

Emma at Christmas Cove

Metzers and Moncrieffs

Our Backstairs Passage crossing to Penneshaw just after New Year, with just two long but shallow tacks on a perfect sea, was a dream sail. But the real dream was the new, albeit unfinished, improvements to historic Christmas Cove, where Flinders' men from HMS *Investigator* landed on their great voyage of discovery and charting. This tiny and shallow cove within easy distance of the town centre once berthed the *Valerie Jane*, a ferry to the mainland. It has never accommodated many boats, and certainly not keel boats.

However, with dredging, pylons and some pontoons recently in place, we took *Emma* into Christmas Cove an hour or so after low tide and moored to pylons overnight. She draws 7 feet. Two fishing charter vessels were also tied to pylons. We understand that these are the pylons to which pontoons will soon be attached. Former RSAYS vessel *Peacock*, which draws six-and-a-half feet and had entered a few hours earlier, was tied up to a pontoon just inside the entrance. Several trailer-sailers were tied aft to a buoy, bow in to a pontoon on the southern side of the cove.

The entry is narrow with rock faces either side and with leads to direct you in. A sand bottom outside is suitable for anchoring if waiting for tide is necessary. A boat ramp for launching small vessels in the cove is hidden from view until one is traversing the entrance channel, so a good watch for runabouts needs to be kept. A diver from *Peacock* could see that at low tide his vessel has no space below the keel and that *Emma's* keel had made its own hole in the soft mud. Christmas Cove is still not deep. If a swell came through the narrow entrance via a north westerly blow, depth could become an issue. However, with the wind from any other quarter, there is ample shelter for several boats on flat water in Christmas Cove.

Penneshaw never looked better as she basked in warm sunshine and gentle breezes from southerly quarters. There is a supermarket, post office, bakery, hotel, bottle shop and car hire within walking distance of the Cove but no butcher. We found that in January car hire should be booked ahead of time. The ferry terminal is within walking distance to the Cove, making it easy access for arriving crew. Dining at the hotel on better than average 'pub grub', and looking directly over the passage to Cape



Emma in Christmas Cove. (Di Moncrieff)

Jervis, was very pleasant, and the old and interesting Grimshaws General Store serves food as well as takeaways. The Old Post Office Restaurant had a more sophisticated menu, which appeared very attractive. We found the new Information Centre, which can be seen on a rise from the Cove, to be a great source of information, local art and craft, helpful advice and toilets. It was well worth a visit.

However, Penneshaw's greatest asset is its cheerful country people. They were exceedingly friendly and helpful, especially as we hunted for a car to rent and asked tentatively for the use of a 240v power point.

Our time in Christmas Cove was a delightful beginning to a few perfect January days along the north east coast of Kangaroo Island. A joy indeed!

Letter to the Editor

Transport SA, Marine Group
64 Dale Street
Port Adelaide SA 5015

1998/04547

2 December 2003

The Commodore, Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron
North Haven 5018

Dear Sir,

NAVIGATION IN PORT RIVER

There have been a number of incidents over time where craft, whether they be sail or motorised, have taken the habit of operating on the incorrect side of the waterway in the Port River.

There seems to be a common misconception that a sailing vessel under the power of sail can travel anywhere in a river or channel providing they have the wind forward of amidships and are tacking to gain maximum distance before altering course and that motorised vessels must give way to them. This is not the case, and I refer you to the excerpt from the regulations below (and/or Rule 9 of the Collision Regulations).

The Harbours and Navigation Regulations of 1994 state:

Navigation in rivers and channels

128 (1) The master or operator of a vessel proceeding along the course of a river or channel must keep the vessel as near to the outer limit of the river or channel which lies on its starboard side as is safe and practicable.

This applies to all craft, and it would be appreciated if you could convey this to your members.

This matter is also of particular concern to large shipping navigating to the Port River, where a small (relatively) sailing vessel will disappear from view of the ship's bridge under the bow. This puts the ship's captain or pilot in an invidious position, as the small vessel's intentions are unknown. From the small vessel's point of view they may have plenty of room and believe they are sufficiently clear of the ship. Please ask your members to consider the pilot on the ship and what his responsibility is in regard to a potential collision that is beyond his sight.

There is also the situation that is raised from time to time in regard to fishing vessels in the Gulf and particularly at night. Operators of fishing vessels have advised that sailing boats are of a habit to shine a light on their sail and expect all other vessels to keep clear. Some fishing vessels have gear deployed, which restricts their ability to manoeuvre, and these vessels will have navigation lights displayed, indicating they are a vessel engaged in fishing.

I appreciate your assistance in notifying your members.

Peter Hurn

For A/Manager Marine Group

This is a long-standing problem. In March 1978 RSAYS Newsletter published a virtually identical letter from the Port Adelaide Harbormaster, and there have been others since.