

By Barry Allison

Here’s another in the series of articles by Barry Allison recording some of the experiences and adventures of our many prominent Senior Members of the Squadron. Barry says, “Of the many articles that I have written over the last ten years this has been one of the most interesting. Kingsley joined the Squadron on 10 April 1972, but had a wealth of yachting and boat building experience well before this time. There have been many experiences that are not reported here because of the lack of space. However, Kingsley assures me that one day he will write a book on his very full life.”



KINGSLEY was educated at Norwood Boys Technical College in the early 1960s and grew up in the Port area learning about the shipping and boat building businesses that thrived in those years. He gained a shipwright apprenticeship at R T Searles and Sons in January 1964, and so began a life of pursuing many interests in a variety of floating craft. His first yacht was a TS16 begun in 1965 at Searles, and finished in 1967. He sailed an open TS16 *Excalibur* at the Port Adelaide Sailing Club with Rex Godfrey and Bryan Mellors. She did not have a cabin like the more recent Hartley TS16s, and sailed well with a set of sails made by Ivan Godfrey while Kingsley had some basic sailing tuition from Rex Godfrey.

Kingsley’s initial contact with the Squadron was in 1968/69 sailing with Howard Trotter (Boy) on *Taabinga* when they would sail up the creeks around Outer Harbor and set fish nets overnight. Kingsley was very keen on spear fishing and scuba diving, and was approached by well-known Port Adelaide shipwright and diving contractor Mac Lawrie to consider some contract diving. He carried out numerous diving jobs for Weapons Research Establishment and



Dragon *Sapristi* being launched in 1976

the SA Water Police, and explored many of the Mount Gambier sink holes. In 1968 he started sailing with T G (Tom) Flint on his Dragon *Pam* (KA27), with Bryan Mellors as mainsheet hand. *Pam* was often skippered by Mark Tostevin or Don King, and Kingsley crewed for both of them at various times in TG’s absence. He also crewed on Jim Howell’s *Ram Rod* and Fred Brinkworth’s *Seevogel* in offshore races. He was absent from Adelaide for much of the time with his diving work, but was able to sell his TS16 to the Batson Brothers and later crewed on Rick Baker’s new fibre glass Dragon *Sapristi*. He returned to work full-time at Searles in 1974 and soon purchased a Randall Karen 29 yacht. She was built in Victoria of King William pine strip planking, and was rebuilt at Searles by Kingsley and Kerin Edmonds then renamed *Excalibur*. It was while working at Searles that he earned the nickname ‘Bones’. Kingsley was six feet tall and very slightly built at that time, and fellow shipwright foreman Fred Townsend came up with the name ‘Bones’ as he said that he was so skinny that he rattled when he walked – and so ‘Bones’ has stuck with him. That year proved exceptionally busy when he raced and cruised on *Natani*, built by Owen Trewartha. He also sailed on Tom Flint’s *Medina*, and in the 1974 Adelaide to Port Lincoln race on Keith McKenna’s *Caravel*. In 1974 Bones left the Mac Lawrie team and worked on his own to fit out an H32 for Doug Bell, and then build *Kestrel* for Dick Fidock – a Blackburn design yacht being built alongside David Bink’s yard at Somerton. This work took most of 1974. Then in December, the opportunity of a lifetime was offered to Kingsley to join BHP as a relieving deck officer aboard *Iron Monarch* with a roster of three months at sea, and two months on leave. She had been built at the BHP Whyalla Shipyards and launched in February 1973 to be a Roll-on-Roll-off steel products carrier, and was equipped with General Electric gas turbine engines providing a speed of nearly 21 knots. This was an opportunity not to be missed, and so began 16 years at sea with experience over those years in 14 different BHP ships. He was in the Merchant Services Guild, and relieved officers for all of the shipping companies – both BHP and other Australian flagged ships. While in Newcastle in 1980, he was selected to work in the dockyard and to later be part of the delivery crew for one of the three new ships being built in Japan by the Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries yard at Kure in Japan. These Cape Class ships, the *Iron Whyalla*, *Iron Prince* and *Iron Spencer*, had a deadweight of 141,475 tonnes, and Kingsley served on the *Iron Spencer* on her maiden voyage to Port Hedland where she loaded iron ore for Port Kembla.



