

This is another in a series of profiles featuring Club members who, through their long term commitment and outstanding support, have contributed significantly to the life of the Club.

ALAN COTTON

Alan is a Foundation Member of the Cruising Yacht Club of South Australia and together with the likes of Dick Fidock and Malcolm Kinnaid, he participated in forming the original membership base of the Club. He has also been a member of the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron for nearly 50 years.

Being born a fourth generation Streaky Bay boy to a living legend, local general practitioner father, Alan was imprinted with the sea from childhood, spending much of his early years fishing for whiting with Streaky Bay fishermen from local fishing cutters and catching blue swimmer crabs from the jetty to sell them for sixpence a dozen to the city slickers coming over to Streaky Bay on the *Yandra*.

He was sent off to boarding school at St Peter's College where he spent much of his teenage years playing football and cricket and, after building and sailing a Rainbow at the age of 16, he started sailing as a foredeck-hand on 80 year old Len Walter's Virtue Class yacht at the Yacht Squadron, this giving him access to the knowledge and stories from the days of the square riggers owned by the Walter and Morris Timber Company in the early 1900s.

He completed a medical degree at Adelaide University choosing to specialise in Psychiatry. While at university he bought his first deep keeler with John Jackson, the restricted 21 Ardale built in the '30s which had a three horsepower Simplex petrol engine and which they brought from Three Dock to the RSAYS. Then followed several years when they rebuilt it, re-caulked the seams, steamed ribs, put on a deck canvas with red lead and re-rigged the vessel with galvanised rigging.

Alan sailed out of the RSAYS for some 45 years, initially with his two daughters in carry baskets, inviting some 35 of his school friends to his first opening day some 45 years ago, which crew have attended every year ever since.

To improve his skills, although always skippering his own yachts, he crewed with senior racing yachtsmen out of the Yacht Squadron including Richard Fidock, David Judell, Ion Ullett and a number of others, doing all of the off-shore races summer and winter over a number of years, during which time he bought *Wyruna*, a 43-foot bowsprit ketch, this time with a six horsepower petrol Simplex engine, built for the Dutton family to sail down to Rocky Point in 1903.

This led to several years of Christmas sailing to the Banks Group with the Judells, Ulletts, Taylors and a number of others, where the children grew up on the beaches while he continued to race off-shore doing his first Sydney-Hobart on Jim Polson's *Narrandera* in the early '70s.

It was about this time that John Duncanson set up to built fibreglass yachts at Webb Street and Alan became involved in building the first of the Duncanson 35s, *Satyricon*, which he campaigned with John Duncanson, Donny King, Pat Hill and Dean Furniss leading to a Sydney-Hobart and he really being part of what in those days was a "works team", racing offshore summer and winter, doing the Sydney-Hobart each year in *Maggie*, *Hornet* and with Richard Fidock on *Cedalion*.

At about the age of 35 he sold *Satyricon* to David Judell, took long service leave from being a Senior Psychiatrist, Clinical Director at Glenside Hospital, built the Duncanson 35, *Circus*, and set out to sail to Tahiti as the weather rounding mark only to roll the boat through 360° some 800 miles into the southern Tasman out of Hobart, knocking out the mast and half-filling the boat with water. He and the three crew barely managed to get the boat back to Hobart where, over some ten days, the boat was rebuilt and they set off again, this time getting to Tahiti via New Zealand and Rarotonga. He picked up his family, with Annabel and Belinda now being aged eight and six, and with Peter and Jenny



Last doing the first leg back to Rarotonga, successfully sailed the boat via Tonga and Fiji back to Adelaide, Peter White from the Squadron having flown up to Fiji to help sail the boat in when he caught Dengue Fever.

Having bought a farm at Nairne for the children's horses, with long-time sailing companion, Professor Seamark, lead scientist on the human IVF programme, and with the help of Professor Armstrong from Canada, he set about developing Embryo Transfer in small ruminants as part of the Human IVF programme. This led to the next ten years commuting back and forth to New Zealand, marketing frozen embryos, setting up high-tech artificial breeding programmes in angora goats and sheep, and being quite extensively caught up in agri-business while he continued his ongoing psychiatric practice and sailed on weekends.

By the mid-80s he sold *Circus* to buy his current William Garden 52-foot bowsprit ketch, *Cabaret* which is berthed in B6 at the Club and, together with Bronwyn, he entered in the Tall Ships' Race, sailing with friends and trainees to Melbourne, Hobart and Sydney, the highlight of which was the Parade of Sail on Sydney Harbour for the Bicentenary. Alan and Bronwyn continue to sail *Cabaret* in local waters most weekends.

By about 1995 he realised that having been a doctor for much of his life he was not much of a businessman so he shut down the Embryo Transfer company and bought the Beneteau 43 *Southern Cross* in St Thomas, US Virgin Islands, where his daughter, Annabel, had become a professional yachting, this leading to the next five years sailing up and down the West Indies from St Thomas to Trinidad with Bronwyn for six weeks a year, eventually leaving the boat in Trinidad to spend two seasons sailing the north coast of Venezuela.

By 1999 they decided things were becoming somewhat too dangerous in the Caribbean and Venezuela with locals shooting at yachtsmen so he and Bronwyn sailed along the north coast of Venezuela to the San Blas, through the Panama Canal and down the Milk Run, via the Galapagos, Marquesas, Tahiti, Suvarov, Samoa and Tonga to Fiji where he kept the vessel for two years then took her back to Tonga for the next five years. Last year they brought *Southern Cross* back to Fiji, he and Bronwyn now spending two months a year sailing in the Yasawa Group out of the Vundpoint Marina in Fiji.

A more recent acquisition has been *Picnic*, a 26 foot Noble Super V plate aluminium power boat, which he keeps on a trailer at the Yacht Squadron, this being suitable for towing to Streaky Bay, Coffin Bay, Tumby to get to the Banks Group, or the River Murray on long weekends.

When he recently had to get a Skipper's Certificate to charter in Croatia and had to list his sailing experience over the last 50 years, apart from day sailing, he was not surprised to find that in fact he had spent more than five years full-time of his life out on the ocean. Now at 70, having partially retired, as has Bronwyn, they are both likely to spend even more time at sea with boats and other yachting, the ocean continuing unabated to be a lifelong passion.

Alan commented that over the years he has found the CYCSA to provide a unique blend of management expertise interacting with and implementing the broad wishes and aspirations of its membership. He enjoys the ambience of the Club and can be found, together with Bronwyn, on board *Cabaret* most weekends.

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