews. If the modern racer was

as pictured by its critics it would surely be dying instead of being in high growth, as evidenced at every Admiral's Cup by the host of new yachts. The truth is that owners and crews are eager for the next series to start at any world venue, and will cart themselves and boats around the globe to compete.

4. To say the modern boat antics are 'alarming and frightening' is just not true. I have never raced a boat where the crew were either frightened or alarmed. They have had some great thrills and some tough spills, but were certainly never frightened or alarmed.
5. I am left cold when I read criticism of crews pushing their boat in atrocious conditions to the absolute limit. What, pray, do we expect our young lions to do other than to go fast and hard? Heaven help us as a race (or a competitor) if that attitude is ever tamed by rule or regulation.

It is beyond my understanding that the editor of *Yachting World* magazine says 'the sport is both dangerous and ridiculous'. He goes on to say, 'the list of crazy realities found in modern ocean racers goes on and on'.

There is nothing more modern than my own boats when they are launched, and there are no crazy realities in them. Whether they have small galleys and flimsy toilets is surely totally irrelevant. To say the top crews won't sail on these types of boats again is simply not true. Top crews will be knocking down the ramparts to get on boats like of *Panda* or *Jade* or the new *Drake's Prayer*, and most of the top crews will be annoyed if there is a built in s.s. sink instead of a built in lightweight bucket. There is such keenness that the off-watch sleeper who does not instantly go about with the boat is considered very non-competitive and quickly dumped by his peers back onto a cruiser/racer.

When Editors of magazines question the ability of tired and underfed crews coping with the aftermath of the '79 Fastnet, the answer is that the top racing crews cope 'better than most by a street'. If there is going to be a crisis, give me the rail-sitting, so-called underfed crew every time.

Finally on safety. I cannot understand the criticism. No crewmen on modern boats are drowning and all modern ocean racing boats get to port when damaged. The sandwich construction gives plenty of warning of serious damage and always gets one to safety. Broken masts are like broken bones, painful, but basically harmless. No modern ocean racer was lost in the Fastnet '79. Small unprepared cruiser/racers were the ones which suffered fatalities.

Modern ocean racing men should defend their wonder machines. They should stand

up to the critics of the sport and they should stand up for the boats they love, and not allow the critics to beach them.

Yours faithfully  
P.P. Kurts

From Peter Joubert

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your letter of 18th April about your concern with the design trends and the increased risk for crews.

I myself consider that crews are being unnecessarily put at risk by owners and designers for the following reasons:

1. They are asked to sit on the windward deck acting as self-righting ballast in exposed positions where they are more likely to be swept overboard or to suffer from exposure.
2. They are asked to sail in yachts which have been poorly constructed to withstand the effects of gales, thereby running an extra risk of foundering.
3. Some yachts are marginal in their stability and are therefore more likely to overturn. Wide beam is again detrimental in this situation as the yachts will stay upside-down for a longer period.

I have read the replies to your article and agree with most of the comments from the many learned and experienced people.

It is obvious that the way the measured beam and beam aft is accounted for in the rule is part of the problem. Surely it is not beyond the wit of the rule makers led by Mr Gary Mull to devise suitable adjustments.

It is also obvious that the penalties for small values of the centre of gravity factor need to be increased and that the number of crew allowed needs to be decreased.

Apart from the above there is one aspect that has not been discussed, and this concerns liability should a tragedy occur involving one of these exotically built lightweight grand-prix yachts. The question of compensation for families of drowned crew members might then arise, and legal advisers to plaintiffs are likely to join any possible defendants in a court action.

Amongst the defendants I visualise a dramatic courtroom scene where the organising yacht club is defending vigorous cross-examination for allowing the unsafe yacht to participate in the race.

In particular I can see the safety inspector, who failed to take note of the weak construction, answering questions in the witness box about other yachts which were not allowed to start in earlier Sydney—Hobart Races until certain 'structural defects' were attended to. One

particular example springs to mind.

**While it might be argued by the yacht club that the responsibility for any yacht participating or retiring rests with the owner, it should also be noted that this is only an opinion. The club, if joined in a legal action, has to defend this view, and a sympathetic jury might well find for the plaintiffs. . . It is time for the IOR makers to take notice of what you are saying. — Joubert**

Designers and builders would also be marked people.

While it might be argued by the yacht club that the responsibility for any yacht participating or retiring rests with the owner, it should also be noted that this is only an opinion. The club, if joined in a legal action, has to defend this view, and a sympathetic jury might well find for the plaintiffs. In all, it would be a most expensive affair and upsetting to our sport.

It is time for the IOR makers to take notice of what you are saying. Perhaps we should turn the spotlight of publicity on the next IOR meeting to find out why the rule is not being altered to improve the seaworthiness of our ocean racing yachts.

Yours sincerely,

P.N. Joubert

From Julian Everitt Yacht Designs

Dear Tony,

Thank you for your letter and article regarding capsizing ocean racers. In Europe the enthusiasm for offshore racing is dying. It is not only the boats that have to 'survive' the long ocean races in the Ton Cup events, but also the minds of the crews. Go to any major regatta and the bar talk will often revolve around the 'nastiness' of the long offshore.

It is easy to blame the boats for this 'dread' of going offshore, but today's crews would push a heavy displacement cruiser in the same way. Ten crew on the rail would make any boat faster than one with only five on the rail. Apart from the so called 'progress' of yacht design, the competitiveness of the people sailing is pushing the limits of what most of us are prepared to do, or even able to do.

I believe the trend is irreversible and in only a small way is due to the boats. In order to maintain popularity Ton Cup events will need to look at shortening the offshore races to make them more acceptable to the minds and bodies of the crews.

Today's ocean racing crew is not interested in the Corinthian spirit that once typi-

fied offshore racing. The 'fun' today is extracting the very last ounce of performance inshore racing. The offshore game is a simple extension of the inshore philosophy. Flat out drag racing 24 hours a day. Even electronic navigation systems have contributed to the degrading of offshore racing. No longer is there a sense of achievement in finding marks offshore. Perhaps the answer to a return of 'enjoyable' ocean racing lies in the international measurement system where cruiser racer type boats will be encouraged — not actively discouraged as happens under the IOR.

**Today's ocean racing crew is not interested in the Corinthian spirit that once typified offshore racing. The 'fun' today is extracting the very last ounce of performance inshore racing. The offshore game is a simple extension of the inshore philosophy. Flat out drag racing 24 hours a day. — Everitt**

Mind you, the IOR hasn't helped itself over the years with its reaction time to impending undesirable trends. It also far from encouraged responsible decisions from designers.

For the rating of deck beam — a long overdue rule — designers were put 'on notice' of a rule change in November 1984. Most designers chose to ignore this notice and produced even wider dish-shaped boats, but when the rule change was implemented they got clean away under a grandfathering clause. That did not make those of us who design boats to last more than one season very happy. Those that play by the spirit of the rules get penalised.

Similarly, under construction, the ABS guide should have been made compulsory for all new category 1 and 2 boats straight away. As it was, a lot of boats were built lighter and therefore under the rule gained an advantage over those who took the structural integrity of their designs seriously.

Crew numbers. Surely, the biggest bone of contention that affects modern design was put aside by the ITC this April with the words 'No performance related reason can be found for changing the existing rule'. That really smacks of a committee out of touch with what is happening on the race course. If crew numbers had been related to displacement rather than rating — a weight for weight rule as it were — then the dominance of the One Ton fleet in the Admiral's Cup and Southern Cross simply would not have happened. A modern one tonner with a crew of eight would be considerably slower upwind or would require more ballast in the keel, thus making the boat safer and slower relative to rating. The fact that the ITC cannot see this is very worrying.

**Mind you, the IOR hasn't helped itself over the years with its reaction time to impending undesirable trends. It also far from encouraged responsible decisions from designers. — Everitt**

My own suggestion at the November meeting of the ITC was to relate crew numbers to DSPL. This would encourage designers to produce heavier boats to get more crew. Very simple to implement and much fairer than a rule which allows a one tonner displacing 12,000 pounds to carry 2,000 pounds of crew weight whilst a yacht rating 34.8 the Fastnet, a trip across the Bay of Biscay in December and a Trans-Atlantic crossing. She has neither sustained a knockdown or any structural problems with her carbon/Kevlar laminate. In rating performance terms, however, there is a cost. An above minimum CGF is very expensive, and building a sound structure is costly in speed terms compared to some of the boats we were competing with and which subsequently have suffered structural problems.

Incidentally *Backlash's* structure, together with ninety-seven other designs we have produced, was 'engineered' by one of those ex-journalists so disparagingly remarked on by a fellow designer, and none of them have suffered structural failure. It is my experience that the correctly 'designed' structures are often scoffed at and modified either by the builder or the growing band of pseudo experts — euphemistically called 'Project Managers' — who now seem to be a necessary part of every owners armoury. Designers — including Europeans — do take their responsibilities seriously, but they can't police every nut and bolt of every campaign if their efforts are undermined by a determined 'crew'.

Kind regards,  
Julian Everitt

From Alan Green, Secretary, RORC

Dear Mr Cable,

Thank you for sending me the set of photocopies of articles and letters about capsizing and safety upon yachts. I have sent the whole bundle on to the Editor of our magazine *Seahorse*.

Like you and the CYCA, the RORC takes a close and continuous interest in all the topics which are raised in your very interesting set of papers.

As Tim Thornton points out, we are undertaking further research about capsizing, with the assistance of the Wolfson Unit of the University of Southampton. This year we have introduced an elementary stability screen with warnings printed on certificates of our Channel Handicap yachts

## Safety and the IOR yacht

(Channel Handicap is a 'short' rating calculation produced from basic dimensions supplied by owners).

One observation which seems to have entirely escaped all your correspondents is the vital importance of keeping the main companionway, washboards and hatch shut when sailing in wind and/or sea conditions which are moderate or above. I can imagine your Australian compatriots greeting this suggestion with cries of horror because of the warm climate in which you have the good fortune to sail, would make conditions below even worse than they would get here when the main hatch and companionway is shut. This undoubtedly means that proper thought and attention has got to be given to ventilating the boat without depending upon the main hatch. It is, in fact, quite possible but is most unlikely to happen all by itself; someone has got to think it through properly, design it and engineer it and install it. Naturally the smaller the yacht, the greater the comparative danger from the open companionway. Remember that Tony Castro pointed out the case of an S&S 34 rolling through 180°; there are quite enough other cases of yachts with similar or even better stability having also been rolled, for everyone to take seriously the importance of shutting the hatches. Of course no single step on its own is going to solve the problems we are considering at one go. The situation is dynamic. We need to keep taking steps and another which I personally strongly favour is that the ORC should require for at least all new designs that a satisfactory GZ curve, or proportions not unlike that of the Contessa 32 shown on page 73 of the 1979 Fastnet Report, shall be produced for every new yacht before a rating is issued. In the diagram to which I refer the Contessa 32 is shown to have a positive righting moment through 160° and only a very small negative moment from 160-180°. There is quite a marked contrast between this curve and many modern designs, despite the moves of the ITC since 1979 to improve yacht stability by rule-based inducements.

Sincerely,  
E. Alan Green  
Secretary, Royal Ocean Racing Club

From Britton Chance, Jr

Dear Mr Cable,

I have your letter of 6 May and agree with its thrust.

Specific suggestions might be:

**Short term:**

- inside ballast not to exceed 5% DSPL
- inside ballast to be defined as, say, any ballast above CMDI
- adjust TR and CGF for such change

**Long Term:**

- support R&D under ABS to improve load based scantlings rules
- set range of stability (work) requirements as function of size and category.

I think the above would help, but we must remember that some sail to be challenged and only feel challenged when at risk.

Sincerely yours,

Britton Chance, Jr

## Namu, the IOR and capsizing

From Tony Cable

With the continuing capsizing debate my intention has been to let it run on as long as contributions of interest keep coming in. In this issue some more letters have been published which are particularly interesting for some new issues raised that were not canvassed previously.

In collecting information on the topic I fell into conversation with a German sailmaker who has represented his country in one of the last couple of Admiral's Cup teams. He being a dedicated 'hi-tech' sailor, I couldn't make any impression on him with the controversy on safety aspects, lightweight keels and crews permanently on deck. He was perfectly happy with the present *grand prix* IOR racer.

I had feared at the outset that, with my articles, the 'experts' would quickly confirm how naive I was on the subject. Here was an international sailor who would not concede one point to me. Our meeting was just about to end, Germany 1, T.C. 0.

But just at this point I glanced over

his shoulder, and there was the position chart of the CYCA fleet out there at the moment in the Vanuatu Race, and beside it was the weather forecast and warning:

ALL SKIPPERS IN THE AUSTRALIA-VANUATU RACE ARE ADVISED THAT CYCLONE NAMU IS EXPECTED TO MOVE THURSDAY P.M. PAST THE NORTH OF NEW CALEDONIA. WINDS RECORDED IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS EXCEEDED 150 KNOTS AND CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE.

What would my hi-tech friend make of this situation? Our race officials and SeaSafety in Canberra were very concerned.

Now let's hypothetically imagine that, among the other Australian IOR boats in the fleet, we had along the UK Southern Cross Cup team left over from the last Hobart (remember their damage?) and the West German Admiral's Cup team. Why not? They all sail, don't they, to the 'international' IOR Rule which surely must apply both to the Channel and Vanuatu (it doesn't, though, does it!)? Now, if any of these vessels got into trouble at this stage of the race they would have had 500 miles to go to the nearest shelter of Lord Howe Island which, in any weather, is indifferent shelter at that. To put that distance into perspective for a European reader, if you got into trouble in a blow in the Thames, out the back of the RORC, and had to go in a straight line 500 miles to the nearest shelter, you could pick 'ports' such as: (north) the Shetlands; (west) nothing; (south) Barcelona; (eastwards) Prague, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stavanger (for 'straphangers') in Norway, and Genoa.

There is selectivity with designs under the IOR. A one tonner for the Solent should theoretically be robust enough to sail for long distances in a good breeze in South Africa, Tasmania, Auckland, Vanuatu, Hawaii, Manila, Okinawa, and Hong Kong. But how 'international' is the Rule, really? ■

# WINNING YACHTSMEN DENY CONSPIRACY ALLEGATIONS!

## Secret investigation uncovers penetration of conspiracy at all levels as evidence mounts.

Yacht racing circles are buzzing today following publication of findings from a secret enquiry into the inexplicable level of involvement with winning yachtsmen by certain persons and companies.

