

A REPORT FROM THE ONE AND ALL

collapsed and that we were now a sailing ship in the true sense. The trade wind favoured us for a few more days and everybody enjoyed the sailing, but unbelievably we ran out of said trade wind, and Neil and our shipwright set to with wood blocks and much ingenuity and managed to hold the bearing in place so that we can now run the engine at slow speed for 5 knots, which is what we are still doing, in very light airs from right ahead.

We will have to make repairs in Seychelles and unfortunately this will cost us several of the valuable days we managed to gain.

Neil also sends his regards to all of his friends at the Squadron, and we all hope our current problems will soon be resolved. The object of course is to catch the "First Fleet" as soon as possible.

23rd MAY 87

Arrived in Mahe, Seychelles on Tuesday, 19th May, and at present are on the slipway repairing our shaft and bearing problems, and several other things as well.

The shipyard here has quite a few yachts blocked up in various stages of disintegration, having been a little too careless about navigating around coral.

My kindest regards to all.

PRESTON MANTHORPE

MELBOURNE TO OSAKA RACE

As reported in the last Newsletter, two SA yachts, both from the RSAYS, set out to take part in the gruelling, two-handed challenge, the Melbourne to Osaka Race which left Portsea on 21st March 87.

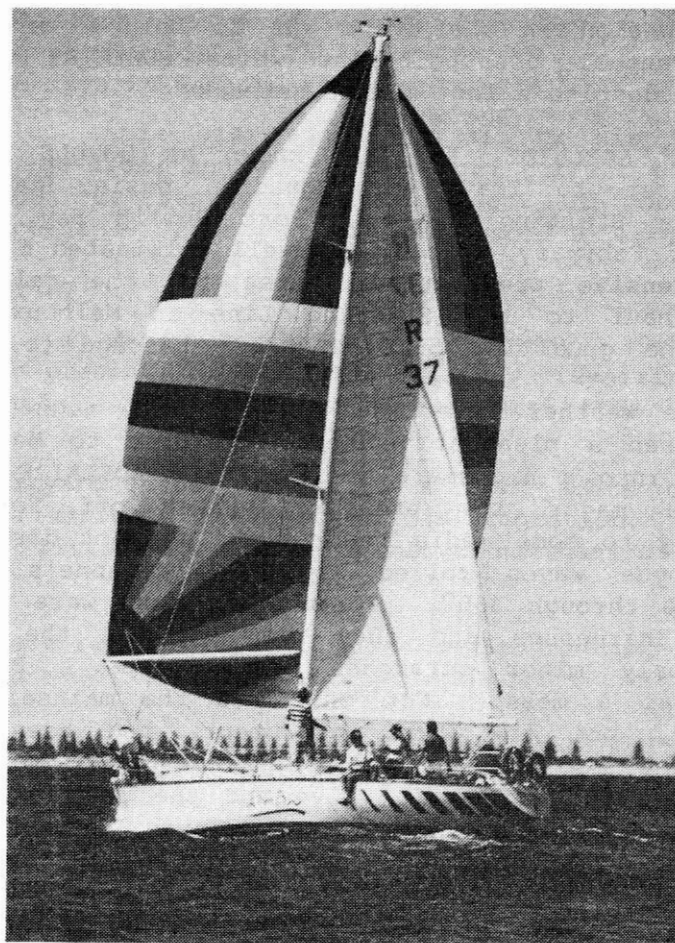
They were the Carter 37, BOHEMIAN owned by Tim Edkins aged 32 and crewed by Tim and his long time friend and sailing companion, Robbie Harrison, 33, and the S and S 39 CITY OF ADELAIDE sailed by Dr Michael Wilkinson and his wife Anne. For the latter, participation in the event was to hold major dramas and eventual disappointment while BOHEMIAN was to triumph despite a last minute setback.

CITY OF ADELAIDE, formerly known as DOUBLE G, was the first to leave the Squadron basin, departing for the Starting Line in Port Philip Bay on the 11th of February. Their farewell culminated 6 months of intensive preparation, first for the relatively short haul to the Starting Line in Melbourne and then the gruelling 5500 NM ocean passage to Japan.

But the weather intervened and what by rights could have been a pleasant shake-down cruise to Melbourne turned into a nightmare when CITY OF ADELAIDE sailed into a major low pressure system off Portland. Contrary to some media reports she was not dismasted, but rogue waves rolled Michael and Anne's S and S twice through 360°. Fortunately both were wearing safety harnesses and they came through the ordeal with only minor scratches and bruises. But the boat was a mess. Not only had the mainsail been damaged, but the wind instruments had been swept from the top of the mast and the 360° rolls had activated the life raft valve and the raft was swept away. Down below the situation was no better as I'm told a significant amount of sea water found its way on board during the double capsize. But despite sending out a MAYDAY call, Michael and Anne

MELBOURNE TO OSAKA RACE

managed to make their way without assistance into the safety of Portland Harbor. The massive task of cleaning up and repairing damaged fittings began and continued later on arrival in Port Melbourne. Despite the setback, the Wilkinson's made up their minds to continue with their plans and after completing the clean-up they finally crossed the Starting Line several days after the tail-enders in the 86 strong fleet.



