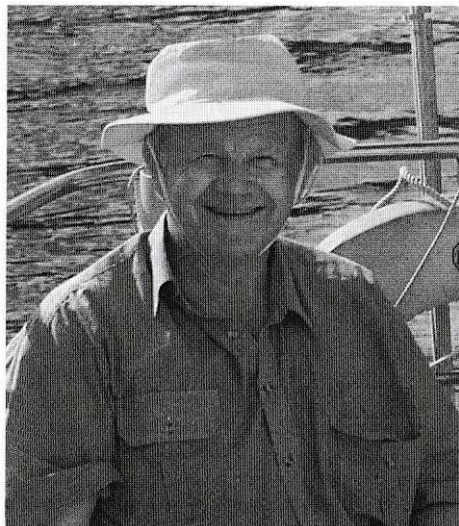


Cruising in Company to Kangaroo Island



Allan Sinclair

The concept of a Cruise in Company (C-in-C) began when Jamie Cowell offered to show Members who had not been there before some of the available anchorages along the North Coast of Kangaroo Island. Eight vessels left the Squadron on Sunday 22 February, 1998 bound for the Cutter Patch on the western side of Troubridge Island. They were —

<i>Adriana</i>	John and Pat Harbison
<i>Bliss</i>	David and Glenys Wright
<i>Chinook</i>	Terry Beaston
<i>Geronimo</i>	Graeme and Judy Measday
<i>Kamatu</i>	Allan and Marlene Swinstead
<i>Mereki</i>	John and Jenny Sparrow
<i>Morning Hustler</i>	Jamie and Anthea Cowell
<i>Soliel</i>	Ric and Dianne Mollison

Morning Hustler left at 0815 and anchored at 1730, after motor-sailing in light conditions. Soon afterwards *Kamatu* and *Geronimo* rafted alongside, followed by *Adriana* and *Bliss*. In a freshening late afternoon sea breeze *Morning Hustler's* anchor was well set with five vessels variously attached to it! John and Jenny Sparrow rowed over to join us after anchoring *Mereki*. *Soliel* and *Chinook* arrived as the party broke up.

Before departure next morning, Graham Measday reported that *Geronimo* had developed a severe electrical fault, and reluctantly was returning to the Harbor. At 0820, in a moderate easterly, *Morning Hustler* led the remaining six vessels through the 'short cut' into Sultana Passage, en route to Knob Point. At the transit between the beacon NW of Troubridge Island and the Sultana Point Beacon each vessel turned to port to traverse the channel leading to Sultana Passage. In doing so they formed in line astern, and looking back from *Morning Hustler* they made a fine sight.

Once clear of Sultana Passage there was an uncomfortable cross sea with a light NE wind, resulting in much rolling and slatting of sails. This prompted Jamie to remark, 'If God had planned for man to use boats he'd have given us three legs.' His observation seemed to have some effect, as the seas gradually flattened, the wind freshened to about 15 knots and we had a lovely sparkling sail to Knob Point.

The feature which gives this anchorage its name is unmistakable from either E or W, with a single scrubby tree growing at an angle just below it. Soon after our arrival at 1700, *The Bottom Line* and *Piping Shrike* appeared from the W. The C-in-C boats arrived over the next hour, as some had closed the coast further E to do some investigating. In all, nine boats spent the night here, but there was still plenty of room.

Next morning brought a forecast of NE to N winds. Jamie motored round the group to suggest a move of 6½ miles W to King George's Bay (Hawk's Nest), which, like Knob Point, is sheltered from the NE and, to a lesser extent, from the N. At 0900 John Sparrow reported that *Mereki* had either a flat battery or a starter problem. *Morning Hustler* moved alongside so that *Mereki's* battery could be transferred and partially charged, but the starter was still inoperable. *Mereki* decided to abandon the C-in-C and await a fair wind to sail for Kingscote and repairs. Meanwhile *The Bottom Line* and *Piping Shrike* had already departed for Kingscote and Shoal Bay, and *Chinook* remained to go fishing and

snorkelling. The rest set off for King George's Bay, and *Morning Hustler* followed later, arriving there at 1300.

King George's Bay (or cove) is magnificent! The water is crystal clear over a sandy bottom, and the beautiful beach is backed partly by grassy open country and partly by a rocky coastline. The day passed in swimming, landing on the beach for some and socialising between boats. That evening the heat was considerably tempered by a faint S breeze across the bay.