The report particularly noted the presence of a company known as Fraser Sails in an extraordinary percentage of cases and suggested a possible conspiracy by Fraser to dominate the winners circle.

### Conspiracy presence wide-spread.

As hard evidence of undeniable involvement by Fraser Sails mounts, loft chief Bob Fraser remains calmly steadfast in his view that "there is no evidence in the report to suggest that this loft's current level of visibility is due to any other factors than our growing level of satisfied, successful customers."

Mr Fraser cannot dispute hard facts:

- The winning yacht in the Sydney-Hobart in 1984 and 1985 carried Fraser Sails exclusively. This follows the consistent emergence of Fraser yachts in the top three placings over the past four years.

- In the opening long race of the offshore season, the Montague Island race, the first three places were again filled by yachts with Fraser wardrobes.

- Hamilton Island Race Week has been won by yachts carrying Fraser Sails exclusively for the last two years.

- Yachts with complete Fraser wardrobes have monopolized the major placings in the prestigious Bruce and Walsh I.O.R. championships in 1985 and 1986 taking first place each time.

- Line honours in this year's Sydney-Mooloolaba went to Windward Passage by a big margin. Passage established the break using a new Fraser headsail extensively in the windward conditions prevailing for the first half of the race. In addition no less than six Fraser equipped yachts took divisional placings

in the race.

- For the fourth consecutive year a yacht with complete

### By undercover reporter.

Fraser wardrobe has been first selected to the NSW Southern Cross team.



APPLEBY - "Any dill can see what the fast boats are using."

### Evidence mounts

Daily our investigators uncover more evidence of Fraser Sails involvement with winning yachts. Further information suggests that this involvement has been increasing rapidly for at least five years.

Garry Appleby, owner of Sagacious, dismissed suggestions of a conspiracy as "nonsense." Appleby commented further saying "Look, any fool can see that the fast boats carry Fraser gear, you'd have to be dumb not to join the club".

### Even Maxis affected.

Flamboyant radio identity and



MUIR - "must be aware of changing market" owner/skipper of super maxi Windward Passage Rod Muir would not be drawn further than to say "OK. I've started using some Fraser Sails. You know, running a yacht's like running a

business, you've got to be aware of the changing market elements, and react to them quickly if you want to win."

A popular crewman of Passage John (Muno) Munson in a most relaxed state last week at M.H.Y.C. told our reporter, with frothing conviction "Hey, listen! Every time I go down the sewer, there's another bloody Fraser bag there. Muir's bloody smart, he knows what he's doing don't worry."



EYLES - "The best rag"

### Appleby & Eyles 'acquaintances'.

Links were uncovered recently between Garry Appleby of Sagacious and John (the King) Eyles, former owner/skipper of Indian Pacific. The performance and success of this yacht are legend in Australian yachting circles. It is hard to overlook the similar records of these two yachts. Both won the Sydney-Hobart; both won the Hamilton Island Race Week. Both won the Bruce and Walsh IOR Championships. No prizes for guessing both carried Fraser Sails exclusively.

An angry Eyles today dismissed conspiracy allegations saying, "What I want to say is this. Why would you spend a motza building a racing yacht and not put the best rag on it? There's no bloody conspiracy, it's commonsense to go with Fraser, in fact they're already working on the sails for my new boat."

### Newcomer's performance questioned.

In his first season of ocean racing, Geoff Player owner/skipper of Farr 37, Silver Minx recorded outstanding results in major off-

shore events, results including third place overall in the Sydney-Hobart, another third

in the Montague and second overall in the CYCA's Blue Water Championship.

Player looked genuinely puzzled by our suggestion that Fraser Sails' involvement (Silver Minx carries a complete Fraser wardrobe) had been instrumental in his achievements. "Of course, I didn't think the performance advantage was any secret. We were delighted with our second place in the Blue Water Championship but don't overlook the fact that the yachts that took first and third were also totally Fraser equipped."


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### Veteran 'solo' sailor implicated.

It seems that the disease like spread of Fraser's involvement is unstoppable. Unconfirmed reports claim that seventy year old Alby Burgin winner of three consecutive events, the most recent the 1280 mile New Plymouth to Mooloolaba race also carries Fraser Sails. Burgin denied any suggestion of a conspiracy when speaking in Sydney today. "There's really no mystery. I was impressed with Fraser the first time I met him aboard Gold Coast Express, that was during the Clipper Cup in Hawaii in 1980. I was navigator and Bob sailing master. We had all Bob's sails, we won every race in our division and took the trophy for first in our class. I've seen a lot of sails and a lot of sailmakers over the years, for my money Fraser's hard to go past!"

(continued on page 27)



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# THE HOBART RACE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

by Frank Sticovitch

Much has been said about the congested starts of the Hobart Race as the fleets get bigger and bigger. In the '85 Race the problems were particularly highlighted by the *Drake's Prayer/Sagacious* incident. This also raised the vexed question of alternative penalties. Where do we go from here?

The Publications Committee sat down one evening to discuss this topic. Our intention was to raise issues and to make readers aware of what the situation is, what options may be available (if any), and to motivate all concerned to ensure that the Race is not damaged as a result of hasty decisions, patch-up remedies, government over-rulings or other outside pressures.

One must realise that, at 41 years of age, the Hobart Race is a grand old lady, well settled in a niche of Sydney and Hobart post-war traditions. She is a sporting institution and one of the world's classics, not only in terms of the racing but as a spectacle for the people who follow and support the Race.

It must be also said that the Race is a huge logistical exercise involving, apart from the CYCA and sponsors, State Governments, local councils, the Maritime Services Board of NSW and its equivalent in Hobart — The Marine Board, the Water Police, the Navy, the Volunteer Coastal Patrol, the media, private enterprise both onshore and offshore and numerous other institutions and individuals. The cause of it all — the 170 or so boats waiting for the gun — are only a part of it.

Obviously, the current starting line is just too short for the number of boats. A number of incidents over the last few years involving penalties, particularly a case involving the disqualification of an overseas yacht which was a member of her country's Southern Cross Cup team, have forced the Race Committee to make some alterations to the sailing instructions. But the time has come to make some significant decisions which may affect the future of the Race.

After every Hobart Race, the Race Committee is invited by the Maritime Services Board to attend a *post mortem*, a *tête-a-tête* to discuss problems and to sift through the logistical fallout of the last Race. This year, the



NEWS LIMITED PHOTO

Start of the 1985 AWA Sydney-Hobart; it may never be the same again.

Committee was 'invited' to propose an alternative for the 1986 start.

By the rule of thumb, it had been considered that the maximum fleet size would be 200 yachts. This restriction was necessary not only to prevent the congested melee at the starting line but, more importantly, because of the limitation of space and facilities both in Sydney and Hobart. It now appears that the figure of 200 may have been generous.

The Maritime Services Board and the NSW Police, both 100% supporters of the Race, play a large part in the organisation. Their programme covers all contingencies and includes full rescue

and 'disaster' plans should there be any emergencies such as crippled ships seeking shelter in port, small craft sinkings, helicopters falling out of the sky, rock and landslides or whatever else might happen on, in or around the Harbour foreshores and along the coastline. Safety is a big issue, and the prevention of possible mishaps is paramount in whatever changes are proposed.

So, what are the alternatives?

If we accept the premise that the AWA Sydney-Hobart Race is as much Sydney's as it is the CYCA's, and the interests of the Sponsor should not be overlooked either, an offshore start is

not desirable on two counts. One is the problem of spectators — the problem of the great number of spectator craft and also looking out for the safety of these craft, considering that included among them are such things as bath tubs, surf skis and the odd fibreglass swimming pool. Even if you reject that premise, it is difficult to deny that an offshore start would rob the Boxing Day start of much of its spectacle and appeal, and that in turn would have a detrimental effect on public interest in the Race.

A staggered start, in divisions, similar to starts employed in overseas races of similar magnitude, has been ruled out by the Maritime Services Board which upholds that this would make spectator control simply impossible. It would be like trying to organise two heats of the *corrida*, the running of the bulls at Pamplona.

A longer starting line in the area between Garden Island and Athol Bay might be possible, but for reasons not clear to us, we believe that this option has not been considered favourably.

The Race Committee has decided, in conjunction with the MSB, that next Boxing Day there will be two parallel starting lines 300 metres apart. The fleet will be split in two, with the larger yachts on the front line. There will be one starting gun.

There are a lot of considerations to be addressed.

For instance, how is the fleet going to be split? If it is split on rating band, why should, for example, a hot, low-rating boat be placed on the 'B' line, and conversely, why should a high-rated clunker which under normal and past circumstances, would have a very conservative start, be allowed on the 'A' line, thus interfering with the thundering hot little boats coming from behind? And, for instance, what if an 'A' line starter breaks the start and has to re-start; interference would occur again and disadvantage the 'B' line fleet. Imagine the port and starboard conflicts between 'B' line starters and 'A' line re-starters.

If the splitting of the fleet is done on previous performance, or seeding, it will take away the 'romance' and some of the incentive for the yachts that on paper do not have a chance but 'do the Hobart' for the prestige and or to gain experience, and it would 'class' yachts and crews as being of 'A' or 'B' standard.

What would happen to elapsed time record? Would we need 'A' and 'B' records? And to make even, why not have a two-line finish as well!

What would the legalities be (in this day and age) if an 'A' line starter and a

'B' line starter had the same handicap adjusted finishing times? Is the computer infallible? And if so, would the computer cover all parameters including weather, tide and slop, to work out how fast an X or Y rating yacht travelled the extra 300 metres sailed from line 'B' to line 'A'.

And when the two-line start becomes effective, would it become permanent? What if next year we would only get 129 or 147 starters? Would the single line be used again?

The other alternative discussed was the restriction of the fleet sizes to a number of, say, 140—150 yachts. The problems then would become different. How would the 150 yachts be selected? Would it work on a first-in-best-dressed basis, or the first 150 *paid* entries, and if so, would it be fair for overseas or interstate yachts or to the club champion whose owner just happened to be overseas on business when the first 150 entries were lodged with the Club?

If the selection were done on performance and experience, it would not be fair to the slower yachts and inexperienced crews the likes of which have been going down to Hobart for years; after all, the Hobart Race started as a cruise.

It could be that the Race Committee and the MSB are quite willing to receive any reasonable suggestions. The 1986 Hobart Race will, at this stage, be a two-line start, and if it doesn't work, it will be a case of back to the drawing board.

The other subject the Publications Committee discussed was penalties.

The current rule allows for percentage penalties based on the number of starters. The question is, 'Is the system fair?'

It would be true to say that, if a yacht was, for example, penalised 20% of placings for the identical infringement in two separate races, she would not receive the same penalty if the two fleets in which the yacht raced were of different size.

A percentage penalty yacht could not improve her position after committing an infringement irrespective of this time factor, in other words, a penalised yacht might beat the opposition on corrected time by more than 24 hours and still finish two-thirds down the field in *placings* depending upon the number of starters, after the percentage penalty was applied.

In the Southern Cross Series, the pointscore was graded to favour the top half of the fleet; accordingly, two or more yachts penalised the same percentage of places would score un-

parallel points depending upon how far up or down the list they finished.

Is there anything wrong with time penalties? They seem to work very well in long distance events, such as the Whitbread Round the World Race.

One would think that (provided it were included in the sailing instructions) if a yacht can exonerate itself by doing 360 or 720 degree turns, which are time consuming (isn't that the general idea?!), a penalty imposed on such a yacht should be a time penalty. Are we not, in fleet racing, racing against the clock anyway?

If a yacht has committed an infringement of a minor nature, under the current percentage penalty system that yacht can be heavily penalised, as was proven in the 1985 Race; but if a time penalty were imposed that yacht could still win the boat race if she is good enough. That would seem fair. Perhaps the flaw here would be the aggressive sailor who might be prepared to risk infringing a particular rule knowing that under that rule the penalty might not be detrimental to his overall corrected time, thus violating the spirit of the penalty and prejudicing the placing of another competitor.

In the 1985 Hobart Race the yacht *Rampant II* was penalised for breaking at the start and by the application of percentage placings penalties; she was placed last, at 179th. The funny thing is that the second last boat was placed 155th, leaving an enormous gap. It should be known, however, that with all her penalties, *Rampant II* should actually have been placed 186th!! But there were only 179 starters in the field! No wonder Tony Cable made it known, in the CYCA *Newsletter*, 'Not only did we finish last, we also finished dead last and last overall'. ■

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# HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK

by Robin Copeland



The Whitsunday Passage, scene of the annual Hamilton Island Race Week, where good racing and good non-racing assume equal importance. Little wonder.

Halley wasn't the only hairy star to be observed at this the third XXXX/Ansett sponsored Hamilton Island Race Week. There was a positive plethora (galaxy) of rock, radio, film and political stars mixing it with the milieu and odd metaphor, a fact that Commodore of the island's yacht club, Keith Williams, drew our attention to a pre-regatta briefing in order that they should maintain their anonymity.

This wasn't easy, since the banner in Brisbane's major afternoon newspaper had declared 'kicks for free as Straits jam'. Popular English band Dire Straits were bunked on the island during the north Queensland segment of their Australian tour, when Mark Knopfler and his group performed at a late night impromptu jam session before their smallest audience in years at the Harbourside Verandah bar. A simi-

lar story advised that Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, would also be staying at the resort. So much for secrecy.

For the first time in Australia, the North American system of time-on-distance handicapping was tried at the suggestion and request of several of last year's competitors. The fundamental difference between the two systems is that the time-on-distance method lets competitors know before they leave the dock exactly how much time they have to give their rivals. For example, a one-tonner, rating 30.5, has an allowance of 175.11 seconds per mile and a two tonner rating 32.0 has 165.84 seconds per mile (based on a set of tables obtained from the USYRU). So the two tonner has to beat the one tonner by 9.27 seconds per mile. If the race were 20 miles long — and courses

have to be laid accurately to assure the system is fair — the two tonner would have to finish 185.41 seconds ahead of the one tonner to beat her.

Other changes from last year included the decision to allow multi-hulls to compete in separate divisions and the substitution of four short races (two each day) sailed around triangular courses for two of the medium distance races, making a total of seven races with one discard being allowed.

The skippers and navigators briefing/cocktail party on Friday night revealed an interesting mix of competitors and further emphasised the organiser's intention to ensure that 'fun and relaxation ashore was to be as important as the racing', not unlike Antigua Week in the West Indies.

