

17-foot runabout with the essentials, and with the outboard motor wailing blasts of to one of his secret fishing hotspots.

One day our hero chose a location near the Orontes beacon. To relieve the boredom of just bobbing around, the esky lid was periodically opened and closed. All lines were cast and a net full of burley hung lazily in the water, drifting on a line a few metres astern.

It was getting towards the end of the day and it was time to head in. No fish to speak of, but the multitude of empty cans rolling around the bottom of the boat bore testament to another successful expedition. There was a bit of commotion in a nearby boat, with some frantic activity and excited voices. The word 'Shark!' drifted across... Probably just a small bronze.

Suddenly the stern of the boat dipped. Tim looked back to see the outline of a *huge* shark tugging on the burley bag. Tim leaped to the bow with the speed and agility that sheer terror will bestow. At least this kept the boat balanced, although the stern was in danger of being pulled under water, swamping the boat. As the shark started to thrash, the anchor dislodged and the dinghy proceeded backwards at tremendous speed. From Tim's perch on the bow, the beast could now be clearly seen, with its fin and tail breaking the surface. You know it is a big one when it has a girth like a 44-gallon drum.

With another angry thrash of its head the burley line snapped and all was quiet. Wasting no time, Tim got the motor going and scrambled back to shore. Luckily, at the end of the day, the only damage was to the burley bag and Tim's undies.

SG

ENTRAPMENT BY POWER FAILURE

Entry to and exit from the Squadron premises require use of a swipe card or verbal contact with a member of staff to activate the electrically operated gates. In light of media reports highlighting the inevitability of power cuts in SA, it is timely to inform Members of the impact of a power cut at the Squadron which will affect the operation of the gates. During office hours, the gates will be opened manually by the staff, so Members need not be concerned about entering or leaving the grounds. After hours, however, the gates will be inoperable from outside the grounds unless Julian Murray is present and has opened the gate for the duration of the cut. Members inside the property will be able to leave once Julian is aware of the problem and opens a gate. Julian can be contacted on 8341 8600 or at the cottage adjacent to the Clubhouse.

The loss of MY Gelka

Jack Wood



Jack Wood wearing the distinctive Gelka cap, with the ship's insignia.

While there is a chance of saving the ship, be it big or little, it is the duty of sailor and pilot and every man in his station to work zealously to that end, but when once the sea has overwhelmed it, zeal is in vain.

Demosthenes BC385-322

Edited from *Seacraft* May 1957: 36.

On 26th January 1955, I was unfortunate enough to be an amateur skipper of a motor yacht which exploded, caught fire and sank in twenty fathoms of water, about six miles from the nearest point of land.

Professor ML Mitchell bought *Gelka* in England and had her shipped to Outer Harbor, where she arrived on 27 January 1927 as deck cargo aboard the Australian Commonwealth Line cargo ship *Ferndale*. She was built in 1910 by White Bros, Southampton, for the German Consul at Dover, and after impressment into the Royal Navy was sold as wartime booty. Built of wood, she was 55 ft long, with a beam of 10 ft 6 in and a draft of 4 ft 6 in. She was rigged as a ketch, but the sails were of limited value, usually only to try to reduce an unpleasant roll in a beam sea. Seafarers of Port Adelaide refitted her just before her end.

The engine room of *Gelka* housed an old 55 horsepower Parsons marine engine, which started on petrol and then ran on kerosene. The engine was in first-class condition, having recently been overhauled by a marine engineer of the same vintage, who deplored the 'screaming monstrosities' that powered boats of the present day. It had both magneto and battery ignition, with two sets of spark plugs. Fuel was stored in two 100-gallon tanks on either side of the engine. There was also a two-horsepower Lister lighting plant of 32 volts and its accompanying batteries, which was kept in a lead-lined box on the port side of the engine. A 12-volt generator ran off the engine for the starting batteries.

The engine room was amidships. It was originally waterproof and fireproof, as at each end there was a steel bulkhead. The only entrance was from on deck, through a hatch in the skylight and down a steel ladder. Unfortunately, however, an old paid hand who looked after the yacht in the early days and kept her in immaculate condition, was reputed to get a little tired of pumping her out from three positions. To remedy this he knocked lubber holes in the bulkheads, so he had to use only one pump.

