

COCONUT'S PREPARATIONS

By Mark Sinclair



Coconut's strengthened Main Saloon

IT has been confirmed! Mark is no longer on the 'Waiting List' and is now officially a 'Provisional' entrant in the Golden Globe race! To prepare his old boat for the 2018 Golden Globe race is a significant undertaking. Although Coconut is a solid vessel and has sailed around the world, it is a gigantic task to prepare her for this challenge. Here is an update of his preparations over the last three months.

Down below there has been great activity. Removal of the veneer on the main bulkhead revealed that it had split vertically, the deck underneath the mast had sagged and delaminated and the top layers of the cement/aggregate floor under the softwood compression post had decomposed to dust. We started by cutting away the bulkhead on either side and stiffened the hull with layers of fibreglass mat and resin. The main bulkhead was then reinstated and reinforced, the aggregate in the floor of the heads was swept up and the remnants were jackhammered out of the void and replaced with a solid timber floor. The fibreglass deckhead was replaced and a new hardwood compression post was inserted. The entrance to the heads and forward cabin through the main bulkhead was moved to starboard to accommodate a new aluminium door in a frame to improve the watertight integrity. Three sets of hanging knees were built in the main saloon to strengthen the join between the coachhouse and deck; the large window in the main saloon was blocked off and replaced with two smaller windows. The forepeak bulkhead was cut back to remove an area of dry rot, a new bulkhead was prefabricated and strengthened to attach the inner forestay, and polystyrene foam blocks were inserted in the forepeak to provide additional flotation.



New doghouse

On the upper deck the lightly constructed doghouse was removed and a larger and more solid doghouse was built from Coosa board, due to its strength and lightness. New polycarbonate windows were installed in the doghouse and main saloon. The winches were relocated from the mast to under the doghouse and halyards and reefing lines led aft to clutches. A new mast step was manufactured with rows of sheaves to lead all lines aft and new enlarged chainplates manufactured and fitted. The mast was strengthened from a single to two spreader rig. The inner forestay chainplate was redesigned and strengthened and the bow fitting removed and refurbished. A new ocean-rated forward hatch was installed, which can be dogged down or opened from either side.

The mast was lowered and all fittings removed. Four metre long side sections from an old mast were cut out and riveted between the deck and the lower spreaders for added lateral strength. A new masthead fitting was manufactured and welded in, as were new spreaders and spreader attachments. New shroud attachments, outlets and sheaves for halyards and a new gooseneck were designed and built. A bracket was fitted to the front of the mast to mount an Echomax EM230 passive radar reflector and light to illuminate the foredeck. New tricolour, anchor and Windex illumination lights were fitted at the masthead and the mast was rewired. Sections of aluminium were purchased to build a new boom and two new spinnaker poles. New sails are also being constructed: a light and a heavy mainsail and storm trisail, yankee, No 1 genoa and No 2/3 headsail, No 4 staysail and storm jib; a new asymmetrical

kite is being made and a second-hand full spinnaker purchased. One of the existing mainsails will also be carried as a spare.

The existing fuel tank was removed from forward of the main bulkhead as it obstructed the new watertight door. A new fuel tank has been fabricated to fit at the bottom of the quarter berth. The injectors were refurbished, head gasket and exhaust gaskets replaced, a new cam and correct-size impeller fitted to the water pump, and engine instrumentation replaced. Old wiring was removed and Coconut is being rewired, including new batteries as well as internal and navigation lighting. Solar charging, HF and VHF transceivers and an Echomax Active XS dual band radar target enhancer are also being fitted.

As a retro race all navigation will be by traditional means. A Walker trailing log has been generously loaned by Garry Fielder from the Grab Hopper Dredge, Andrew Wilson, and I have received an offer of a spare sextant. A Radio Direction Finder (RDF) has been located and will be refurbished for the race. I am still in search of a winding chronometer, as no electric watches or clocks are able to be carried under the retro race rules.

There has been fantastic progress over the last three months and I am very appreciative of the team of people who have worked on Coconut so far. These include:

- Ken Banwell for the design and work on the mast, boom, spinnaker poles, mast step and design of the chainplates;
- Doug Gladman (Adelaide Yacht Rigging) for the standing rigging;
- Peter Bolton (Blue Sky Marine) and Tom Wilton for the structural work down below including bulkheads, hanging knees, upper deck work including the doghouse and forward hatch and refurbishment of the Farymann 22 hp diesel engine;
- Peter Sheridan (ElecMarine Innovations) for the electrics;
- John Moffatt (International Communications Systems) for the communications;
- Luke Burrow (Bravo Sails) and Danny Allen for the sail plan and sail making ;
- Howard Peachey (Registered Ship Surveyor) for design reviews and inspections of the work.



Additional flotation added to the forepeak

Earrame left the Squadron early in 2014 for Tasmania. After spending a year there, she travelled up the East coast to the Whitsundays and spent the summer in Scarborough, north of Brisbane. Having left Earrame in Scarborough, Moreton Bay, at the end of last year, Clive and Anne Arnold returned to the boat in the middle of the year. Anne tells us of their cruise so far this year.