From the Cruising Division Marshall Phillips (ex *Sweet Caroline*) was



The view of Windward Passage most often seen by other competitors.

there. He had taken time off from sailing his Swan 51 *Defiance* in which he is retracing the single-handed voyage around the world of Joshua Slocum's *Spray* between 1895 and 1898. Also present was Terry Fitzgerald from the NSW Water Police and ex *Ragamuffin* crew member, who is now co-ordinating the AYF Instructor's Programme; he was skippering a Ben Lexcen 40 *Ariel*.

Trevor Cook and Jim Theroux had entered in the performance handicap division two of the twelve metre yachts that were significant in the progression towards *Australia II's* victory in the America's Cup. (*Gretel I*, designed by Alan Payne for Sir Frank Packer and launched in 1961, was Australia's first challenger, losing 4-1 to *Weatherly*; and *South3rn Cross*, designed by Ben Lexcen for Alan Bond's first challenge in 1974, with Sir James Hardy at the helm, was beaten 4-0 by *Courageous* (Ted Hood)).

The biggest and smallest multi-hulls in the fleet had come all the way from Victoria with Lindsay Cumming aboard the Crowther 42 *Bagatelle* and Tony Consadine with his tiny tri *Born to Run* which was runner-up in the Yachting World design award last year.

Representing Bill Dodds aboard the Kell Steinman designed *Nuzulu* and *Ruzulu*, which were fresh from first and second overall in the Sydney-Mooloolaba Race, were sailmaker Charles Wallis from Airlie Beach and, on *Ruzulu*, Sydney 18-footer sailors Bill Shead and David 'Big-Kite' Stephens.

Like I said initially, we weren't sure

whether we were there for the racing or the star gazing when Mark Knopfler was spied in the cockpit of *Windward Passage* (Rod Muir). Muir, who owns two FM radio stations, in Sydney and Melbourne, had met Knopfler on Friday and invited him to sail in the race. However, Saturday morning saw the odd waning star, from the previous evening's quiet XXXX, waxing at the start of the 24 mile South Molle/Daydream Island Race.

1986 was to be third time lucky after the wet and blustery '84 series and the Claytons '85 series (at which the lack of breeze caused the abandonment of three of the five races and was a factor in the reduction of the size in this year's IOR fleet). The same cerulean skies, but this time above a white-capped passage ('Dent', that is, not 'Windward'). It was the latter, though, that set the pace and the scene for things to come. No one was to pass the Lahaina Yacht Club's whale insignia on her stern. Being the only maxi who was to take line honours in all seven races.

Interest in the first race settled on whether (as suggested by representatives of the smaller boats, that is, everyone except *Windward Passage*) time-on-distance handicapping would favour the larger boats, and the potential battle between *Sagacious* (Gary Appleby — winner of the 1985 Sydney-Hobart trophy), *Silver Minx* (Geoff Player — third in the Sydney-Hobart), and *Nuzulu* (C. Wallis).

At the rounding mark off North

## Hamilton Island Race Week

Molle Island *Windward Passage* was, as expected, first to set her number one for the beat home against the tide. Next came *Gretel* and *Southern Cross* which had an absorbing duel all the way to Henning Island on the eastern side of the channel, first one leading then the other, until *Gretel* got the better of a bending breeze along the shore and crossed the line three minutes ahead of her rival. Next came *Mandrake* (Terry O'Hare) then *Siska II* (R. Smith) and *Sagacious*. Interestingly all six boats maintained their positions on handicap for both the IOR and performance divisions.

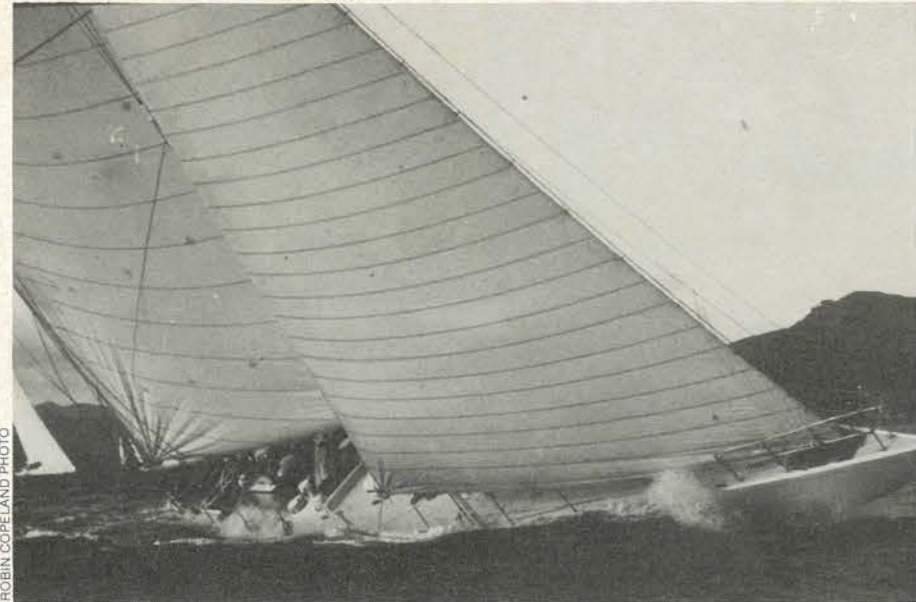
### Results Race 1

IOR	Performance
1. <i>Windward Passage</i>	<i>Gretel</i>
2. <i>Mandrake</i>	<i>Southern Cross</i>
3. <i>Sagacious</i>	<i>Siska II</i>
Cruising	IOMR
1. <i>Defiance</i>	<i>Born to Run</i>
Four Seasons II	Goldrush
3. <i>Nomad</i>	<i>Bagatelle</i>

The windward start for the two 15 mile triangles around Pentecost Island (on Sunday) was off Catseye Beach on the north-eastern side of the island. In the morning race *Windward Passage*, despite some woeful tacking, again took the double in winds that seldom rose above 10 knots to defeat *Silver Minx* and *Sagacious* by a comfortable margin. *Kookaburra* (Rob Knott, Qld.), *Flyaway* (Paul O'Hare, Qld.) and *Charisma* (Ian Powell, Qld.) achieved what was to be their best results of the series in the Performance Division while *Ruff Red* (W. Hill) proved that she doesn't have to start with the IOR fleet by taking a first in the cruising division.







(Above) Gretel giving top performance. (Below) Sagacious won the IOR division adding to an already successful year.

Results, Race 2

IOR	Performance
1. Windward Passage	Kookaburra
2. Silver Minx	Flyaway
3. Sagacious	Charisma
Cruising	IOMR
1. Yellow Brick Road	Bagatelle
2. Prisana	Goldrush
3. Matelot of M'Lab	Born to Run

The social events organisers continued to keep abreast of things that evening in spite of recently passed legislation in Queensland banning 'live' entertainment in licensed premises on Sundays. During the sponsors' XXXX party, at which every crew member is allocated enormous quantities of yellow tickets which can then be exchanged for similar amounts of yellow cans, several sires, selected for nefarious reasons, sat in judgement of nubility on the deck of a barge, separated from the shore as if by some mediaeval moat. I am told the largest ones were awarded a round ticket to Sydney.

Monday was a lay day.

Tuesday saw HMAS Townsville's gunners don anti-flash gear to fire the Bofors gun for four separate starts. The IOR fleet got away dramatically on the 171 mile Coral Sea Race, blown out of Dent Passage under spinnakers before hardening on the wind for a bruising 70 mile beat into a 20 knot southeaster to Bailey Islet (the southern rounding mark was changed from previous years' Penrith Island subsequent to Aggression losing her keel on that island's reef).

As expected Windward Passage shot away to a long lead ahead of Mandrake while Sagacious, Di Hard, Granny Knot III (ex Smuggler — Mile



De Berg) and Singapore Girl short-tacked along the Dent Island shore to avoid the ebbing (north flowing) tide. For some reason the Zulus held further out into the middle of the Whitsunday Passage. Then under a darkening sky apparent disaster struck for Windward Passage as her huge mainsail tumbled to the deck when the galvanised wire main halyard finally parted after chafing through near the masthead. Sailing under her No. 4 headsail Passage ducked for cover into the lee of St Bees Island, while forward hand Ian 'Noddy' Exton was hoisted aloft to a wildly gyrating masthead where he worked for close on an hour rigging a snatch block to the crane so that a spare halyard could be run.

Had Noddy enough time (he would certainly have had the inclination!), whilst he was whirling around aloft, he may well have seen to the north our Navy's finest, blasting the Performance and Multi-hull fleets around Dent Island on a shorter overnight of 83 nautical miles.

Waterline, a Steinman 9.45 m skippered by Don Brooks of Mackay, had to take a short cut back to the harbour after she broke her mast during a wild gybe. Running at 12-15 knots she wrapped a running backstay around a spreader, broached, dipped her pole in the water and suffered the consequences.

Meanwhile the other major sponsor, Ansett, was hosting a dinner in the Dolphin Room at which executive Les Schofield, seated at the junction between two huge round tables, was forced to display hitherto unheralded skills by eating his meal on his lap, served saucily on an Ansett tray.

The dawn-spotter's flight saw the majority of the fleet running towards

Eshelby Island before turning south to beat into a 25 knot south-easter.

Results, Race 4

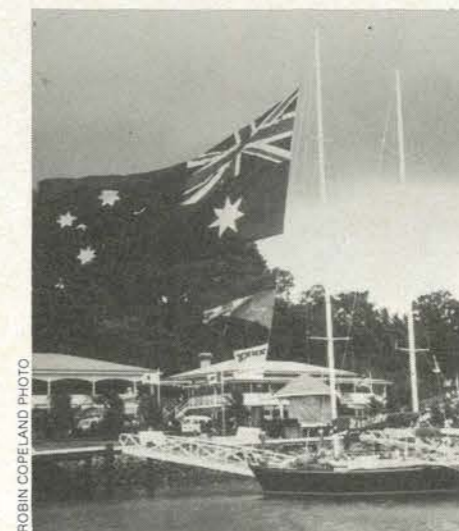
IOR	Performance
1. Sagacious	Magic Dragon
2. Mandrake	Fat Albert
3. Windward Passage	Destiny
Cruising	IOMR
1. Nomad	Goldrush
2. Matelot of M'lab	Nudgee Budgee
3. Four Seasons II	Born to Run

For several days now the VHF radio on Kanimbla had been having a one-way conversation with the world's most famous port runner hand (he cannot be named to protect the guilty). 'Race Control, this is Big Cat; go to 81 please, over.'

'Big Cat, this is Race Control, over' etc. Possibly irritated by this monologue, curiosity and the urge to answer back finally got the upper hand and pushed him in where the proverbial angel fears to tread. Not one to resist a chat, this winch hand finally grabbed the mike and, assuming the reserved and verboten call sign 'Mobile One', advised Race Control that they had been working too hard all week and to 'take ten', so to speak. Unfortunately, the real Mobile One, Commodore Keith Williams, more recently referred to as the island's 'happy tyrant', just happened to be monitoring traffic (as he so frequently does) and commanded that the illegitimate caller identify himself. Receiving no response, he persevered. 'This is Mobile One. Unauthorised use of company communications equipment is illegal, and any person found in contempt of these regulations will be on the next boat out.' Now, any sane and slow-



(Above) The grand old lady, Gretel, enjoying retirement in the Whitsunday Islands. (Below) Hamilton Harbour scene.



The Whitehaven Beach party lacked nothing that an off-duty racer would desire.

thinking mortal would have hung up and shut up. Not this 'Cronkite of the water waves'. Presumably the belief that invisibility meant invincibility, he responded immediately for the populus of the whole island, who were all staring at their radios in disbelief.

'All stations, all stations, there appears to be an illegal station on the air; please ignore all future communications purporting to emanate from Mobile One for the time being.'

Now, at the same time, a member of the marine staff had been having a bit of trouble towing one of the islands 'war canoes', which have large dragon's heads on their prows, and had accidentally decapitated the poor thing. He radioed for advice from the Harbour Master. Once again, however, the real Mobile One overheard the conversation and called upon the hapless hand to explain himself. This is where things get totally out of control, and the hand replied authoritatively: 'I'm not talking to you, Mobile One. You're an imposter. Get off the air.'

I'm told later it wasn't just 'Race Control' that took ten minutes' break. Apparently the whole island broke up! I surely hope, for the short fat bald man's sake, that Keith Williams retains his sense of humour.

As the armada sailed for Whitehaven Beach on Thursday, the huge landing barge Sampson already had the XXXX coming off. While Rusty and the Ayres Rockettes got the taste for it, the crowd couldn't wait for it, and the catchcry was soon 'I feel like a fifth coming on'. Even the resident mosquitoes and sandflies had retreated. It was amongst this cacophony that I bumped into a poor, unsuspect-



(Above left) Silver Minx (sail number 331), series winner Sagacious (sail number 4117) and Di Hard charging down the passage under spinnaker. (Above right) Windward Passage enjoyed line honours throughout Race Week.

ing Ted and Des, a chartering couple who had innocently sought out this otherwise peaceful beach paradise whilst cruising the '100 Magic Miles'. They quit the place, shaking their heads in disbelief.

The following morning in the lost and found column of the media centre's huge refrigerator door (the one in which the milk was kept — the small fridge was for the XXXX) appeared the forlorn message:

**LOST — ONE THURSDAY!!!**

Would anyone finding Susie Archibald's Thursday please return it to her at the media centre as soon as possible. She began losing it early on Whitehaven Beach, and by the time she returned to Hamilton Island it was nothing more than a blurr.

The day was of enormous sentimental value, so obviously a huge reward is offered.

Race five, and *Sagacious* revelled in the gusty 25 knot trades to score a 4½ minute win in the 22½ nautical mile Lindeman Island Race. *Passage* started well and sailed the course in the fast time of 2 hrs 26 minutes for an average speed of 9.17 knots, but a 20° wind shift to the east greatly favoured

the smaller yachts as they lifted from Pentecost Island to lay the easternmost tip of Lindeman Island. *Singapore Girl* showed her best form of the series to take a deserved second place 2½ minutes clear of Sydney sloop *Granny Knot III*. *Passage* had no answer to the surfing speeds of the smaller sloops and put in her worst performance to finish seventh.