There were two ventilators to the engine room, one on either side of the wheelhouse, which admitted air to the front of the engine. The amount entering depended on the velocity of the wind and the speed of the ship. [See cover]

Accommodation forward of the engine comprised first the skipper's cabin, with a passageway alongside it, then the forecabin, which was entered through a wooden bulkhead, then the head and chain locker. Access to the forward part of the ship was through the wheelhouse and down a hatch on the foredeck. Aft of the engine room bulkhead was a large saloon, a galley and an aft cabin with two bunks. Entrance to these was by a sliding hatch to the galley and a hatch aft to the main cabin.

Professor Mitchell had a holiday house on Strawbridge Point at American River. Each summer a group of amateurs, often drawn from his Department of Biochemistry at Adelaide University, took *Gelka* there as a base to go fishing in the area.

ONLY 6 SALES TO GO FOR PROJECT TO COMMENCE!

Marina Stage III Expression of Interest

The Management Committee seeks expressions of interest from Members for the purchase of marina licenses. The anticipated site for the new berths would replace chain mooring rows B & C and they are likely to extend from the north bank and as far south as necessary. For stage 3 to be cost effective, the number of berths needed is 15. Expressions of interest are to be sent to the General Manager indicating the type and size of vessel to be moored and whether you prefer a single or double berth. A 25% deposit is required for confirmation of interest.

Grelka left American River on 25 January 1955, bound eastwards for Antechamber Bay, with the intention to go from there to the Pages, if weather permitted. Before leaving American River, my guardian angel prompted me to leave behind the small dinghy usually carried by *Grelka* on her davits, and to take instead a larger 11ft 6 in dinghy, which also fitted on the davits. The other lifesaving gear consisted of two lifebuoys and two lifejackets.

There were three other crew members. We were to meet the owner at Antechamber Bay, where he was to establish a shore camp and join us. We arrived there early in the afternoon, and after taking the owner and three of his guests aboard, we cruised about the Bay and fished for the pot. The owner and his guests then went ashore to camp for the night, and it was arranged to pick them up early in the morning and then to proceed to the Pages to try our hands at fishing for sharks. Towards evening, HMAS *Barcoo*, a survey frigate, entered Antechamber Bay and also anchored there.

Early next morning (26 January) we picked up the shore guests, but the owner decided to go ashore and fish for bream in Chapman River, a freshwater stream which enters the Bay. We had an uneventful run out to the Pages on a hot day of about 95° F. The wind was slight, although there was a long swell running on the sea, as it always does when out of the lee of Kangaroo Island. After anchoring for an hour or so near the Pages, we weighed to return, at about 1030.

A contented crew lounged on *Grelka's* deck as we cruised back. The engine was throbbing

reassuringly, the sun shone brightly, and the helmsman sang lustily at the wheel. Suddenly, **BANG!** — a terrific explosion flashed from the direction of the engine room. I ran forward, and looked down the hatch into a raging inferno. All hands raced to procure fire extinguishers, of which we carried three of foam type and one of pyrene. One of the former was in the engine room, and it would be suicidal to venture down there. All the others were played on the fire, but it had spread forward through the bilge. Flames were shooting from the fore-castle hatch. We could see that the main fuel tanks (which were nearly full) had not caught fire yet. They could blow up at any moment, so we lowered the dinghy. All hands except myself and Max Wall (the mate) clambered into the dinghy, which hung astern. Max and I tried to put buckets of water on the flames, but this only encouraged them. All hope of rescuing the yacht had ended. The extinguishers were empty, and the fuel tanks were set to explode.

HMAS *Barcoo* was only smoke on the horizon, after leaving Antechamber Bay that morning. We could expect no immediate help from her, even if she saw our smoke. There was nothing for it but to abandon the yacht. Max Wall and I climbed overboard and swam to the dinghy. It was by no means certain that it would hold seven people. It did! Once more we were afloat, and we decided to make for Cape St Albans, being the nearest point of land, and we could not gamble on the *Barcoo* coming to our rescue. The time was about 1115.

