

SOUTHERN MYTH'S EXPERIENCES (Cont'd)

which when crossed with a D.F. bearing on Gabo Island and two other rather hairy bearings, did give us a useful "cocked hat" with sides of about 4 miles long.

Once again, I consider that, observing our earlier loss in position in the race, due to the calm period in the centre of the "low" (which completely circumnavigated Tasmania) the decision to play it safe in this gale with its very bad seas stirred up by the tidal sets out of Bass Strait, was a right one, which we all felt was justified when we learnt that about a quarter of the fleet did not reach Hobart.

NORMAN HOWARD,
February, 1971.

★ AVOCET AND OWNER IN NEW LOCATION

First, the Avo was absolutely magnificent, handling a mixed bag of seas in a very safe manner ... due I think to the extra 3 tons of ballast, and certainly helped in comfort by the smallish steady sails. From Adelaide to Robe was a mixed trip, very calm from the harbour to the Pages and then, overnight becoming windy and roughish from the SW. Sheltered in Robe for a day to let the worst through, then on to Port Fairey in reasonable comfort. Cold, of course, and a bit wet ... round the corner to P.F. was masty as the sea was on the quarter and the sails could not stop a fair roll. Rested a day, then intended to go straight across the bottom to Eden ... but after we were near Apollo Bay, at 8 at night the bottom had dropped out of the glass, there was a strong wind warning and the tops were being blown off the waves (coming from astern, not very

AVOCET AND OWNER IN NEW LOCATION (Cont'd)

uncomfortable). Discretion the better part etc; so a night entrance into Apollo Bay boat haven ... rather tricky ... and stuck there for 4 days while it blew like blazes. The local fishermen were getting quite disconsolate as they had not been able to get out into Bass Strait for the better part on a month.

The forecast improved (and we were glad it did as Apollo Bay, wet and windy, is not an aesthetic paradise) so we left at 5 in an uncloudy evening and rode some large, but long swells across the Strait to the Prom ... the wind dropped right out and for the next week it was just about dead calm, and sunny with a slow moving high sitting right over us and moving with us. No good for sailors, but marvellous for motorboaters.

Passed the Prom on a sunny day, no wind and dead calm! And what a scenic spot it is ... I had only ever passed by at night or in diabolic weather on convoy duty and in fact had never seen it before ... stunning scenery. Lots of penguins and seals ... the seals lie on their backs on the surface sunning themselves ... we could not work out what the first one was when it appeared up ahead but we got used to them ... disdained to interrupt their sunbake unless we came fairly close.

Fine to Sydney and one of the crew (we were three in all) left us to fly back home so we went 2 handed to Brisbane. 3 hours on and 3 off gets a bit tedious and getting sail off in our own private rainstorm off Newcastle (7 inches in 24 hours I heard on the news!) was no joke. Sheltered behind Crowdy Head where I left a tiny footprint in the sandbar on leaving, but only a slight touch.

Reached Brisbane in good heart and John Menz joined us for the leg to Noumea and here. Had the most calm and beautiful weather while we were getting some work done at

AVOCET AND OWNER IN NEW LOCATION (Cont'd)

a shipyard in the Brisbane River and when we left it changed a bit and we had a day and a half of fairly rough going, but with a very favourable longrange forecast before we left. It came good and in fact became so calm that it almost was a bore. Must sunbathing, with the temperature in the mild seventies, and only a long ocean swell from astern to tell us we were not in the Port River.

Four and a half days found New Caledonia right where I expected it and the only worry a night entrance through the reef and up, to Noumea. This gave me a fright as the white light (18 miles) has, on the chart, leads shown under it (fixed red) and when I raised the reds there were two of them, one above the other, but not in line with the main white. Steamed on, thinking the leads were on, but as we got closer could see rollers between me and the light! Full astern and think again ... tried lining the two reds under the white and all clear ... when we got close enough it would seem that the two reds are a precaution if one should go out ... always in line from any angle ... what a bastard of an idea ... and the chart not clear about lining the red with the white. Otherwise, the Noumea lagoon is lit up with lights like Rundle Street, no trouble at night once you know what's what.

Noumea is a filthy place, they have a nickel smelting works pumping out dusty smoke at a great rate, covers everything with a haze if the wind is wrong. Stayed there for a couple of days and then decided to have a look at the Isle of Pines on the way to the New Hebs. Not really worth the visit, quite diabolically surrounded with reefs for 20 odd miles to get to the Bay of Kuto where the very modern hotel sits on the edge of a coral sand bay, and bundles of rain. We were glad to get out of it.

The forecasts between New Caledonia and the New Hebs. were

bad, winds of 25-30 knots and seas "passionelle" so back to Noumea to sit it out. John Menz's time ran out so we came on eventually 2 handed.

Between Noumea and the reef entrance to get to the New Hebs. you have to pass through a Strait between New Caledonia and an offshore island called the Canal Woodin ... must be one of the most beautiful straits in the world ... and very good for fishing, caught about fifteen bonito going up to 15-20 lbs. Also out in the reef passages some tuna (white fin), marvellous eating. Very good weather for motorboating as far as the Loyalty Islands which we passed through at night, a bit tricky, but from there on to here was the worst sea of the trip. Not big, but very lumpy ... the S E swell which is always there was overlaid with an E swell (it had been blowing 20 - 30 knots for a week) and as we came through it got round to the S W! Real pyramid lumps, about 30 feet apart, not much wind but raining off and on like hell. The nearer we got to Vila the more it rained, and as we had run nearly 28 hours without land, or a sight, I was starting to worry ... Pango Point suddenly loomed up dead ahead ... another victory for a lucky mug ... all the landfalls were dead ahead on the trip ... better lucky than rich.

So into Port Vila with redrimmed eyes and three hearty cheers and wet the Avo's head with a cold can of lemonade ... and then 15 hours of bunk time. 410 engine hours from the Port to here, 600 gallons of fuel, \$126 the lot ... the Gardener is a really good donk.

GARDNER
Cheers, come up and see me!

★ COLIN STURM.

[Colin would be interested to hear from any member who could find the time to write. His address is -
P.O. Box 166, Port Vila, New Hebrides.]