**Results, Race 5**

IOR	Performance
1. <i>Sagacious</i>	<i>Aussie Rules</i>
2. <i>Singapore Girl</i>	Jemima
3. <i>Granny Knot III</i>	<i>Destiny</i>
<b>Cruising</b>	<b>IOMR</b>
1. <i>Nomad</i>	<i>Bagatelle</i>
2. <i>Four Seasons II</i>	<i>Goldrush</i>
3. <i>Matelot</i>	<i>Nudgee Budgee</i>

**Races 6 & 7**

Gary Appleby's crew showed their combined skills in the two 15 nautical mile short races sailed on the same triangular course as Sunday from Catseye Beach around Pentecost and back again. They won both races to string together five straight wins in a wind strength which at times gusted to 20 knots and which vascillated some 20°. Appleby allowed his sailmaker

Bob Fraser the honour of steering *Sagacious* in the final race after they had amassed an unbeatable points lead and did not have to start. But start she did, and Fraser showed great talent when



Southern Cross in an all-Ansett photograph.

he elected to start in clear wind on port tack, a decidedly risky manoeuvre that entailed clearing a bunch of yachts, including *Windward Passage*, already wound up to maximum speed.

**Results, Race 6.**

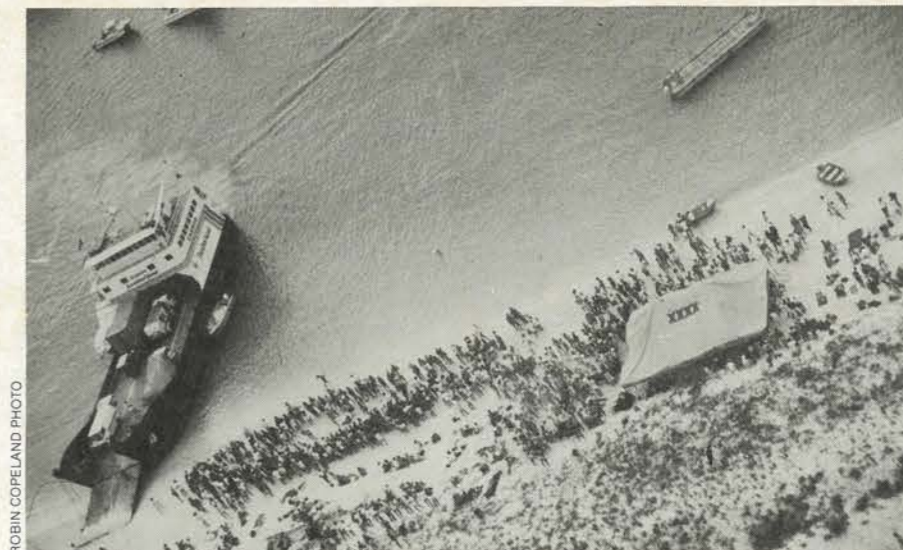
IOR	Performance
1. <i>Sagacious</i>	<i>Destiny</i>
2. <i>Nuzulu</i>	<i>Grand Slam</i>
3. <i>Granny Knot III</i>	<i>Charisma</i>
<b>Cruising</b>	<b>IOMR</b>
1. <i>Thomas Jones</i>	<i>Goldrush</i>
2. <i>Four Seasons</i>	<i>Born to Run</i>
3. <i>Nirvana</i>	<i>Bagatelle</i>

**Results, Race 7**

IOR	Performance
1. <i>Sagacious</i>	<i>Destiny</i>
2. <i>Nuzulu</i>	<i>Kediri</i>
3. <i>Ruzulu</i>	<i>Aussie Rules</i>
<b>Cruising</b>	<b>Performance</b>
1. <i>Matelot</i>	<i>Goldrush</i>
2. <i>Four Seasons</i>	<i>Nudgee Budgee</i>
3. <i>Nirvana</i>	<i>Born to Run</i>

The first and second placings for *Sagacious* and *Windward Passage* augur well for Australia's chances in the Kenwood Cup (ex Clipper Cup) in Hawaii later this year (August) as they and Olympic Gold Medallist David Forbes' *Great Expectations*, a 50 ft Bruce Farr design, join forces to make up one of the two Australian teams.

Reworking the results using the yachts' TCFs to find time-on-time



Peace-shattering scene at Whitehaven Beach.

handicaps suggests that the time-on-time system would have favoured the smaller boats. In fact, *Passage* would not have won a single race. Time-on-distance, however, favours larger yachts in extreme tidal conditions where they can get through adverse currents quicker.

Changes for next year so far include having two of the short races start in Dent Passage, which will ensure that the points for the long race cannot be discarded, and allowing the multis to start shortly after the mono-hulls.

**FINAL RESULTS (IOR)**

1. <i>Sagacious</i>	597
2. <i>Windward Passage</i>	581
3. <i>Nuzulu</i>	574
4. <i>Di Hard</i>	574
5. <i>Granny Knot III</i>	571
6. <i>Singapore Girl</i>	569
7. <i>Mandrake</i>	568
8. <i>Silver Minx</i>	566
9. <i>Galaxy III</i>	543
10. <i>Akarana</i>	468
11. <i>Ruzulu</i>	468
12. <i>Apollo III</i>	451



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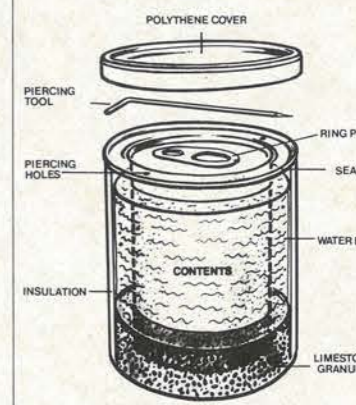
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Media tug-of-war at Whitehaven Beach.

## SNIPPETS FROM HAMILTON ISLAND RACE WEEK

by Tony Cable

Dave 'Chalky' Hutchen is an ocean racing mate of mine who runs the marine operations side of Hamilton Island. As many would know, he gained his nickname at the inaugural Quiet Little Drink in Hobart in 1968. When drinks were at a critical stage, he walked up to the dart board of the Shipwright's Arms Hotel and chalked up 'Cable and Dawson 100 beers', and then added his crew, 'Jisuma 100'.

Chalky had a spare berth on the 'press' boat and through the good offices of Race Week sponsor Ansett (who shared it with XXXX) prevailed upon me to come up to Hamilton as an 'observer' for the series.

A lot of work has been put into developing this series, and Dave, with his ocean racing background and tremendous energy, has a rare ability as a race organiser. This is not just to say something nice, for those who have seen him in action would classify him as being rather on the hyperactive side — the sort of chap who should slow down, in north Queensland terms, by 'a quarter of an hour' or so.

The Island has a few big cats. Our craft, *Kanimbla*, is generally used for diving trips to The Reef. She has some nine cabins each of which was filled with two or three TV, radio and press alumni. You couldn't walk in a straight line anywhere for their crates of cameras etc.

I found my bunk with our own *Offshore* writer Mike Power; also aboard was another Publications Committee Member, Robin Copeland. Being dissipated journalists, our paths only predictably crossed at breakfast.

Breakfast. A crew of three ran the ship and the cook, Col, the 'Poison Dwarf', gave the press corps the best tropical breakfast on the island. This ordinarily is not much to relate, but a good meal to start would be fairly important to this media crowd who could typically start with an early helicopter run and finish twelve hours later after filing stories.

In some ways the week is worse than Hobart. At least you get off Tasmania after about three days. Up there

you need the constitution of a gun for'ard hand to keep the pace on for eight days! As someone said, 'I thought the series was supposed to be hard on yachts!'

Chalky, being an ocean racer, had two fundamentals straight: (1) Good racing, and (2) Good non-racing.

On the racing side the weather was perfect, relatively mild and warm, providing excellent breezes of 20—25 knots. Tides were significant, particularly in the long race, when 'gates' could close off the different classes.

Chalky had with him, as Race Director, Victorian Warwick Hoban, and Rear Commodore of the Hamilton Island Yacht Club, Leon O'Donahue. I have never been closely involved in race administration before but spent a lot of time with these officials and their office team of four ladies. Their cheerful work was most impressive.

I hadn't been on the island half an hour before Chalky had me on the pillow of his motor scooter for a trip up

Snippets from Hamilton Island



(Above) Rod Muir (left) and Gary Appleby, happy and victorious. (Below) Left to right: George Negus, Richard Clapton and Rod Muir on stage.

to one tree hill where he supervised by radio the laying of marks (radar was also used).

The next morning I was up to join a 0700 helicopter flight with the Race Committee to check that the marks were still in position. One wasn't. It was spotted miles downwind. But there was time enough for one of the fast chase boats to recover and relay it.

There was no hesitation to use fully the island's resources whether it be lifting equipment, sending a light aircraft to deliver TV film to the mainland. I was involved in an example of this support. The skipper of *Di Hard* needed more sheets and braces in a hurry. A chartered light aircraft in constant radio contact brought these up from Mackay, a car got me to the airstrip to pick the package up, a chase boat was ready and we sped out to the start to get the gear aboard before the ten minute gun.

I was on the *Kanimbla* for a couple of days when she handled the starts and finishes for the 12 mile races. For the first of these Warwick had his computer aboard to instantly print out the results. Unfortunately he couldn't persist with this scheme because of 'spikey' power from the ship. Nevertheless, at the end of the first race, a copy of the results was handed to each competitor as they cruised around waiting for the second race to begin.

I was enlisted by Chalky to crew on his rubber ducky, acting as results sheet hander-outer. At first he was quite irate with me, for I had jumped aboard and crushed his sunglasses. Though later he felt much better for, in doing a sharp turn to port, full throttle



Relaxing with a Four-X after a hard day's racing.

at 25 knots, he threw me out to starboard at the same 25 knots. In turn, I lost my brand new prescription sunglasses and had to swim around in the bay waiting for Chalky to stop laughing and gather himself to pull me out.

The social side was so hectic that the crews really had run out of puff by the last few days of the week. On the first Saturday night (there were two!) they had a disco in the street. The gravel really carved into the Sperris and the pot holes made dancing to intricate routines a trifle difficult. The next morning our skipper, Mike, after surveying the scene, commented 'Did you see the road? She was wall to wall XXXX cans, all jumped on'. On another night they had a north Queensland style wet T-shirt competition. Being from NSW I was elected one of the international judges and was given a box seat to decide on the half, one and two-ton divisions. The winner happened to be a maxi, and amongst her prizes was an Ansett ticket to somewhere (maybe Ti 'boob'burra).

A highlight of the week is the trip to Whitehaven Beach. Everyone leaves Hamilton for a barbecue on this Whitsunday Island beach. The organisation for this is impressive, with the landing barge, *Sampson*, disgorging tents, stores and even a garbage truck.

Playing on the beach was, to a very enthusiastic audience, a local band, Rusty and the Ayres Rockettes. They had a very unique, ribald repertoire.

Another group up there was Richard Clapton's, which performed at the trophy presentation. On stage for a guest act was the unlikely combination of Rod Muir and George Negus, singing some sort of 'Windward Passage'

song. Their capability has given me the confidence to assure readers that the new *Sovereign* crew will provide a much better class of artiste at such public affairs.

There are no signs of last year's fire which burnt the heart out of the central building. It has been completely restored. There is still a lot of construction and improvements going on. Gardens are well established with many palms planted. This flora should be magnificent in a few years. I mention this not because of any great interest in horticulture, rather because I think that it will provide a very pleasant contrast to the typical island gum forest, hoop pine and mangrove landscape.

Before arriving up there I had heard stories of how 'expensive' the Island is. I didn't find this so. Maybe this was because I got Chalky to buy me a couple of dinners (by way of defraying the cost of the aforesaid sunglasses). Even if a beer is \$1.80 you can't break your budget if you limit yourself to 20 a day.

A tip worth pursuing is to check out the 'standby' airfare and accommodation deals on offer. These seemed to me more than reasonable.

While biding time on the finishing boat I yarned with Leon O'Donahue, who when not a race official is occupied managing Whitsunday Rent-A-Yacht, the largest bareboat charter company in the Whitsundays.

As a stranger to the region I was struck by how fresh the breeze was at 20 knots-plus, together with the strength of the tides. Leon mentioned that for one period last year they had 44 consecutive days with 25 knots and above, 'although we have under five gales a year.' To cope with this most



(Top right) Whitehaven Beach scene. (Top centre) Who was that nice fat bald man? (Above) Bob Fraser, perhaps shell-shocked after his daring port-tack start on *Sagacious*.



Ansett's Patricia Pickup filming a TV clip in front of Southern Cross's Ansett spinnaker.

Snippets from Hamilton Island



charter yachts have roller furlers, 'Holland blinds front and back', although other rigs are available to suit anyone. With the tides running north-south it is essential to work them, otherwise you don't get anywhere. As part of the preparation for a holiday, Whitsunday Rent-A-Yacht send out with each booking a familiarisation kit including a 40 minute video and our Editor, David Colfelt's, book *100 Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef - the Whitsunday Islands*.

I asked about the 'types' of charterers. Many obviously professional people are totally impractical, one such group often being doctors. One, when being patiently coached by radio as to how to change a fuse, replied 'Oh, I can't do that'. A surprising fraternity are those yacht owners who prefer to charter motor cruisers. Perhaps they have some trepidation in taking out a yacht without the security of their own crew.

Some charterers are in such a hurry to set sail on arrival that they don't seem to absorb anything from their initial briefing. True to relate, one yacht struck a problem a few days out, and as the radio diagnosis was underway actually said 'Where is the engine'. Every charter boat runs aground on a weekly basis, generally through going too quickly. Fortunately (for the yachts) the coral is softer, so damage is minimal (averages less than \$20 per charter and is generally only due to the odd lost flipper, mask or cutlery). Blocked heads can be a problem. Leon's people, as a matter of routine, demonstrate how these work, emphasise that they are 'now actually working' and then declare that the charge is \$50 if they get blocked and require service - to a sailor, a very clear-cut arrangement.



The Hamilton Island series this year provided excellent sailing conditions and a lot of fun during and after the racing. These scenes reflect the general ambience of Race Week experience (the chap making the 'thumbs up' gesture is actually cooling a red hot microphone thumb).

Today there are a great number of charter boats (was the figure 130?) including among them a group with special survey classification which allows the likes of *Apollo III*, *Banjo Patterson*, *Gretel*, *Solo* and *Southern Cross* to work these areas. Leon said that ocean racing owners could benefit from the ABS scantlings as this should give them a big advantage in meeting survey and give the yachts a new lease of life after their top ocean racing days are over.

