

By new member, Charles Coffrant



VERY often, when one buys a boat, he or she enjoys it for a while, and then eventually sells it. In some rare instances, a boat has such history and heritage that the owner feels like a custodian. *Mauna Kea* is the boat I have been looking for since I was 13 years old, when I first started sailing. My dream boat had to be in aluminium to be light, be designed by one of the great designers, rigged as a schooner and ideally have a clipper bow.

By chance, during the Christmas break in 2003, I saw the advertisement for a schooner called *Sheila*, for sale in Yeppoon. After a thorough survey, a deal was struck. She was not seaworthy, and I had it trucked to our factory in Wingfield. Some information came with it: the original name was *Mauna Kea*, and it was a Phillip Rhodes design built for a German sailor named Peter Kammler. Not realising the rich history of the boat, my wife Kerry and I started considering a few names like *Little Escapade* (after P Rhodes' most famous yawl *Escapade*), and *Charles de Fleurieu* (my Great-grandfather Charles had a country house in Fleurieu sur Saone, north of Lyon).

One day, out of the blue, we received an email from a German admirer who wanted to know how we were going with the boat. This was followed by another admirer who had made a very accurate scale model of it. We decided to get onto the previous owner Peter Kammler. He was very supportive of our restoration project, sending us a DVD of the TV series, a movie of his voyages around the world, and a beautiful book retracing the genesis, the construction and the voyages of *Mauna Kea*.

In late 1970, after an around-the-world trip on their Nicholson 38 (the first *Mauna Kea*, just to confuse everybody!), Peter Kammler and his wife returned to Germany as celebrities. Their book, *Come with me, let's sail around the world*, had made them famous. Peter wanted to go back to sea with a larger boat. He acquired the rights to build the ketch *Gouden Draak*, design No. 745 from another Philip Rhodes design. The ketch became a two-masted staysail schooner, with the centreboard replaced by a long keel. The schooner was built in aluminium by Turbotechnik, a Hamburg shipyard which builds ships for the German Navy. It was completed in 1981, and was baptised *Mauna Kea*.

Mauna Kea specifications are: OA length: 16.3 m; Deck length: 14.5 m; Water length: 10 m; Draft: 1.8 m; Displacement (with water and fuel), 12.8 t; Sails: Yankee 34 m², Fore staysail: 17 m², Main staysail: 18 m², Main: 35 m², Fisherman: 34 m², Spinnaker: 96 m².

Mauna Kea was trucked from Hamburg to the Mediterranean Sea for a TV series which Peter had secured with German Television Station. Imagine the convoy going down the steep and narrow mountainous roads of the Alps! During the next five years sailing around the world followed, including a crossing of the Panama

Canal. Peter settled in New Zealand, and then sold the boat. Over the years, *Mauna Kea* changed hands three times. Needless to say that we quickly abandoned the idea of finding another name – it had to go back to *Mauna Kea*!

With the boat next to our factory a refit, when time permitted, of 13 years followed. We worked on her every Saturday, public holidays, sometimes from 0600 hrs to 0800 hrs, before our staff arrived for work, and of course after work! Family and friends were enrolled as well. The stainless screws fastening the 1" thick teak deck planks had caused extensive corrosion. The aluminium of the deck had to be treated before re-laying it with 18 mm thick teak planks. This time some Sika glue was used. With our son Christian, we drew every plank and joint on the deck, and handed it to Rick De La Mater, the carpenter who most accurately cut it to our marks. In order to avoid steaming the planks, I decided to lay them in straight lines (rather than following the gunwale curve). However, the gunwale teak capping in 3" x 1" would test us - it was the first time we used the steaming in the plastic sleeve technique. It worked a treat. Our daughter, Laurence, focused on the inside, and became an expert at installing the ceiling panels. We have tried to keep everything as original as possible, although adding some comfort features, such as a diesel-fired heater with five outlets (including one in the head!), a double berth cabin on the port side, and a black water system. Above deck, an asymmetrical spinnaker will complete the wardrobe.

Mauna Kea was relaunched in late November 2017, with her first sea trials conducted in February. Unfortunately, the relaunch happened very quickly and Peter Kammler could not be there. However, he is planning a trip to Adelaide for Christmas in 2018, with a special gift – the original bell that will once again sit under the boom rest portico.

