

By Marion Holden



Marion and Roger Holden

ON a sunny day in about 1950 a young Squadron Member George Holden took his three sons on a fishing trip as he had done many times before. On this occasion George pulled his wooden clinker open boat alongside a neighbouring sailing boat to chat to the owner who worked with him as a lino-type operator at *The Advertiser*.

Owen Trewartha kindly invited them below. The eyes of Roger, the youngest son, were wide with astonishment as he took in the saloon and the galley and even a bed. He had not until then appreciated that one could perhaps live and sleep on a boat. How magical was that!

Moving quickly to the adult Roger we find him first as a copy boy and then a journalist at *The Advertiser* but soon getting itchy feet to see the world. With a friend he sailed to Naples on the liner *Castel Felice*, followed by a train journey to Berlin where the two of them bought a camper van to tour Europe. Eventually, short of money, he settled in London and found work on Fleet Street. And he found me!

We met through a mutual friend, married in 1967, and had our first child Richard a year later. During those early days Roger would read as many yachting books and magazines as he could, and when I found a sailing school advertising its services in beautiful Fowey, Cornwall, there was no holding back. In early June we left

Roger and Richard in front of *Didgeridoo*

Richard with his grandmother and drove to Cornwall. The instructor had no other pupils and taught us sailing in the mornings on a Wayfarer dinghy and gave us full use of a Mirror dinghy each afternoon to go exploring. We had great fun sailing on the River Fowey and Roger became a proficient dinghy sailor, but unfortunately I didn't!

In 1970 we bought our first boat, a new Vivacity 650, from Russell Marine of Southend. *Didgeridoo* became our weekender and many happy times were spent pottering around the Essex mudflats of the Blackwater. *Didgeridoo* was a bilge-keeler with a flush deck and little headroom, but she had four berths, a sink, an ice box, a toilet and a metho two-burner cooker. This was heaven!

After Nicole was born three years later we had our first big adventure. We 'went foreign' as the yachting magazines of the day used to describe it. With a baby in a bassinet and a lively toddler we set out for France from our eel barge mooring at Heybridge Basin. Perhaps it was a foolish thing to do, but we were young and silly and we did it.

Richard and Nicole on *Ramdel*

During our sail across the English Channel through the shifting Goodwin Sands and heavy fog in the approaches to Calais we just hoped that our radar reflector would protect us from all the ships we could hear but not see. At one stage in the fog we had to sail up to a lightship to find out where we were as our only forms of navigation were a grid compass, a chart and a DF radio. We enjoyed Calais with all the British crews and then made our way up the coast to Ostende in Belgium. Not long after, North Sea gales arrived (it was June) and we had to get extra holiday time because it was too rough to return to the UK for three weeks.

In 1974 Roger and I came to Australia with the children. Within a year we had bought an old wooden cutter called *Ramdel* from Squadron Member Reg Lewis, renamed her *Marionette* and found a mooring at the Port Adelaide Sailing Club. We had also put our names down on the waiting list for a berth at the Squadron. The day we moved into our new house at North Haven – with hardly a cent left to our name from the building – we received a letter from the Squadron offering us a mooring.

After eleven years of cruising the Gulf, Kangaroo Island and Port Lincoln it became clear it was time to spend more time sailing instead of varnishing so we bought a fibreglass boat called *Halcyon* in 1987 from Greg Jaunay and renamed her *Marionette II*. She was a Skandia 32 built by Peter Lauridsen and performed admirably as a cruising boat for South Australian waters, visiting Port Lincoln many times and all destinations in between.

But a man always wants a bigger toy (doesn't he?) and even though I never participated much in the sailing I accompanied Roger in all our cruises, and encouraged him in his quest for a larger boat. During our visit to a conference on the Gold Coast in 1992 we spent more time looking for a boat than attending lectures, and found *Nebo*, soon to become *Marionette III*. She was a lovely Cavalier 43 built by Cavalier Yachts and she suited us well for a number of years.

Eventually we closed our business and decided to go cruising, planning to be away for about six months or possibly up to a year if I was amenable. Unlikely, he thought. Impossible, I thought.