Among the funny instances Leon related is the one of a charterer who was lost. They figured out over the radio where he was. The urgent advice was given: 'Do a reciprocal and get out of there'.

'Happy to do anything you recommend... What is a reciprocal?'

Or to another charterer: 'Suggest you sail under main with the outboard on'. Reply:

'We've already tried that but the end of the main sheet has got wound around the propeller and we had to drop the main'.

The next, with due apologies: apparently some Jewish doctors were on the Island for a conference and one was negotiating the steepish 'Coronary Hill' that separates the resort from the harbour. Up came one of the taxis, which he hailed. 'How much to Driftwood Bay?' said the doc.

'One dollar anywhere you want to go.'

'How much for my kids, here?'

'Nothing.'

'Good then, would you take the

kids, I'll walk.'

Being an island the story got around real quick. The next day the doctor walked into an office and asked the development executive 'How much is one of those new penthouses?'

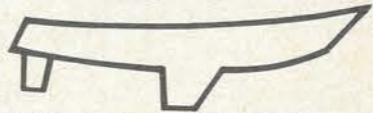
'A million dollars, but if you want my opinion I reckon you would be better off trying to buy the taxi concession.'

Before closing this article I best mention Ian 'Stripey' Grant who was on the press boat with me, a journalist from Brisbane and an ocean racer from way back. He had done a Gladstone race or so on *Mouse of Malham*, and he related a rather indelicate story of one of these trips — how he was trying to save the ship by swinging away at the masthead. It must have been something he ate, for presently he had to heave. As luck would have it he did so on an in-rather than an out-swing, and it slid all down the dripping mainsail and, wouldn't you know it, went all over the skipper Norm Wright's bald head. That story showed the bad side of Stripey, but there is a good one about him.

On the last morning the 'Poison Dwarf' was rostered off, but there was still the hungry 20-30 press around with no cook about. Stripey wandered aft from the shower, only a towel around him, saw that the troops were short of their 'grits' and, with the memorable line 'Tell the cook to rack off. We don't need him anymore... we are going home today', proceeded to create another one of those great Hamilton Island breakfasts. ■



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# Project 87

The CYCA has recently embarked on an extensive promotion campaign highlighting the 1987 AWA Southern Cross Cup, the AWA Sydney-Hobart Race and the Maxi Series as worthy and memorable events on the eve of our country's bi-centennial celebrations.

For this reason we have produced a colour brochure, a copy of which is enclosed in this issue of *Offshore*. With the assistance of Channel 10, we have also produced a 16 minute video.

## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP

Very simply, by sending the enclosed brochure to a yachting friend overseas.

Already hundreds of these brochures have been mailed to yachtsmen and authorities in over twenty countries, but your assistance can be an important addition to the effort.

DECEMBER 1987



# MANGROVE SEAMANSHIP

a letter from Harry Parsons

*Cyclones are in the back of the mind of all yachtsmen who sail in southern hemisphere tropical waters, particularly in the late summer. On the Queensland coast the recommended procedure to adopt if you are caught in one (in coastal waters) is to head for a shallow estuary and ground your vessel amongst the mangroves. You put out as many anchors as you have and tie all available ropes around mangrove trees, stow everything below, close the ports and hatches, turn on the 'trannie', break out the overproof rum and pray.*

*The following tale comes from CYCA Member, Harry Parsons, who operates a 52 ft steel cutter, Neptunius, out of Dunk Island where he does tourist charters. It was written as a letter to his wife, Davina, who kindly passed it on to us for the benefit of Members who might be interested in a first-hand tale of weathering a cyclone.*

**From the yacht Neptunius, somewhere in the Hull River, February 1, 1986**

Don't know when I will be able to post this, but here goes. Left Dunk island mid-day Thursday in 30 knots of wind. At the moment it is 4.30 p.m., and tropical cyclone Winifred is on us in vengeance.

I am in the Hull River right up behind South Mission. I have a bow anchor and a stern anchor out, a line from the bow into the mangroves, another from the stern on the port side into the mangroves, a line from the stern across the other side of the River and tied onto a mangrove tree there. I have everything lashed down on deck, and down below everything that moves is stowed down low. It is raining like hell and although this is a fairly sheltered spot there are waves two feet high on the river. The boat is pitching all over the place. So I would say conditions are rather fresh-to-frightening.

A short delay. I have just had to go on deck. The bow anchor has dragged. Suspect *Tahari*, Roy's boat, has dragged across it; she has dragged and has been blown across to the other side of the river and is wedged in the mangroves. Hope the branches don't punch a hole in her. Nothing I can do about my bow anchor. Wind gusting to 90 knots here, so am not

attempting to pull it in to reset it as I would probably upset my stern anchor in the process. So all I've done is shorten up the chain to tension it and tied a line on the bow to a mangrove tree which is hanging over the boat. That should at least stop me from being blown further into the trees. There are small branches and leaves all over the deck that have been blown off the trees. Have chopped a few small ones off that were hanging over the bow so they won't get anything tangled. The side of the boat is going to be a mess with all the scratches from these branches. Can't be helped

Cyclones are not the most pleasant things to be caught in even in fairly sheltered places. I'm not looking forward to tonight. Can't see much here; it gets pitch black. This will be my third night now. Bob is still in bed sick at Sandal's place. I was able to get ashore in the dinghy and get some groceries. There is no chance I can leave the boat now in these conditions.

Just heard from Fiona Conti on *Timana*. She has been on the radio a couple of times. They are just about to evacuate the house as the seas are only ten feet from the door. They are going to the shack further up the hill with whatever they can carry. Have checked the barometer on board and it is down to 993 millibars. It was 1008 mb at 7.30 a.m. this morning. According to the radio reports Innisfail is really copping it, and the cyclone Winifred has been designated as 'violent'. Makes for a lovely bedtime story although I don't think I'll get much of that tonight; a bit limited to what you can do when you're on your own, but the river is pretty deep here so think I'll be OK with the present set-up. Can't go much further into the mangroves even if she does drag any more. Some of the trees are fairly big so would hold her off. Can only sit tight and wait it out. Wish this bloody rain would stop. Just had another radio report. They expect it to peak at 10.00 p.m. tonight with wind gusting to 120 knots. I've done all I can do, so now it's just wait it out.

It's 5.15 p.m. now, love, so I think I'll have something to eat before it gets dark. Will continue this in the morning and give you further details.

Not morning, darling; only 6.45 p.m. Have had scrambled eggs on toast for tea. Didn't want to use fat or griller in case it splashed. All lines and anchor holding at the moment. Latest radio report — they

are giving us updates every hour — they expect Winifred to pass over between Dunk Island and Cardwell in the next 2—3 hours. We are right in the path. Barometer on the boat has dropped to 901 mb. Wind going through the rigging sounds like a symphony orchestra, bloody awful music, off key to buggery.

I have had to bail the dinghy out. Bloody thing was down to the gunwales. Saved some of the water and poured it into the tanks on board. Every little bit helps. Well, love, will close for now and have a hot drink and continue this tale in the morning.

Well, love, it's still only 9.00 p.m. but useless trying to relax. The full fury of this Winifred bitch has hit. The whole boat is vibrating from stem to stern. Gusts have changed direction, coming from the SW now. Has driven me into the mangroves a bit. Most of the port stanchions are bent where branches have been wedged against them in the gusts. The boat is heeling over about 45° in these gusts and that's not bullshit. A few small branches are tangled in the shrouds. Put the spreader lights on at 8.30 p.m. and went on deck, cut some of the branches off with a saw that looked like coming through the windows. The dinghy is full to the gunwales, but not going to attempt anything about it. Very difficult standing on deck I put my safety harness on when I went topsides and clipped it onto the railings of the coachhouse. Reckon these gusts are in excess of 100 knots. Enough broken branches on deck to start a timber yard. My lines are holding, though, thank Christ or anybody else for that matter. You have to try to keep a sense of humour in these situations although there's nothing to laugh about.

It's 1.00 a.m. Sunday morning now. The worst is over. Winifred has passed through and is moving inland over Cardwell according to the weather report at midnight, so all we can expect now is winds of 40 knots slowly decreasing over the next six hours. So much for the first half of the night.

What a bloody shambles on deck. All the stanchions on the port side are bent over and touching the deckhouse. The barge board along the deckline (that's the one painted light blue) is busted in three places, one section about two feet long amidships is missing altogether. The plastic cover over the compass has blown away, probably miles away by now. All my lashings have held, so everything is

still intact around the mast area. We have the compressor back on board and that is still lashed securely. I have just bailed the dinghy out; amazing it is still afloat. I put the spreader lights on to see what I was doing and there are trees that have been uprooted floating down the river. Wonder what sight daylight will bring? Wind still very strong; boat shudders from stem to stern when gusts hit. Nothing has broken loose down below and still pretty dry except for a couple of spots but they aren't too bad considering the amount of rain we've had. Haven't had any now for about 1½ hours. Hope it stays away.

Barometer back up to 998 mb. Hope it keeps climbing slowly. Tide is half hour over the turn, so time to check all lines. If the wind swings round will have to re-adjust all. Strange thing; all night with these horrific conditions I have been getting the weather reports from Thursday Island, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart Radios as clear as if they were moored alongside. Tried to call Sydney Radio at one stage to ask them to phone you in the morning but they obviously couldn't read me.

Well, love, it's over. It is deadly calm here. Very eerie feeling. There is all kinds of debris floating down the river. The mangroves are bent over and in places you can see through almost to the road leading to South Mission where the wind has just flattened everything. There is one hell of a mess on deck. Will take me hours to clean up — broken branches, some about six inches in diameter, don't know how they didn't cause more damage. Leaves and other rubbish, about three inches thick all over the deck. Lot of scratches along the side of the hull but

no other structural damage. I'm OK. Not a scratch but feeling very tired. As soon as I get this mess cleaned up I'll get some sleep.

It's 9.30 a.m. Sunday now. Have got most of the mess cleaned up. Sandal and the kids are on the bank about 200 yards up river. Am leaving the boat to find out what drama they've got.

Back on board now. It's 7.00 p.m. Sunday night. Sandal has no power or water at her place so I took over little generator off the boat. We had to lug it about one-half mile through the bush as trees are down everywhere blocking the road. Set the generator up and running her fridge and freezer off it.

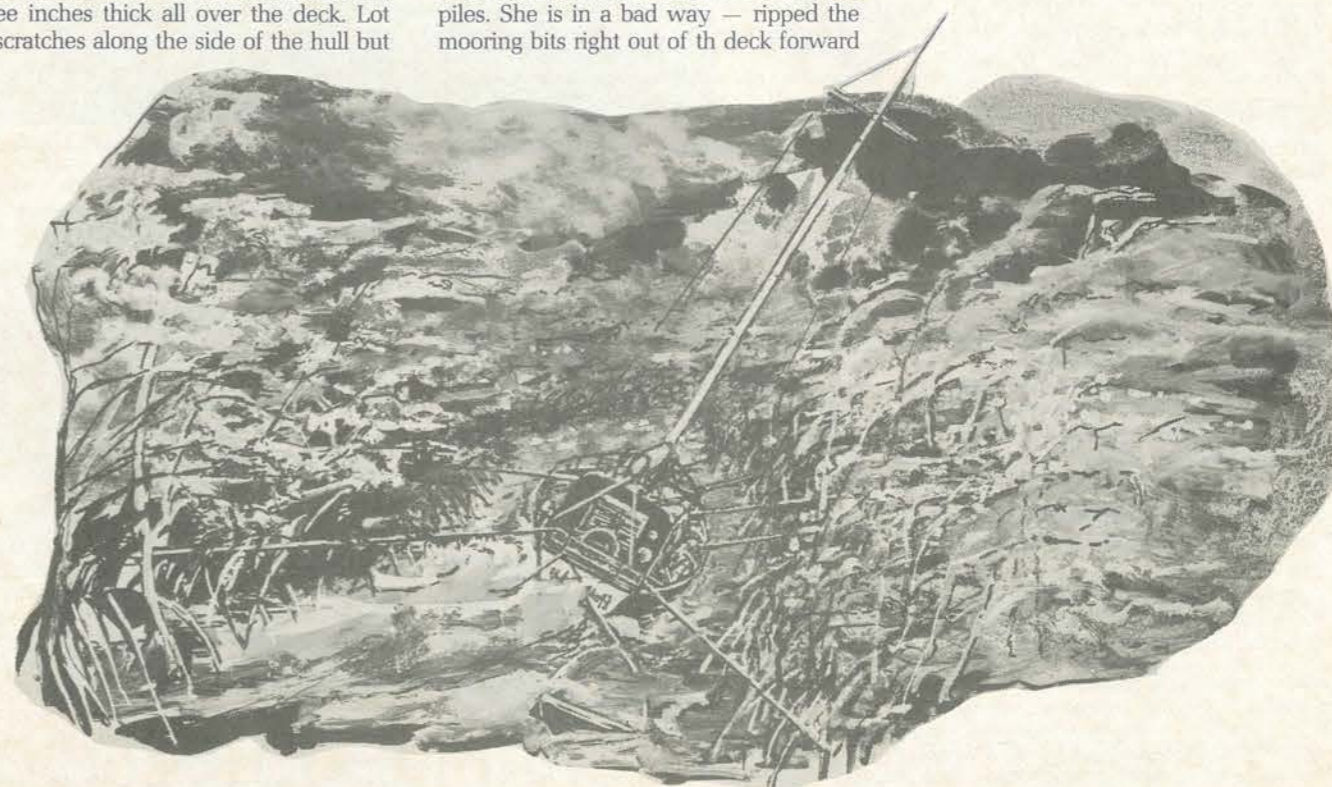
The devastation here is unbelievable. You have to see it to realise the enormous power of destruction that was in the wind. Every second house is minus its roof. Trees are down everywhere. Those that are still standing have no foliage on them, just bare sticks of timber. Some houses have been wrecked completely. Banana plantations look as though somebody has gone through with a huge lawn mower and cut them down. To give you an example, you know how Liz Galley's place was tucked away in the rain forest — well, no more rain forest. The house is still OK but looks as though its standing in a barren paddock, not a tree left standing around it. Amazing how they all missed the house. She got out on Saturday morning, spent the time in an underground shelter with a lot of other people. There are boats wrecked along Mission Beach. The Quick Cat went to Morouylan Harbour and moored on the piles. She is in a bad way — ripped the mooring bits right out of the deck forward

then snapped the main central mooring line, surged astern in the wind and smashed that big steel landing platform off the stern. The rubber dinghy (Zodiac) was found on the highway still complete with motor and fuel tank. Kooch was on board so he just drove her up full throttle onto a mud bank. He tried to get out of the harbour but with both engines on full throttle the wind just blew him sideways.

