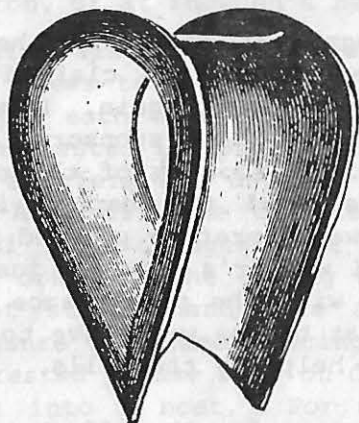


The finish of the race was the culmination of an 8 year campaign for Don who now has to come to grips with normal life again as he finalises the loose ends associated with his fantastic adventure. Once again on behalf of his fellow Squadron members, we congratulate him for his excellent result and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

DAVE HURFORD



The front cover of this edition of "SQ" features GRELKA, a 16.8 m (55') motor yacht built in 1910 by White Bros of Southampton, UK. She had a relatively narrow beam of 3.2 m (10½') and drew 1.4 m (4'6"). Although ketch rigged, a former skipper, Mr Jack Wood, considered GRELKA to be a failure as a sailer. However the sails did help the engine and they also helped to minimise the roll in beam seas which was most uncomfortable without them.

GRELKA was powered by a Parsons marine engine which was started on petrol and then run on kerosene. Fuel for the engine was stored in 2 450 litre (100 gallon) tanks on each side of the motor. A 32 volt Lister lighting plant with it's accompanying batteries was also installed to provide electricity for the vessel. The engine room was isolated from the rest of the boat by steel bulkheads and was accessed through a hatch in the skylight.

The accommodation forward of the engine room comprised, first the skipper's cabin with a passageway alongside it, then the forecabin which was entered through a wooden bulkhead, then the heads and chain locker. Aft of the engine room bulkhead was a large saloon, a galley and an aft cabin with 2 bunks. Access to the forward part of the ship was through the wheelhouse, and down a hatch on the foredeck. Entrance to the rear was via a sliding hatch to the galley and a hatch aft to the aft cabin.

She was built for a high ranking officer of the German Embassy in London, Baron Von Bissing. For 2 years running she won the annual motor boat race from Dover to Cwres. Following the declaration of war, the Baron was interned and the vessel was taken over by the Royal Navy. She was renamed HMS CHARLIE and served at Scarpa Flow. She was fitted with a cannon on her foredeck and probably served as a messenger boat between larger naval vessels.

* After WWI she was renamed MY FLORA and had a couple of owners before she was purchased in 1927 by the late Sir Mark Mitchell who was then a student at Cambridge University. A grandson of Sir Thomas Barr-Smith, he was subsequently appointed as Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Adelaide and later knighted. He used her around the English coast until he had her shipped to Australia as deck cargo on a large freighter. Sir Mark also served as Commodore of the RSAYS from 1938 to 1945.

Whilst at Cambridge, Sir Mark was president of an undergraduates club called the Grelka Club. The word "grelka" is Russian for "fireside" and Sir Mark renamed his boat after the club. GRELKA's emblem was a combination of the letters "R" and "E" of that word, and the emblem also appeared on jumpers, shirts and lapel badges worn by GRELKA's crew as well as the many lads who sailed on Sir Mark's cadet dinghies, sharpies and the restricted 21 ft class vessel NERANA. Bruce Tunbridge (OOD) still has a GRELKA lapel badge in his possession.

In the Axel Stenross Memorial Museum at Pt Lincoln there is a photo of GRELKA taken in 1930 whilst she was on the slip having her propellor shaft replaced. She was taken to Pt Lincoln by Professor Stanton Hicks who had also sailed on her in England during his student days at Cambridge with Sir Mark. After putting Sir Mark off at Henley Beach when he became ill, Professor Stanton although not an experienced seaman, continued on to Pt Lincoln. Also on board was a technician at the university and an engineer who had been brought out from the UK with the vessel as he came from the Parson Marine Engine works where GRELKA's motor had been manufactured. They arrived safely at Pt Lincoln having sailed outside the Althorpes for safety reasons but no doubt having experienced relatively severe conditions.

On arrival they anchored near the Town Jetty but were asked to move by the Harbour Master. They weighed anchor and the signal to move ahead was given to the engineer but no movement of the boat occurred. It was a glassy calm morning, and on investigation, they saw the propellor lying on the seabed. The propellor shaft had rusted through. They were very lucky that this mishap occurred in the harbour, and not during the voyage.

➤ During the Second World War, GRELKA was taken over by the RAN and shipped over to HMAS LEEUWIN in Fremantle WA. She served in the Naval Auxillary Patrol, RANR until the cessation of hostilities. Whilst under their control the RAN completely rewired her to naval standards, however before handing her back, she was accidentally rammed into a wharf with such force that her stem was split. Under the agreement with the navy she had to be returned in the same condition as she was when she was taken and they were dismayed to learn that her stem was teak. However they honoured the agreement, and teak was obtained to replace the damaged stem.

Mr Jack Wood who was a member of the medical staff at the University of Adelaide and a part time member of the NAP RANR during the war took over as GRELKA's skipper after WWII having also been a junior crew before the war. Each summer for 5 or 6 years she was taken from the Squadron down to American River where Sir Mark had a holiday house. Using American River as a base, GRELKA was cruised extensively along the north coast of KI. In 1955, near The Pages, the engine room caught fire and GRELKA was lost without loss of life. The full story of this tragedy appears later in this edition.

* Our thanks go to Messrs Jack Wood and Bruce Tunbridge for providing the information for this article.