

This is the next in a series of articles by Barry Allison which records some of the experiences and adventures of our many prominent Senior Members of the Squadron – this time we review John Deniet, who joined the Squadron on 25 June 1986 and has had many wide experiences not only in yachting, but also in the building of many fine yachts.



John Deniet

JOHN was born in the coastal town of Scheveningen in Holland and became very familiar with the inland lakes and canals on small fishing boats in his early teen years. He began to learn the fishing skills with his cousin on the North Sea, catching herring and shrimps with gill nets. He was born into a family of four generations of fishermen and merchant sailors, although John's grandfather was an exception in being employed on the Holland/America line of merchant ships. It is common knowledge that John has never been a smoker, and this is attributed to his early years on the fishing boats, where as part of the crew he had to roll and light up cigarettes for the experienced crew who were too busy gutting and filleting the fresh catch of fish. After the tough times in Europe following the Second World War, the Deniet family decided to emigrate to Australia in 1958 and settled in Adelaide. John undertook studies in the construction industry and later formed his own building company, John Deniet—General Builder and Building Consultant.

John's love of the sea continued in Adelaide and it was not long before he purchased a Gwen 12 dinghy which he sailed on the Patawalonga. Later in the 1970s he bought an Arafura Cadet catamaran and sailed her off the Brighton and Seacliff beaches.

John and Pam married in 1967 and John began to work seven days a week over the next many years to raise their family and to plan for the next boat. At this time Wayne Rosenweig, who worked at Bill Porter's boat yard on the Port Inner Basin, had just launched his new boat *Exodus*, and John crewed with Wayne for the next seven years. He joined the Port Adelaide Sailing Club in 1973 and continued to sail with Wayne on many Gulf races and cruises to Kangaroo Island. At this time, John had become interested in building his first boat and set his sights on a Peter Dowding Sparta design – a 30 foot hard-chined plywood boat. She was built at North Brighton and launched in 1977 at No 1 Dock at Port Adelaide and christened *Aquarius*. Because of her lightweight construction, John could only mount a lightweight English 12 hp Dolphin petrol engine, which was more than adequate over the next nine years. These years provided plenty of sailing experience for their growing children, Scott and Anne, and provided valuable knowledge in their later years.

John's next boat was a Lexcen 9.6 which was also built at North Brighton over three years and launched at Blue Sky Marine in 1986 and christened *Maybe*. She competed

in many Gulf races, including an Adelaide to Port Lincoln race, and in many cruising and fishing adventures. His crew in those days included his brother Jerry Deniet, Greg Pickford and Neil Dell. Over many voyages it was decided that a yacht with more room down below would be a bonus, and so the New Zealand designed Whiting 11 was chosen – mainly attributed to a West Australian company which was making the Whiting 11 moulds and had just become bankrupt. John was instrumental in purchasing the moulds with Neil Dell and Graham Morris and these were transported from a paddock in Port Arlington, near Geelong, where the hull and deck moulds had been lying for a number of years. Once the moulds had been transported to Adelaide, they were set up at Beswick's yard on the Port River and polished. Meanwhile, John decided to improve his skills in fibre-glassing and laminating, and took on a course at the Marlestone TAFE with Ray Cauchi as his lecturer. Three hulls and decks came out of the mould, with one complete hull being transported back to John and Pam's home at Warradale where John spent the next four years fitting out the hull to become *It's Magic*. Over the next 12 years she was raced and cruised around both Gulfs, including the lesser visited anchorages of Spencer Gulf. John's crew in these times included Jerry Deniet, David Rawnsley, John Wickham, Paul Mills and many newcomers on the Twilight races, who later joined the Squadron.



Maybe



It's Magic

While working at a Lonsdale factory, where he was building some internal offices, John experienced some chest pains and went to the medical clinic to see a doctor. The doctor then ordered an ambulance and John was admitted to the Flinders Medical Centre with a suspected heart attack. This happened on a Wednesday and he was concerned that he might not be able to sail in the Twilight race. He rang Pam to say that he was at the FMC having a couple of tests and everything was OK. Pam was rather concerned and went to the FMC where she was told that he was having an angiogram. Pam needed John's car keys and asked the nurse to ask John as to the location of the keys. So having his priorities in order, John first sent a message to Pam to urgently ring John Wickham to take his boat out to maintain the fleet number and then gave the location of his car keys.