CLIVE and I had a limited season on Earrame this year, sandwiched between family events that allowed less than three months away. As cruisers know, it's not good being on a schedule, and a son's wedding imposed a strict timeline! However, we had a good time despite the schedule and very disappointing weather. In fact, we spent a large proportion of our time holed up waiting for better weather. The winds weren't extreme, but we had persistent head winds, strong winds, large swells, and rainy, grey weather which does not do justice to the tropical scenery. We didn't get caught out in bad weather, but missed anchorages and islands we had hoped to visit. Several times, we filled the water tanks from the rain, which is a bonus but didn't seem like Queensland.

From Scarborough, we had a quick overnight sail to the Wide Bay Bar and into the Sandy Straits where we waited for the weather. Then, three day hops to Gladstone Harbour and through the Narrows, a short-cut waterway from Gladstone Harbour to Keppel Bay that dries, in parts, to two metres at low tide. That is, two metres out of the water, not two metres deep! It is unnerving to see the plotter screen all green, indicating land not water, and interesting to cross the world-famous cattle-crossing where cattle were walked between the mainland and Curtis Island. En route to Mackay, we anchored at two islands we haven't previously been to, Hexham and Curlew. Both were very pretty, rocky islands with sandy beaches. I've renamed Hexham Wind-Funnel Bay. It was an uneasy, narrow, deep, steep-to anchorage with very strong bullets of wind from every direction that put us sideways to the considerable swell. We left early the next morning! Curlew was a contrast the following night: no swell, gentle breeze,



Earrame dressed for the Shag Islet Rendezvous

EARRAME'S EAST COAST EXPEDITION

By Anne Arnold



Clive and Anne Arnold

peaceful, pretty, lots of room, and easy to get into despite shoals and sand bars.

From Mackay, we sailed to Brampton Island, a very pretty island with a defunct resort. In fact, there are many failed resorts in the Whitsundays and few that appear successful. Then to Shaw Island, where we had a marvellous whale experience while anchored, as a pod of whales swam into the bay, turned and came straight for us. They were almost within reach, and the boat was shunted sideways by the tremendous amount of water they displaced before they moved off. Lovely to see, but impossible to capture on camera!

Weather delayed us in the Whitsundays at Cid Harbour; a huge anchorage, sometimes with over 70 boats sheltering there. At night, the anchorage resembled a small town with the riding lights – high, low, bright, dull, fixed, flashing. Many power boats have coloured lights at the waterline for added spectacle and one yacht had pink lights up the mast.

Two interesting things happened at Cid: an earthquake, and a sea-plane visit. The earthquake was very close and very strong (stronger than the Newcastle earthquake for example). We were below when we heard a loud grumbling noise that lasted maybe half a minute, with the boat trembling and shaking. We thought we'd dragged onto rocks (impossible!) or a whale was caught in the anchor chain (improbable) so we both shot up on deck, along with absolutely everyone else on every boat! It was surprising it was so loud and made the boat move so much. There was no tsunami effect (yes, we were watching out) but, strangely, boats have dragged anchor there recently in what had been very good holding. A coincidence or some underwater disturbance? Who knows! Another interesting thing at Cid was a seaplane taking people off a charter yacht for a joy

ride one rainy day. The crew waited in their dinghy, on an extremely long painter, as the plane taxied in close and they were absolutely soaked by a huge downpour as they clambered into the plane. To top it off, they would have seen virtually nothing in the rain and low cloud.

Our turnaround point was the Shag Islet Cruising Yacht Club Annual Rendezvous held, unsurprisingly, at Shag Islet, a small pile of rocks and sand (smaller at high tide!) in Gloucester Passage, just north of the Whitsundays. The rendezvous is all about having fun and raising money for prostate cancer research. Approximately 200 boats participated and raised over \$100,000. The 2016 theme was 'Parrotheads', which would be well understood by Jimmy Buffett fans. As well as lunch on the islet (wary of the tide!), functions at the resorts, and socialising, the iconic activity is for dinghies to raft together in the shape of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia logo. It was incredible – lots of dinghies, people, and music from the Abell Point Marina super yacht. If you get the chance to go, do so! If not, check it out at <http://creektocoast.com.au/shag-islet-cruising-yacht-club/>

Heading south was difficult as it was too early in the season, so weather windows were short. Our best sail of the entire trip was a long day to the northern end of the Narrows, a three-quarter reach in 20-25 knots of wind, with flat water. This reminded us of Lake Alexandrina: the water was brown (caused by the outflow of the Fitzroy River) and shallow (4 metres over shoals) and the wave action was similar to the Lake. We transited the Narrows into Gladstone and holed up in the marina during more bad weather. Then, back to the Sandy Straits and Tin Can Bay to wait out the next weather system before going over the Wide Bay Bar and down to Scarborough to leave the boat for the time being.