BOHEMIAN OFF OUTER HARBOR
(Photograph by Judy Rishworth)

MELBOURNE TO OSAKA RACE

A few days later the reluctant decision was taken to withdraw after more harsh conditions were experienced and CITY OF ADELAIDE pulled into Eden, officially out of the race. Mike's account of the circumstances which led to their withdrawal follows this article.

And while the delivery trip to the Starting Line had gone comparatively easily for the second SA yacht in the race, BOHEMIAN, there were still dramas in store for Tim Edkins and Robbie Harrison, once again before the starting gun on 21st March. After competing in the pre-start fun race from Port Melbourne to Portsea, Edkins and Harrison noticed something which brought them down with a crash from the hype of preparing for the race.

Just hours before the start, in fact on the morning of the race itself, they discovered broken wires in a shroud and rather than take the chance, they motored back to Port Melbourne where the entire rigging was replaced. But they completed the task in extra quick time, sailed back to Portsea and finally faced the Starter, 28 hours late.

But while that might have been the end of the road for many as far as the competition-proper went, the two rallied to the occasion and pulled out all stops. At least they had confidence in the rig again and BOHEMIAN was pushed hard towards Tokyo.

Everytime I checked Race Headquarters to do an update story for the ABC, the Carter 37 had made more places and while it was evident that they couldn't overtake the eventual winner NAKIRI DAIO, a place didn't seem out of the question. In the end, the weather dictated the outcome and BOHEMIAN sailed across the Finishing Line to a rousing welcome from the Japanese after weeks at sea.

For their trouble they will collect \$10000, the amount of prize money offered every entry if they finished the event within a designated time limit. But I'm sure the achievement would be the icing on the cake. Congratulations.

PETER MUIRHEAD

CITY OF ADELAIDE'S OSAKA RACE WITHDRAWAL

As reported previously, CITY OF ADELAIDE's troubles started on her way to Melbourne to compete in the Osaka Race. After repairs, CITY OF ADELAIDE started the race, 6 days after the Official Start. Regretfully, shortly after the start she experienced further trouble which resulted in her withdrawal from the event.

The following is an extract from a letter from the Wilkinsons describing the circumstances which led to their withdrawal from the race:-

"We crossed the Start Line off Portsea Pier at about 1400 hours with virtually no wind and it was the ebb tide which took us through the Heads of Port Philip Bay. The next 36 hours were uneventful. Then just before midnight on Saturday the wind rose from NW 15 knots to 40 knots in about an hour. We had an uncomfortable night as the seas rose and the wind increased to 50 and then 60 knots. We hand steered for a little while under a staysail and 4th reef before we became tired and took all sail down. Under bare poles the following day we were still doing 6-7 knots with the wind remaining at 60-70 knots. I later confirmed all this with the skipper of an ocean going tug whom I talked to on the VHF at the time, and later met in Eden. He had 25 years experience in the area and said it was the worst storm he had been in and was having hassles himself. He said the wind averaged over 60 knots for a 12 hour period on the Sunday.

It was during this period we were knocked flat even though we were towing warps. The boom caught in the sea and then broke near the goose neck. I think it had probably been damaged off Portland although we hadn't noticed a crack in it afterwards. Anyway, the weight of water in an improperly rolled mainsail on the boom was enough to break it as the boat righted itself.

CITY OF ADELAIDE'S OSAKA RACE WITHDRAWAL

The conditions persisted on Sunday night and we hove-to with a storm jib. We found this to be the most comfortable as we tried to rest below, making about 2 knots in a NE direction. By morning it had abated to about 50 knots and I was able to sheet the jib correctly and we set off for Eden. The wind went more southerly but didn't drop to 30 knots until late in the afternoon. We reached Eden at dusk and were guided in by the PAPUAN CHIEF, a tanker of about 20000 tonnes which had waited off Twofold Bay and used his radar to guide us in by radar and VHF. Apparently our radar reflector works very well!

We enjoyed marvellous hospitality in Eden from the people who run the Coastal Patrol Service.

Well that was the end of the attempt to sail to Japan. A pity really after all the hard work and we were sorry to disappoint all our supporters. Once past Gabo Island it should have been easy. It was lucky the bulk of the fleet didn't get the bad weather in Bass Strait otherwise there would have been more lives lost. In retrospect I suppose we did make some mistakes but I think we did well to survive and I also think that many boats would have done 360° or been lost in the conditions we had off Portland, notwithstanding that we were probably too close inshore."

Michael later sailed the boat with an Eden crew to the RSYS in Sydney and then on to Gosford where he will be working.

Michael and Anne send their kind regards and thanks to all at the RSAYS, especially those who helped them prepare CITY OF ADELAIDE for the race.

JIM BOUCAUT