

By Barry Allison

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 Richard Colebatch who has had wide experience in yachting and in the administration of our Club.



RICHARD started sailing at the Grange Sailing Club when he was 10 and crewed in a Yachting World Cadet dinghy. He remembers one occasion when the skipper's father came rushing down to the beach after they had finished a race to congratulate the pair for completing the course. Richard then moved to the Port Adelaide Sailing Club to sail with his uncle, Bill Raffan, who had built a 16-ft Yachting Monthly Senior. She was launched at Snowdens Beach and sailed up the Port River to the Port Adelaide Sailing Club. This was fine while the breeze was on their beam, however certain problems did arise when tacking towards the Birkenhead Bridge into a westerly breeze – without a motor. The bridge was opened but it required brother Philip to swim between pylons to pull the boat through the bridge and into the Club basin. In later years Bill bought a 22-ft Bluebird and only twice did they sail outside the Outer Harbor. One can imagine how disappointed it was for an adventurous 12-year-old to only tack up and down the Port River.

Richard joined the Squadron on 7 February 1967, being proposed by his grandfather, Norman Ford. His early memories of the Squadron go back to rowing about the Squadron basin in a dinghy with his brother Philip and his grandfather, and of course, only rowing for the maximum 20 minutes allowed. Also in those early years, he remembers visiting Senator Sir Magnus Cormack's yacht *Tainui* to help him clean out all the old cans and bottles from the bilges prior to cruising to the Spencer Gulf

with his many friends. Magnus used to place fishing nets around the mooring floats in the Squadron pool at night, and in the morning pull them in and have a cooked breakfast of fresh mullet.

In his first years at the Squadron, in his mid-teens, he crewed with Alan Behrens. Alan was well known being the builder and owner of the beautiful H28 *Monsoon*. Around this time Alan had decided to build another new yacht designed by John Spencer from New Zealand, more popularly known as 'butter boxes'. Two of these hulls were built alongside each other in Alan's Norwood workshop, one for Alan named *Caravel* and the other for Keith Flint called *Scimitar*. (A third boat, *Kiandra*, was also built at the same time.) When building these craft a unique measure of progress was gauged by the number of empty flagons of dry sherry consumed. The main saloon table allegedly took four and a half flagons to complete. The first cruise was to the West Coast via Port Lincoln, visiting Flinders Island and Venus Bay. These craft had an incredible turn of speed downwind and it was like riding a 45-ft surf board.

Then along came *Zante*, a Duncanson 29 bought from Brian Dixon. Brian had originally bought *Zante* from John Inverarity and only recently has John bought her back again. *Zante* provided the next 20 years or so of incredible cruising for Richard, his wife Tracy, and their two children, David and Claire. On one of the early cruises, after a fairly tortuous day at work, Richard decided the best way to unwind was to load up the boat and just cruise around the Gulf. The weather was perfect with light breezes and so the family pushed off, having had a quick snack at the Ozone Café in Port Adelaide. With both children, aged four and six, asleep in the fore berth, and Tracy having a snooze in the cabin, Richard relaxed with a can of beer and a chicken leg or two and headed across the Gulf. Around 0230 hrs, Tracy was called to help drop the anchor at Port Vincent. The children were amazed at how they had sailed across the Gulf, and Richard was now totally relaxed.

Another voyage with his son David took them across the Gulf at night to Stansbury and then down to American River in delightful conditions, catching the odd



Skipper and crew aboard Caravel. Photo: Harry Nimo
I to r: Allan Brown, Douglas Maxwell-Wright, Chris Nigh, Richard Colebatch and owner Alan Behrens



Zante in the sail past Opening Day 1988

snook or two. They met up with Peter and Barb Osborne on *Ranger*. After two days in American River they decided to return to the Squadron with a marvellous spinnaker run to Rapid Head, where they were hit with a wild southerly buster which blew out the kite. Ken O'Brien was later given the pieces of the blown-out spinnaker, but considered it beyond repair. There were many cruises over the years on *Zante* and she was reluctantly sold in 2016.