We started our outboard engine and headed for Cape St Albans. At this stage, another terrific explosion came from the burning yacht, accompanied by huge columns of black smoke.

Probably the main fuel tanks had just exploded, confirming that we left just in time.

We were approaching land when we saw *Barcoo* approach the burning *Grelka* and circle her. The Captain told me afterwards that he could see that the yacht was doomed, and the fact that the dinghy was launched was shown by the falls hanging loose from the davits.



One of the great white sharks caught by Governor Sir Willoughby Norrie from Dr AL Tostevin's Nyroca. (Jack Wood)

He then commenced a block search. We were about half a mile from shore when we saw *Barcoo* closing us quickly. At about 100 yards out she signalled us to turn round and head for the ship. We didn't do that for long, because we were in another sort of trouble. On our stern tagged an 18-foot shark. By this time the outboard had stopped for good and we had to row. Cape St Albans was a lot closer than the *Barcoo*, so it was to the Cape we headed, with the shark silently following. He kept nudging the dinghy transom with his head, then he went on either side of the dinghy and bumped the oars with his head. He then moved underneath the dinghy, presumably to upset it and started to bump the underside. At this stage we had to do something to distract him, so I dropped the

outboard engine over the stern, and luckily he followed it down. The oars were applied with great vigor for the last hundred yards, and we headed the dinghy into a crevice in the rocks on Cape St Albans, where we scrambled ashore.

HMAS *Barcoo* lowered a launch and picked us up. We were treated very handsomely by the officers and crew of the *Barcoo*, and we will always be grateful to them. We were landed by launch at Penneshaw, and the *Barcoo* went back to the burning yacht, arriving as she sank, [after a few shells were fired to make sure she wouldn't be a menace to shipping in a narrow passage. — added to the copy by hand in 1991.]

The reason for the explosion on *Grelka* will never be known. One theory is that a fuel pipe fatigued and fractured, causing a leak. Due to the hot weather and inadequate ventilation to the engine room, a spark from the brushes on the 12-volt generator could have ignited fuel vapour.

Jack added by hand (11 April 1991): There was a sequel, which could have embarrassed the RAN if it had become known. The launch taking the survivors to Penneshaw was commanded by a Lieutenant RN, on exchange to RAN. Some sailors from HMAS *Barcoo* had been left there to make observations of weather and tide. Their camp was deserted, untidy with dirty dishes and discarded cans, beds were unmade and 'looking like the proverbial brothel on Christmas morning.'

The RN Lieutenant was angry at the sight, and asked rhetorically, 'I wonder how well they've done their work?' He scooped up their observation books, and his face went very red. They had done their work only too well! They had entered into the logs the readings in advance for the next few days, until they were due to be picked up by *Barcoo*.

At this stage a small and worried rating ran into the camp from the beach, where he and his friends had been enjoying the company of the local belles. The furious Lieutenant ordered him to collect the others and to radio the ship for replacements. The offenders were sent aboard for punishment.

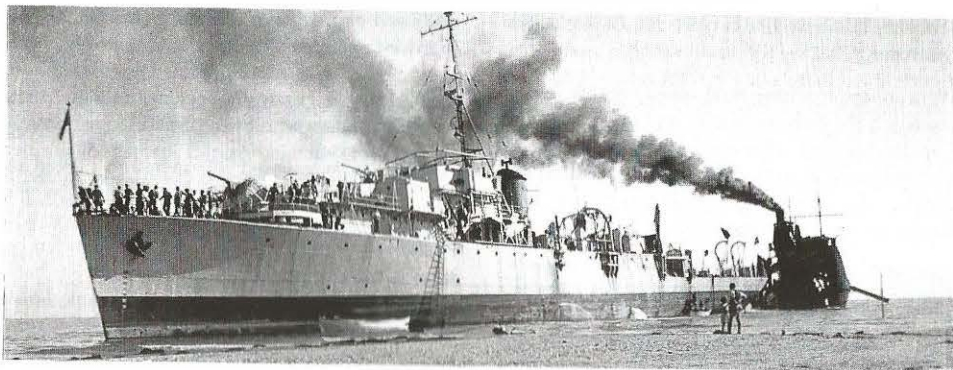
On 11 April 1991, Jack Wood wrote, 'I could not put this into print at the time for fear of embarrassing HMAS *Barcoo* and the Navy, nor could I mention that she shelled and sank the

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HMAS Barcoo aground at North Glenelg, April 1948 (Maurice V Carter)

floating hulk of MY *Grelka*, which served in two wars — in the RN in the Great War and in the RAN in the Second World War. Nearly forty years have passed, and I hope the RAN will forgive me.'

