

Quarterdeck

Barry Allison (*Audacious II*) has sent us a copy of the yachting report in *The Mail* of December 10 1949, which has revived happy memories of a race in which we participated almost exactly half a century ago. This was the fourth heat of the State (heavy-weight) Sharpie Championship, sailed at Glenelg. The winner was *Swift*, sailed by Ross Radcliffe. Other names to catch the eye were *George Ross* (Peter O'Grady); *Heather II* (Harry Perry Jun, several times State champion and sometime Secretary of the Squadron); *Vandal II* (Norm Le Cornu); *Mercury II* (H Soulsby); *Waituna* (Bill Appleby); *Suzanne II* (Laurie Deacon); *Ecstasy* (David Judell, with your Editor as for'ard hand); *Radiant* (Bob Martin); *Rascal* (Alan — 'Chippie' — Barclay) and *Britannia* (Bryan Price). There are several more. It must have been a heavy day, for five yachts retired and an adjacent report referred to strong winds marring the cycle races. Heavy-weight sharpies were not self-righting, and there would have been one or at the most two escorting motor boats. If we capsized or swamped, we had to wait to drift ashore, which could be a tedious and cold process.

At the Squadron *Zane*, 'well sailed by skipper T Flint', won the first class A race from *Venture* (A Rumbal); followed by *Celeste* (a Tumlarén, sailed by sometime Commodore Alan Jordan, which gained fastest time); *Nereid* (the Derwent class sloop of Norman Howard, predecessor of *Southern Myth* and on which your Editor crewed for three years); *Stormalong* (A Tedmanson); *Ingrid* (H Badenoch); and *Sirocco* (Jack Williams: another Tumlarén).

Cadets at Brighton & Seacliff Yacht Club raced for the W Sage Trophy. This was won by Jim Hall in *Heather*, followed by Jim Hardy's *Nocroo* and *Hazard* (Pat Malone — Paddy's son). The other participants were *Neptune* (J Dixon) and *Truant* (Peter Sievwright).

Some of the names at Henley and Somerton were familiar to us, but probably not to most of our readers. Local yacht racing got much more detailed publicity then than now. Reports included times and handicaps, as well as listing most participants.

Barry wrote, 'Ross Radcliffe's sharpie *Swift* is currently in a chook shed at Broken Hill out in the weather with an Acme wringer and numerous other nondescript items stored aboard — sadly in a poor state. *Sea Rover* (one of the also-ran sharpies) is under my carport and is being restored. Of the RSAYS boats listed, I wonder how many are still afloat?'

Several years ago we saw an old heavy-weight sharpie at Venus Bay, fitted with a tiny inboard engine and said to have been used for fishing in the shallows. It lay out of doors and was falling into sad neglect. For those who know only the Australian adaptation called the light-weight sharpie, the heavy weights were themselves derived from one of the classes raced at Kiel in the 1936 Olympic Games, where the Dragon made its debut. They were gaff-rigged and raced with a crew of three or sometimes four in heavy weather. Trapezes were invented by Peter Scott in the 1930s for the International Fourteens, but did not enter Australian yachting until after the heavy-weights were steadily being replaced by the lighter self-righting Bermudan rigged light-weights. We merely leaned out as far as we could, hanging on to a sheet. In their turn, light-weights were supplanted by newer international classes like the Flying Dutchman and the 505, so no doubt many of them have suffered similar fates.

To Ian Birrell we owe the nice news that *Aorere* lives on to sail the Swan River. In a note accompanying a copy of an article in *Australian Yachting* for March 1999, Ian wrote, 'Harry Cook purchased *Aorere* approximately 40 years ago, and having been transported to South Australia by road, we stood the mast and launched her off the wharf in Port Adelaide per crane. Many of the newer Members would only remember Harry as owner of *Anyndah*.'

In 1995 Andrew Mason's eye was caught by an advertisement for 'Yacht 1898 Fife plank-on-edge cutter'. He found a complete wreck, which cost him \$6,000, and that was not much more

than the scrap value of the lead in the keel. He set about restoring her with authentic materials. 'There's no ply, no stainless steel, no fibreglass. It's caulked with cotton, pitch and white lead putty. We've done what would have been done 100 years ago.'

