

Miss Robyn, RSAYS Duty and Rescue Boat

It is easy to take the presence of *Miss Robyn*, the Squadron's racing duty and rescue boat for granted for she is always at her berth near the clubrooms, always at race starts and finishes and always available for use in many different ways. Dick Richards (*Hannah*) decided to find out more. His account makes fascinating reading.

You will have noticed that *Miss Robyn* has had a complete exterior refurbishment including a re-fibreglassed foredeck and cabin top, ready for next year's racing calendar. This powerful and comfortable work boat has served the Squadron for several decades thanks to the support and generosity of her owner David Henshall, who maintains her at his cost and carries out most major maintenance tasks himself. She is skippered by John Ellison, Racing Officer, with a crew of two or three regular volunteers including Ric Ottaway, Simon Barnes and Helen Ellison, ably assisted by John's poodle Milly. A second duty boat, *Macro*, an Arvor 23, owned and skippered by Robert Henshall is smaller and faster. She places the marker buoys and is stationed at the windward marks. The back up vessel for race days is the large and seaworthy 11 m. aluminum fishing boat *Wilbur*, designed by Phil Curran of Fremantle, built and owned by Brian Sutherland, and skippered by Langdon Hamlyn.

In consultation with the Racing Committee John Ellison on *Miss Robyn* coordinates the laying of the marker buoys for each race, monitors the race, fires the gun for the start and finish and records the results. With *Macro* and *Wilbur*, she also rescues boats in strife and tows the Etchells in on windless afternoons.

Miss Robyn was built in 1972. The hull was made by Peter Kruger in Port Lincoln as the plug for the Kruger 40 work boat and the fit-out was completed by Austral Yachts of Hackam. The boat finally launched in May 1974 for the late feisty Mount Gambier businessman Alan Scott. With typical bravado and black humor Alan named her *Enola Gay*. Younger members may not know that that name came from the B52 aircraft that atom bombed Hiroshima in WW II. She is, in the old measurement, 40 ft OA, 38 ft LWL, 13 ft beam, weight 12 tons.

The boat was leased to the Squadron by Alan in 1990 and later renamed *Miss 5DN*. It was then sold to RSAYS in 1994 and renamed for the third time *Scotty*. In 1996 the club sold it to David Henshall who renamed her yet again, *Miss Robyn* after his daughter.

During the America's Cup preparations in Adelaide in 1985 she was put forward as a duty boat for *South Australia*, our entry for the America's Cup to be held in Perth in 1987. Sadly *South Australia* was eliminated during the pre-race trials and did not compete in the final event in Fremantle.

South Australia was designed by Ben Lexen and built of aluminum in Sydney by Steve Ward and Co. She was 19.80 meters loa, 13.54m on the waterline, 2.66 m. draft and displaced 24.32 tons. One of the principal sponsors was Mitsubishi Motors in Adelaide and she was trialed here. On the day that the Cup committee was to visit the Squadron to inspect the *Enola Gay*, Julian Murray, now our slipmaster but at the time, resident contractor with his partner Wendy, were hastily asked to paint out the politically controversial name. In the event the Cup Committee rejected the offer of our duty boat. When Alan Scott heard that the name of the boat had been changed he was furious and insisted that the old name be restored. Perhaps he held the old superstition about boat name changes carried out without appropriate ceremony!

Major Damage to Keel

In 2003 *Miss Robyn* suffered major damage while being slipped at the Squadron. With her two stern drives and large engines she had to be maneuvered well forward in the cradle because she was heavy by the stern. On the day of the accident watchers on the shore were horrified to see the boat sink onto the cradle with a heart rending crunch as the keel collapsed and the bearers ripped into her hull. At first it was thought that she was a total write off but following an assessment by the shipwright Bill Porter and much wringing of hands, David Henshall decided to commission Bill Porter to restore her. Bill spent long hours, initially on his back shoring up the boat, stripping, repairing and fitting a new, stronger keel.



Some years later in 2006 David determined to make more major changes to *Miss Robyn* and his detailed account of the saga follows.....

"The original Engines were a pair of a Volvo Penta 250 HP TAMD 70 turbo charged diesels driving through stern drives. Very powerful and manoeuvrable but wretched things to maintain. The engines were habitual "slow starters" which resulted in new battery banks being installed with monotonous regularity due to the strain of starting. The stern drives had countless seals and "o" rings which all took turns in leaking and they became a nightmare to keep up to scratch.

New Engines

In 2006, the decision was made to take *Miss Robyn* round to Bill Porters yard to replace the engines and also to burn and scrape decades of anti fouling from the hull and also topsides. Many club members volunteered in this hapless job. The new engines were 'preloved' Nissan 180 HP naturally aspirated engines that were marinised by Dicon of Brisbane. They drive through V drive gearboxes and conventional 2" shafts and 4 blade props.

A pair of hydraulically actuated rudders were fitted and a hydraulic pump fitted to the port engine.

While the original engines enabled *Miss Robyn* to reach 19.5 kts, the new engines can reach only 12 kts. However they start very easily and are very modest in their fuel consumption. Definitely a positive step forward!

While work was proceeding at Porters, the Department of Land Management was giving Bill a hard time about closing his business as the buildings and slip were scheduled to be demolished and new and wonderful architecture put up in its place so that the inner port might become a showpiece of great urban development and a monument to the local MP. Bill fought them off for as long as possible but it seemed that we would not make the deadline. With no alternative *Miss Robyn* was launched hurriedly one Saturday morning. The engines were not aligned accurately, and had not been started. We were filled with dread because so many things might have been forgotten which would turn the launching into a disaster. At that point there was no hope of the boat being re-slipped if there was a major problem. Thankfully while the vessel made some water, the engines started immediately.

Launch Drama

Upon putting her into gear a loud thump was felt and heard and the port motor stalled. Near panic! This turned out to be a large block of wood that choked the boat up on the cradle had stuck to the side of the hull and let go just as the prop was engaged. A big shifter spanner hastily attached to the shaft was used to wind the prop back a little and the block floated free. Thank the Lord!. *Miss Robyn* then returned to RSAYS where over another couple of weeks most things were tidied up and she was ready for the 2006/7 sailing season."

One of the many pleasures of racing days is to see *Miss Robyn*, followed by her escorts loaded with marker buoys steaming out of the pool, flags flying, crews busy, against the background of the race crews madly preparing for the start.



Miss Robyn