

1981, in classical fresh conditions, starting in a 20 knot wind east of south. An ebbing tide threw up a short steep sea in the Gulf of St Vincent. Soon after it was fully dark, a couple of hours after the start, the yacht *Moonraker* was seen to be turning back, with all the crew on deck. A shouted message and a glance at the navigation lights dipping under with each wave confirmed that she was sinking. The ferro-cement yacht *Jabula*, handled with skill, confidence and courage by John Hussey, took the crew off, at the cost of hull damage and having to send a man overboard in difficult conditions to free a line from the propeller. The keel fell from *Moonraker*, and she turned herself upside down. She presented an eerie and strangely evocative sight. The white hull was just awash. Each wave sent a high jet through the gap where the keel had been, and the rudder rose in the air like a fin. She looked for all the world like a white whale.

In the Squadron's centenary year of 1969 we sailed the race backwards, with the Governor firing the starting gun from the Town Jetty. The winner was *Woodwind*, sailed by Jamie and Anthea Cowell. It was interesting to beat through the slot between Althorpe Island and Cape Spencer at night in close company with many other boats. It happened to be a time of light airs, but it would have been a real challenge if we had struck a fresh change. Of course, over the years there have been occasions when the fleet has been deprived of the south-easter you expect. Then it becomes a long bash to windward, with a real test of the seasick tolerance of all aboard.

The Ultimate Cruise

Ion and Margaret Ullett

There have been so many spots which one remembers as outstanding, however we have not had much trouble in finalising our choice, which undoubtedly goes to our month long cruise of the Kimberley Coast, with its mass of waterways, rugged beauty, isolation and adventure.

We arrived in the Kimberleys at the BHP controlled Koolan Island, north of Broome, after our crossing from Timor, having competed in the Darwin to Ambon race and then a cruise through the Indonesian islands to Macassar and Bali.

After the race comes Lincoln Week, which is justifiably popular with the keen racing fraternity. Sooner or later, however, our yachts must come home. For those with plenty of time this can be a superb opportunity to revel in the best cruising grounds within easy reach of Adelaide. Many deplore the recent proliferation of moorings in the classical anchorages, which doesn't otherwise reduce their attractions. Thorny Passage is virtually the same as it was when Flinders was there.

Thistle and Wedge Islands have changed irrevocably from the time when they were farmed by the Wades, the Modras and the Crowdens respectively. There was a time when a visiting skipper (with or without his crew) would be invited to join the Wades for dinner, with their host and hostess in evening dress. If Chris Wade felt generous, the evening would conclude by going down to catch a sleeping turkey, to be plucked and dressed for the lucky yacht. Turkeys also ran free on Wedge Island. In both settings predators cleared them out. Sad to say, they were human. The fishing is nowhere near as good as it used to be. Even so, they are delightful islands to visit, with mutton birds and gannets usually conspicuous in the waters nearby and dolphins eager to make friends. It was after a classical Lincoln Race and with idyllic conditions that Alan Behrens sent his famous telegram, "Return unavoidably delayed. Hopelessly weatherbound in Whaler's Bay." Once again, come February there will be many to share that sentiment. SQ



The first adrenaline shot of the Kimberleys is undoubtedly the tides. Planning your day and anchorages with a maximum 37 ft tide is a very exacting task. It is impossible to go against the tide. Currents in some of the narrow channels with apt names like "Whirlpool Passage" have tide races of 5 to 9 knots. They are not uncommon.

Not far from Koolan Island is one of the great anchorages. Crocodile Creek is a five mile creek winding its way through vivid red cliffs, remembering all the while that the creek completely dries out at low water, finally ending in a boil hole under a waterfall. We tied *Fine Romance* to iron rings set in the cliffs around the hole and the anchor was set out in the centre of the creek. The boil hole was only just large enough for us, and any late arrivals would have to raft up to our sides. We then waited for the tide to run, tending our lines until we were virtually hanging by our lines and the anchor was set in the mud high above us. At low water the boil hole still showed 27 ft of water under us.

Day after day was spent cruising inland waterways, with stark red cliffs on one side and mangrove and tropic islands on the other. The isolation can only be experienced. In our month in the Kimberleys we saw one yacht in the distance and saw life once as we passed the Kuri Bay pearl farm.

There were countless great experiences. The 18 miles up the Prince Regent River to the King's Cascade, with the crocs swimming between *Fine Romance* and the anchor chain. The silence of the King George River motoring in the dinghy through narrow gorges bordered by 400 ft ancient red cliffs blocking out every breath of wind and the sound of the motor echoing from the cliffs. Settling down into mud in Camp Creek as the tide ran completely out. Having closed all our sea cocks we just squelched down into the mud.

The Kimberley Coast is a cruising yachtsman's heaven. With the exception of those massive tides and roaring currents creating a navigator's nightmare, we generally felt very safe and at ease with the environment. It was particularly pleasing to see the number of whales. In all we had twelve sightings. Some were very close up as the humpbacks, usually with offspring alongside, surfaced and slapped their tails or breached high into the air to give us a thrill. SQ

[An illustrated account of the Kimberley cruise of *Fine Romance* was published in *Squadron Quarterly* for March 1993: 26-30. Ullett cruises can be found in the issues of November 1980, June 1985, September 1985, July 1986, June 1988 and December 1993. There are others, but our collection is incomplete.

Adelaide to Port Lincoln Cruising Division

Participating yachts will satisfy Category 3 safety requirements and sailing instructions pertaining to the Adelaide to Port Lincoln race. The nomination fee of \$60 includes an event in Port Lincoln. Vessels will be identified by code flag 'C' flown from the backstay.

A briefing for skippers and crews will be held at the Cruising Yacht Club of SA at 1900 (7 pm) Thursday, 8 February 1996.

The event will start at 1000 (10 am) on Friday 9 February 1996, over the same course and finishing line as the Adelaide-Port Lincoln Race.

The simple handicap system will accommodate yacht speed, equipment and

crew. This will take into account such items as dinghy, anchors, diving equipment, etc, as well as use of the engine if there is not enough wind. Crews younger than sixteen and older than fifty gain handicap time.

Skippers and crews can participate in all the celebrations at Port Lincoln, together with a two-day cruise in the area, culminating in a beach barbecue with the racing yachts.

This is a fun new way to participate in company with the Adelaide to Lincoln Race.

For more details, contact Mike Stockdale — Telephone: (086) 82 0600 • Fax: (086) 82 6820