Keith Flint’s *Aquilla*

Kingsley, as a shipwright deck officer, served with BHP over the next ten years in local and overseas voyages. This cut into his sailing time, but with long spells of leave from BHP he decided, in 1979, to build a flush deck Koonya 38 foot steel sloop which was altered as requested by designer Alan Payne. The first hull built was *Evergreen* for Brian Mellor and Roger Knill, owners of Searles Boatyard. The sister ship was *Aries*, a full rigged cutter which was completed by Bones and Kerin Edmonds, and launched in 1983. Searles had chosen the Koonya design at that time to compete with John Duncanson, who was building his Duncanson 35s and 38s in fibreglass. Hull welding was done by Alan Miel, and the hull fit-out was completed at Searles assisted by Howard Peachey in design and rigging. Meanwhile, Kingsley continued his sea time until 1990 when the ship bounty was removed from Australian ships and BHP reduced the manning of the *Iron Spencer* and other ships of her fleet from a crew of 34 to 27. After 10 years at sea, and now happily married, this became the deciding factor in giving up the life at sea and returning to his shipwright life at Searles. In the early 90s, Kingsley was invited to become a partner of Searles Boatyard with Roger Knill and Brian Mellors. In 1997, Trevor Manoel joined the company as a shipwright and added to the boat building strength. Yachts being built or maintained at this time were Keith Flint’s *Volante* and Bill Harniman’s *Allemanda*. Then in 1997 two pilot boats from Flinders Ports were lengthened to enable them to increase their speed to 25 knots. Each hull was re-framed and re-engined, and took ten months of tricky engineering to complete. The SA Police boat Investigator was also rebuilt at Searles in 1999/2000 and provided plenty of boat building activity at that time. Brian Mellors decided to retire in 2000 giving Bones the opportunity to buy him out. Roger Knill followed in 2004 leaving Kingsley sole owner of the business. The years from 2002 to 2008 provided some very frustrating and demanding times, with all of the boat yards along the northern shore of the inner Port basin being threatened with closure and relocation elsewhere in Port Adelaide. Bones faced some particularly difficult times when having to lay off some of his employees and stop taking on additional work. There were some particularly bitter fights between government departments and the boat yard owners, and also the many local residents and boating enthusiasts who supported the industry. After some bitter wrangling, the State Government issued a Court Order to close the Searles Boatyard on 22 June 2008, and so ended many years of boat building in Port Adelaide. The wind-up barbecue put on by Bones to farewell a piece of history, and attended by many identities from the boating industry and yacht clubs, is still talked about today. Meanwhile, back at the Squadron, Bones became Chair of the Cruising Committee and introduced some cooperation with the Cruising Yacht Club SA. He began serious sailing again with early involvement with Keith Flint’s ferro hull *Aquila*. From 1997 to 2002 he was also involved in assembling eight American Catalina yachts – 320 Mk 2s and 42 Mk 2s. One of the last was *Soleil*, a 42



Catriona of Adelaide

Mk2 for Ric and Di Mollison which was modified for long distance cruising. Ric, later Commodore Mollison, raced and cruised her extensively with Bones as part of her crew. Adrian Donald had plans for *Catriona* to be rebuilt in time for the 2015 Wooden Boat Festival being held in Hobart. After a complete upgrade lasting five months, *Catriona* set off on 22 January 2015 with Adrian Donald, David Searle, Bruce Weatherall, Jeff Hunt, Artie Vandenbroek and Bones aboard bound for Hobart. After a very fast, comfortable and uneventful voyage, they participated in the Wooden Boat festivities, then secured the boat at the Prince of Wales Marina in the upper Derwent and flew home, planning to return later in the year to bring *Catriona* back to the Squadron. In 1994, Adrian van den Bok was crewing for Bones on *Aries* and decided that he should have his own yacht. Bones and Adrian set off for Sydney where they surveyed a Robert Perry 48 named *Amageel*. She was purchased and sailed back to the Squadron with a crew of Jim Howell, Kerin Edmonds, Adrian van den Bok and Bones. Adrian re-named her *Nullabor*, and competed in several Adelaide to Port Lincoln races and numerous cruises to Kangaroo Island. Then in 2010 Bones purchased *Nullabor* which had been laid up on a Squadron marina for several years. A complete rebuild could not be accomplished at the Squadron, so she was transported to Lipson Street in the Port where Bones has been very busy undertaking the rebuild. In 2015 Jeff and Rae Hunt purchased *Mahalo*, a 2010 Catalina 42 Mk 2, in Nelson in New Zealand, and required a crew to sail her back to the Squadron in time for the 2015 Opening Day! The voyage to Adelaide was to be via Lord Howe Island and Sydney, as this provided the most favourable weather window for that time of the year. The crew of four comprising Jeff Hunt, Bruce Weatherall, Jeff Price and Bones departed Nelson on 1 October in freezing cold winds, and headed for Ball’s Pyramid, Lord Howe Island and across to Sydney in very strong winds. On one of the days they managed 217 miles in 24 hours. After a short stay in Sydney they headed for the Squadron and arrived just one week before Opening Day, having taken five weeks for the voyage from Nelson to Adelaide. *Mahalo* was then ready for Commodore Rae and Jeff to lead the Sail Past. Today, Bones is very active, and continues to provide his boat-building skills to those requiring this work. He is also very keen to complete the rebuild of the IOR One Ton class, *First Light*, for his son Owen, and to maintain his work boat *Gladys Mary* which was built at Searles in 1963-64. However, his biggest challenge is to complete the rebuild and refit of *Nullabor* and have her back in the water and ready to sail away to some secluded havens. We wish him good luck with these plans.



Gladys Mary