

being blown over the boat, made me wonder if we would do this at home. Emmes Reef and surrounding waters now look like a walk in the park. Next it was time again to thread the needle and, believe me, the Entrance to Caswell Sound looked bigger on the chart than it really was. Rocks to the right of me, a cliff to the left with a bit of jostling from a three-meter sea and bounce back. 'Are you sure the GPS is right? It seems to want to run us into the rocks!' No, I wouldn't want to come in here on a big day, but from the inside looking out it seems easy.

13 & 14 February, 2003

Head of Caswell Sound NZ

S 45° 02.51' E 167° 17.49'

We are stuck at Caswell Sound with gale warnings, but I wonder whether it's all a farce; or is this just one hell of a protected anchorage. The trees above don't move, there is hardly a ripple on the water, although the clouds at times scoot across the blue sky. We have had plenty of rain at night, but what are we hiding from? Maybe it's dead calm outside as well. I suppose we won't know, as we just hide in our little cove down below away from the sandflies. Occasionally we

venture on deck after a good spray of Rid and commence the sandfly dance brushing all exposed skin constantly whilst cursing the little critters. From a distance we must look very strange.

15 February, 2003

Alice Falls
George Sound, NZ

S 44° 58.60' E 167° 26.43'

We had some interesting fun last night plotting today's course from one chart to another. I found my way-point, which was very conservative on one chart and on land on the other. I got Ali to check it, with the same result. The most recent chart is labelled as provisional, and it's based on a survey by HMS *Archeron* in 1851. Although it was printed in 1991, it was engraved in 1881. There is a note, 'Mariners without local knowledge should proceed with due caution.' If I had local knowledge, I probably wouldn't need the chart. Another note: 'Coastline reported to lie 1 mile further NE.'

To be continued. At the time of going to press, news had just been received that *Legs Eleven* had safely arrived in Tonga.



After alighting from Brian and Margaret Dawson's *Tamanui*, John Moffatt escorts his daughter Cathy to her wedding to Sharon Wells on the *Quarterdeck*, 3 May 2003.

In Tranquil Waters

Life Member Dr Geoffrey Webb Verco
(1913–2003)



Geoffrey Webb Verco was a son of a general practitioner surgeon, Dr Reginald John Verco, and thus was a member of a well known Adelaide clan, many of whom were doctors. He was born in 1913 and died on 20 January 2003. He graduated in medicine from Adelaide University in 1937; and was in England at the outbreak of the Second World War studying for a surgical Fellowship. Members of the Reserve of the Australian Army Medical Corps were required to return to Australia at their own expense to enlist, with the threat of otherwise being arrested for desertion. Geoff returned on a Blue Funnel ship with his friend and contemporary, D'Arcy Sutherland, who had sailed with him at the Squadron. He became Adelaide's premier cardiac surgeon. They tossed a coin to see who would be ship's surgeon and thus have a free passage. D'Arcy won. The voyage took them to Cape Town and then far south, within sight of Kerguelen Island, where it was foggy and bitterly cold.

After the war, Geoff became a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1950 and went on to practice as a urologist.

His nautical career was fostered, like many of his contemporaries, by Major MOH ('Micka') Forbes, who was in charge of scouting at St Peter's College. By the time Geoff was thirteen, he already had his first boat, a cadet dinghy called *Mermaid*, which he raced from the Squadron. Dr Stan Verco (his father's cousin) found it in a bathing shed at Grange. [Stan Verco was a prominent radiologist, who had two vessels named *Solace* and sailed from the Squadron for many years.] This was before the development of the small fleet of cadets provided by the generosity of Professor Mark Mitchell. Geoff remembered Mr Fisher's *Reverie*. Another vessel was *Eva May*, which was kept at the Port. Geoff acquired an eighteen-footer named *Culwulla*, with a very thin mast, of which Geoff broke the top twice. It was originally built by Claussen for Bill Birnie, when it would have been one of the dozen or more of his yachts always called *Wyla*. Its fate is not known, and, like many yachts of the time, it may have been converted to become a fishing cutter. When his father bought *Carina* for him, Geoff disposed of *Culwulla* by raffling it. He never saw it again.

