

ANACONDA II ROUND THE WORLD RACE

By Arthur Vandenbroek and Campbell Mackie



The 1975 Financial Times Round the World Race and the crew of Anaconda II - Part 1

IN March 1976, Adelaide-built yacht *Anaconda II* departed RSAYS for Sydney to compete in the Financial Times Round the World Yacht Race. These were the pioneering days of such races, and *Anaconda II* was the only Australian yacht competing. From Sydney they sailed deep into the Southern Ocean – 66 degrees 30 minutes south was iceberg country, and then there was the Horn. The crew included many RSAYS members who have continued to make a significant contribution to the seafaring heritage of our Club. They were young men then, fearless and full of excitement and enthusiasm for adventure. Forty years on it is time to reflect on the impact this remarkable achievement has had on their lives. Here is a brief window into their stories.

The instigator of this great endeavour was owner/skipper Josko Grubic whose story was featured in the June 2009 edition of the Squadron Quarterly. Josko, like a number of other Squadron members, was introduced to sailing on Sari and thus began a lifetime engagement with the sport. He



Josko Grubic

built five boats and sailed in 27 Sydney-Hobarts, the Financial Times Round the World Race, the Parmelia Race, the Rio Race and the Heard Island expedition and more. It is estimated that he sailed some 800,000 nautical miles.

Before the FTRTW race old Cape Horners came to inspect *Anaconda II* and opined that she wouldn't be good enough to make it around. The rest is history. Sadly Josko was to see *Anaconda II* meet her end as a result of cyclone Yasi in February 2011. Josko was the most colourful of yachtsmen and a deepwater adventurer who gave thousands of people opportunities to sail to extraordinary destinations. A passionate member of the RSAYS, Josko sailed into Tranquil Waters in 2011.

Anaconda II sailed with three watches – the Wonder Watch, the Cruising Watch and the Chelsea Pensioners. The stories of the crew of the Wonder Watch are told here:

Lou Davidson was the master and navigator. He was 25 years in the RAN, specialising in the Hydrographic Surveying Branch (famously naming Davidson Rock in Spencer Gulf a couple of nautical miles north-east of Boston Island), when Josko asked him if he would like to join his crew as navigator. Lou responded instantly – “Sure, why not?” So he downed Navy tools (ie retired) and went off for a sailing jaunt which continued his life at sea but kick-started it under sail.

Returning to Sydney after 14,000 nautical miles of the FT race he was welcomed as a delivery skipper which generally assured him a position in the racing crew. Rolly Tasker's *Siska IV* was the next marathon. *Siska* participated in the 1979 Parmelia Race from Plymouth to Cape Town and Fremantle to celebrate 150 years of white settlement in the Perth area. *Siska* changed hands and was renamed *Vengeance* which had

something to do with Rolly's 1978 Hobart race in which he was a non-starter and was booted off the starting line. So he began five minutes before the gun and arrived in Hobart 20 hours before the 'second' yacht, *Apollo* – the biggest winning margin in the history of the race.

Lou participated in local Sydney racing, including off shores to the north and south, and Sydney-Hobarts and returns. When *Vengeance* owner Bernard Lewis decided to build a serious maxi to a Dave Pedrick design, the 83 ft *Sovereign* resulted. *Sovereign* won all the races contested in 1987 before winning the 1987 Sydney-Hobart, claiming the 'double', the first Australian yacht to do so. Bernard decided to campaign overseas and so Lou was off on another long delivery from Sydney to Newport, Rhode Island via Hawaii for the 1988 Kenwood Cup. He then went on to San Francisco for the Big Boat series. It was exciting stuff with six maxis racing cheek by jowl in San Francisco Bay. Then through the Panama Canal to St Thomas in the British Virgin Islands, the first of the regattas for the 1989 World Maxi Championship, and then on to Newport RI via a memorable stopover in Bermuda, which just happened to coincide with the USA College spring break!

Arriving in Newport for the second regatta of the Maxi Worlds, *Sovereign* made a clean sweep, having won both the St Thomas and Newport series. *Sovereign* was then sold and Lou managed to get a berth on the J Class *Shamrock V* owned by the Newport Museum of Yachting. Elizabeth Meyer of Levi Jeans fame had rebuilt Sir Thomas Sopwith's J Class *Endeavour* and then the two raced in Narragansett Bay before sailing to New York, there intending to race for the benefit of New Yorkers. However, the super officious US Coast Guard dug up some antiquated rule about foreign built vessels not being allowed to raise/earn money in US waters. (It had been hoped to take the public on board for the races if they became members of the Museum for \$100.)

