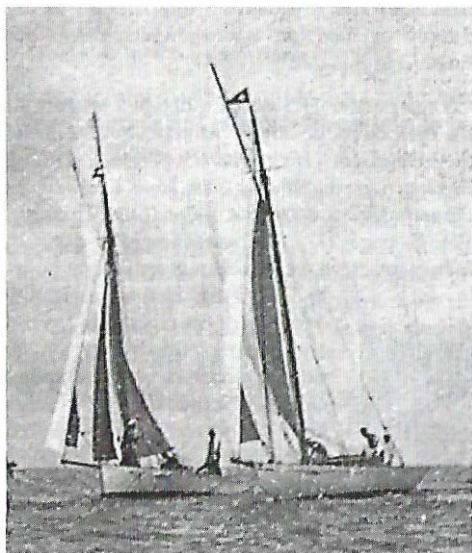


The First Orontes Cup



Norallie (left) in the Black Point race of about 1910.

Through Mrs Judith Judell, a daughter of Len Wigan, we have obtained a copy of the detailed log of *Norallie* in the inaugural Orontes Cup of 7 March, 1931, over a course from inside the Port River (the classical starting line of old) to Long Spit, then to Orontes, finishing inside the River. The participants were *Alexa*, *Anyndah*, *Ardale*, *Lady Alice*, *Nautilus*, *Norallie*, *Solace*, *Stormy Petrel* and *Wylo*. Bearing in mind that this was at the deepest and most despairing phase of the Great Depression, there was a respectable fleet. The skipper, TM Hardy, was absent due to an injury, and those aboard *Norallie* were George Eimer (skipper), Len Wigan, E Smith and HB Holthouse ('log-keeper'). *Norallie*, *Nautilus* and *Stormy Petrel* were the only vessels to carry dinghies. 'Suggest that in Gulf races a condition should be imposed that dinghy must be taken and a lifebuoy.'

They started in a very light SW and a strongly flooding tide. *Ardale* and *Lady Alice*, being the smallest boats in the fleet and also the lightest, were first out of the river, presumably through working the re-entrant eddy along the north bank, a delight not known to today's skippers.

'5 pm. *Ardale* and *Lady Alice* 3 miles ahead on course NW $\frac{3}{4}$ W. First and Second Mates [Eimer and Wigan] have retired to the main cabin with a big chart spread on the table, a pair of parallel rulers and callipers, several large volumes, presumably nautical tables, etc. They are busy working out our position, so they allege. They are now going on deck with an instrument staring intently astern. The First Mate says, 'The gasometer reads — (pause) — no, I won't give you my reading, Len, see what you make it.' Len takes the spy-glass affair and says, 'It looks pretty warm and I make it 127°'. The First Mate claims to have arrived at the same conclusion ... They now decide with the aid of last week's tide table upon the course, namely NW $\frac{1}{2}$ W.'

At 7 pm, '*Anyndah* one mile astern and to leeward. *Norallie* carrying topsail, balloon [jib], fores'l, spinnaker, water sail. [A small sail spread in square-rigged ships in calm weather and a following wind, either below the lower studding sail or below the boom of the driver. *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*.] Fine night, clear sky. At sundown, wind drawing to westerly, still very light.'

By 9:45 pm the wind was freshening, and they rounded Long Spit at 10:35 pm, with an unidentified vessel 13 minutes behind them. The wind fell away to a very light SSW, and '*Norallie* is not doing so well in the short joggle between lulls.' In flat calm at 3 am and 'tide flowing strongly', they set the balloon fores'l. After rounding Orontes at 5:55 am, following *Alexa* and another boat, also on the home run, 'wind SW. *Norallie* making a good 5 knots. ... Glorious morning.

'Not for rich gifts of gold and gems,
Not for the gauds few afford,
But for the sunshine, pure and free —
We thank thee, Lord

'For these thy gifts, for earth and sky
Mingling their moods in sweet accord.
For health and for the seeing eye,
We thank thee, Lord.

'Now, a free sheet, Holty and Len still on duty.
Len has just set the spinnaker alone — a smart

laddie. Holty steering, George and Ernie bunking. Sailing into the rising sun! 6:15 am. Rigg'd water sail, ... *Anyndah* $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the north, beating up to mark and two sails well to N. Are they *Wylo* and *Lady Alice*? Barom. has risen 15 points, reading 30.00 [1015.9 mb]'

