

Keith Walkem Flint

Peter Last

Fittingly for one who has participated in five Sydney-Hobart races, Keith Flint was born on 26 December, 1921, being 3½ years younger than his brother Tom (also sometime Commodore of the Squadron). The family first lived on the Esplanade at Kirkaldy, overlooking the sea. In about 1930 Keith's father journeyed to England, and brought home for the boys beautifully crafted model sailing yachts. At that time there were two sandbars at the water's edge, and the blue line of weed began fifty yards or so out to sea. It was a very safe place for children to play, to swim, and to learn to muck about in boats.

Tom led Keith into sailing through participation in the fleet of 12 foot open clinker cadet dinghies owned by Professor Mark Mitchell. Mark sold the Flints the first of the fleet, *Parama*, which they raced from RSAYS in about 1937. They have retained the receipt for £25. The third member of the crew was Bill Ayliffe. Races were held in the Port River. They were familiar with SS *Karatta* making her regular run to and from Kangaroo Island, as well as the ketches coming and going about their trade in the gulfs. The cadets were hoisted on to the hydroplane wharf with the jib crane, to be stored in the eastern annexe, where now there is the passage way past the office to the stairs. The family moved to Toorak Gardens, and had a bathing box on the northern part of the beach at Brighton. Here there was a wood and canvas canoe. "I paddled it for miles." The journey to go racing involved taking a trolley bus to the city and a train to Outer Harbor, followed by a long walk to RSAYS.



Two Life Members together: Jim Howell and Keith Flint in Constitution Dock

In 1938 Keith got a job at the ES&A Bank, until he enlisted in the Second AIF on his twentieth birthday, 26 December, 1941. He had wanted the navy, but a broken toe rendered him unfit for sea duty, but not to join the infantry! Later he was commissioned and was transferred to an anti-aircraft unit, and was sent to Anjo Peninsula on the north-west coast of Australia, which was the closest point to the Dutch East Indies. Liberators landed to refuel coming and going from Darwin. Responding to a call for volunteers to rejoin the infantry, Keith went to a conversion

course at Coonungra in Queensland. He became Staff Captain (Administration) and stayed for a year at "the best jungle warfare school in the world." Only occasionally could he go sailing, as, for example, with Tom when home on leave. He did help to build an eighteen-footer in Darwin, for which his father sent up rope and copper nails.

With the war over, his love of sailing helped to determine his future. Instead of returning to the bank, he joined Tom and his father in the family business of Flintware (SA) Pty Ltd. WT Flint & Sons, Ironmongers was established in Adelaide in 1867. For many years the business was conducted from premises on the corner of Hindley and Bank Streets. Adelaide City Council wanted to widen Bank Street, and the senior members of the family sold the premises to the Savings Bank of SA and the Council.

During the war Keith bought an International Fourteen (designed by the celebrated Uffa Fox), but he never had the opportunity to sail it. His first post-war vessel was a sailing

canoe, also with a Fox influence, which he bought from Pat O'Grady. This was the only one at RSAYS, but he raced at Brighton-Seacliff Yacht Club. Keith regularly sailed alone to Seacliff, going down on the morning light northerly, and returning on the afternoon sea breeze.

In 1947 he bought *Osprey*, a 24-foot gaff cutter from a Mr Fisher for £325. This was his first keelboat. He raced her with Bill Lumb and Ross Hicks (a sharebroker) until he sold her (for £350) to Sir Arthur Barrett in order to be married in 1948. He could not keep away from boats, and for about £400 he built *Circe*. This was a 24-foot North-East class yacht, which he raced from RSAYS. Keith's next vessel came in 1958. This was a Tumblaren, *Tronmie*, bought from Tim Jolley. He raced her with Jack Fielder and Bill Lumb. In 1959 he changed to an H-28, *Caprice*, which he bought from Bob Clarke, a solicitor.

Annydah was built by Norman Ford, who sailed her for many years without an engine.



Helsal II off the SE coast of Tasmania in the 1990 Sydney-Hobart Race.

• FLINTWARE •

S.A. PTY. LTD.



