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March 4, 2021

People & Places

A real sea change

Imagine living at sea where you could up-anchor any time and sail where you please. Meet these stay-aboards who are living their dream nautical life at North Haven's 35 South Marina.



At the helm of the 50-foot vessel, Bernie Dobson is ready to navigate anywhere he pleases.

Words and Photographs Ben Kelly

Finding tranquillity

Bernie and Gill Dobson describe their 50-foot motor yacht *Tranquillity Base* as a floating apartment, equipped with everything you could ask for in a place to call home.

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Originally from the UK, where they met as teenagers, and having since travelled around the world with Bernie's work in marine engineering, the couple has now found the serenity they'd long been looking for.

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“We’ve been living here at 35 South Marina for three years and we love it – it’s peaceful and we can change the scenery whenever we want; it’s great,” Bernie says.



Keen sailors Bernie and Gill Dobson first picked up competitive sailing while living in Brunei many years ago and now live aboard Tranquillity Base, which has everything they need.

Bernie was working in Venice, Italy, when an opportunity came up at nearby Osborne, where he today works as a contractor. Last year he did plenty of work from home in the powerboat’s galley, which suits him just fine.

Bernie was at one point travelling so much for work that he was burning through a 32-page passport every nine months, and some places he visited were less desirable than others. In Jansi, India, Bernie woke one night to discover that two snakes had found their way under his hotel room door and into his bed. In Kashmir, he was shot at while disembarking a plane.

“There was a riot going on with a lot of shooting, and it was one of these flights where you just walk off the plane into the open. A few bullets were flying around, I turned to get back on the plane but they’d shut the door on me,” he says.



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Happily, there's none of that at the marina where Bernie and Gill often socialise with other "stay-aboards" and head out for a cruise once every fortnight.

"We'll get the maps out and visit all the various marinas, because there are fantastic places to go in this area of South Australia. There are hundreds of islands that are amazing to go and look at," he says.

One-year-old spoodle Maggie has quickly found her sea legs and makes a particularly good crew member, given that she doesn't shed any hair. Tranquillity Base has plenty of room to move about, with a roomy main saloon with a lounge, kitchen galley and dining space. The master bedroom, or "state room" has an en suite bathroom, as does the second bedroom at the rear of the boat.



Bernie with the couple's dog, Maggie.

However, Bernie says nothing beats having a drink on the swim deck with your feet dangling in the water.

"We like being by the water and now that we are, I don't think we could live back in a house."

Changing tack

Buying a yacht, selling his house and transitioning to life on the water at North Haven has been a liberating experience for Edmund Burke, but also a chance to show his daughter Lily that there are alternatives to the norm.

Lily spends every second week living aboard *Cable Bay* with Edmund, the highlights of which include paddleboarding with other young people at the marina and being visited by a friendly resident dolphin.

"I've never been in a community where everyone knows each other, so that's really cool," Lily says. "Dad and I live really well together and we don't take up a lot of room. There's a lot to do other than being inside the boat, so it never gets cramped."

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The Year 9 student practises the saxophone on board to keep up with her music studies.

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“I’ve learnt a lot from being on Dad’s boat and I’ve since done a school sailing course, which taught me about the wind and how to use sails,” she says.

While the boat is more modest than some of the nearby luxury vessels, it has everything they need, except for a shower. Happily, they have access to the marina’s newly-renovated bathrooms and other facilities.



Dolphins, paddleboarding, and the fresh sea air are just a few of the perks of living on the water.

Edmund first stepped aboard a sailboat in 2018 and was so captivated with the experience that it set him on course to purchase his own yacht a year ago. Earlier this year he sold his house to live aboard *Cable Bay* full time and has since taken time off work to get the vessel shipshape.

“The only way I could justify buying the boat was to live on board,” he says. “It did require quite a lot of work when I first bought it. I’m slowly but surely getting my way through all of that and Lily and I will be sailing quite regularly this summer.

“Lily’s meeting people that have lived on boats all their lives and it’s a real eye-opener for her. A lot of pressure is put on young people to have the house, the car and all the possessions. But overall, it’s just a lot of fun,” Edmund says.

