

Helsal II Progress Report

By Di Moncrieff

Di and Ian Moncrieff called in on *Helsal II* to see how her rebuild was going. Last time they saw her a crane was lowering a new deck into place. Here is what they found.



Ian and Chris peering down the centre board case on Helsal's deck

There is no doubt that RSAYS member Chris Riggs is a visionary; a 'can do man'. He dreamed of the legendary retired racing boat *Helsal II* being his ultimate racer cruiser. Dreamed? Yes dreamed; fast, comfortable and sometimes tucked in close in a little remote cove somewhere having a hot bath! *Helsal II* remade is well under way with lots of bits ready but still to be put in or on her. This is the story so far.

For those who are new to South Australian yacht racing, here is the short version of pre-Riggs *Helsal II*.

You are bound to have seen her picture in the clubhouse ground floor gallery during the notorious 1998 Sydney to Hobart Race; the big boat with the teeny storm sail. It was one of the first of the media images that came out of the dangerous weather of that race and was splashed across Australia. She was owned and skippered by the legendary yachtsman, the late Keith Flint.

A 20 metre Adams design, she was South Australia's pre-eminent racing yacht with a fibre glass hull, timber deck and a mast of aluminium. We remember being on board for an Inkster Memorial race and of course with a handicap start we were last to start (and third to finish). I remember the vast open space below under curved timber beams ready to knock many an unwary head. It seemed to be full of sails and pipe berths and not much else. No cruising comfort there!

Keith eventually sold *Helsal II* and she went to 'The Royal' in Victoria for a rebuild then competed in notable races around the world. We stumbled across her during that period when cruising with RSAYS members Mike and Faye Harmon on *Minke II* in Penang, Malaysia. Her big blue hull was white by then.

Now Riggsy has her, gleaming, with a new raised deck (he's a big man), a reshaped step-through stern, twin wheels and all that modern technology has to offer.

'I like simple and practical,' says Chris. 'I need to be able to reach everything and fix everything – easily'. So, for instance, when the engine oil is replaced there are no telltale drips. A simple pump bleeds the system for him.

The big old winches have been reinstated but they now operate pneumatically. *Helsal II* will no longer need a beefy crew just to get the mainsail up. There are 4 halyards, 6 cockpit and 2 runner winches. Foresails are all fitted with inbuilt forestays.

Besides being racing competitive Visionary Riggs also likes the soft life. He wants to tuck into cosy anchorages so *Helsal II* now has a lifting centre board rather than fixed keel. All 5 tons of it including the bulb. Made with a cedar core and fibreglass coat it is built to ABS standard with a 2x safety factor. At 7 inches thick, 12 ft high and 4 ft fore and aft it fits into a stainless steel plate at deck level. *Helsal II* will draw just 6 feet, centre board up, no more than most family cruisers.

A 160HP Yanmar diesel motor that will generate 90hp at 2000 RPM, sits ready on its engine mounts in the shed nearby with the generator that will be housed in the same engine room space. Access is by a hatch in the cockpit floor and then fold back panels down below once it is fitted.



Jeanne Pierre Kerry of Kiki, and Chris Riggs with the new centre board, bulb yet to be fitted. Jeanne has been a stalwart in the rebuild and is currently making beautiful cabinetware for Helsal's interior.

The Bath

By Jaynie Morris (Riggs)

We were on a boat doing the last race in the Hammo Week a couple of years ago and the crew and I were talking about *Helsal II*.

The guys asked me if I was having any input and the only thing I said was "If Chris and I are going to sail around the world in her, then she had better have a bath!" (I am a sucker for a good soak, haha!)

The word got passed down to Chris who was helming at the time. He returned and got the search on for the mould and then they surprised me with the bath! Clearly when she is racing it will double for wet gear storage. So there is the story...oh, plus I'm getting a cappuccino machine too (yes, he found one made for boats!)

The rudder, bearings and housing was made in the Farley Riggs workshop where close tolerance mining equipment is routinely refurbished and tested. The drive shaft likewise. Deferring to the necessity for a party cockpit, a tagar bar above the companionway will house the mainsheet traveller. The rig is also ready to go.

So what's this about a bath? Below deck one could never mistake being on a racer. Space is plentiful and solid handholds either side run the length of the boat, crew berths are plentiful, and large overhead hatches are strategically

placed for efficient sail deployment and stowage. Decor is minimalist. Sleek and practical one might say and the sort of detailed attention to life on board that comes from an experienced sailor living a project intensely. But the galley is huge, and the fridge and freezer massive and the saloon table will surely host many a party.

And the bath? Well it is deep, white, glossy, and sleek, belying its former life as a horse trough.

Only a visionary could do it.