

CORRESPONDENCE

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

7th August, 1981

My Dear Commodore,

The Prince and Princess of Wales have asked me to send the Commodore, Flag Officer and Members of the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron their warm thanks for the kind message of loyal greetings and good wishes sent on the occasion of their marriage.

Yours sincerely,

THE HON. EDWARD ADEANE

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Royal Thames Yacht Club,
60 Knightsbridge,
LONDON, SW1X 7LF

11th August, 1981

The Secretary,
Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron.

Dear Secretary,

With London hotel prices rising all the time, your members may care to be reminded about the reciprocal facilities the Royal Thames Yacht Club offers in Central London.

The enclosed brochure gives an idea of the ambience of the Club with its banqueting rooms but your members

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may also like to know that we have available 23 single and 9 double cabins, some with bathrooms, many of which overlook Hyde Park, and an excellent cuisine and choice of wines can be enjoyed in the dining room.

The Vice Commodore, Mr. John C. Foot, and the Rear Commodores, Mr. Owen A.A. Aisher and Mr. Peter C. Nicholson, are always happy to meet visiting yachtsmen when they stay at the Club - as am I.

I hope we may have the pleasure of welcoming some of your members at 60 Knightsbridge during their visits to London.

Yours sincerely,

CAPTAIN A.R. WARD
Secretary

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THE ALBERT STRANGE ASSOCIATION

An inch-thick folder of the Association's newsletters and other correspondence, kindly loaned by Squadron member Harry Cook makes fascinating reading. We discover that the Association was formed in England during 1978, as its constitution says "to trace and preserve the designs and little ships of Albert Strange and to make a permanent record of his life and work". Its members are owners and other admirers of yachts built to the designs of the late Albert Strange (1855-1917) and include Harry Cook, whose ANYNDAH (owned jointly with wife Edna) was built to the A.S. design of PHANTOM by R.T. Searles in 1928 for the late Norman Ford. The original drawings for that yacht are now among those of 75 Strange designs in the W.P. Stephens Collection of the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, U.S.A.

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The newsletters and other papers are indicative of the enthusiasm and success with which the Association is pursuing its stated aims: A.S.'s. few living descendants have been traced and Martin Strange (a grandson) installed as Honorary President; all yachts known or reputed to be A.S. designs have been listed and much historical matter collected regarding them, whilst many of their owners have been enrolled as Association members; the prolific A.S. contributions to the Humber Yawl Club Year Book and to the Yachting Monthly have been researched along with pieces written by others about Strange designs, and quite a few of them reprinted for distribution to Association members; many of Strange's paintings have been located and photographed in colour for the Association's records and his grave in the village churchyard of Hutton Buscel, near Scarborough, tidied and sketched by an Association artist. A sub-committee is working towards the publication of a commemorative book.

From all this carefully documented material, we gain the impression of a most likeable and remarkable person, one who was "undoubtedly a man of great talent - artist, musician, poet, raconteur, sportsman and teacher, quite apart from being one of the finest designers of small cruising yachts this country has produced", to quote Bill James, a founder and Honorary Secretary of the Association. Bill is also Hon. Secretary of the Scarborough Yacht Club, of which Albert Strange was himself a founder back in 1895, not long after his appointment as first Principal of the Scarborough School of Art.

Among the reprinted Yachting Monthly articles is one by Lord Stalbridge, describing his winning of the second Fastnet Race of 1927 in the 48 ft. cutter yacht TALLY HO, built to an A.S. design in 1910. The race was sailed in such appalling conditions that all but two of the competing yachts were forced to retire, including the famous JOLIE BRISE. The drawings of TALLY HO show a hull form and profile not unlike that of ANYNDAH, though with a slightly greater beam to length ratio.

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However, it is the writings of A.S. himself that appeal most strongly, having about them a direct and refreshing style that is complemented by his excellent illustrations in what I believe is known as "line-and-wash" and which seem so much more evocative of those distant times than mere photographs. His stories abound in characteristic anecdotes, as for example the one that occurs in "A Single-handed Cruise in the North Sea", which appeared in the Yachting & Boating Monthly of February, 1908. This cruise was made in the Humber yawl CHERUB II of Strange's own design and only 20 ft. overall. Because of unfavourable weather, A.S. decided to visit the Wash by way of the Humber and Trent Rivers. After various adventures, including the rescue of a small boy from drowning ("my boathook came in very handy") and the curing, in the absence of professional medical care, of a village youth from violent stomach pains induced by over-indulgence in gooseberries, A.S. arrived at Lincoln to be greeted with the news that the lock at Bardney below Lincoln was under repair and he would be unable to get through. Faced with the prospect of retracing his ground so far in such bad weather, A.S. resolved to press on to Bardney and get through somehow, even if he had to use dynamite! We take up his account from the time of his arrival at the Bardney lock:-