The cat *Duet* tied up here in the river. It broke loose and we have had a devil of a job this morning getting her out of the trees, untangling the lines which got caught up in *Morando's* anchor lines and getting her moored up again. She is fairly badly damaged, though.

This could go on forever, darling, listing all the damage. Am very tired as haven't had any sleep since 5.30 a.m. Saturday. The destruction has to be seen to be believed. Should have brought the camera back with me. Anyway, I came through it all right. Don't want to experience that again, thank you, at least not on my own. Too limited with what you can do. By the way, saw a big crocodile on the bank as I was taking the generator ashore, so am not going to put a little toe over the side here. Must be more of them in these mangroves along with all the sand flies and mossies.

Will close now. ■





## 2PC PENTA COMSTAT 10 YEARS ON

The smiling 'dial' of Jeanine Barnard in front of the bewildering array of dials in the very well equipped radio room at 2PC Penta Comstat. Among the sophisticated gear 2PC now has: JRC 400W transceiver; 3 Wagner C100s; Wagner 1829MR; 2 Icom VHF's; 1 om R71A all-band receiver; President 27MHz; Samtron 27MHz; VHF scanner; antenna rotator for 27MHz/VHF antenna; tape deck for continuous monitoring of all traffic; 3M Stormscope; Apple MacIntosh computer.

The new radio room at Penta Comstat\* is a far cry from the original station when it commenced operations in 1976. The radio room then consisted of a 27 MHz radio under one of the shelves in the small shop of Derek Barnard's Chrysler Penta Marine business in the main street of Gosford. Records were kept on a sheet of white cardboard on the wall to enable he and his wife, Jeanine, to identify their anticipated 60 members.

Today, 10 years later, Penta Comstat has a large radio room and office with a very extensive range of communications equipment and a computer to maintain the membership records and position reports for the ever-increasing number of vessels using the service. The range of communications still includes the Brisbane Waters and Broken Bay area but has been extended to include the rest of Australia and the South Pacific.

### Now officially recognised as the best radio facility for private yachtsmen

One of the most important changes in Penta Comstat's operations is the fact that it is now recognised by the search and rescue authorities that stations such as Penta Comstat pro-

Penta Comstat is a privately run and funded limited coast station providing a communications and safety service to its Members. Membership enquiries welcome. Derek & Jeanine Barnard, Holgate NSW (043) 677 668.

vide the best communications service for individual private yachtsmen at sea. The new procedure for reporting is the result of discussions between Penta Comstat and the Department of Transport's SeaSafety Centre, and should clear up some of the confusion that has existed about reporting facilities for pleasure craft. Many people have erroneously believed that by maintaining contact and filing position reports with OTC Coast Radio Stations that they would be automatically 'missed' if they failed to come up and report their position. A certain amount of bureaucratic self-protectiveness encouraged this belief in those early days of 'Penta Base' as it was then called. But the passage of time and the exceptional job that has been done by Derek and Jeanine Barnard has earned due recognition from the Department of Transport which has now formally recommended that private stations such as Penta Comstat be the primary radio contact so that positive action can be taken earlier in the event of a yacht getting into difficulty. It is suggested that those travelling locally should use a short range station, and that those on an extended coastal or ocean voyage should use a long range station. SeaSafety has made it quite clear that this service is not available through the OTC Coast Radio Service except by paid public correspondence facilities to a shore contact.

### Continuing in the service of yachting

This year Penta Comstat was again responsible for the Australia—Vanuatu race and the station will also be shepherding the fleet going over to Hawaii for the fourth time. The station has also done its usual excellent job of providing the return skeds for yachts coming back from Hobart, communications for the Sydney—Mooloolaba race, and it is about to take on a new and unusual communications role. 2PC has been requested to provide communications for a large part of the BOC Challenge, from the time the yachts get out of range of Cape Town on to Sydney and then from Sydney to Cape Horn on the third leg of this round-the-world epic. The station has also been asked to assist with the Melbourne—Osaka race next March and with the Round Australia Bi-centennial Race in 1988.

Penta Comstat's efforts in pressing government departments to recognise the needs of individual yachts making ocean voyages has resulted in the introduction not only of the revised recommended small craft reporting system mentioned above but also the issuing through 2PC of both coastal and long range navigation warnings. The Station has for some time been providing a High Seas weather forecast and warnings service. The Bureau of Meteorology has now agreed to extend this service to cover the NE and SE

areas twice daily. A weather and navigation warning service will now be provided for the High Seas areas from the equator to 50°S to 170°E.

Derek and Jeanine had hoped that negotiations with the DOC would have resulted in a new range of higher working frequencies being available this year, but this has not oc-

curred. The DOC has agreed to the use of the 6, 8 and 12 MHz channels that have been previously used for some approved races and return skeds. These channels will supplement the very successful service being provided on 4483 kHz.

The schedule that 2PC has implemented on these frequencies should ensure that ves-

sels will be able to receive the High Seas forecasts, weather and navigation warnings and to make SeaSafety reports over a much wider area.



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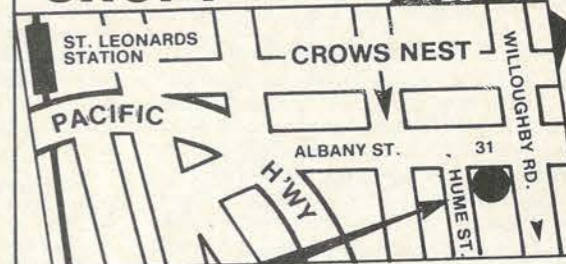
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(Continued from page 9)



FRASER "nothing to answer for"

### Conspiracy evident in Harbour fleets.


It is expected that the Fraser conspiracy theory will be further supported when our investigations into the huge harbour racing market are complete. However, even the most casual look at the various fleets racing on any weekend reveals the presence of the familiar Fraser Sails logo on an unusually high percentage of competitors, usually concentrated at the front of the fleet.

### Fraser cool as pressure mounts.

When confronted with clear facts and amazing coincidences clearly establishing Fraser's presence in virtually every winners circle Bob Fraser maintained the stance he has taken since conspiracy allegations. "I've told you already, I have done nothing other than to provide my customers with the best in product, service and assistance. I am quite sure that consistent

adherence to this policy is the reason for our high level of visibility today."

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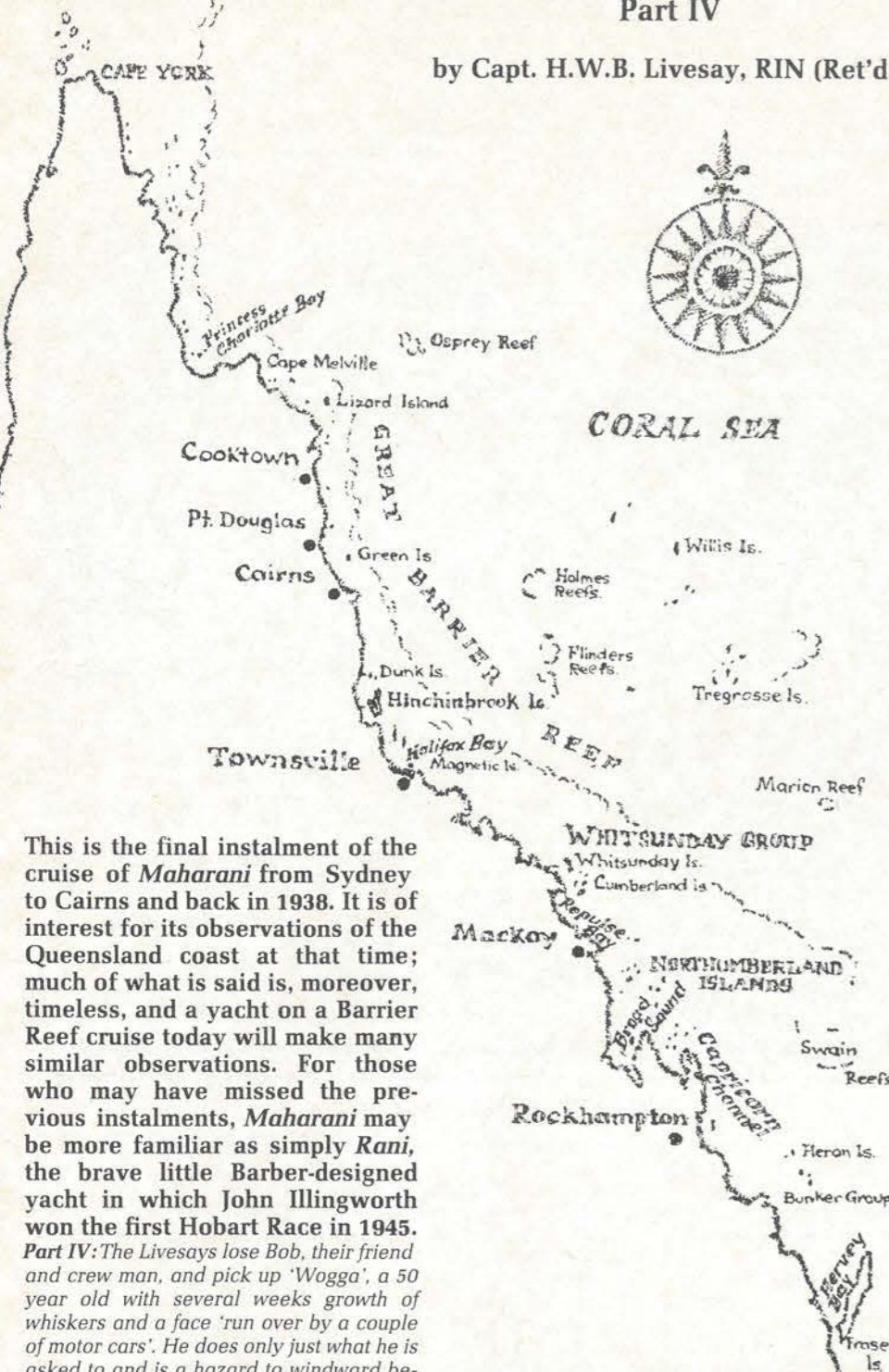
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# MAHARANI'S BARRIER REEF CRUISE

## Part IV

by Capt. H.W.B. Livesay, RIN (Ret'd.)



This is the final instalment of the cruise of *Maharani* from Sydney to Cairns and back in 1938. It is of interest for its observations of the Queensland coast at that time; much of what is said is, moreover, timeless, and a yacht on a Barrier Reef cruise today will make many similar observations. For those who may have missed the previous instalments, *Maharani* may be more familiar as simply *Rani*, the brave little Barber-designed yacht in which John Illingworth won the first Hobart Race in 1945.

**Part IV:** *The Livesays lose Bob, their friend and crew man, and pick up 'Wogga', a 50 year old with several weeks growth of whiskers and a face 'run over by a couple of motor cars'. He does only just what he is asked to and is a hazard to windward because his only clothes are those he has on his back. Such was the desperate need for crew. A cruise to the beautiful Palm Islands and the aboriginal settlement. They witness a Corroboree. On to Cairns and the Musgrave River where they encounter a 16 ft crocodile, surprisingly swift for its size. Having reached their northern destination, and due to the deficiency of crew, Maharani turns south again. On the journey back to Sydney Maharani has a close encounter with disaster. The Livesays renew some acquaintances. Archie Nichol*

*son of Lindeman Island joins them for the leg to Brisbane but has to leave there to get back to Lindeman for sheep shearing. Maharani demonstrates her seaworthiness yet again in a tempest of wind and hail.*

*We rejoin Maharani as she sets out north from the tiny Queensland town of Bowen, just north of the Whitsundays.*

### Wednesday, August 3rd, 1938

At dawn it was blowing a strong sou'easter so hung on till it moderated and got going at 1000 hrs. After rounding Cape Edgecumbe

set the spinnaker to port and, averaging 8 knots, brought Cape Upstart abeam at 1620. Rounded up into the bay and anchored at 1750. Upstart is a big bay, but the anchorage under the hills on its eastern arm is well protected.

### Thursday, August 4th

Weighed at 0800 to find it blowing a fresh sou'easter outside which carried us along all day. The sailing directions are quite clear regarding the dangers off Cape Bowling Green and though a course was set to give them a wide berth, we were set in and experienced a big ground swell, and after turning west saw sand banks fine on the port bow. The sea being too heavy to gybe brought her to the wind and tacked ship, then when clear, hove to and reefed the mainsail. A SE gale appeared to be setting in so decided to run right on and get protection under the lee of Magnetic Island. Cape Cleveland was passed at dusk. Fierce squalls and a heavy sea were met with rounding Magnetic Island. She was hard to hold with the wind on the port quarter and took the helm hard over to stop her broaching to. We were thankful to get the hook down at 2100 and go below for a hot meal. Had we known the locality we could have made a good anchorage in Horseshoe Bay, but it was a dirty dark night and there are no lights to lead you in. I had had 13 hours at the tiller without a break and was I tired?

### Friday, August 5th.

Dawn broke to a light SE wind and frequent showers, which continued all the forenoon, visibility bad. Got under weigh at 0930, it being then low water, and commenced the nine mile beat to the dredged channel. Somehow I had omitted to get a large-scale chart of the bay so had to make do with Chart No. 348. Kept the lead going continuously and sighted and passed south of Middle Reef and made up to the entrance of the harbour at 1245 where the mainsail was taken in and we continued through the outer harbour and up Ross Creek to an anchorage on the eastern side of the swinging basin abreast the flying squadron boat shed. Moored with an anchor ahead and astern, a snug berth.

Bob now had to return to Sydney and he left us on the 18th, the arrangement being that having completed his business there, he would return and sail south with us. But this plan I abandoned as the local weather experts assured me I would experience strong southerlies until October. So, provided I could replace Bob, I decided to continue north to Cairns and chance getting a crew later for the return voyage. So he left us, to our regret, and did not return.

