

WINTER CRUISING OUR GULFS

Single handing their sailing vessels *Narda 2* and *Peregrin*, Ken Holbert and Rob Diamond affirmed what many have known before them; that winter cruising our local Gulfs can be an uplifting adventure.

On 30th May '11 we anchored comfortably overnight about an hour north of Outer Harbour in south east to east winds and we knew we were shifting to cruising mode. Rafted together for sundowners then sharing a light meal, we deliberated and planned, ending the evening with little idea of tomorrow's destination.

Dawn brought north easterly winds on which we made for Ardrossan, 36 miles away. This was the first time *Narda* and *Peregrin* had sailed together so it was interesting to see the boats perform against each other. Of 1940's design, *Narda* is a full keel, heavy displacement wooden ketch of 32 feet; *Peregrin* a modern Duncanson 34 foot sloop. In company, it was difficult not to try to best one another, and Rob Diamond's competitive nature(!) emerged. *Peregrin* won the day, especially with a wind shift and sails close hauled. Judicial use of *Narda*'s engine kept the yachts together to finally berth, rafted up at Ardrossan Jetty. Light westerlies meant a comfortable night alongside.

Next day, a delightful 10 mile broad reach to Black Point and formation anchoring convinced us we were ready for a longer cruise. Returning to Port Adelaide (our first

'Peregrin relaxed

back at the Yacht Squadron by lunch time next day for a few days alongside to recover.

Our next destination was Kangaroo Island, for which we departed on the 12th June. With light westerly winds we wafted south to Brighton anchorage on a pretty unpleasant choppy sea. Next day we saw Rapid Bay and rafted up in this sheltered bay for sundowners and dinner. Next morning we crossed Backstairs Passage. Tidal currents

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run 2 to 3 knots so we synced with the tide and were halfway across by mid-morning. When winds eased, the voyage to American River was completed under power.

American River's Strawbridge Pointers (local yachting

enthusiasts) welcomed us to a whale hunt planned for the morrow. *Narda* was selected to embark a locally made 'whale', and after a short sail with five yachts around Western Cove, we anchored to launch the 3 metre wire, shade-cloth and plastic drum Cetacea, tethered. With an inspiring speech by the Japanese Ambassador, the competition commenced with boats' crews made up of a harpoonist, blindfolded pulling hand, and coxswain. The whale was heartlessly skewered and winners were judged on time and technique before an evening BBQ and drinks. After a rest day, *Narda* and *Peregrin* headed for Edithburgh in a freshening westerly wind. Eventually we were enjoying 20 knot winds with fresh cold squalls. Exhilarated, both yachts cruised comfortably inside Sultana Passage and headed for the town jetty. Happiness was being alongside after a great day of sailing.

Our return to Port Adelaide was an easy sail with light winds and a following sea. We were now feeling comfortable about cruising, and ready to venture further a field. Our circular routes were about to get significantly larger.

A couple of days rest, and a cool morning with a mild north westerly wind sent us spilling out on a broad reach for Edithburgh. Next day, whilst on a favoured broad reach along the bottom of Yorke Peninsular, winds freshened and by mid afternoon we were fairly flying. At Marion Bay we worked the average speed for the day at more than 7kts over the 42 nautical miles.

Next day we motored to the Althorpes, arriving about midday and decided to go for a walk-look-see. This meant using *Narda*'s inflatable tender to get ashore. Three of us embarked (an extra crew had stowed away on *Narda* in Marion Bay) and we made our way to the narrow beach, with a gentle surf breaking. With expert boat handling,

this gentle break was just enough to send the tender over nose first, resulting in wet pants and unjustified criticism of the coxswain's talents.

Althorpes is a great place to wander, take photos and enjoy the ruggedness of the south coast. Historic lighthouse and cottages are in fair order, considering the Island is unmanned, with repairs on many buildings evident. However, pathways were precarious and footing

midday Monday we thought the club would be deserted – not so! We were invited to an informal wine tasting to select wines for the forthcoming visit by the Yacht Squadron. Refreshing ales followed and for health reasons (ie so we didn't fall over) we turned in soon after sunset.

Departing next morning was easier but still tight in spots. On the way out we decided to overnight at the St Kilda Boat Club. Up a narrow channel lies this secluded basin, with extra berths for 2 or 3 visitors. We were made welcome at the local pub, enjoying a great meal and good bar conversation. We were



Narda 2 and Peregrin at Althorpe

unsure due to prolific mutton bird burrows underfoot. Althorpe Island provided a comfortable overnight anchorage and a good stepping stone to Spencer Gulf.

