

MY BOAT: AZURE SKYE

We can but dream about the type of boat we would like to have or be able to go to sea in! And attempting to achieve the dream is an adventure in itself. As Frank Seeley says in this article, 'One Metre Fever' is one thing, but more importantly, in the framework of the Squadron's motto, it is ultimately the capacity to achieve seamanship and fellowship that will prevail. Frank and Kathy Seeley are now reaping the fruits of their labour and enjoying a craft that is bringing pleasure and adventure to themselves and many others.



Azure Skye at RSAYS.

The Boat

Type of Craft;	Fast Cabin Cruiser		
Vessel;	<i>AZURE SKYE;</i>	Callsign;	CT210S
Designer/Builder;	Azimut Spa, Torino, Italy	Make;	Azimut 70', Sea Jet
LOA; 21.3m	Beam; 5.48m	Draft;	1.92m
Max Wt; 54T	Max Speed; 29Kts	Cruising Speed;	20Kts
Fuel; 5200lts	Water; 1500lts		
Passengers; 7 in 3 cabins	Crew; 2 in 1 cabin		

Power and Ancillary Features;

2 x 1150HP MTU 12V183TE93 Engines with ZF V-Drive Gearbox;
 2 x 17.5kW Kohler Gensets; 220VAC 24VDC
 Raymarine Instruments with 2 x MFD's (Fly Deck and main Helm);
 Trim Tabs; Stabilizers; Bow and Stern thrusters;
 Water Maker; 4 x Vacflush toilets; Black and Grey water Holding Tanks;
 Air conditioning and Heating all cabins and closed areas;
 RFD 10 Person Life Raft; RIB Tender + 20HP;
 Fly Deck; Jet Ski, aft garage; 300kg crane;
 Fridge/freezer and Ice maker; MMSI, Raymarine AIS 660 Class B

As Frank Sees It:

Kathy and I have always loved the sea. Her grandfather was a Swedish sea-captain and she claims to have salt water in her veins. My family moved from Melbourne to Largs Bay when I was eleven years of age. Our house was on the Esplanade and I spent many hours on the beach. At the age of ten, I was in a small sailing dinghy that capsized out in the gulf, and was saved from drowning by personnel from the Largs Bay Sailing Club. That is a story for another day, but my experience did not dampen my enthusiasm for the sea.

We bought our first live-aboard power boat at Sanctuary Cove, Queensland, in 1990. She was a 42' Lyscrest, with twin Volvo engines and two cabins. Her name was *Blue Skye* and we kept her at Hamilton Island. We had ten wonderful years of boating in the Whitsunday Islands.

Then two things happened at about the same time. Kathy contracted that dreaded disease known as



Every girls dream; spa bath.



The main saloon.

'One Metre Fever', where the sufferer craves a boat that is one metre longer -- well I say it was Kathy. And I needed two hip replacements. As it turned out I also had to have three surgeries on my back.

We didn't know how I would recover after surgery, so we did the boat up, got her looking as good as new again, and sadly decided that she had to be sold, always with the proviso that if we were still able to manage a boat in a few years' time we would buy another.

It was about two years before we felt confident to start looking for another boat. By then we had a 'wish list' between boats. I wanted head room in the engine room, Kathy wanted all the day living area to be on one level, and we wanted more cabins, three or possibly even four. We pored over boating magazines, attended boat shows, and inspected boats all over Australia. We even went to the Philippines to look at a boat, but did not manage to find the right one. We were "between boats" for several years.

Then in 2010 I had to visit China on business. I got through it with a day to spare, so took the opportunity to spend the day in Hong Kong looking at boats. I told the agent what I wanted and he showed me a huge portfolio of boats he had for sale. There were about half a dozen in the size range I had asked for, but they were all pretty lack-



Secured as deck cargo, Hong Kong

lustre, and he could sense that I wasn't really interested in any of them. So he offered me something bigger. It turned out to be 70', which was a lot bigger than we had been considering. However, it ticked all the boxes, and the photos looked good, so I asked for an inspection. I have to admit it was love at first sight. She was gorgeous! I had some reservations about the size, but was confident that we would be able to handle it, and also that Kathy would make the transition to the bigger size, without too much persuasion on my part. After all, the owner's cabin had an en suite bathroom with a spa bath and marble floor. What more could a girl require? The big problem was the asking price, which was well beyond our budget.

The agent followed up with emails and phone calls after my return to Australia. In the course of our conversations I discovered that the owner had already ordered a bigger boat from Italy, and urgently needed to get this boat out of his marina berth to make room for the new one. As I was the only prospective purchaser I was able to negotiate a much better

price, and a few weeks later the deal was done. But she was to come to us without a name, because the former owner wanted to keep the name for his new boat.