Whilst here *Maharani* was placed on the hard and scrubbed down and the engine given a complete overhaul by Eagers' motor workshop, after which it was tried out on a trip round Magnetic Island and functioned

excellently. Several trips were made out to Picnic and Horseshoe Bays filling in time while I vainly endeavoured to pick up another hand.

Whilst here we heard of the disaster to the *Fram* referred to previously also as the *Zjawa*, which sailed soon after arrival, got on a reef off Cooktown and had to put in there for repairs; the damage was not extensive and she continued her voyage a few days later.

We found the people of the north most hospitable. Mr Swanson and his good lady couldn't do enough for us. On Friday 19th August having failed to get a crew we decided that Billie and I would leave next day and visit the Palm Islands where is situated the principal aboriginal settlement.

### Saturday, August 20th

Whilst getting under weigh at 1245 was hailed by Mr Swanson who introduced a person who said he was known as 'Wogga' and was willing to come with us having had some experience in small boat sailing; he was a sorry-looking individual aged about 50 with several weeks' growth of whiskers on a face which looked as if it had been run over by a couple of motor cars. Billie almost passed clean out when I introduced him as our future companion. However, if he enabled us to get to Cairns and knew something of the job we could forget the rest, or I thought we could.

Made Horseshoe Bay that evening and remained there over Sunday. I was short of some of the charts required for the passage north, but the deficiencies were made good through the kindness of Dr Chapman at Townsville, who lent me some of his.

Horseshoe Bay is the location of several tropical fruit farms, pineapples, paw paw and mangoes being most in evidence. There is also a good and quiet guest house kept by Mrs Swanson.

### Monday, August 22nd.

We sailed out of the bay soon after sunrise and had a pleasant sail to Challenger Bay on the west side of Palm Island, anchoring half a cable distant four points off the starboard bow of the old hulk lying stranded there. Wogga is not much of a hand at the tiller but is useful in other ways, but he does no more than he has to.

Dr Courtney, the medical superintendent, and the white staff were very hospitable, entertaining us to meals and providing hot baths. We spent a few days going over the settlement, schools, etc., and witnessed a Corroboree; the boomerang and spear throwing was worth seeing. The abo's are experts at spearing fish and turtles. We had some soup and steak of the latter and like it as well as ever, having had it before, in Rangoon.

The harbour contained by Palm, Curacoa and Fantome Islands is magnificent. These islands almost entirely close it. It is free of obstructions with depths of seven to twenty fathoms and the tides are not severe.

The school children's features were worth studying. Besides aboriginal, they show Polynesian and Micronesian ancestry, and there are also many half casts.

The settlement is very clean and while strict discipline is maintained, all young and old of both sexes look supremely happy, and

so they should since they are clothed and rationed and required to do a modicum of work only in return — no cares or responsibilities whatever.

Accompanied by Dr and Mrs Courtney and leaving Wogga behind, we made fishing cum bathing excursions to Pelorus Island and the outer reef. We also took two native boys to dive for coral. Peter who was one of them is reputed to be a first class hand in a boat besides an expert diver. He bought up some splendid specimens of coral for a depth of four or five fathoms. We caught snapper, rock cod and mackerel.

### Friday, August 26th

Complete with supply of fresh bread and vegetables, gifts from Mrs Courtney and Mrs Thompson, we sailed at 0720 bound north, passing east of Fantome and Orpheus Islands and west of Curacoa, then through the channel between Orpheus and Pelorous Islands. The wind which was sou'westerly at the start died away at 1130 and we put on the engine for a couple of hours when a light breeze came out of the east. Made but slow progress and reached Shepherd Bay on the northern side of Hinchinbrook Island at sunset and anchored there for the night.

### Saturday, August 27th

0700 saw us under weigh with a light SE breeze which failed for an hour on approaching the Family Islands during which time we steamed. Passed west of Brook Island on which is an unattended light, between Combe and Bowden Islands and east of Thorpe Island, thence up the western side of Dunk Island, round the sand spit at the NW point and into Braemo Bay. There is an excellent anchorage half a mile west of the settlement close inshore, in three fathoms, a cable's length in from the extremity of the sand spit. There is a small jetty here.

Dunk Island is easily the most attractive of any lying south of Cairns. It has luxuriant tropical growths, first class oyster beds and a well protected anchorage. The guest house, maintained by Hugo Brassey and his merry men, is very popular.

We suffered a loss here in that Billie was not very well and was put ashore to be picked up on our return from Cairns. The presence of Wogga may have had something to do with it, as having only the clothes he stood up in, he was getting a bit 'ripe' and it was advisable to keep to windward of him. Stayed over here until Tuesday.

### Tuesday, August 30th

Sailed at 0800 for Cairns with a fresh southerly blowing, made good just on seven knots throughout the day, passed west of High and Fitzroy Islands and brought up in Mission Bay at 1900.

### Wednesday, August 31st

Under weigh at 0700 under engine, there being a head wind, and anchored at 0940 on the edge of the bank on the line of wharves opposite the Strand Hotel, which proved as convenient a place as any. The Motor Yacht Club kindly allowed us the use of their jetty and premises. The approach to Cairns is well defined and it is only necessary to follow the sailing directions.

The attraction of Cairns lies in the adjacent tablelands which can be reached by rail or motor in a few hours. The scenery makes

## Maharani's Barrier Reef Cruise

them well worth a visit; so also is the launch trip up the Musgrave River where enormous crocodiles can be seen in the natural state. We got within a few feet of one, which measured about 16 ft, being asleep on the bank and it was some minutes before he awoke — then in a flash he had turned and hurled himself into the water. The speed at which he moved his great body was remarkable.

We had now reached the northern limit of the cruise. Had I had a different crew I would have continued as there was a month to put in before the northerlies could be expected; but things being as they were it was better to work slowly south to Townsville loafing here and there en route.

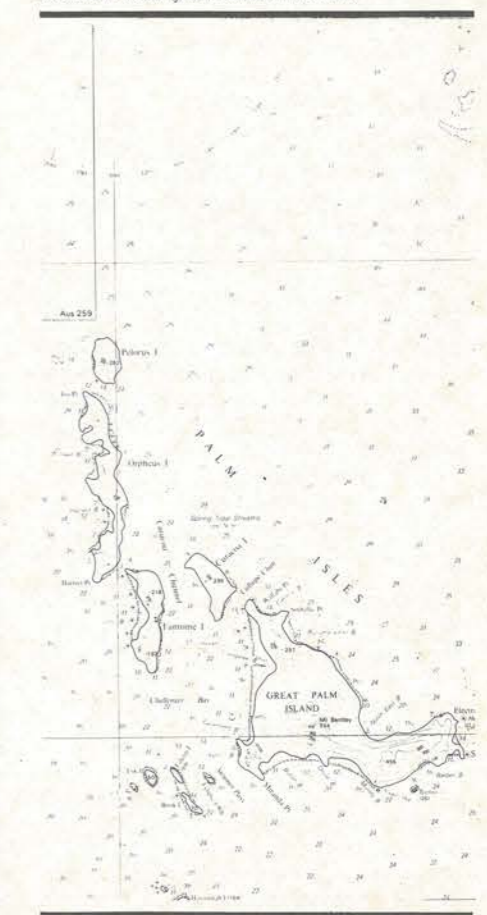
### Monday, September 5th

We left at 1500 under the large jib and mainsail to an anchorage one mile west of Cape Grafton, encountering heavy rain squalls from SSE. Rolled a lot at anchor.

### Tuesday, September 6th

The usual southeaster but not too hard. Got under weigh at 0615 and beat down the coast all day passing inside Fitzroy Island and the Franklin Group and anchored in an open roadstead, five cables offshore, at 1700, having made good 36 miles. With a crew of three would have carried on, but with only two of us it is hard work and the old body soon got tired.

The Palm Isles (from chart AUS 828).





Wednesday, September 7th

A nasty looking orange coloured dawn with dark heavy clouds in the south. Off again at 0610, wind SSW force 3. This was more promising as it enabled us to head for N. Barnard Island but it was too good to last, and at 0840 it chopped round in a squall to its old quarter, SSE, and rapidly increased with a rising sea. Had hoped to enter Mourilyan Harbour but having stood in close to the entrance I disliked the look of it intensely; the channel is only 170 ft in width and spring tides, which were now on, flow at seven knots according to the sailing directions, but at Cairns I was informed they attain a velocity of ten knots. Here I noticed several seams in the mainsail had opened due to chafe from the runners, so stood off and took it in and started the engine. We were now joined by a fishing ketch which had arrived from the south and which took in all sail and got going under power. We hailed and asked him if he was going in, to which he replied 'yes', and moved off towards the entrance. We followed under jib and engine, but half a cable off he turned, made sail and bore away north. Having had another look at it we followed suit, with the strong SE wind blowing against the spring ebb tide the seas on the bar were too big for us and it would have been courting disaster to have entered. It had worked up to a moderate gale, so the only course was to run north and seek protection under the lee of High Island. It was bad luck losing all that ground after flogging to windward for six hours, but these things will happen. We made the anchorage behind the High Island at 1600, a beastly day, raining most of the time.

The gale continued and held us all Thursday.

Friday, September 9th

It moderated during the forenoon and we made a start at 1100. The barometer was no quite so high and a moderate SSE wind blowing. Not a bad day, but slow going there being a good deal of sea left over from the gale. Got past Innisfail before sunset and decided to keep going. North Bernard Island light was abeam at midnight; it had been obscured for nearly an hour by rain, and now there fell a dead calm. Peculiar conditions reigned for the next four hours, the wind chopping from E to S and back with forces ranging from calm to strong breeze and accompanied by intermittent heavy rain. The very devil of a night.

Saturday, September 10th.

At 0330 during a lull Dunk Island appeared in the moonlight to be quite close, so took in sail and started engine, but later found it was a good four miles off, so wished to make sail again, but couldn't, as Wogga had let go both the jib and main halyards, the ends of which were streaming like Irish pennants from the masthead. Eventually reached the anchorage at 0600, and having been at the tiller for 19 hours on end, I was ready for bed.

Life was so pleasant here that we stayed for two weeks making several excursions out to the reef and neighbouring islands. On one of these I lost my propeller, which dropped off without any warning of its being loose. Am having another sent up from Sydney and will fit it on return to Townsville.

Sunday, September 25th.

Bid goodbye to Dunk Island, with promises to return next year, and headed south with a light easterly breeze and smooth sea which took us down to Ramsay Bay where we found anchorage in the southern end.

Monday, September 26th

During the night the wind went back to the SE and blew hard, continuing all the forenoon but moderated and came from the east at 1500, so we proceeded on our way and made over to Pelorus Island altering course south at 2100 to skirt the west coast of Orpheus Island and came to an anchor at midnight in Juno Bay, off Fantome Island. A pleasant sail.

Tuesday, September 27th

Weighed at 0800 for the short run back to our anchorage at Palm Island, arriving there at 0930.

Parted with Wogga here. Shed no tears. Went over by the island launch to interview one Harry Dale who had written applying to return to Sydney with us, so took him back with me to give him a try out on the sail over, and well I did so.

Sunday, October 2nd

Having said goodbye the previous evening to Dr and Mrs Courtney, delightful people with whom we had become very friendly. We started off at 0630 against a light SE breeze which at noon shifted to the east and gave us a fair run to Ross Creek, Townsville, where we moored in our old berth. Dale, who had said he owned a 40 ft ketch in England, was no earthly use and too obviously knew nothing of boat sailing, so we parted on arrival.

Maharani was placed on the hard on Monday, received a scrubdown and a coat of anti-fouling paint, had her new shaft and propeller fitted by the Cleveland foundry and was back on the moorings on Thursday.

On Friday a minor disaster occurred for which I could have kicked myself. I had hauled inshore with a breastline to the jetty to keep clear of a vessel coming off the foundry slipway, and on return from breakfast ashore found her on the bank and the tide falling. That would not have mattered great-



The Whitsunday Passage

ly had I not forgotten to turn off the cock below the pantry sink before leaving her; as it was, young Harold Swanson paid her a visit after the flood had made and found her filling herself through the sink; he turned off the cock and warned me. The water was now coming over the deck so it was an urgent matter to get her pumped out so she could rise before it reached the hatches. An SOS sent to Mat Taylor brought his son and another lad with a pump which, with the aid of buckets, soon cleared her, and beyond wetting clothes etc., no damage was done. At sea I had always been so particular about that cock that I can't think how I forgot it. Mrs Swanson came to the rescue and gave us the use of her copper to rinse out blankets and clothes.

I had now got one young fellow, Oscar Swanson's nephew, Gordon, for the passage to Sydney — not too much experience but very keen, and on Tuesday on visiting Haacks *Tropic Bird*, which had just come in, I procured Jack Ridings who had made part of the trip before under sail in the *Pelican*, which last year had been driven ashore in a gale and become a total loss on Stradbroke Island. It was arranged that Billie should return from here by steamer. It would have been no fun for her if the interminable southeasters still continued.

Wednesday, October 12th

With Billie and friends to see us off we were away at 0630 and steamed out of the harbour making sail when clear of the east arm. A light northeasterly, necessitating a beat to Cape Cleveland, which we passed at 1127; after that it was a fair wind, but light. Gordon was seasick soon after we started and continued so all day. Cape Bowling Green was abeam at 1730, but got set in here and had to make a leg out to clear it.

Thursday, October 13th

A bright clear day. Gordon appears to be in a bad way and asked to be put ashore, so will make for Port Denison and land him at Bowen. Passed Abbot Point soon after noon, rounded Cape Edgecumbe at 1420 and brought off up the jetty at 1615. Landed Gordon, had dinner ashore, and aboard and abed by 2000.

Friday, October 14th

Got under weigh at 0415 and tore across the harbour and out by the southern channel under a fresh NE wind which failed us at 0900 and we lay becalmed till noon; then it came again from the NE. With genoa set we romped along at six knots passing Rattray island to port 1310. Armit to port 1435, and brought up at 1800 in North Bay of Molle Island where we had anchored on the passage north.

Saturday, October 15th

There was a dead calm all forenoon and we made a start at 1130 and drifted down the Whitsunday Passage to abreast Dent Island lighthouse where we picked up a good ENE breeze which took us along to Lindeman Island where we anchored as before at 1645.

Archie Nicholson came out to meet us and I asked him if he'd like a trip to Brisbane or Sydney. Later he came along and said he'd like to go with us. Hurrah! He's a first class seaman and a most likeable companion. We were warmly welcomed back by Mrs Nicholson and invited to dinner.