After a month in the Big Apple *Shamrock* returned to Newport and Lou headed home to Sydney. He managed a couple more Hobarts, his thirteenth and last being on JT's *Allegro* in 2010. (JT of course had been a crew member of *Anaconda II*.) Not counting around the buoys, the above sailing totals about 130,000 nautical miles. No wonder he reckons he is wet between the ears. And that's sailing!

Interspersed with the above Lou spent eight months of each year for nine years as Master of a tanker flogging fuel around the Pacific from Singapore to Tahiti and the Cooks. He is now resident a goodly distance from the sea in Gympie in Queensland.

Lou's parting comment was to say – “Thanks, Josko, for the kick start.”



Arthur Vandenbroek

After finishing the race in Dover **Arthur Vandenbroek**, who was the sailmaker, stayed with *Anaconda II*, sailing her up the historic Thames River to St Katharine Dock in London. Stopping at Greenwich they visited the National Maritime Museum to inspect the famous clipper ship *Cutty Sark* and Sir Francis Chichester's *Gypsy Moth IV*. They were introduced to the skipper of the *Cutty Sark* who gave them special permission to climb the rigging – about 180 ft up! Arthur climbed up to the 'truck' atop the mainmast and gave it a kiss 'for luck', then slid down the halyards and ratlines back to the deck. He was fit in those days but glad they were not out in a gale with 50 ft waves to deal with.

St Katharine Dock was an amazing place with much relevance to Australians. Convicts in ball and chain had embarked there for transportation to Australia. While at the dock Arthur even met some Australians who had found their ancestor's signature inscribed in the wall. He was also privileged to meet Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, who in 1969 won the Golden Globe Race and became the first person to sail single-handed non-stop around the world. Sir Robin invited Arthur to go aboard the 32 ft double-ender *Suhaili* in which he had completed his circumnavigation. An invitation that was readily accepted!

They met many interesting characters, including the skipper of the *Gladis* – an historic Thames Barge that had won many races up the Thames River over the years.



When *Kritter II*, who was third behind *Anaconda II* in the second race, was to be taken from Dover to St Katharine Dock, Arthur, his wife Trish and friends Julia Steel and Craig Mitchell got to go for the ride. Olivier De Kersauson (the skipper) was so intent on being sociable to his guests, that he ran *Kritter II* aground on the sands in the Thames Estuary and had to wait for the tide before he could get off. No damage was done, other than to the Frenchman's pride!

The *Anaconda II* crew were presented with their medals by Princess Alexandra, and Lou Davidson returned Captain Bligh's chronometer to the British Naval Museum before the rest of the crew returned home. Trish and Arthur then went touring in the United Kingdom.

Back in Australia they met John Field and Alby Mangels (of World Safari fame) in Port Adelaide. Arthur had heard about them buying the *Gretta Marie* in Queensland and bringing her back to Port Adelaide for a major refit. They asked Arthur and Trish to join them for a few years up in the Pacific islands. Refitting a timber boat with an old-school rig was a mammoth learning curve! They had to learn a lot, including how to fit in as a married couple among a constant influx of wild and adventurous folk. It was an opportunity of a lifetime.

The *Greta Marie* progressed to Sydney for film promotions and meanwhile the maintenance of the ship was becoming more routine. It was at this point that Trish and Arthur left the *Greta Marie* to get their own boat to do their own thing.

Arriving back in Adelaide in 1977 they started their own business, SA Motor Trimming Centre. The business went well and they bought a 28 ft Daydream (*Argana*) at the RSAYS, and learned a lot more about wooden boats. In 1981 Trish and Arthur became parents to Rhys, and that was also the year *Natani* joined their family. *Natani* is a Blythe Spirit of 30 ft, built by Owen Trewartha (an *Anaconda II* shipmate) and launched in 1966. Arthur did two Sydney-Hobart races in her (1968 and 1970) and was consistent with a 48th and a 47th.

Arthur was preparing to do the 50th Hobart in 1994-95 but to get *Natani* up to Category One was not in his budget, so he had to pull out. But Don Morton gave him the opportunity to do that race on *Toolka-T* with a great crew including Jimmy Howell as navigator, Chris Perry and New Zealander crew Dirk and Vic.

