

BAD MANAGEMENT

The title might have been Bad Luck (as it was to some extent) but the caustic comment of the rather "livery" fisherman to whom we confided our misfortune compels me to admit that "Bad Management" more fittingly fills the bill.

"Anyndah" lost her dinghy and this is how it came about and what followed.

Three of us, Burford (Horace) a regular cruising member, Moir (Mair or Muir) a Queenslander anxious to learn something of South Australian waters and the writer, sometimes described as the P.B.O. (P for poor and O for owner) were out on holiday for a fortnight's cruise - destination uncertain and dependent on the wind, its strength and its direction for the boat has no engine and we weren't looking for work.

We left the moorings of the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron at the Outer Harbour, Port Adelaide on a perfect February morning in 1939. Tide ebbing, wind light from the S.W., a cloudless sky with the barometer falling for what turned out to be a minor change. We beat slowly down the Gulf of St. Vincent completing the stowing of the stores etc. as we went and then at noon we put overside the ashes of a late member, Dr. F. Lucas Benham, who had expressed a wish that this be done. Within an hour of anchoring at Brighton for the evening meal the wind came off the land and from then on we didn't start a sheet until we reached Nepean Bay, Kangaroo Island just after daylight. Breakfast and then before a gathering northerly, ran into that charming little place, American River, arriving just ahead of a S.W. change which persisted for some thirty hours. To my suggestion that we tie a couple down and get on the way as far as Emu Bay the mutinous crew raised objection. I was told very bluntly where I could go - they were quite happy to rest awhile and indulge in a spot of reading, eating and drinking. So we stayed. When we finally left for Spencers Gulf the change had petered out but there was sufficient wind to get us to Emu Bay where we spent the night. Then on across The Investigator Strait to Pondalowie, another very attractive anchorage. As attractive indeed as its name. Wind very light but right aft - the only fly in the ointment being the heavy swell running up the straits at right angle to the wind. Spent the night at Pondalowie and awoke next morning to find a real southeaster blowing. We got the anchor at 6:45 after a quick breakfast, ran past Wedge Island, had a look in at Whalers Bay on Thistle Island but there was too much "fobble" to lie as quietly as we desired so went on our way to Snug Cove at the N.W. end of the Island. A great sail 44 nautical miles in 7½ hours which is quite fast enough for a 25 ft. LWL. It was wonderfully calm under the lee of the shore but there was no doubt about the wind outside. White caps as far as the eye could reach.

Up to now we had caught no fish so the net (a very small one) was taken ashore after dinner. It would be difficult to imagine a lovelier night. A full moon in a cloudless sky and the wind off shore. We set the net and fish were in it almost at once so the writer hauled it in hand over hand and carried the net boated ashore to disengage the catch in comfort. The heel of the dinghy was only just hauled up on the beach then it happened. Within a minute or so one of the crew looked up and called out, "Hell, look at the dinghy". She had slipped off noiselessly and under the influence of the breeze was making good way out into the

passage. To follow her was hopeless - the late Zane Grey had recently been in the vicinity fishing on the expectation of landing a world's record shark and that consideration weighed with us when we debated the idea of swimming off to the yacht and going in pursuit of the errant dinghy. There we were marooned.

The occupants of the Island, Mr. & Mrs. Chris Wade, were miles away and we didn't know the nearest track to their house. We burgled a deserted cottage near-by, lit a fire and went into consultation. I knew that Mr. Wade had a wireless transceiver set by means of which we could get in touch with friends at Pt. Lincoln so at 9 o'clock (at night) two of us set out to examine various tracks in the hope of finding the way. Of course we picked the wrong one. I went out alone, barefooted and clad only in shirt (destined to be much torn) and trousers. After following the track for over an hour and getting considerably startled by quail rising from almost under my feet the road was joined by a dozen others all of which led to a watering place for stock. Back to the cottage arriving at midnight - full of strange oaths. After some four hours spell I set out again, this time accompanied by Burford who did have shoes on. We chose a new track (one we had refused the night before) and plugged on steadily till we reached the top of the ridge some 770 feet above sea level. In the early morning light the view was magnificent. Cape Catastrophe and eight Islands bearing the names of the boat's crew lost near here when Flinders made the discovery and first survey of this coast in 1802 were spread out before us. Dangerous Reef looking what its name suggests and several of the Islands in the Sir Joseph Banks Group were plainly visible. And below in the cove "Anyndah" infinitely small and toylike. We rested awhile and Burford looking round gave vent to the opinion that it was almost worthwhile losing the dinghy to see such a sight. But he didn't have to replace it.

Then on again finally arriving at the haven where we would be; at 10 o'clock. It was just as well we had made an early start as the day grew into a very hot one and I hate to think what I would have had to endure on the burning sand. We were given a charming reception by the lady of the house and her little daughter. They couldn't have been kinder. Seeing our distressed state (we were almost exhausted) they helped us to two whiskies each (it was the best whisky we had ever tasted) and then prepared what was actually four breakfasts. The owner of the island came in to see about it and of course we couldn't watch him drink with the flies. That isn't done. The wireless picked up Cape Borda Lighthouse and a telegram was got through to one Allan Payze of Pt. Lincoln. NOTE - If ever you go to Pt. Lincoln become acquainted with Payze. Then we lunched with the family and a message came through on the afternoon transmission to the effect that Payze had dispatched a fishing cutter to take us off.

In the meantime our hostess had sent her son down to the Cove with food and drink for our friend Moir who by his own report had developed "fun Fans" and was engaged in waving his shirt at seagulls, sandhills and anything white in the mistaken idea that they were sails.

After partaking of tea Chris Wade harnessed three very fresh horses to a dray (and not a sprung dray) and with six empty petrol tins aboard just in case we had to build a raft we left on the roughest ride I have ever had on a wheeled vehicle. However, our John was a wizard with the reins and the brake and we didn't capsize. But you should have heard the row those two made!

Back at the Cove we bade farewell to Chris Wade and then lit a fire of driftwood around which we sat and awaited the arrival of the rescuer who did not put in an appearance until 10 o'clock. On board "Anyndah" again and over a glass or two of wine we argued with a very mercenary fisherman as to what was a fair thing for the job. He won the "old cow".

Next day we sailed into Pt. Lincoln to stand up to a lot of "barrack" indulged in by friends. Here we borrowed a dinghy but the damned thing leaked so badly that we returned it and left on the homeward track with no means of connecting with the shore. And then the real task started. The wind failed almost completely and what there was of it was always dead ahead.

Result, 86 hours to do the 160 miles to Pt. Adelaide and the boat always with steerage way on her.

On looking back on the happenings rather feebly described I'm afraid the conclusion come to is, "It might have been worse". Thistle Island is the one of the eight in Thorny Passage that is inhabited. To have been isolated on any of the others might have had dire results. The the kindness shown us by the Wades and their family on this and subsequent visits makes me wonder if Burford's remarks didn't have more than a grain of truth in it. Although at the time he gave his opinion of the view he was being facetious yet to meet our friends.

Further, altho "my way of life has fallen into the sure and yellow" to have indulged in a 20 mile walk barefooted and with considerable stubbing of toes without any other consequence than a slight stiffening of the calves of the legs suggests that there's life in the P.B.O. yet and while there's life there will be sailing.