*Marionette* in Gulf of St Vincent*Marionette II* in Port River

Both children were newly married when *Marionette III* said goodbye to the Squadron in March 1994, and headed for the east coast of Australia. After one year I began to understand how the wind and sea determined the action of the boat and I became absolutely hooked on sailing and the cruising lifestyle. The following year we took part in the Gove to Darwin Yacht Rally followed by the Darwin to Ambon (Indonesia) race in which we sailed the whole way, even when there was almost no wind and the racing boats dropped down into the cruising division so they could use the motor and win a trophy. A year later Roger crewed on a friend's boat in the inaugural Brisbane to Gizo (Solomon Islands) race and was determined to take me to see that beautiful country. In 1997 we sailed to Gizo in the race and then cruised through the archipelago before returning to Australia via Cairns.

Such was the wonderful experience, we decided it would be nice to take our growing family cruising with us so we started looking for a bigger boat ... again.

We fell in love with a 1991 Taswell 49 sloop in Southport called *Mariand*, soon to become *Marionette IV*. The boat was designed by Bill Dixon of the UK and built for the American market by Ta Shing in Taiwan. This was the perfect boat for extended cruising with both hydraulic in-mast and jib furling. We were her second owners and she had hardly been used. The engine was a Yanmar 80 hp turbo diesel and she had an Onan 6.5 kva generator. All mod cons were present, including a good size watermaker, air-conditioning and leather upholstery.

Marionette IV was everything we wanted in a cruising boat and in November 1999 we were off to New Zealand via Lord Howe Island. We cruised the famous Bay of Islands in unusual wintry conditions and back-packed around the North and South Islands of the country by ferry, train and bus. The following June we participated in the Auckland to Nuku'alofa (Tonga) rally and cultural tour, and enjoyed the hospitality of the islanders we met. We sailed the complete length of the Tonga Islands chain

*Marionette III* in Pittwater

and returned to Brisbane via Fiji, Vanuatu and Chesterfield Reef.

The Olympic Games were held in Sydney in 2000 so we decided to get out of Australia during that time and headed to Noumea (New Caledonia), a French jurisdiction, but it was quite cold when we arrived so we sailed north to Vanuatu, returning to Noumea in October for the glorious Pacific Arts Festival of dance and music.

In 2001 we were back in Darwin and wondering where to sail next. Roger suggested Indonesia or the Kimberleys as a possibility. I was not too impressed with our first visit to Indonesia but ... Bali? I could handle that. So we cleared Customs and Immigration, set out quite illegally for a few days to an anchorage a couple of hundred miles to the west – where the Coast Watch aircraft found us but treated us kindly – and then moved on to Ashmore Reef, Rinca Island (Indonesia) to see the Komodo dragons and then to Bali. This was the start of our accidental cruise around the world which lasted another 10 years. But that is another story.

In January 2012 a large number of family and friends crowded the dock at the Squadron to greet *Marionette IV* on our return to our home Club which we had left 18 years before. At my insistence, we kept the boat in the Club marina for twelve months before settling her on our home pontoon in the North Haven marina. That way we were able to renew friendships and make new ones, and fully participate in the social life within the Club.

Many happy years of cruising in home waters ensued but soon it became obvious that the boat needed upgrading, and having spent so many years using a big part of our savings, it was time to move on. Our son Richard, upon hearing that *Marionette IV* could be sold, asked if he might buy her. This was a wonderful, elegant solution to our problem: she was so much part of us, we could barely endure the thought of not seeing her again, or losing her to someone who had no appreciation of her wonderful history and might not care for her as we had.

*Marionette IV* in Fiji

Richard had been living in Melbourne for ten years and travelling to the city for his employment at the *Herald Sun* newspaper where he was a journalist. In 2019 the three of us sailed *Marionette IV* from Adelaide to Wyndham Harbour near Melbourne, when COVID-19 arrived and employees were encouraged to work from home so Richard did precisely that. After all, his home was the boat.

As time went on he realised that it was unnecessary to visit his office and he could live and work just as well in Adelaide as in Wyndham, so in March this year, the three of us sailed her back to Adelaide again. *Marionette IV* is now in her customary berth opposite our home. The beauty of it all is that while she may not be ours we can see her there and know she is being well looked after. We are content.

Richard was an Associate member of the Club in his early twenties and was a regular Crew member on Wilbur Tedmanson's *Hecate* for a couple of seasons. As he is a night and weekend worker he is unable to make use of the Club's social activities as his parents do. One day soon the third generation of the Holden family just might become a member again, with *Marionette IV* back on the Register.

Marion with grandson Harrison on *Marionette III* at Airlie Beach