In about 1930 or 1931 Geoff left school, and drove with his friend Rex Lee on holiday to Sydney. Rex's father was the captain of the *Moonita* or *Minnipa*, which traded for years in the Gulfs. They stayed at Neutral Bay and on Sandman's slip Geoff saw an almost new cedar twenty-one footer, *EOJ III*. She was built for a celebrated wealthy Sydney yachtsman named Milsom. He had taken her to Brisbane for a Forster Cup series, but she performed poorly in the light airs of that year. Geoff's father bought it for him for £199 and renamed her *Carina*. A man named Fechner from Largs Bay built a shed for Geoff in order to protect *Carina* when she was hauled out every weekend after racing. Old railway sleepers remained from the work done on the northern breakwater, and Geoff borrowed the *Pioneer*, the Saints sea scout boat, to transport some to the pool for the purpose.

When they came in from a race there was a lot of work to be done. The mast and ballast were removed, and a cradle was lowered from the big slip. The boat was hauled out, using the main

motor winch, and run on to a platform to one side of the slip, which Fechner built. For this they used a winch operated by hand, and D'Arcy Sutherland remarked when interviewed for another purpose that it was very heavy work. Mark Mitchell's twenty-one *Nerana* came later, and Mark had a much swankier shed built to house it.

At the time when Geoff obtained *Carina*, the annual interstate competition for the Forster Cup was a dominant interest in yachting, and had widespread and prominent press coverage. The best known boats were the series from Tasmania built and sailed by sundry members of the Batt family. They were all painted yellow, which led to them being called the butterboxes. Years later this name was applied to the Van Der Stadt plywood racing boats at the Squadron, mostly Black Soos. Its origin had by then been forgotten. The best of them was *Tassie Two*. Geoff also remembered *Corella*, the boat owned by Lord Forster and then Lord Stonehaven. She was the inspiration for the establishment of the Forster Cup and of the restricted twenty-one footers that raced for it.

[For a detailed account of the Forster Cup, see *Squadron Quarterly* March 1995: 15–25.]

In 1933 the series came to Adelaide, when Geoff Verco narrowly missed winning the Forster Cup. The Saturday race was almost a flat calm and was won by *Tassie*. On Monday a good souwester came in, and *Carina* was only just beaten into second place by *Milsonia*. Tuesday's race was again a heavy day, and *Carina* won easily from *Milsonia*. There were high hopes of winning the Forster Cup, but in the deciding race Len Wigan struck a buoy in *Nerana*. In a fine display of sportsmanship he at once withdrew, as the rules then required, even though only he and his crew knew of it. The result put Geoff second overall, with the consolation that he easily won the less prestigious Albert Cup, sailed in fresh conditions. The Squadron paid the costs of transporting *Carina* interstate by sea for the 1934 Forster Cup, dominated by the Batts. The crew paid their own way.

Because of his postgraduate training, Geoff was away from Adelaide for both the pre-and post-war Forster Cup races sailed in Adelaide. During the war, his family sold *Carina* without consulting

him, but he couldn't keep away from yachting.

Geoff had been in touch with an English yachtsman, well known in his day, who wanted to foster the St George class throughout the Empire. The Dragon was a German design used in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. There was a somewhat naive belief that St George would overcome the Dragon, which it didn't. Geoff obtained the plans, and Claussen built *Vanessa* in teak. This proved to be a disastrous mistake, for she was too heavy and never performed up to her expectations. He should have used spruce or mahogany.

Geoffrey Verco had the unusual distinction of first becoming involved in the governance of the Squadron as Commodore, not having served on any committees or having held junior flag rank. He did not seek the office. Like greatness coming to Malvolio, it was thrust upon him. There was much dissatisfaction amongst many Senior Members at the conduct of racing. The Rear Commodore was Tom Hardy, who declined to be advanced to Commodore, as did the Vice Commodore (whose name slipped Geoff's memory at the time of the interview).