Next morning brought a forecast for Adelaide of NW winds and a temperature of 41°C. Our faint breeze from the night before seemed to be a weak cool change, giving us a refreshing SE, ideal for heading W to visit Western River and Snug Cove before spending the night at De Mole River. As we departed at 0930, *Chinook* appeared, after spending the night at Knob Point. We were all in Western River Cove by 1030 for morning tea, and (for some) a swim. By 1200 we were under way again for Snug Cove, 6 miles further on.

From first sighting Cape Cassini I found the coastline fascinating because of its variability. There are numerous bays and headlands, some rocky and eroded and others covered in grass and scrub, and the colours of the rocks were forever changing. West of Western River fascination becomes reinforced by awe as the cliffs increase in height and spectacle. The 1:50,000 series of topographic maps of Kangaroo Island show that along this part of the coast the near vertical cliffs rise to 140 metres or so and are less than 100 metres when intersected by numerous steep-sided gullies, many of which have been named. Sheoak Gully, Castle Gully, Billygoat Gully (appropriately) and Waterfall Creek are but a few. These outlets give the cliff tops an unusual scalloped and symmetrical outline not seen elsewhere along this coast.

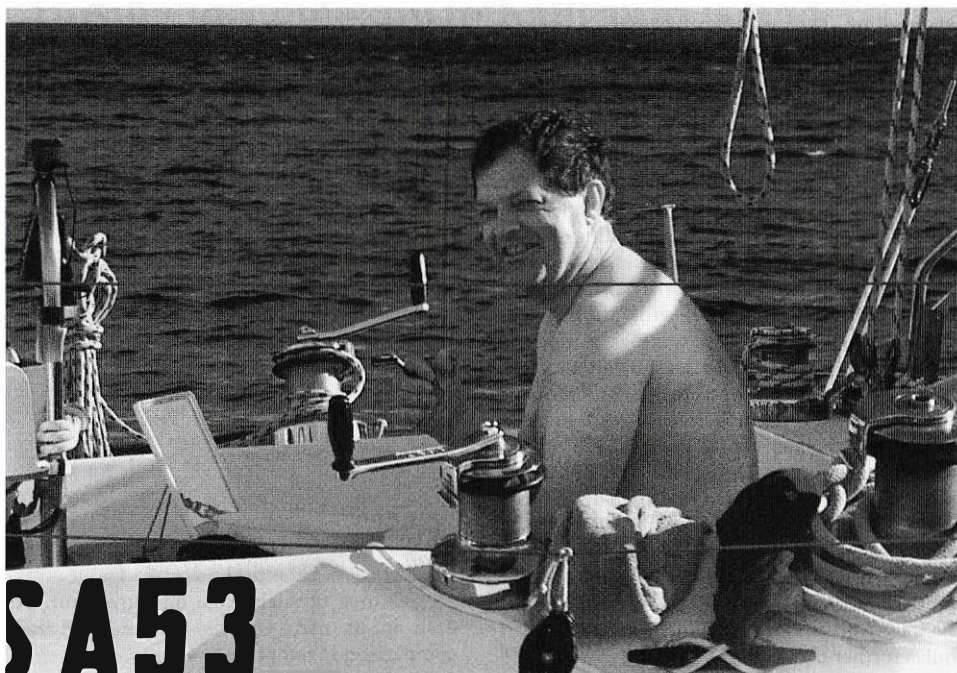
We sailed, then motored fairly close inshore in failing and variable winds. East of Seal Rocks six feral goats wandered along the shoreline at the base of the cliffs, which consisted of waterworn stones ranging in size from pebbles to large boulders. At one point we motored slowly into depths of ten to twelve feet, where

we could clearly see large slabs of rock covered in weed. We drifted up to and occasionally over them as Jamie fished for sweep. Fish were there, but they were not biting. Passing Seal Rocks, complete with seals, we looked into a small cove on the western side, backed by a rock face 500 feet high.

We anchored in Snug Cove for lunch in company with *Chinook* and *Soliel*, but the other three continued on towards Cape Forbin. While our Snug Cove companions went west, we motored two miles back to Seal Rocks to anchor over a sand patch in 42 feet. On one side were seals a hundred yards away and on the other the huge rock face towered above us. It was an absorbing place. Behind us (approximately west) the base of the cliff has been undermined by the sea to create what looked like a small tunnel. Gazing at the rock face over a cup of coffee, it seemed to me that only in the Northern Flinders Range does one see features of such scale and grandeur, but each in its own way is unique and direct comparison is rather meaningless.