“If there’s something I’ve realised it’s that you don’t need so much. I’ve become much more economical with everything, including how and what I eat. I previously had a lot of stuff, but you downsize. In a house, you can become rather wasteful just because you’ve got the space and the big fridge. I think I’ve become a lot less wasteful.”

Edmund and Lily have met other stay-aboards who have anchored for the winter to work and save money to set sail for nomadic life at sea when the weather is fair.



This year, Edmund Burke decided to sell his home to allow him to live aboard Cable Bay, where daughter Lily has been enjoying a different way of life.

“The ideal scenario is you work for six months and you go sailing for the other six months. Living on the boat can be really cheap as long as you don’t end up with major mechanical problems. I want to build up confidence sailing in the relatively safe waters of the gulf and in a few years’ time be able to go to the east coast of Australia, Tasmania, or New Zealand,” Edmund says.

The idea of living aboard a yacht was planted during a trip to Europe about 10 years ago. “While I was in Turkey, I saw a heap of boats all moored in the Mediterranean, they were Dutch, English, French and from all over.”

Speaking to their owners, he learnt that, just like Australians buy a caravan to go touring around the country, some people in Europe buy boats and go sailing around the Mediterranean.

“Living close to nature like this makes you appreciate things a little bit more. Once you do motor out of the marina and then turn to head into the ocean, you realise that you really could go anywhere you please.”

Permission to come aboard

The past two years have been smooth sailing for Ben Morgan, since retiring from the Air Force and moving permanently onto his 64-foot yacht with partner Natalie Feil and his son Edison. The stay-aboard lifestyle is a far cry from his former job as an Electronics Analyst on P3 Orion aircraft, but Ben says he wouldn’t trade anything for being able to set sail at the drop of a hat. The sound of water gently lapping at your doorstep is hard to beat.

“As soon as you walk down through the gates into the marina, you feel detached from the world in your own little bubble,” Ben says. “It’s just a pleasant way to live. I’m lucky in that my boat is relatively large and has the facilities on it that a house would, so we don’t miss out on anything.”

His yacht *Aquila* has five bedrooms, two bathrooms, an office and a large kitchen, lounge and dining space. *Aquila* is a ketch, which refers to its two-mast sailing rig. When underway, the family ensure tamaruke dog Ziggy is wearing his mini life jacket at all times.



Before the Air Force, Ben worked as an electrical engineer in the maritime industry, which exposed him to boating and the pleasures of life on the water. He's since picked up sailing relatively quickly and, although he would advise aspiring yachties that the romance of life on the water is different to reality, he says the reward is worth the effort.

"It is a fair amount of work. Boats require more maintenance than living in a normal house to keep them up to a functioning, acceptable standard. Playing around with the gadgetry is interesting at times, but when you've got to replumb a toilet, it's no fun at all."

Coronavirus put a halt on Ben and Natalie's big plans last year to get married and embark on a sailing trip around the coast of Australia. So far, the family has sailed mostly along the metro coast within Gulf St Vincent and over to Port Vincent, and are hoping to do a major trip in the next year.

Ben says Edison makes a great crew member and is keen to sail to Kangaroo Island. They tried once, but strong winds forced them to return home. "The finer aspects and finesse of sailing is a learning curve," Ben says.

"But if you get a weekend of nice weather and you need to change your scenery, you just go and anchor off the coast somewhere and it's like being on holiday."

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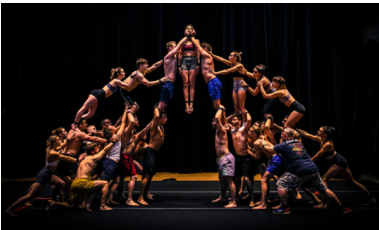
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Three minutes with acrobat Jascha Boyce (<https://salife.com.au/people-places/three-minutes-with-acrobat-jascha-boyce/>)

Acrobat Jascha Boyce, a co-founder and director of South Australian contemporary circus company Gravity & Other Myths, is performing in the Adelaide Festival's free outdoor opening night spectacular Macro, which is set to wow audiences in March.

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Some of Adelaide's most prolific party-goers reminisce about the nights they'll never forget – and the ones they wish they could. From camels, to cream pies, to Kylie, these

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He's chaired the Fringe, started a record label and is a legend of Adelaide's advertising industry. David Minear chats about the paths he's taken in life and what continues to drive

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