At Port Vincent over Easter, 1960 a group prevailed on Geoff to stand for election, saying that the Club was in a hell of a mess. He was persuaded, and at once found it a formidable responsibility. One of his first acts was to tell the Secretary that he must depart. There were no industrial or legal problems with summary dismissal in those days! Some of the Monthly Meetings were very stormy, with a clique of critics generous with criticism and rare with praise. They were known as the Imperialists from their practice of dining together at the Imperial Hotel before the meetings, which were held in the Squadron rooms in the basement of the T & G Building. Geoff Verco presided over the establishment of the loan scheme, but he couldn't remember who originally thought of the idea.

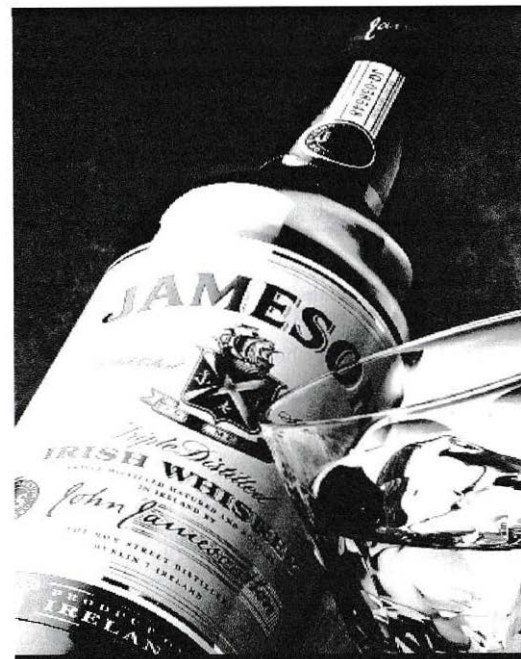
[Arthur Cocks said that it was David Judell, who was Chairman of the Sailing Committee about that time. According to Arthur, Harold Dicker would have been a powerful influence. The Loan Scheme rescued the Squadron from dire financial problems, but it was allowed to lapse, depriving us of this means of undertaking significant capital works. Its most



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tangible memorial is the stone wall on the eastern margin of the basin.]

As Commodore Geoff had to do a great deal of the work which should have been the Secretary's. It was at his urging that the Constitution was amended to limit the term for a Commodore to two years, creating the convention of progressive advancement in flag rank followed ever since. He spoke at length of the problems in an organisation of powerful individuals hanging on to office for

too long and which led to the difficulties he was called on to overcome.

After serving as Commodore from 1960 to 1963, Geoff Verco continued to race *Vanessa* until his crew began to drift away. Eventually he sold her to Sydney, and thereafter was not much involved with the Squadron, of which he was made a Life Member.

[Based on an interview of 24 November 1994.]

New Vessels on the Squadron Register

<i>Angela May II</i>	Mark Tomlinson	<i>Second Wind</i>	Robin Vandegraaff
<i>Arion</i>	Daniel Rantanen	<i>Seven Eighty</i>	Peter Cooling
<i>Balisong</i>	Robert Westlake	<i>Shady Lady</i>	Neil Perkins
<i>Cadenza</i>	Ray Mylius	<i>Solitaire</i>	Stephen Lewis
<i>Camelot</i>	Leslie Briscoe	<i>Sprindrift of Belair</i>	David Taylor
<i>Current Affair</i>	Jessica Lohmeyer	<i>Tarita</i>	Roger Vincent
<i>Delphinus</i>	Robert Birse	<i>The Bottom Line</i>	Peter Heysen
<i>Eclipse</i>	Trevor Rose		David Oliver
<i>Lorelei</i>	Scott Anderson	<i>Theme Song</i>	Geoff Bigwood
<i>Natima</i>	Trevor Manoel	(Unnamed)	Anthony Callus
<i>Pied a Mer</i>	Colin Daly	(Unnamed)	Robert Gilbert
<i>Primal Scream</i>	Tony Hooper	(Unnamed)	Richard Murray
<i>Quadrifoglio</i>	Phillip Stump	(Unnamed)	Tiss Simeoni
<i>Sanya</i>	Lindsay Dodd	(Unnamed)	Kimble Warren

RAPID IS FOR SALE

Built in 1989 of western red cedar and epoxy using the WEST system, *Rapid* is 48 ft long by 12ft 11 beam and 7ft 3 draft, and weighs about 12 tons.

