

Book Review

A Pirate of Exquisite Mind: The Life of William Dampier, Explorer, Naturalist and Buccaneer. Diana & Michael Preston. Transworld Publishers. Transworld Publishers. ISBN 0385 607067 ISBN 0552 772100 (Available April 2005, approx \$27.00)

Reviewed by John Smith

Reading this book is rather like reading an adventure novel, a book on natural history, a seaman's almanac and a comment on eighteenth century social history, all at the same time. It is well written in a style which is easy to read and which gives a substantial insight into the life and times of William Dampier.

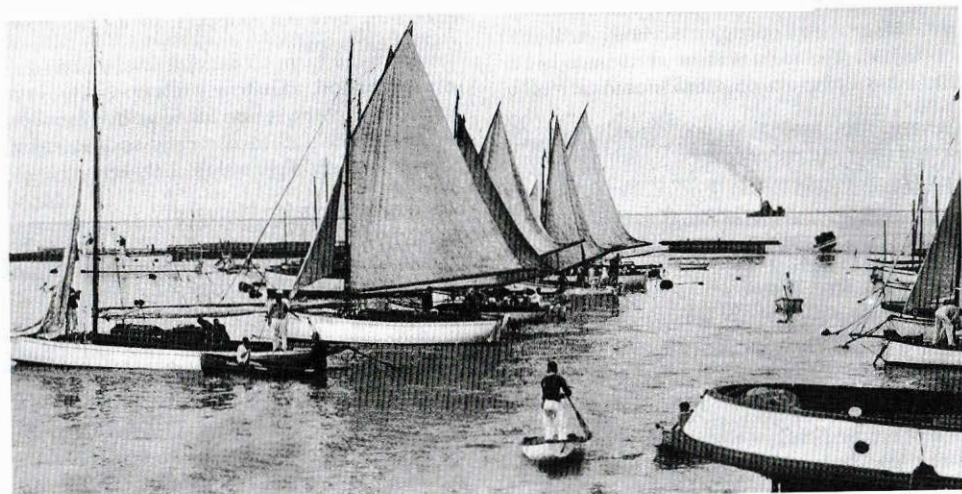
Dampier was a man whose thinking was well ahead of his time. He questioned everything he witnessed and based his conclusions on physical observations rather than hearsay or superstition. I knew of him, but like many other people knew nothing of his life and achievements. I was not aware that James Cook, Matthew Flinders, Thomas Baudin, and Lord Nelson all held him in high esteem as a seaman and hydrographer.

He was the writer of the world's first best selling travel books. He predated Charles Darwin with

his thinking about species and sub species. Daniel Defoe's *New Voyage* around the world by a course never sailed before was drawn from Dampier's experiences in real life. Jonathan Swift drew on Dampier's *New Voyage* when writing *Gulliver's Travels*. Dampier's writing undoubtedly influenced Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Dampier was the first person to circumnavigate the world three times, visiting many places for the first time which were unknown to Europeans, and whilst doing so always taking copious notes, which he protected above all else whilst labouring his way through jungle, swamps and shipwreck. He was a buccaneer who, for the most part operated without a warrant. He found himself to be in the company of others who did not pay too much attention to the laws at the time concerning their profession. Once he was a member of the crew it was not easy to leave the ship's company, but he made several attempts to do so.

I found this book difficult to put down, quite fascinating, with well-documented footnotes and bibliography. It is in my view well worth the \$32.95 price I paid for it. SQ



The Squadron pool in about 1930. The two closer yachts are Reverie and Anyndah (with sails hoisted). The motor launch has not been identified and nor has what looks like a tug in the foreground. The 'breakwater' barges were still largely intact. (Kingsley Haskett).

In Tranquil Waters

Hartleigh Kelly

31 August 1910–16 February 2005

Hartleigh Kelly had a long, productive and innovative life, with ancestors from Robe and Riverton and long-lived siblings. We are primarily concerned to record the particular components relating to yachting. There are probably now none left alive who go back so far.

A newspaper cutting in the Squadron collection dated 29 November 1926 reported on a handicap race held at the Grange Dinghy Club for the Savage class of canoes. The starters, handicaps and skippers were —

<i>Moby Dick</i>	3 min	Miss M Kelly
<i>Britt</i>	3 min	W Kelly
<i>Ljorleather</i>	2½ min	H Kelly
<i>All's Well</i>	2 min	J Harrington
<i>Reckless</i>	2 min	J Ellis
<i>Who's Mistake</i>	Scr	K Allen

The race was won by *Who's Mistake* and *Ljorleather* came second.

The story of the deep divisions in the dinghy racing community that created the Grange Dinghy Club is recorded in the news cuttings books. Hartleigh's brothers Walter and Erskine did well both locally and in the national championships.

In the 1930s Hartleigh Kelly designed, built and skippered the first racing catamaran in this country, which has earned him acknowledgement in the National Maritime Museum in Sydney. Back home, he raced successfully in fourteen-foot dinghies and in the original heavyweight 12 square-metre sharpies that became obsolete in the 1960s. He inflicted his passion for yachting on his newly-married wife Gwen by taking her across the Gulf in a *lumaren*. The *Tums* were a Scandinavian design, not really suitable in our waters, being of narrow beam, designed to be very tender and wet to windward in any sort of sea. Their canoe sterns produced small and congested cockpits and there was headroom below only for children. Only a truly devoted wife would have endured such an experience, and we didn't often see her at the Squadron. That was a pity, because she was a cheerful and gracious lady.

By about 1960 Hartleigh was converting his interest to keel boats. His first was a Yachting World Seahorse called *Galaxy*, which he built himself and raced intensively both inshore and offshore. Hartleigh might have been colourblind, because to others she and subsequently *QED* were a vivid yellow, but he once remarked that he liked the soft tone he had chosen.

His inventive mind produced, among many things, a complex and ingenious device that automatically tied loops in nylon line for fish-hooks. There was a simple piece of bent plastic that was ideal to use on tubes of toothpaste or anything else packaged that way. He designed and manufactured a clothes smocking machine, which was highly successful on the market. He became expert in hydraulic systems, which he used on the rig of his last yacht, the little sloop *QED*. The idea came from watching sailboarders off the beach at South Glenelg, where he lived for many years. In contrast to the subsequent complex racing yachts that tilt the keels to windward, Hartleigh tilted the rig above a swinging keel, so that the mast could be swung independently. The problem was that the hydraulic mechanisms were necessarily slow to respond. *QED* didn't work as well as he had hoped in the short steep seas of Saint Vincent Gulf, but it would have done better either in smooth water or on regular ocean swells. A further difficulty was that the racing rules of the day were interpreted as banning the use of onboard computers, which are now standard on many racing yachts. Consequently a crew member had to stay below to operate the apparatus, which was uncomfortable and difficult on such a small yacht.

With great determination Hartleigh continued to race *QED* into his final years as a conventional yacht with fixed rig and keel. He rejoiced that at the Squadron he was so competitive against larger vessels that he was promoted from Second to First Division. At the age of 86 he won the TG Flint Memorial Race from Outer Harbor to Somerton. He raced with determination that could almost amount to being aggressive at times, but always scrupulously fair.