By 1750 we were anchored off De Mole River, with the log showing 93.75 miles, having bypassed the attractive Kangaroo Beach with its rolling grassy hills behind — quite a contrast to the scene we had recently left. The anchorage at De Mole River is formed by the curve of the coastline trending S from Cape Forbin before trending W again. There was room for many more boats than our six. The spaciousness of De Mole River makes it much more scenic than Snug Cove in my view, and there is less development.

The morning of Thursday 26 February saw the C-in-C effectively come to an end. *Kamatu* left for the Cutter Patch about 0700; and *Soliel*, *Bliss*, *Adriana* and *Chinook* also headed E to various places to suit their respective timetables. Overnight the anchorage became quite rolly, the only time we experienced such movement. We did not have the moderate to fresh NE to NW winds forecast for Tuesday and Wednesday. Our conditions were light NE or variables, interspersed with calms, as well as the SE mentioned earlier. In hot summer weather such variation in the winds on the North Coast is not unusual.



Richard Colebatch greets the day on Kamatu. (Jamie Cowell)

We escaped the roll before completing breakfast, took our leave from the others and continued W, motoring close inshore to the spectacular and craggy Cape Torrens. Part of it was spotlighted briefly by the sun through a gap in the clouds, and as we approached we were treated to a display of acrobatics by twenty or so dolphins. On the rocks at its base many fur seals were hauled out. A mile or so past Cape Torrens the cliffs reach up to 230-240 metres (780 feet), the highest on the Island, before diminishing at the creek entering the little bay of Harvey's Return. We anchored briefly, but the roll was much the same, so we went on to look into Scott's Cove. This is afforded more W shelter than Harvey's Return, because the hills and cliffs curve behind it to NNW before resuming the W trend to Cape Borda. We continued NW under motor until several hundred yards offshore and NNE of Cape Borda lighthouse, when the fitful and variable breeze freshened from the W, presaging the long forecast S change. *Morning Hustler's* mainsail was set, and at 1100 we turned E. We had cruised the N coast.

The wind was a strong WSW 45 minutes later, and we sailed rapidly past Cape Torrens. The thickening cloud gave the Cape and the cliffs a more forbidding appearance, an impression enhanced by the sight of more goats and the seals at its base, for like us they seemed utterly insignificant against the grandeur towering above. Such a contrast helps to put the immense scale of this coastline into perspective. I thought it a pity that the schedules of the other C-in-C participants did not allow them to come the extra distance to our turning point. To me that last ten miles is the most awesome part of the entire North Coast.

We reached Western River Cove at about 1400, to find *Naiad* and *Estella* already there, in company with the well-known fishing vessel *White Pointer*. The hills to the S and SE have recently been burned, apparently from the carelessness of campers, resulting in ash drifting over the boats during the night. Trying to contact the other boats in the C-in-C from here on VHF and HF was unsuccessful on any channel, although we could hear *Adriana*

calling us and speaking to *Bliss* and *Soliel*. Port Lincoln Coastguard could be raised only on their HF sked.

Making our way E on Friday in a cool SSE, we looked into every little bay we could. SE of Cape Dutton was a small cove, backed by a low eroded reddish cliff with a white sandy beach, fronted by emerald green water and with a reef on its NE side. It would be accessible only from the sea and seemed a pleasant anchorage in suitable weather.

The Mare's Tail E of Knob Point is a very attractive place, where we stopped for lunch. The name derives from the flora hanging down the cliff face in long green strands, together with the effects created by the erosion of constant trickling water.

Soon after leaving the Mare's Tail Jamie spoke to David Harries at the Squadron on HF and to *Adriana* and *Soliel* on VHF. *Kamatu* was blown out of the Cutter Patch with the change and was back home; *Soliel* was en route there; *Adriana*

was at Wirrina and *Bliss* was going there. *Chinook* was presumed to be in Emu Bay. How the C-in-C had scattered in thirty hours! We were close-hauled in typical North Coast summer weather until we anchored in Boxing Bay off a broad sweep of white beach.

Our cruise ended in American River after a frustrating sail across Nepean Bay in variable head winds. The total distance of 181.78 miles completed *Morning Hustler's* 150th return trip from Kangaroo Island to Outer Harbor.

In writing this account I have not given much detail of the holding or shelter characteristics for any of the anchorages we used, as that information is well provided in Jamie's book. Instead, I hope that I have given some indication of the variety, spectacle and grandeur this coast has to offer. Staying close inshore, even though there are dangers to beware of, enables these features to be fully appreciated. They await anyone who, like me, had not previously cruised the North Coast of Kangaroo Island in its entirety.



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