In September 2008, while working on the decking at the RSAYS, John became quite ill and was again hospitalised and went through a very serious and traumatic period of his life. He was in an induced coma for 11 days and then in intensive care for a further three weeks. He was in hospital for a month and at one point nearly died. His wife Pam claimed that only a stubborn and arrogant Dutchman could survive this ordeal!

After some lengthy recovery, John decided to buy another yacht and selected the German Vision design built by Bavaria Yachts which was imported into Sydney in 2010. She was transported across to Blue Sky Marine at North Haven, and after some frustrating teething problems, was launched as *More Magic* in February 2010. She had a Volvo 55 hp diesel engine with a sail drive and a three-blade folding propeller. John and his crew, including his brother Jerry, David Rawnsley, Mary Carpenter, Pat Catley, Paul Mills and others sailed *More Magic* in many races and cruises from the Squadron and he is one of the few yachties who have cruised extensively around the small anchorages in Spencer Gulf.

Many longer cruises were taken to Port Lincoln and Kangaroo Island as a precursor to an even longer planned cruise to Tasmania. So in February this year, John and his crew of Tony Hooper and Geoff Keynes sailed out of the Squadron, and approaching Kangaroo Island were hit with 30 to 35 kt sou-westerlies which held them in Christmas Cove for the next two days. The next port was Robe, where they refuelled and managed to organise an exchange of a large 3 kg crayfish for a carton of beer. The local cray fishermen were also able to provide co-ordinates of craypots on the way to their next stop Port

Fairy, where a Jazz Festival was underway. Geoff Keynes, the third crew member, needed to leave the boat at Port Fairy due to prior commitments.

The crossing of the notorious Bass Strait to King Island was comparatively quiet and they moored in the safe harbour of Naracoopa on the east side of the Island. After a short stay, they left in the evening and motor sailed towards Stanley on the north coast of Tasmania where, once moored, they encountered 50 to 55 kt sou-westerlies. Some damage was experienced here with broken mooring lines and a bent pulpit. From Stanley they sailed across to Devonport and the Devonport Yacht Club and enjoyed a three-day spell. Then across the short hop to Beauty Point in the River Tamar for another three-day stopover before setting off across the top of Tasmania and around Fosters Inlet to Triabunna, where they went aground for a short time. The navigation through the Dunalley Canal to Hobart provided some challenging moments but they eventually tied up at a Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania marina berth where they were looked after by the local yachtsmen. Cruising around the waters of Hobart provided a very rewarding time, cruising to Kettering and Oyster Cove as well as the areas of the Huon River. They were able to meet up with Richard and Tracey Colebatch on *Aqua Lass* who had left Adelaide in 2017, and later Ian and Di Moncrieff on *Pied Piper II*, who are regular visitors with their yacht moored in Kettering.

The return voyage back to South Australia was via Triabunna and Port Fairy, where this time a Folk Festival was well underway. John and Tony sailed *More Magic* back to the Squadron after calling into Robe, again hoping for another feed of crayfish. The watch system adopted for the short-handed part of the cruise was two hours on/two hours off with a regular check on the AIS system, and this worked very well. Tony had previously owned *Warlord* (built by Squadron member Ian Scott) and has had plenty of experience in navigating and crewing on ocean waters. When John and Tony were sailing into Kettering, they saw *Warlord*, and also *Sunburst* (Jim Howell's previous craft) and they both became very excited.

John's family have been involved in the sea over the years, with his son Scott now owning a Bavaria 40 which is moored on Lake Macquarie. His two boys, Josh and Sam, are keen on the sea. John's daughter and son-in-law, Anne and Mathew Cook and their two children, Spencer and Eloise (now living in Brisbane), have spent many a holiday and weekend on the boats over the years. Pam is a very patient wife and enjoys the shorter cruises and the social activities at the Squadron.

John and Pam are no longer working and we wish them well in their retirement and their future travels.