Sunday, October 16th

Off at 0515 with a complete and efficient crew for the first time, and reluctantly said *au revoir* to the Whitsunday group fully determined to come again and spend weeks exploring their many passages, bays and islands. A moderate ESE breeze which just allowed us to lay our course for the Percys — did well enough at 5 knots passing to windward of Blacksmith and Ladysmith Islands and to leeward of Ingot Island. At 1100 wind and sea increasing rapidly, so changed to small jib and mainsail. By 1135 wind had attained gale force so bore away for Brampton Island which bore NNE and sought shelter in the bay between it and Carlisle Island. On the short run across with the wind a point abaft of the beam attained a speed of 10 knots. The sailing directions are not very clear in their description of Maryport Bay, formed by the western and northern sides of Carlisle and Brampton Islands respectively. A reef joins the two islands, its northwest extremity lying in a NE-SW direction. In the centre on its seaward side is an island. At low water springs the whole reef, including the channel between the two islands, dries out right up to the small island in the centre. The best anchorage for small craft lies half a cable off the north shore of Brampton Island just outside that side of the reef which runs out to the centre island. Approaching from the west with the sun behind, the reef is easily distinguished. I have not mentioned before that in making up to an anchorage or exploring the reefs it is always advisable to do so from a position which places the sun at your back; then there is nothing to fear, as shoal water is easily seen some distance ahead; but with the sun ahead of you you may crash a reef without seeing it. Brampton Island is a dreary spot and the southeasters tear through the narrow gut between it and Carlisle Island. We were forced to shelter here for five days, having made an attempt to get out on the third day, but found the seas too heavy to make any headway.

The tides set very strongly through this anchorage, so gave her plenty of cable; the rise and fall at springs is 18 feet.

Saturday, October 22nd

Was up on deck at 0230 and saw the reef exposed close astern so dropped the lead over and got 2½ fathoms which was all right as it was nearly low water. Shortly after turning in, felt a decided bump. My first thought was 'it's the dinghy'; my second was 'the dinghy's on deck'; my third was 'hell, it's a nigger head', so roused all hands, started the engine and moved out half a mile into four fathoms.

Weighed at 0500 and proceeded out through north channel to pass between Henderson and Keelan Islands. Found a very strong flood setting south into the roads, necessitating the use of the engine for a short time, and twice subsequently had to use it to prevent her being set onto Penn Island — estimated tide velocity five knots.

Friday, October 21st.

Sailed at 0500 round the west point of the



Maharani sought shelter between Brampton and Carlisle Islands.

island close hauled on port tack, wind SE force 3—4 and beat past Keswick and St Bees. Then at 0915 the wind chopped round to E—N—W. The genoa was set and away we went on our course, rejoicing. Prudhoe Island was passed to starboard at 1545 and Double Island to port at 1720 and soon after the wind failed, so started the engine and made for the anchorage in Sappho Roads in the Beverley Group. Henderson Island was abeam to port, distant one cable, at 1855 when sail was taken in, and at 1910 the anchor was let go in four fathoms, tide being one-half flood. It was a dark night and not late enough to have starlight so the position was a good deal of a guess.

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Beat across to Sphinx Island against a light easterly wind until noon, when it shifted to ENE and strengthened a little. Passed to the northward of Pine Island through some heavy tide rips and anchored in West Bay at 1330. Went ashore and renewed our acquaintance with the White Family. There had been a tragedy since our previous visit; a launch having set out from Mackay with a man, his wife and two children, besides the crew, to visit the Whites had not been seen again. It is presumed she foundered during strong southeaster which got up the night they left Mackay.

Sunday, October 23rd.

Dawn came with a low barometer and clear eastern sky, good signs for a northerly. 0500 saw us under weigh and, after picking up mails from Pine Island lighthouse, took the dinghy aboard and made sail, having a light northerly behind us which gradually increased until at sunset, when we were off Dome Island, it was blowing a gale. By that time had taken off the genoa which had been set all day, changed jibs and mainsails and then hove to on the port tack.

Monday, October 24th

The gale moderated at 0230 so bore away on our course for Cape Capricorn. After daylight came in for a series of heavy rain squalls making the visibility very poor and the wind began to increase until at 1030 it was blowing harder than ever from the NW, so again hove to on the port tack. At 1330 it began to ease up so filled and lay our course again and sighted Cape Capricorn at 1530. Towards sunset the visibility, due to rain,

## Maharani's Barrier Reef Cruise

was reduced to half a mile and the sky bore a thoroughly dirty look, so decided to hang on here and pop into Port Curtis at dawn if the weather had not improved.

### Tuesday, October 25th

By midnight the conditions had improved considerably, sky clearing and barometer rising, so carried our course towards Lady Elliot Island, setting the genoa and large mainsail, the wind being WNW 3. Passed Lady Musgrave Island before noon, the trees only showing on the horizon, and Lady Elliot at 1445 going strong at 8 knots. Shortly afterwards substituted the small for the large mainsail the wind having freshened midnight and we bore away south on the last lap for Brisbane.

### Wednesday, October 26th

Shook out the reef at 0400 and gave her the genoa at sunrise also later set the large mainsail. A perfect day with a smooth sea and moderate northerly breeze before which she carried the spinnaker from noon till 2100. Before midnight it fell calm. What a difference three of a crew makes, two of them young, keen and full of energy. I never seem to have anything to do now and lead a lazy life compared to former days.

### Thursday, October 27th

At 0130 a light westerly sprang up, and at 0400 we altered course in on the northwest channel leading lights and started the engine. The wind died away and later came from SE, so sail was taken in altogether. The northwest channel and skirmish pass into Deception Bay are easily followed — one sounding of one fathom off Bribie Island south point it being dead low water at the time. Entered the dredged channel at 1150 and tied up alongside Norman Wright's pontoon at 1310.

I was to lose Archie Nicholson here, he having to return to Lindeman for sheep shearing, and we were very sorry to see him go. I was able to replace him with John Druyn, who had made this passage before and turned out to be a good hand. We were to have sailed on 2nd November but were held up by a hard southerly and eventually got away on Friday, November 4th.

### Friday, November 4th

The engine, assisted by the ebb, took us down river across Moreton Bay and out by the eastern channel. Made sail in the dredged channel which helped us along until we took them in rounding Comboyuro Point, which brought the wind ahead and reset them, genoa and large mainsail, off Cape Moreton when the engine was stopped and course set for Point Lookout at 1400; it was abeam at sunset and shortly before midnight the wind failed.

### Saturday, November 5th

We were keeping well out 12—15 miles offshore to keep in the south-going current. It paid us well and it must have been setting us south at the rate of 3—4 knots. Experienced light easterly airs up to noon when a moderate ESE breeze sprang up which increased at sunset when Evans Head was abeam a distance of 14.5 miles.

### Sunday, November 6th

At 0215 got a headwind from the south which at sunrise changed WSW and later to



DAVID COLFELT PHOTO

Lady Musgrave Island.

ESE. A dull day with little interest. At sunset, being on the port tack with little or no wind, we were being set down on Smokey Cape so put on the engine for an hour, heading out ESE to get an offing. Before midnight the wind was NE.

### Monday, November 7th

The wind again shifted to NNW at 0200. Genoa was set at 0430 and replaced the spinnaker at 0720 which in turn was taken in at 0930 the wind then being north force 5 increasing with a falling barometer. Had the misfortune to lose my Rolleiflex camera overboard after taking a couple of photos on deck. The weather did not look to good at 1100; set storm jib and small mainsail close reefed. The barometer continued to fall all day; there had been no rise in the morning, and at 1545 observed a storm forming to the south'ard, so secured all hatches and scuttles and rove preventer jib and main sheets. At 1615 the storm was spreading out east and west while advancing in a northeasterly direction; also our following wind was dropping. It was one of the most devilish I have every seen — masses of heavy, inky black and grey cloud formed in fantastic shape with continuous flashes of purple coloured forked lightning, dropping to the sea and increasing roar of thunder — really most frightening. We were snugged down all we could be and there was nothing more to do but await the onslaught. At 1635 the northerly wind dropping and the edge of the storm being about half a mile distant, we hove to on the starboard tack. Next we saw the tops of the northerly seas being cut off and flung back and then it was on us with a loud hiss and a roar.

We were put right on our beam ends immediately and pinned there for fifteen minutes, the wind velocity being estimated at 60 mph. We three stood on what had been the port side of the cockpit with the weather rail above our heads; the lower crosstree was some 6—8 feet off the water, which had covered the deck to the coachroof and just lapping the cockpit coaming. She lay about three points off the wind. After a few minutes hailstones the size of marbles were lashed at us and hurt so much that we took refuge in the cabin and shut ourselves in. A sharp knife was kept at hand ready to cut away the main sheet should she go over further, but she did not.

Apart from the hiss of the hail striking the water and the shrieking of the wind there appeared to be a peculiar stillness due, I now think, to there being no motion either rolling or pitching, the hail having beaten the sea and swell flat. The first five minutes was certainly alarming, but after that she took it so well we lost all fear of anything worse befalling. After 15 minutes the hail stopped and the wind gradually subsided; in a quarter of an hour the sky had cleared and the storm was to be seen retreating eastwards. The very ugly cloud formation from which the storm had appeared to form was still in position west-south-west of us distant about five miles. After half an hour another one formed and bore down on us. Meanwhile the wind being easterly we went about and hove to on the port tack. Compared to the first there was nothing in it, and after half an hour all was clear with a fresh easterly blowing, so we continued on our way. The barometer remained low and steady at 29.72 in and at 2200 the wind chopped round to the west and south-west and commenced to blow at gale force, this being a dead headwind and Port Stephens lying on our starboard beam, we made for it.

### Tuesday, November 8th

Had no large-scale chart of Port Stephens so had to manage as best I could on Chart 1024. At 0120 having Point Stephens Light, distance 1.5 miles, took in the mainsail, started the engine and proceeded passing Nelson's Point light distant two cables at 0250, and anchored off the jetty in Nelson's Bay at 0320. Made all secure, spliced the main brace and turned in.

Continued blowing from the south all day.

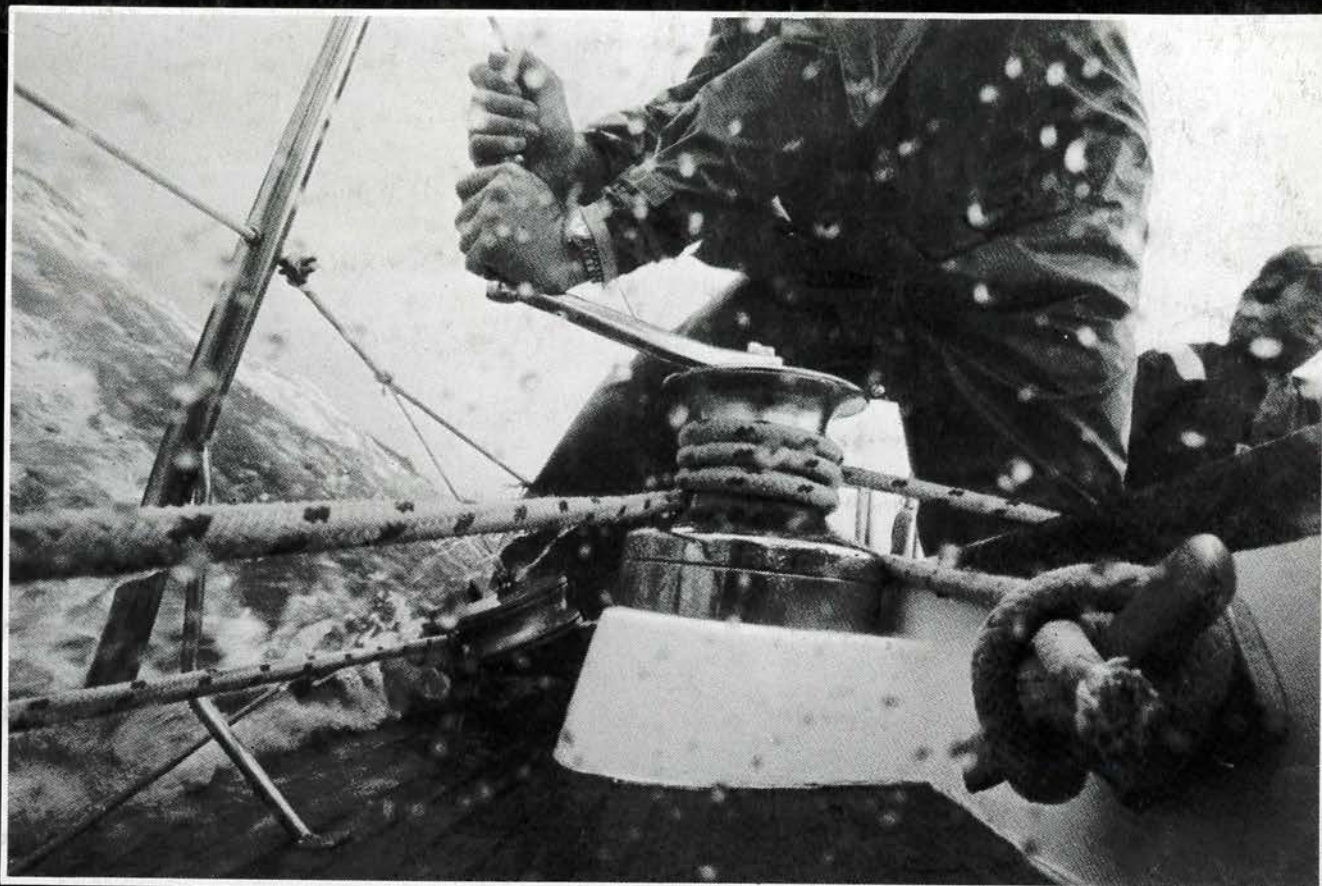
### Wednesday, November 9th

A warm sunny day; swam before breakfast, followed by a hot shower in the hotel and sailed at 1100 under power to Point Stephens where sail was made at noon. A light nor'easterly breeze continued until 2200 when it changed round to NNW, North Head and Barrenjoey lights being both visible. The wind continued light and flukey, with frequent changes from NW to east and back, right through the heads, which were entered at 0630, and up the harbour to our moorings in Careening Cove, where we secured at 0745. So ended a most enjoyable cruise. ■



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