Aorere was built and probably designed in Melbourne to the Length/Sail Area Rule of the day, being similar to the style of the celebrated *William Bligh* (1818-1902: see a cutting of 22 February 1902). Harry Cook and his family used her assiduously, as later he did *Anyndah*. We recall how he took her to Port Lincoln, undaunted by her low freeboard, with no 'fence', and bravely towing a dinghy.

To revert from the past to the present, it's nice to see from a clipping of *The Otago Daily Times* supplied by Roma Thompson that Bob and Pat Catley's move to Dunedin has received good local publicity. Bob wasn't one to boast of his considerable academic attainments and qualifications. Originally from Wales, he has been an Australian citizen since 1967. He gained his higher education in London and Australia, and is also a graduate of universities in Singapore and Malaysia, but most of his academic life was spent in this country. He served as Member of the House of Representatives for Adelaide, and before he left us had convened the international studies

program at the University of Adelaide. He is now Professor of Political Studies at the University of Otago.

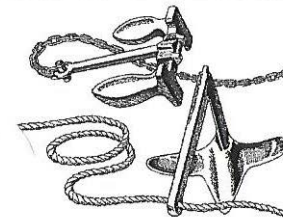
We hope to receive in due course an account of yachting in and from Dunedin. All that we have published from that part of the world has been Jo Capel's account of the family cruise in *Just Jane*, which appeared in our issue of December 1997: 27-30.

Cassandra was a daughter of Priam, King of Troy. It was her fate that her prophecies were always correct, but were not believed. Now a latter day Cassandra speaks from beyond the grave. Malcolm Kinnaird AO has sent us some notes made by the late Alan Payne, together with a copy of a newspaper article expressing his ideas.

Alan Payne could well speak with authority. He took part in nine Sydney-Hobart Races, including the first in 1945. As one of the premier international nautical architects of the day, he designed *Gretel*, our first challenger for the America's Cup. *Nocturne*, which he designed in 1949, was Australia's first light displacement offshore racer, with a short keel and a separate rudder. Malcolm wrote, 'Alan and I were friends for about thirty years, and I miss him greatly. He was a source of unending wisdom and inspiration. A cruise with him was a singular experience!'

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Alan Payne pointed out the potential danger of Bass Strait, where strong winds have up to 150 miles of fetch in shallow water. In 35 knots or more, over 14 hours there will be something like 470,000 waves. Of these, two will be at least forty feet high, and every yacht should see at least one of 33 feet. He cited records of two waves measured at 75 ft and 42 ft, and which were steep, with a slope of 30°. An individual will probably never see such a big wave. 'You would have to go 40 times to Hobart, and every trip would have to be in 35 knot winds for the right period and place. The odds against it would be 1,000:1.'

In the inaugural Sydney-Hobart Race they had three days of winds of 40-50 knots, but all boats survived. Most hove to or took shelter. Alan Payne was critical of modern designs, with big freeboard and light displacement. Their large ratios of reserve buoyancy are intended to ensure that the yacht floats over anything it might encounter. But many have poor pendular stability, and they could capsize, not like a slow spin broach, but very quickly. He believed it would be impossible for some modern yachts to remain on station in extreme conditions, as did vessels like the traditional Norwegian lifeboats.

He calculated that if 80 boats faced 35 knots for 24 hours, 'three will completely disappear, perhaps losing 22 people. There will be numerous capsizes and dismastings, with injuries and maybe six people lost overboard. Many crews will take to liferafts, but not all will

be saved. The loss of life could be as great as the Cyclone Tracey disaster.'

The undated newspaper article (written by Rob Mundle) quoted him as saying '... the yachts will fail structurally; they will be capsized; and their rigs will break. Then problem is that they aren't strong enough, or in the event of a capsize are so stable in the inverted position that they don't want to come upright. ... We can't do anything about it for this year's race, but what we can make sure is that we do have better rules for next year's event.'

We do not know when Alan Payne died, but it is tragic that more notice was not taken of this serious warning from a very wise and experienced man.

Bernie Matzat of *Camelot* has appealed on behalf of the Cruising Committee for help from a generous Member or Members. For some of the presentations given by guest speakers we need much more sophisticated projection facilities than we can at present afford. This particularly applies to the sort of elegant displays from computers which are increasingly used these days. Quite apart from the formidable cost, the field is developing so quickly that what is new this year is out of date the next and antediluvian within five years or less. Can anybody help with a loan or gift? If so, please contact Bernie or the Office.

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