AEG

BS7-2PCS

7.2 Volt, 2-speed Cordless Drill and Driver
* 10mm chuck * 5 stage clutch * 1 hour re-charge

BOAT BUILDERS PRICE:- \$239

This AEG Cordless Drill and Driver is an ideal tool for the yacht owner. It is 2-speed and fitted with a 10mm capacity chuck, a 5 stage clutch and the battery is a one hour charge.

SPECIAL OFFER INCLUDES BONUS BATTERY VALUED AT \$100

S.A.'s BEST TOOL STORES

62 Grote Street Adelaide, Phone 231 5707

1199 South Road, St. Marys, Phone 374 0722

He sold her to Mark Tostevin, who did not have her for long before selling her to W Douglas Verco. Keith bought *Anyndah* and raced her for about two years. In 1963 Keith commissioned Karl Lange at Welland to build *Ariel*, which was the first of the South Australian Blythe Spirits. He sold this to Merv Butterfield.

Looking for more speed, Keith was attracted to the New Zealand plywood hard-chine Spencer flyers. In conjunction with Alan Behrens, *Scimitar* and *Caravel* were built side by side in the Behrens' shed at Queen Street, Norwood. It was an enjoyable and convivial experience. Alan's father was very old, but fit enough to have an unerring nose for a freshly opened bottle of beer. At her launching the group of well-wishers gasped with dismay as *Scimitar* slipped from the cradle. Keith remained quite calm, and invited all to participate in the food and drink which was waiting for them. The problem was rectified, and later she quietly entered the water. She was certainly fast, but a problem arose when winter racing started to become popular. The crew (and Keith) were trapped with painting and varnishing when others were enjoying their racing.

The next boat was *Seabreeze*, a Duncanson 35, but Keith had her for only a short time before she was sold to David Evans. For about eighteen months Keith made do with a Folkboat *Shaula*, but she was certainly no speed machine. For the first (and only) time Keith went into partnership in 1978, with Geoff Bungey. *Vivid* was built at Hindmarsh. She was not a beauty, but she was fast and comfortable below. When Geoff wanted his share she was sold, and Keith bought *Trade Secret*, a Dubois 34 which had belonged to the celebrated Western Australian yachtsman Roly Tasker. After eighteen months *Trade Secret* was sold to Sydney.

She was succeeded in 1983 by *Celebrity*, a Swarbrick III, in an attempt to meet the perpetual goal of a yacht which is fast to windward. At this time Keith became gravely ill with subacute bacterial endocarditis, which is an infection lodged on a heart valve. Sailing had to take second place as his health recovered.

Still seeking a very fast vessel, Keith brought the hull and deck from Queensland of an Adams/Radford fifty-foot sloop, with a partially retractable keel. By buying furniture ready made in Sydney, *Volante* was completed at Searle's Shipyard in the astonishingly short time of six weeks. She was launched in mid-January 1987.

A Geelong surgeon, Sandy Kelso, repeatedly approached Keith to discuss an exchange of yachts. Sandy had *Helsal II*, another Adams/Radford flyer, 66 feet long. Her draft was too great for racing in Corio Bay. The Squadron pool seemed too shallow, until space was found in a deeper pool which had originally been dredged for *Sir Wallace Bruce*, the vessel used for many years as a pilot boat to serve Outer Harbor. An amicable arrangement was achieved, and the respective crews changed places in Portland Harbor on 27 August 1989. The sail home was more exciting than they wanted, with a south-west gale clocked at 57 knots. Keith was glad to have aboard John Champ, a descendant of early settlers in the Geelong district. He rigged a trysail, and under this alone they still made eight knots to windward.

As an adjunct, literally just for fun, in 1988 Keith bought *Marietta*, a converted crayboat 38 feet long, and with a secure Gardiner diesel to drive her at eight knots up and down wind. She usually lived at Port Lincoln, and came to Adelaide to act as the committee vessel for the sponsors of the Grand Prix skiff races in 1992. She has since been sold to Launceston, where she is undergoing a complete refit for a couple to live aboard.

SC