Natani and Arthur are still in love after 37 years, winning overall the Port Line Cup and Plympton Cup, plus multiple firsts, seconds and thirds in her divisions – almost too many to remember them all! *Natani* was in the very first Twilight race in South Australia.

Cruising is much more Arthur's focus now. *Natani* had a major refurbishment of her hull eighteen months ago, requiring a complete re-sheathing. Arthur thanks Julian Murray, Steve Dunne, Bones, Rob and more!

Arthur's involvement in the RSAYS and the friendships made there have enabled him to cope with the loss of his wife Trish to cancer in 1987, with his son then five years old. Rhys, having been brainwashed with sailing and boats all of his life, makes Arthur proud – not only in sailing but as a parent and in his business.

After about five years Arthur met Heather and they had two daughters, Rhianna and Emily, who are now 22 and 19 years old. Despite having parted company, Heather and Arthur continue to share the parenting responsibilities.

When the good ship *Catriona* came up for sale Arthur missed out on buying her by one hour! As events unfolded, he was later able to facilitate her purchase by Adrian Donald. Bones, and a lot of other experts in their field, got to work on *Catriona* and about eighteen months later she was possibly better than she was when first built due to the application of modern technology.

Adrian entered *Catriona* in the wooden boat show in Hobart in February 2015 and Arthur got to sail on her 'west about' Tasmania, including into Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour, exuberant that he had had the opportunity – he felt like a dog with two tails! Now he's busting to take *Natani* to Tasmania as soon as he can.

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On his return from Hobart Arthur restructured his business to be a mobile workshop and moved to Goolwa. Arthur says that after 40 years as an RSAYS member he is truly grateful for all the opportunities and experiences he's had and been given by such an amazing group of people.

Only a week after finishing the race in the UK, **John Taylor** returned to Adelaide, his studies and tried his hand at various business ventures, including house renovating and a fruit and nut business at the Adelaide Airport. Keen to do more sailing, he joined the WA yacht *Siska* in the 1979 Fastnet Race and Plymouth-to-Fremantle Parmelia Race, during which he obtained the nickname 'JT' to distinguish him from the other two 'Johns' aboard.

In 1980 he moved to the Gold Coast and became a stockbroker which then took him to Hong Kong for nine years, years which were spent living aboard boats in Aberdeen Harbour. While in HK he married Jackie, the daughter of *Anaconda II* navigator Lou Davidson. They returned to Australia in 1994 with a couple of kids. Robert is now doing officer training in the army and Laura is working for an NGO. On returning to Sydney in 1994, JT set up a printing and mailing business which still keeps him busy between his involvement in *Sailability*, Rotary and the occasional sailing trip. In 2011 he circumnavigated Australia with several of the *Anaconda II* crew assisting on various legs, and more recently he crewed



Skipper and Crew on Anaconda II

on Peter Riddell's *Southern Myth* in the 2014 Sydney-Hobart race. Reflecting on the past 40 years, JT says, "The Anaconda experience was the greatest opportunity I could have had at 18 – it was the launch pad to a world of great adventures, opportunities and enduring friendships."

On his return to Australia **Craig Mitchell** sailed with *Anaconda II* crew member 'Chook' Wall Smith and other *Anaconda II* crew on Chook's lovely Spencer half tonner *Roustabout*. He experienced many very enjoyable campaigns, including the Melbourne to Hobart, and Half Ton Nationals in Hobart.

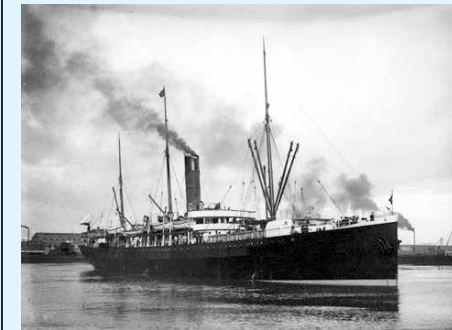
Then Craig returned to Lightweight Sharpie sailing, balanced with further offshore campaigns and Sydney-Hobarts, with several likable skippers and crews. His last Hobart was the 1998 race which he says, "We got through OK." He then returned to regular Sharpie sailing, up to and including the present.

Craig observes that, "Yes, sailing can be an addictive sport."

The Autumn edition of SQ will complete the stories of the members of the other two watches of *Anaconda II* – the Cruising Watch and the Chelsea Pensioners.