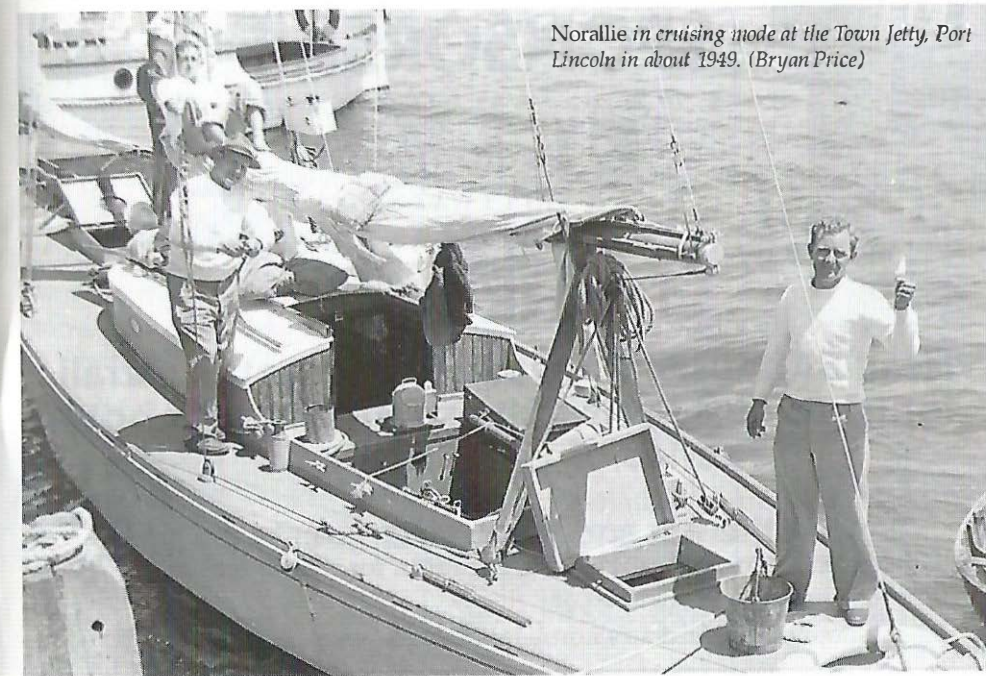
'7 am *Stormy Petrel* and *Nautilus* 6 to 8 miles N, bearing well down to Orontes. 9 am. Nothing in sight astern. *Alexa* ahead, estimated six miles and the leading boat out of sight. Harbour showing up well, right on our course, E $\frac{1}{2}$ S. Set spinnaker and entered Harbour at a great pace, 10:20 am. Course finished at 10:34 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes am. — just 12 hours from Long Spit, a very long one.'

After 'a beautiful warm clear night and a glorious calm morning', the winner on handicap was *Lady Alice*, followed by *Alexa* and *Norallie*. They sorted out that the order rounding the Long Spit beacon was *Lady Alice*, *Alexa*, *Norallie*, *Ardale*, *Anyndah*, *Solace*, *Stormy Petrel*, *Nautilus*; and the Orontes beacon *Lady Alice*, *Alexa*, *Norallie*, *Ardale*, *Anyndah*, *Solace*, *Stormy Petrel* and *Nautilus*. Presumably *Wylo* retired.

Lady Alice and *Ardale* were the smallest boats in the race, being Forster Cup Twenty-ones with cabins added. *Stormy Petrel* was the largest vessel in the racing fleet at the time. This wasn't the current *Wylo*, but an earlier vessel of the same name, probably that which passed to the Vercos as *Nautilus III*. She was subsequently owned by Dr Bob Downing and Hugh Bower. Her fate thereafter is not known. A photograph and a little of the story of *Norallie* appeared on our cover of the issue for December, 1995. *The Advertiser* or *The Register* of 20 October, 1906 reported, 'Mr B Weir has, during the recess, built a fine boat for Mr LW Walter [Vice-Commodore], who has named her the *Norallie*. She is about the same size as Mr W Fisher's *Reverie*, and is intended chiefly for cruising.' A Member told us that poor old *Norallie* fell into such neglect that she sank. We would appreciate confirmation that this is so and when it happened.

LJC (Len) Wigan was Chief Engineer of the Adelaide Electric Supply Company at Osborne, which was 'nationalised' by Premier Playford in 1946 to become the Electricity Trust of South Australia. He was a celebrated skipper in the Twenty-One Foot Forster Cup class; won the inaugural State 12-square metre championship in *Alawa*; and had a notable record in offshore racing and cruising. He is commemorated in a trophy for the winner of the Neptune Island race under international (as opposed to arbitrary club) handicap. His sons, daughters and sons-in-law have been prominent in racing, cruising, the activities of *One and All* and yachting administration.

George Eimer was Chief Engineer of South Australian Railways. Later he owned *Nymphæa*, and became one of the notable cruising and fishing Members of his time. He never married, and is commemorated in a trophy endowed in his name for the Haystack Island Race. SQ



Norallie in cruising mode at the Town Jetty, Port Lincoln in about 1949. (Bryan Price)