Going back over the last 13 years, a 'close call' comes straight to mind. Late one morning on 13 March 2012, the factory of one of our neighbours, literally 15 m away from *Mauna Kea*, caught on fire. Ninety-five fire fighting vehicles turned up, only to find out that north of Cormack Road the water supply was insufficient! The original gunwale capping, and the shade canopy, ended up with a dark tan! Thankfully no firemen were seriously injured and nor was any damage caused to the boat. By the end of the day Elvis, the fire-fighting helicopter, managed to extinguish the blazing inferno, and we could all finally breathe a sigh of relief.

We came to the RSAYS gradually. In 2007, Caillin Howard took me for a race on his Mum30, which he won. Later on, Adrian Donald showed me his yacht *Exodus*, and then *Catriona*. The decision to become members of the RSAYS came naturally, with Adrian and Kingsley Haskett as sponsors. The next two years will see us fine-tune the boat in Australian waters, before heading to Polynesia and beyond.



By Trevor Hammond, Rebuild Independence Group

RSAYS members would be aware that a group of boat enthusiasts on Kangaroo Island are currently building at American River a copy of the 45 ft schooner *Independence*, built at the River by American sealers after establishing a temporary base there in 1803. When finished, it will be surveyed for charter to do cruises out on the Bay with interested visitors.

Funding and Building

The project is heavily dependent on donations – materials, equipment, labour and cash. Most are gathered through the energies of RIG's hard-working members. Many donations come from two recurrent sources:

- The \$20 'Buy a Plank' program has raised over \$30,000 to date. That equates to 1,500 individual donors, who have been given a guided tour of the project and the boat's history. That's a lot of enthusiastic presentations from volunteer 'guides'.
- The frequent visits of cruise ships to Penneshaw. These ships disgorge between a few hundred and a couple of thousand cruise passengers each visit and, as well as swelling Boathouse visits, RIG has a stall at the special Cruise Ship Markets.

Other valuable donations come in the form of useful items, machinery or materials. One donor recently presented RIG with a 65 kg anchor, ideal for the 35 tonne *Independence*, and a compass that had served on SA's last trading ketch, *Falie*.

Perhaps the most valuable donation, and hardest to quantify, is the time and effort of RIGgers. Whether it be building the boat, talking to visitors, manning the fund-raising stalls, tending the Boathouse precinct, making simple souvenirs to sell, serving on committee or cooking the ubiquitous barbecues, the project is wholly dependent on their input.



Progress of the build has been less than ideal. While volunteers are willing and able, coordinating that labour has been difficult. A change in strategy has proven effective with a declared work schedule enabling volunteers to plan ahead. With several set tasks undertaken by small teams, the combined enthusiasm is producing measurable and visible progress.

Ballast Head Cup

Squadron members will be familiar with the annual Ballast Head Cup, run in the welcoming waters of Eastern Cove. The New Year's Day race draws many entrants and is intended to be light-hearted ... but sailors will be sailors! RIG conducts a fund-raising barbecue on the beach for weary, returning tars*. It provides a happy scene where visiting and local sailors can relax and chat face to face, rather than gunwale to gunwale.

New ferry service

RSAYS members may be aware of the new passenger ferry service, the *James Cowell*, operated by KI Connections, to

run between Cape Jervis, Penneshaw and American River. Minor complications with the docking facilities at Cape Jervis have delayed the start but it is expected to be underway within weeks. RIG is especially excited by this because the morning/evening ferries will dock at the American River wharf, not 100 m from the Boathouse. Needless to say, this will place a sharp focus on the *Independence* project. In conjunction with this enterprise, an Air Village is planned for the airstrip just above nearby Pelican Lagoon. So if you want to fly in fresh crew ...

St Ayles Skiffs

The Boathouse is also currently home to another boat-building endeavour, the St Ayles Skiffs, with separate funding and work-team. Simply described as a small surf-boat with four staggered rowers and a steersman, the attractive skiffs add a complimentary flavour to the maritime focus of the site. Once the two skiffs are finished, many keen oarsmen and women ('oarspersons' doesn't really work does it?) will bend their backs to the 'Heave-ho' of the skipper.

Things are happening at the River. Come and see us at the Boathouse next time you're driving/sailing/flying to KI. For further information see www.rebuildIndependence.org



*TARS. An affectionate name for a sailor, derived from their habit in the days before the issue of official uniform of treating their canvas coats and hats with tar as a protection against the weather. It was a contraction of tarpaulin.

Source: The Oxford Companion to Ships & the Sea Edited by Peter Kemp