A Freak of Navigation



SS Warrimoo

WITH another New Year on the horizon, it's timely to read this intriguing piece, submitted by two Squadron members, **Chris Mandalov** and **Peter Dermott**. We wonder if they were in the same hemisphere at exactly the same time when they forwarded it. What a coincidence if they were!

The passenger steamer *SS Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia. The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John

Phillips, the result. The *Warrimoo's* position was latitude 0 degrees x 31 minutes north and longitude 179 degrees x 30 minutes west. The date was 30 December 1899. "Know what this means?" First Mate Payton broke in, "We're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line". Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double check the ship's position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed. The calm weather and clear night worked in his favour. At midnight the *SS Warrimoo* lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part (bow) of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and the middle of summer. The rear (stern) was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter. The date in the aft

part of the ship was 30 December 1899. Forward it was 1 January 1900. This ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two different seasons and two different years, but in two different centuries – all at the same time!

Source: A reference to the author is at:

<http://forums.qrz.com/index.php?threads/a-freak-of-navigation.428608/>

Peter obtained some further information on the SS Warrimoo from the Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1915-16.

Signal Letters: N.K.G.W.
Built: 1982 - C.S. Swan & Co, Hunter, Newcastle
Owners: Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand Ltd.
Registered: Dunedin, N.Z.
Beam: 42.2 ft
Tonnage: Gross 3,529 tons, Net 2,076 tons



I WAS recently invited to speak at the Winter Solstice Dinner held by the Wooden Boat Chapter of the Squadron. It was quite a daunting task. Not speaking in front of a gathering, but rather choosing an appropriate topic. Not considering myself to have any vast experience or knowledge to impart I chose to stay away from technical detail. Instead, I decided to explore what it is that makes that strange breed of boating enthusiast: those obsessed with wood.

Timber boat enthusiasts, I believe, are some of the world's greatest lovers! We are the Don Juans and Madame du Pompadours of the boating world. The romantics, the poets, the artists and the dreamers. Also the stubborn, the frugal and those reluctant to embrace change. Wooden boat owners and enthusiasts are driven by the beauty of their boats. Yes, they may still be competitive, still like to race and even more so like to win. But the elegance and grace of a timber boat are a hugely important part of the experience.

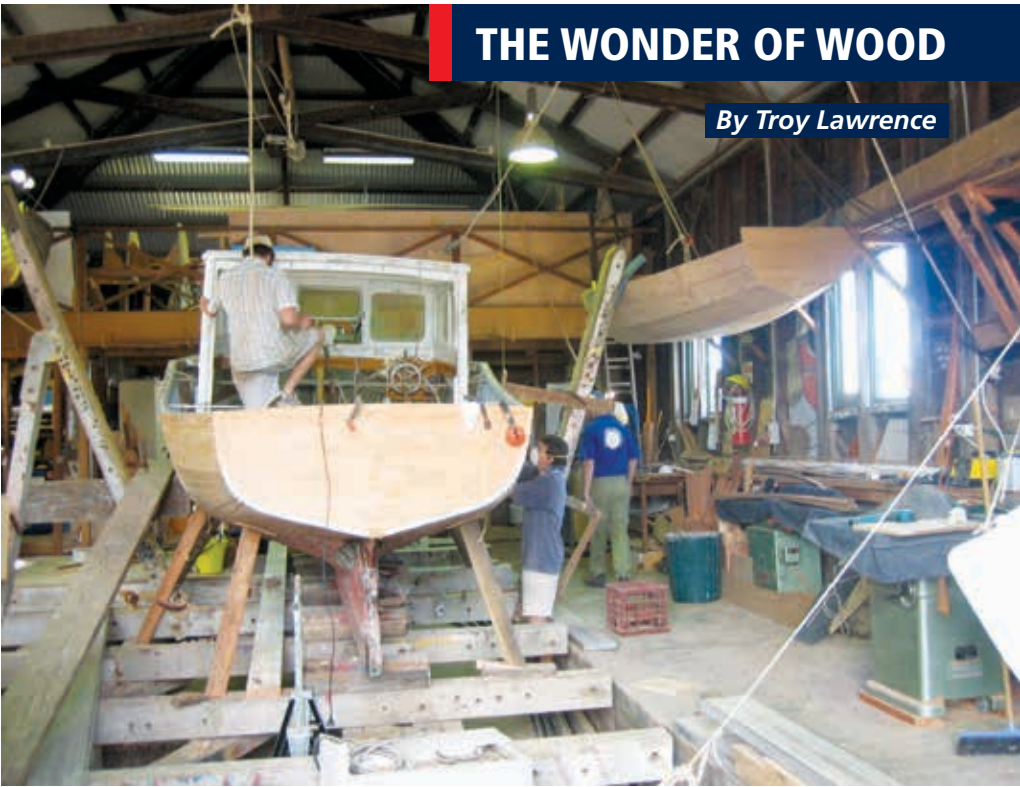
Of course everyone's tastes are slightly different and everyone's passions are derived from their own experiences. My passion for timber boats started two generations before I was born. My grandparents came out to Australia as '10 pound poms' after the war. As a country boy from Surrey, my grandad knew nothing of boats. But shortly after arriving, they moved to Albany on the south coast of WVA and he started a lifelong love affair with the sea.