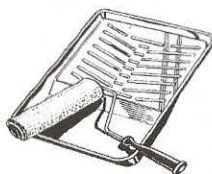
HMAS *Barcoo* became notorious when she grounded north of Glenelg on 11 April 1948, in the great storm in which the jetty and swimming baths were destroyed. Her captain was ashore at

the time, for which he was court-martialled. Decrepit wooden swimming boxes survived in the general area now occupied by the Adelaide Sailing Club. An old woman came out of one, waving a hurricane lantern and calling, 'You can't come any further! It's all land here!' The vessel was eventually refloated, amid great public interest and significant humiliation for the RAN. See the Quarterdeck column.

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Toolka-T's Wanderings

Don Morton

At long last our *Squadron Quarterly* Editor, Dr Peter Last, has charmed me into putting pen to paper. So, here we go!

Toolka-T originally left Adelaide in November 1985 to sail to Perth, to watch the *America's Cup* and to go on to circumnavigate Australia, returning home about twelve months later. This was my first real offshore trip as skipper of my own yacht. The original crew were Pep Manthorpre, the late Spen Chesterman, Tom Cudmore and Claudette Marson. After the *America's Cup* was over, *Toolka-T* cruised up the coast of WA, and visited most anchorages on the way to Darwin. We competed in the Darwin to Ambon race of 1987, cruised round Indonesia, and returned to Darwin.

Next we day-sailed from Darwin to Cairns, and 1988 found *Toolka-T* in Townsville. That led to us competing in the Coral Sea Classic and took us to New Guinea. I must add that *Toolka-T* was entered in all these races in the cruising-boozing division. The Coral Sea Classic was a race with four legs — Townsville-Cairns; Cairns-Port Moresby; Port Moresby-Samarai Island; Samarai-Townsville. You were allowed to drop one leg for the final result, and we chose the last. Consequently, *Toolka-T* took out First Prize in the Cruising Division. From Samarai we cruised New Guinea, New Britain, etc and returned to Cairns.

In 1989 we got down to Brisbane to compete in the Brisbane-Noumea Race, in which we came second in the Cruising Division. We had the pleasure of having Jim Howell on board for all these races, and for the Brisbane-Noumea we had as crew Martin Oats, and Dick Tiver, also Squadron Members.

From Noumea I picked up crew in order to sail to Fiji, Vanuatu and then down to New Zealand. This has been *Toolka-T*'s summer home since then. She has cruised out of New Zealand to somewhere in the South Pacific islands each year.

In 1994-95 we competed in the 50th Sydney-Hobart Race, with two NZ crew, who sailed from Auckland to Sydney. There we picked up Jim Howell, Chris Perry, Arthur Vandenbrock and Julie Butler. I don't think old *Toolka-T* got out of



her cruising mode during the race, with no sitting on the rail and cooking roast dinners on the way. However, we made it and came in the middle of the fleet in our division. It was a great experience.

The cruising season of 1999-2000 saw *Toolka-T* in the spectator fleet of the pre-Cup elimination series, followed by the final. This was the third *America's Cup* I have witnessed — Newport, Perth and then Auckland — but it was the first time I had seen an elimination series. *Toolka-T*'s home in NZ is Gulf Harbour Marina, just north of Auckland and five miles N of the Cup course, so we avoided the heavy traffic out of Auckland, where most of the local and overseas super-yachts were based.

There were two courses and two races in each course run at the same time, from November to January in quite strong winds and rough seas. We saw masts broken, sails, ripped, and the New York Yacht Club's yacht broke in half. The spectator fleet was three times bigger than in Newport or Perth, and the super-yachts were really something to behold. The *America's Cup* was won easily by New Zealand in very light airs, and it was time to think about getting out of NZ before the arrival of the cold weather.