In the interim period, David Harris, David Biven and Richard bought the Etchell *Gomas* (Grumpy Old Men At Sea) and raced competitively on Saturdays. A second Etchell *Maxen* owned by Don Hayley was purchased by David Biven, Michael McMichael and Richard. This one was aptly re-named *More Gomas*. There were many exciting times on the Etchells – one in particular when lining up for a start in the Port River. Conditions were wild with plenty of wind and rain with most competitors expecting the race to be cancelled. Suddenly Paul Bognor's *Arcadia* loomed out of the chaos and collided with *Gomas* on starboard tack. Paul had started five minutes earlier than *Gomas* and managed to plug the small hole in his bow and push on. When approaching the Black Pole they noticed a floating vessel which looked like a barge, but in fact was *Arcadia* which had lost its mast. Another exciting time was when they sailed the Etchell across to Port Vincent for an Easter Regatta, a feat not totally sanctioned by some of the Racing Committee.

In 2016, *Aqua Lass* was purchased from Alan O'Donnell and Lynda Walsh. She is a 40-ft centre cockpit Beneteau now 20 years old and will be used for extensive cruising around the east coast of Australia. With son David living in Toronto in Canada and daughter Claire living in Queenstown in New Zealand, and all of the grandchildren being overseas, there are no immediate family ties in Adelaide and so the plans are to port hop around the coast, taking their time and enjoying the sailing.

Richard has had many experiences in yacht deliveries. One of the more memorable was taking Rick Mollison's Catalina 42 *Soleil* to

Sydney and back for the 2000 Olympics, and again when Rick cruised to Queensland. Among the crew on these voyages were David Rawnsley, Kingsley 'Bones' Haskett and Alan and Andrew Swinstead. The quarter berths on *Soleil* provided some fairly intimate relationships when in port with the crew down below trying to sleep.

Other deliveries included bringing Andrew Just's *Tucana* back from Mackay to Adelaide and several voyages on Alan Down's *Salacia* to Tasmanian waters. There were numerous deliveries of David Harris's catamarans – Sydney to Apollo Bay, Kangaroo Island to Robe and Perth to Exmouth via the Abrolhos Group which provided some exciting night sailing in 35 kt winds.

Then followed the delivery of Henry Reich's Huon 32 *Shenandoah*. She was built of timber at Port Huon in Tasmania and they set off in February to sail back via the West Coast of Tasmania. Navigation proved to be a challenge as the charts on Henry's iPad only went as far as Tasmania's South West Cape. While Henry was working on the motor in Strachan he accidentally put his elbow through the iPad and so Richard's phone was used to navigate the rest of the way back to Adelaide.

Perhaps the longest of the delivery voyages was aboard David Harris's Volvo 60 from Adelaide to Hong Kong in 2009. David had engaged the services of a well-known yachtsman, John 'Mega' Bascombe, an ex-navy clearance diver from Port Lincoln, to be part of the crew. The voyage to Hong Kong took six and a half weeks with many ports of call. These stopovers generally occurred at night which made the transit from yacht to shore a fairly hazardous exercise, particularly when Mega confronted the small Asian rowers to ferry him ashore. Sadly, Mega died on the voyage and was taken ashore at Sandakan. The remaining part of the voyage through Subic Bay to Hong Kong

was in extremely rough weather with the seas as high as the second spreader on the 26 m mast and helmsmen having to be acutely aware of the spinning wheel when broaching on large waves. Most agreed that this was the most challenging sailing they had done.

Richard's involvement in Squadron affairs has been over a long period, and includes a rewarding time working with eight Commodores from Richard Smith through to Caillin Howard over 13 years. He joined the Committee of Management in 1995 and remained until 2008. He was Rear Commodore from 2006 to 2008 and was voted Volunteer of the Year in 2008. His continued involvement with RSAYS Ltd has been from 2001, and he was a Director on the Board and Chairman from 2004 to 2008. He has also been a Trustee with the RSAYS Foundation from 2006 to 2008. On reflection, the greatest success over this period was the purchase of the Squadron's freehold. This was achieved because of the efforts of many members, and the disciplined approach to achieving a regular trading surplus in line with the annual budget.

Richard has now retired from his involvement with the plastics industry, having run the family manufacturing company Kemalex in SA and Victoria. He is a director of a number of private companies. He was President of the Engineering Employers Association of SA from 1995 to 1997 and also involved with the Australian Industry Group and Business SA.

With a new craft to play with and plenty of time on their hands, we can be sure that Richard and Tracy will enjoy many more years of cruising our waters. We wish them well.



Richard on Salacia 2014