'Yes, alas, it was there, bolted and barred by big balks of timber! The lock-keeper came out and looked at us, shook his head, and said he thought we should have to go back. I had forgotten to purchase dynamite, and it really looked as if all progress was impossible. We made fast, however, and Fred, my youthful companion, began to fish for perch, whilst I suggested lunch. After this meal had been completed we sat and looked at the forbidden lock again, more in sorrow than in anger, and whilst we were thus engaged a large Lincolnshire man strolled up. He heard our tale of woe, bit a large piece of tobacco off one of my plugs, and then said, "Might pull her over if we'd some help." Grand - nay, superbly magnificent idea! But where to get help? for no houses were visible. Oh, he'd just look up some

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friends of his who would come along (it being Saturday) and give a hand if there was anything forthcoming for their trouble! Good heavens! I would give untold gold rather than go back, and speeded him on his way with large promises and a three-finger nip of whisky as an earnest of good things to come. So off he went, and we began to strip the boat and carry the things beyond the lock. Presently he returned with four other men like unto himself in stature. The five of them solemnly undertook to haul the Cherub over the bank, along the lock side, and launch her again for the sum of two shillings each and a quart of beer apiece, and to exercise all due care in the operation. We had only the oars to roll her on and our own cables to haul with, but, after much pulling, splashing, and sweating, we succeeded in getting that 8 cwt. of bare boat out of the river, dragged her some hundred yards through nettles, weeds and rushes, and launched her into her native element below the lock. Never was boat fitted out in so short a time. In half an hour or so we were being towed down the river to a little "pub" that must have depended upon the beasts of the field and the birds of the air for its customers, for it stood quite alone, hiding behind the riverbank, and in its modest parlour I settled up with my helpers, the sum of 11s.8d. satisfying all their claims, and, to judge by their remarks, leaving them my debtors. A little breeze springing up, we went on our way, the five stalwarts lined up on the bank watching us disappear into the rain and mist, and the crew of the Cherub certainly very light-hearted.'

By way of conclusion, I can do no better than quote Bill James from his footnote to the list of 86 known A.S. yachts:-

"Having written the list out, I am wondering where on earth A.S. found the time! Designing a yacht is no five minutes job and it wasn't as if he was a Naval Architect employing a staff of draftsmen. He was teaching full-time, writing and painting prolificly, getting more cruising in than most of us manage, and all the while was deeply involved in the Scarborough Yacht and Humber Yawl Clubs."

Truly a remarkable man!

BLYTHE LINDSAY.

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THE DIRE RESULTS OF INEXPERIENCE AND OVER-CONFIDENCE or THE LOSS OF THE MERALTE (pronounced Meralty)

This recounts an adventure of my early sailing career which I would rather forget, but never shall. It began on a Saturday, towards the end of September, 1918.

My elder brother Frank, the keenest and most experienced yachtsman in the family to that time, although Guy ran him a close second, had recently been invalided home from France and discharged from the Australian Army. You will remember that the Armistice was signed on 11th November, 1918. Frank was the owner of a 25 foot relatively light displacement canoe-bodied gaff sloop named MERALTE. She was designed by and built for that master of yacht designing in S.A. Mr. R.V. Sanderson, father of the late Judge Ken Sanderson, who will be remembered by many of the older members as the owner of WYLO for some years. He (Ken Sanderson) had the delightful habit, whenever a court was scheduled to sit at Kingscote, K.I., of sailing WYLO to Kingscote for the sittings, after instructing Harold Dicker, who was Clerk of the Adelaide Police Court at the time, that his services would be required at Kingscote for the sitting!

MERALTE was a very pretty little boat, not dissimilar to Dr. Geoff Verco's VANESSA, except for the rig, and she also was built of teak. Her rig was rather like that of the 21 ft. Restricted Class yachts GYMEA and NERANA, with a high-peaked mainsail but somewhat less sail area. She had a ton of lead on her keel which was fairly long and shallow, being almost triangular in shape, with the rudder hung on its after end. She was originally designed as a centreboarder, but had to have the ballasted keel added to make her stand up to her sail. She had about eight feet beam, 4 ft. draft and displaced about 2 tons. She sailed like a witch and there was great rivalry before the war (1914-18) between MERALTE and FIDENA owned by Syd Tolley of G. & R. Wills. FIDENA was also, some years later, lost at Glenelg.