On 27th June we entered Spencer Gulf, rounding West Cape on a freshening south easterly wind, skirting nearby reefs where the long westerly swell broke. We headed north, to an evening anchorage off Corny Point township. Exposed to the north and west, by morning with a wind shift, we were bouncing on an ugly chop. Weighing anchor on *Peregrin* was not safe and was delayed until winds abated. Anticipating strong winds on the nose, *Peregrin* turned back towards West Cape to head for Port Lincoln. *Narda*, heavier and with more mechanical horse-power, headed for Port Victoria. By mid afternoon, *Narda* was alongside, and *Peregrin* revisiting West Cape where she had weathered past storms.

During the next few days *Narda* investigated the channel north of Wardang Island and checked out Moonta, then crossed to Franklin Harbour and Cowell. Meanwhile *Peregrin* left West Cape and on a broad reach made Wedge Island in an easy day's sail. Unfortunately, West Bay proved an uncomfortable and stressful anchorage with winds shifting west of north and a south west swell tossing the boat through the night.

For *Narda*, Franklin Harbour provided challenging navigational practice and Cowell a great stop-over; friendly locals, good laundromat and shops, and two pubs, everything a sailor needs.

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With a change looming, both yachts had to reach Port Lincoln without delay. *Narda* left Franklin Harbour, and set a cruising spinnaker for a lively run on a short following sea. Solo sailing in fresh conditions is exhilarating but after seven hours energy reserves are drained. The reward was covering 58 miles to arrive at Tumby Bay before sunset.

Peregrin's experience was similarly exhausting but for different reasons. Dirty squalls with westerly wind shifts were now marching over the lower gulf, buffeting *Peregrin* and bringing sharp choppy seas and bursts of cold rain. By sunset *Peregrin* had completed the 25 mile uphill sail and moored in Port Lincoln Marina, with a wet, cold and tired skipper finally collapsing into a good night's sleep. Next day, *Narda* completed her sail south rejoining *Peregrin* for celebratory drinks and the telling of tall tales. The next five days were spent alongside Port Lincoln town jetty and in the marina. The pleasure of sitting in a cafe on the waterfront on a sunny winter's day admiring one's own yacht was repeated with relish - and pizza. The two wandering pilgrims had found temporary sanctuary.

Time to return, island hopping via Thistle and Wedge. At Wedge Island, wind and seas had risen,

necessitating a lay-over in the anchorage north of the island. Overnight, with gale force winds from the south, both yachts dragged anchor, thankfully with no adverse effects except embarrassment. *Peregrin's* excuse was that he had headed off early to pick up milk and the papers! A day's rest at Wedge allowed for a stomp ashore, where we were amazed at the size of the burrows inhabited by the black footed rock wallaby abundant on the higher grounds. With seas abating, we sailed to West Cape, finding good shelter from south westerly weather. Another hike ashore - by now boat beaching technique had been perfected; me staying dry and Robert getting soaked from the waist down, mostly due to his enthusiastic jumping into the sea - no stopping him at times. Walking to Pondalowie allowed us to take in the great scenery, snap a few photos and chat to other reclusives on this isolated and unspoilt waterfront. Next morning on nor'westerlies, we easted as far as

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possible. Making good time we pushed on to an eerily still and dark Sultana Passage, anchoring south of Edithburgh jetty. The following day was a run ashore, mooring *Narda*

stern to on the town jetty and enjoying the town's pleasures. Then overnight, *Peregrin* dragged anchor on the weedy bottom, unfortunately onto a lee shore. Initial efforts to free her from this shoaly perch were futile, with a delay waiting for the flood tide. Despite this, we made Port Vincent in good time, entering the bay after twilight to anchor without mishap.

We felt that one last spree was necessary, so the next day it was alongside at the marina, then into town. Despite the pull of coffee shops, fast food outlets and an excellent playground, we settled down in the local hotel and managed lunch, then dinner, and an ad-hoc Karaoke night featuring two well intentioned but barely musical pilgrims. Hotel patrons were not impressed with our talent but we did avoid being kicked out by leaving first.

Port Adelaide was made next day in a comfortable sail and we were home once again.

In seven weeks we had covered more than 750 nautical miles in circles and visited some great cruising destinations in St Vincent and Spencer Gulfs and Kangaroo Island. We had shared good times with locals, experienced a range of winter weather largely blessed with fair winds and following seas, seen some powerful coastal panoramas, climbed hills, hiked beaches and lost sleep in open anchorages. Essentially, we had shared a full chapter in the life of cruising yachtsmen.

More importantly, we shared the experience and enjoyed one another's company, returning home safely and the richer for our experience.

Footnote: During spring and summer *Narda* continued to cruise Gulf St Vincent and Kangaroo Island whilst *Peregrin* made a return trip to Port Lincoln.



Rafted up for Sundowners at Marion Bay