

CRUISIN' WITH THE WELLMAN-KELLYS

By First Mate, Carol Wellman Kelly



Former Commodore Peter Kelly and first mate and wife Carol Wellman Kelly left RSAYS in September last year after a hectic time preparing to get away cruising. These are 'can do' people. But for Carol, cruising miles have been a new challenge and we welcome her 'take' on their time away so far.

Roasted cashews are my weakness... Peter has too many to go into right now! Amazing the habitual patterns that form, oh so quickly, at sea. Some of these are useful and downright essential; shutting the hatches before setting off, unhooking the oven so the gimble functions, activating the chart plotter, securing the dinghy. But other less useful habits have crept in and taken over our lives. More vices to conquer and abolish, these lifestyle parasites live on the host of the cruising yachty.



Departure Day 1st September 2013.

I appear to be addicted to Facebook. A morning does not pass without Peter and me sitting propped up in the V birth, silently engaged with our mobile phones, chortling or exclaiming, sharing a tit bit of news or gossip to start the day. This is closely followed by the engine roaring into life to juice up the house battery, to power the solenoid, to get the gas, to boil the kettle, to make the morning cuppa, all before Julia has finished playing the Swoon for the day on radio ABC.

Rubbing my brass Buddha figurine (no, not a euphemism!) on the forehead and heart each morning, I hope that the gesture will bring good fortune and stave off unsettling moments on this journey. Generally I consider myself fairly courageous, but until recently have had little off-shore sailing experience. Thus I'm not taking any chances. I will be ever grateful to my Yoga Guru for teaching me a series of chants, including one from Ganesha to "remove all obstacles".

I did have cause to employ Ganesha's chant respectfully and quite seriously on one occasion off the coast of Eden. In the dark our engine failed, with a 4-5metre swell and not enough wind to sail us out of trouble. ("ommgum ganapatya namaha"x 200). Fortunately the Divine Universe smiled on us and Ganesha came through with the goods. (For more detail on this episode and many others please refer to our Blog where Peter has chronicled the voyage on this good ship *Home James* since our departure last September)

Home James (HJ) is holding up well. In extreme seas she occasionally seeps fluids of indistinguishable sources in unusual places. However on a day-to-day basis there is no dampness or excessive bilge water. (I do hate the fortnightly sewerage 'pump out' and am currently designing an appropriate nose peg for the occasion.)

The idiosyncrasies of *HJ* are commonplace now; squawking of the gas sensor alarm on first use after a journey, the slightly pungent heads during the night, the thud of the dinghy insistently nudging the stern when it has been left in the water, the rattle of the BBQ at low revs and the flap and flicker of the Red ensign tethered to Peter's 'unique' davit and flag pole.

Peter's 'Magnum Opus' design and self-constructed davit attracted some raised eyebrows and smirking comments at the Squadron prior to our departure: weird religious cross, ostentatious flag pole, bondage rack, penitentiary stock. However the structure, in spite of the haranguing, has proved its worth and has ably supported our pre-loved fiberglass dinghy which we acquired from the behind my parent's shed three



Captain Kelly.

months ago. We christened her *Minna* after we recycled Harold Handley's inscribed oars, left in the sail locker we took over, following the sale of Harold's Cole 43 several years ago.



The Mighty *Minna*.

Our *Minna the Mighty* has stood up courageously to all manner of passages but most particularly to the relentless stream of visitors ferried to and from the Sail Corp jetty to *HJ* waiting patiently in Lavender Bay in Sydney Harbour.

Moored for the period over Christmas, New Year and Australia Day it has been quite a highlight of our journey so far, nestled in the lee of North Sydney's high-rise buildings, Wendy Whitley's garden and the "hurrah" of Luna Park we have had copious visitors: friends, family and fun times. Thankfully we are happy to

exchange the fair-ground screams for the whisper of the wind and if I don't see any fireworks for the next 40 years my life will not be any less-rich or rewarding.

Experiences from our sailing are etched into my cellular memory; dolphins torpedoing towards the bow on a moonless night streaming with phosphorescence, being roused from sleep to witness spectacularly lit oil rigs towering like sentinels of the sea in Bass Strait, over canvassed and charging up the Sapphire Coast in a stiff southerly, seeing a whopping 11knts on our speedo (fabulous! considering she's an old girl and we weigh 15 tons!), a close encounter with two barnacled humpback whales who surfaced on our bow and with a nudge and a wink disappeared into the inky waters of Davy Jones locker. The beauty and challenges of this journey so far have been diverse and poignant, difficult to describe, so thank heavens for mental pictures and mechanical photos.

As I write this moment of memoir we are moored on a Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron buoy (thanks to the reciprocal relationship of our clubs) in the peace and tranquillity of

America Bay within the Cowan Creek arm of the Hawkesbury River. After a superbly sunny day with winds 10-18knts fluctuating, it's now overcast and cool. Big shady Eucalypts sporting bright green new shoots, hug the bay. There is a plethora of mooring buoys here but only a few boats are tethered this evening. One can only imagine the heaving community jostling for space during the height of the summer holidays in this heavenly environment!



Keeping my head above water! Middle Harbour.

Chewing on the dreaded roasted cashews (I just can't help myself) and nursing a Gin and Tonic, Peter (with lemon) and I (with lime) are catching the last of the light and breeze observing sea eagles and other smaller tenacious birds claiming their territory in the skies, adrift on thermals. Cicadas serenade us and our fridge motor accompanies them periodically, reporting judiciously to its thermostat.

The fridge (a big draw card in purchasing this boat) has been the prime offender for sucking the house batteries into submission. I fight to compromise on other apparent offenders: lights, computer, radio and LED TV, in order to maintain my preference for cold tonic and mould-less cheese. Regardless of refrigeration the lettuce and broccoli are the wilting flowers of our culinary experiences. They require my attention within the first 2 days. The pumpkin stays perky and keeps company with the tomatoes well into week 2. The rock melon can be temperamental especially when the Sauvignon Blanc bottle is nonchalantly dumped in its lap!



First Mate reporting for SQ, American Bay, Hawkesbury River.

Oops! Captain Kelly (complete with salt and pepper whiskers) has revved up the Perkins and is calling for the mooring line to be let off. I must jump to and fulfil his fantasy that I am the ever compliant first mate of his dreams.....

For more detailed accounts of our adventures so far and to come, you are welcome to visit our Blog site: www.homejamesblog.wordpress.com P

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