Kathy and I went to Hong Kong and were on board when the Marine Surveyor did his inspection. He gave it a glowing report, apart from a few small repairs that were completed before the sale was finalised, in August, 2010.

Then began the fun of arranging to get her to Australia. We ruled out bringing her under her own steam, because the cost of fuel was prohibitive, and also because of the risk of pirates. The only alternative was to have her shipped as deck cargo.

The first quote we got seemed very high. It took time to look for alternative quotes, which were no better anyway. So by October we decided to accept our first quote and get things moving, only to be told that the new price was now almost double, because it was getting close to Christmas, and prices always go up then due to the demand for freight at that time of the year.

This was ridiculous. We decided to leave her in Hong Kong until after Christmas when the price would come down again. The agent found a swing mooring for us in the Aberdeen Harbour cyclone shelter area. There were hundreds of boats on fore-and-aft moorings, lined up next to each other with only a fender space between them. We were second-to-last on Row 4.

In January, 2011, we took some friends from Melbourne with us and lived aboard for a week. What a delightful adventure. Transport to and from the shore was by sampan. The agent showed us how to do it and explained what the going rate was for the trip. There was a recognised pick-up point at the water's edge, with access by a narrow lane between the local small businesses. It seemed to us foreigners that as soon as there were a few people waiting a sampan would appear. We just said to the driver, "Row 4", while holding up 4 fingers and gesturing vaguely in the direction of the boat. They always understood exactly where we wanted



Kathy and Frank on Naming Day

to go. If we wanted to go ashore we just had to stand on the back deck and look out expectantly, and within a few minutes a sampan would appear. We could say "Jumbo" and they took us to the Jumbo Floating Restaurant for dinner. Even at 11pm, we just waited on the outside deck of the Jumbo and soon a sampan appeared to return us to the boat.

Finally, after months of delay, we discovered that all the ships that were big enough to load and unload our boat were going only to ports on the east coast, not to Adelaide. So we had her shipped to Melbourne.

There we discovered the inevitable – things that just had to be fixed before she could safely undertake the voyage to Adelaide. More delay. But we did find an excellent instructor who came aboard and spent time helping me to get my head around the very different handling of a bigger boat. Time well spent, and a great confidence booster. The change from 42' to 70' and 15 tons to 54 tons was enormous.

We engaged a transit skipper to bring her to Adelaide, where she finally arrived in December, 2011. We took a temporary berth at RSAYS while we had annual maintenance done on her (scraping the bottom and antifouling etc. etc.), then were able to purchase a berth for her permanent home.

Now it was time to give her a name. We thought we would like some sort of continuity with our previous boat. *Blue Skye II* was briefly considered and discarded. We wanted something more distinctive. So we thought of all the other words that were available to describe the colour blue. We tried *Cobalt Skye*, and *Indigo Skye*, then *Azure Skye*. The word 'azure' simply means 'sky blue'. And it had the advantage of starting with the letter 'A', which would put us at the top of the radio skeds. Decision made, and a great opportunity for a party on board to celebrate with friends. We had a naming ceremony in September, 2012, just a week before the annual Open Boat Day, when we introduced the boat formally to any club members who wanted to make an inspection.

Since then we have started to get to know the local waters. We became very familiar with all the anchorages in the Whitsundays, during the ten years we were there. Now we had to start from the beginning.

Our first overnight stay was at Brown's Beach at New Year. A fantastic experience, with much helpful advice from fellow club members, including information about the anchorage off Kingscote in the lee of the Beatrice Islets for shelter in a northerly wind. We enjoyed it so much that we went there again with some friends

in January. We have since acquired a berth at the marina at Wirrina, as a very convenient stopping-place on the way. Obviously we intend to do this trip again. Then to Port Vincent at Easter. Also a trip we have done again. And so we are gradually building up our store of local knowledge.

A friend who has sold his boat and retired from boating (but gladly came with us on one of our trips to Port Vincent), gave us his copy of a publication put out by the club some years ago, entitled 'Cruising in South Australian Waters', a series of addresses to members of the RSAYS by Vice Commodore C. P. Haselgrove. What a fascinating read! It has whetted our appetite to go further afield.

Geoff Boettcher, owner and skipper of *Secret Men's Business*, is off to England to compete in the Fastnet Race in August. He has offered to come with us to Port Lincoln next summer, to show us all the interesting places on the way and all the good anchorages around the Port Lincoln area.

We love this boat. It has plenty of room to entertain friends, and we love having friends on board. So if you are in the Marina and see us on board, please come and visit us. We will be glad to meet you, or to renew acquaintance if we have already met. And if you see us out on the water please call up on the radio and say "Hello". We enjoy the friendship and camaraderie we have discovered at the RSAYS. 

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