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Peter Last and Peta Last, with Dimity and Verity Harries. On her marriage, Peta became Peta Harries, wife of David. She and Peter are second cousins, both being descendants of Henry Last, who was born in Suffolk in 1845. (RSAYS)

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East Coast Cruising Made Easy



Peter and Beth Miller

What is the first thing to do when experienced dinghy sailors want to venture further afield to visit our beautiful coastal waters? What we did was to gather (and largely follow) advice from those who have gone before. After fifteen years in dinghies and twelve in a 20 ft trailer-sailer, we wanted something bigger for the open ocean. Consequently we set about building *Pyewacket*, a 30 ft glass-fibre masthead sloop, with auxiliary power and all the aids and gadgets for coastal navigation.

This took three years, and after retirement and overseas travel were behind us, we got serious about cruising. As dinghy sailors who like to be back on firm ground after a few hours afloat, probably the best advice came from one of the Squadron icons of the cruising scene, Ion Ullett. In one of those enjoyable marina conversations which seem to happen at the Squadron, Ion asked what we were planning to do. When we said we wanted to take *Pyewacket* to the Whitsundays, he immediately suggested that we should transport the boat to Sydney by road. After some brief moments of careful consideration, he amended the original statement to, 'No! On second thoughts, ship it straight to Brisbane, because it's not a lot of fun sailing between Sydney and there.' So it was to be!

For the benefit of those who have built-in trepidation and a highly developed desire to sleep at night in a bed (bunk) which moves up and down as little as possible, but would still like to visit exotic places and rub shoulders with the friendlies who have opted for a simpler and alternative life style, we will provide some of the technical details of our trip. We will, however, leave out all the fun parts like beautiful sunsets, long happy hours, beach parties, exciting bashes to windward and fast reaches. All of these and more you can discover for yourself if you do anything like what we did.

Pyewacket was purpose-built for such a trip. By departure date she would be three years old, which meant that all systems were run in and tested. We carefully followed the advice of current Vice-Commodore Ian Moncrieff to ensure that the boat was as near as possible 'finished' at launching. Ian maintained that marina time was six times longer than home workshop time. The ship left Adelaide with 440 hours on the clock, and all rigging and sails were as new. The eutectic refrigeration driven from the engine worked reliably. Safety equipment was brought as near as practical to Category Two.

Financially much is involved in transportation over several thousand kilometres, so if the only aim is a relatively brief visit to the Whitsundays, bare-boat hiring may be a better (and cheaper) option. Trailer-sailers have some advantages once in the Whitsundays, being able to use anchorages not accessible to keelboats, but it would be wise to consider carefully the conditions and daily mileages required for a long coastal cruise in a trailer-sailer.

We decided to follow Ion Ullett's advice to haul out in late April and re-launch in Brisbane; sail to the Whitsundays; spend six months on the water; and truck the boat home from Airlie Beach in late October or when we got sick of it, if that came first. This should give us the best weather, with the famous south-easterlies providing a downhill ride all the way up the Queensland coast.