She was designed by Hank Kaufman as a fast and comfortable cruiser, and is a bigger sister of the Northshore 46.

From 1991 to 1998 *Rapid* cruised Tasmania, Australian East coast, New Guinea, Trobriand Islands, Truk, Guam, Hong Kong, Philippines, Borneo, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Darwin, Kimberly, Australian West Coast, the Bight and back to Adelaide.

She was second in the Darwin-Ambon race in 1997. Since then she has done a few cruises in South Australian waters.

Her equipment includes GPS, HF radio with Weatherfax, VHF radios, autopilot, B&C log/sounder, large freezer/fridge, gas stove and an electric anchor windlass.

The sail wardrobe includes a fully battened mainsail, genoa, No 3 jib, No 4 jib, storm jib and spinnaker.

Rapid has proven herself to be a fast and comfortable cruising yacht, and would suit someone who wants to enjoy the cruising life or to live aboard. She has two large double and three single bunks.

Rapid is berthed at the Squadron, Marina F 10

For more information please contact John Clarke on 0427 61 91 51

Quarterdeck

We wished to congratulate Max Holbrook for being honoured with a Mitcham Council Australia Day Citizenship Award for his long service to scouting, dating from 1943, but, sad to say, Max died before this issue went to press. He was a lovely man, a true gentleman, and he will be very sadly missed — generous in spirit, hard-working, conscientious, who gave all of himself to a project, whether it was restoring the Correll trophy; arranging to bind old issues of Squadron Newsletters and *Squadron Quarterly*; or negotiating over the purchase by the Sea Scouts of Sea Haven.

★ ★ ★

A historical detail has emerged from working through the minutes of General Committee meetings. 9 January 1925: 'Resolved that a letter of thanks be forwarded to Mr AF Grieve for his gift of a mercurial barometer to the Club.' Presumably this is the instrument attached to the wall of the Dining Room. Mr Angus F Grieve was elected a Life Member on 8 November 1922, being the ninth to receive this rare distinction.

★ ★ ★

The remarkable saga of Herbert and Diane Stumer has ended with Diane's recent death from melanoma. With no previous significant yachting experience, they set out from Ottawa in a 42-foot steel cutter with their three sons, and after four years completed an adventurous circum-navigation. Their informative and animated website at <http://www.northernmagic.com/> is well worth a

visit, made poignant by the knowledge of what has subsequently happened to Diane.

★ ★ ★

Colin Doudy has sent us a note on Seahorses, from a letter to *The Advertiser* of 12 January 1953:

'I can confirm the statement by T. Stones (29/12/52) that a horse swam St Vincent Gulf from Ardrossan to Pt Parham. Two other horses swam the gulf from Pt Arthur to Bald Hill ... north of Pt Lorne at about the same time. About 28 years ago ... I saw two horses land at Torrens Island after having swum from Yorke Peninsula... E. Sawyers, Largs North'

★ ★ ★

We were pleased to hear from Pat Catley, who wrote recently,

For old friends at the Squadron who may wonder what's happened to the Catleys, we now have some news.

In July we will be moving from Darwin to the NSW central coast, near Gosford, where Bob will be Professor of Business at the University of Newcastle's Ourimbah campus. We are both very excited at the prospect of moving to such a lovely part of Australia, with a more sensible climate!

Darwin proved too hard for sailing with such huge tides, and it is very hot most of the year. When we move and are so close to Sydney, I don't think it will take long for Bob to become a skipper again.

Best wishes, Pat Catley

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