My Dad followed suit and then when I came along I was inducted into the family weekend ritual of sailing, fishing and generally mucking about in boats. Sunday mornings were spent doing the rounds of the waterfront to see what was new within the week - a visiting ship or the latest boat up on the slip. Our boats were never fancy, quite the opposite, a mismatch of sails, spars and rigging begged, borrowed or stolen (though I doubt the last bit). To me this always felt like the true essence of 'mucking about in boats' and when I look back on it now, it captured that element of resourcefulness on which many boaties (particularly cruising sailors) pride themselves.

We never ventured past the shelter of King George Sound - 'shelter' being a term that I use very loosely, which all southern ocean sailors will understand. As a teenager my urge to venture further grew stronger with tales of people like Robin Lee Graham and Thor Heyerdahl. After I left school, while working, I took a holiday on the *STS Leeuwin*. Although I had a reasonable working knowledge of boats and sailing, this was vastly different from anything I had done before and confirmed my passion for the sea. I was invited back to work on the ship and jumped at the opportunity. For the next year or so I worked as crew, sailing up and down the West Australian coast and through the Northern Territory.

THE WONDER OF WOOD

By Troy Lawrence



RSAYS WOODEN BOAT CHAPTER Hail Poets, Artists, Dreamers and the Stubborn

Adelaide boat owners are indeed lucky to have the skillful, timber loving shipwright Troy Lawrence settle in Adelaide. Troy reveres the beautiful mature timbers he works with and the timber boats from which they are constructed. He addressed an irreverent bunch of wooden boat officianados at the Wooden Boat Chapter annual meeting in the Dinghy Shed..

Over the next few years I went on to work on several other sailing ships around Australia and as I worked my way through the ranks became more and more responsible for the maintenance of the vessels. Often working alongside shipwrights I was in awe of their ability to take rough sections of timber and transform them into perfectly fitting curved pieces. I started vaguely looking for an apprenticeship seeking only to work with timber boats which was easier said than done.

Eventually I came across Simon Sadubin at Sydney Harbour Wooden Boats (now Sydney Wooden Boats). He was based out of the historic boat shed at Chowder Bay (Clifton Gardens) and was interested in taking on his first apprentice. I am very grateful for having served my time with Simon. Having both a background in industrial design and a fine furniture maker for a father means that Simon has an incredibly good eye for detail. The physical difference between whether something looks good or looks amazing is often very subtle and hard to identify. As well as being an excellent shipwright, Simon is very good at implementing those subtleties. During my time I was also lucky enough to work with Rick Wood under whom Simon had previously served his time. Rick is a wonderful teacher, patient, encouraging

and an excellent tradesman. Again, subtlety was an integral part of his teachings. Sometimes you just need to know how to hold your tongue in the right spot!

After completing my trade with Simon, I returned to work on sailing ships, now as a shipwright. This really felt like coming full circle. Working on ships had nurtured my passion for timber boats and driven my yearning to become a shipwright. It felt like an opportunity to give back to something that had played such a pivotal part in my life choices. I then took a few years out to look after two small children and now, here in Adelaide, I am happily on the tools once again.

So for me working on timber boats combines my passion for sailing with maintaining things of great beauty. I love the fact that timber boats are built from a material that previously had a life for hundreds, possibly thousands of years. I spend a lot of time considering that with our forests dwindling these resources are not easily replaced which also means in some ways that neither are our timber boats.

I consider the work that I do quite important - in preserving perhaps irreplaceable works of art. And for that I considered myself extremely lucky.

