THE FIRST CRUISE OF NERIDA.....1934 (Continued)

Sunday - 11th February. Early to rise and to find another calm day in the making. Left with the intention of visiting Dangerous Reef and its bird life and seals, but after several hours of close hauled work we gave up the attempt. The wind fell lighter and lighter: the sky becoming overcast with some lightning in the N. and N.E. The fishing cutter "Gladys" out of Moonta passed us, close enough to exchange greetings. With her surprisingly light and white canvas, under all sail including a jack yard topsail and a water sail, she was going well in the light air. The wind shifted back into its old quarter, so we made for Spalding Cove and Fisherman's Point. Before coming to anchor for the night, we rested awhile at the foot of Stamford Hill (474 feet) which Dempster, Eimer and Ford proceeded to climb. It was from this point that Matthew Flinders accompanied by Midshipman Franklin (afterwards Sir John Franklin) surveyed the harbor and named it and many of the outstanding features of the landscape. It was noticed with regret that vandals had been at work on the monument. Some of them had gone to the trouble of chiselling on it the names of people who really do not count for much in the scheme of things.

Then to Fisherman's Point for the night and once again the gill net functioned. Dinner (a late one) the joint effort of the Master and Dempster, was such an excellent effort as to merit special mention. And so to bed.

Monday - 12th. An early rising. Coffee on the table at 6 a.m. and taking no thought of breakfast we set out on a second attempt at Dangerous Reef. On clearing Cape Donington we found plenty of wind outside, but dead ahead and a considerable sea. Turned up all hopes of visiting the reef and made down the passage for Taylor Island. A splendid sail with much spray flying and came to an anchor on the S.W. end of Taylor's with the fishing cutter "Playfair" (named after one of her builders), Walter Westerman and "Uncle" in charge, anchored about a cable's length to windward. All hands except Chef Dempster (very busy with Mrs.

Maclurcan) ashore for a walk and further study of the Islands of the Group, from the height attained by Taylor Island, 227 feet. Two members of the party traversed the full length of the Island on its Western side and returned by the Eastern side. A beautiful seascape.

The Master, a great believer in local knowledge went on board the "Playfair" and on some pretence or other, prevailed upon her owner to visit "Nerida". He came accompanied by his passenger one Mummery, a toothsmith out of Port Lincoln. The chart was produced and much talk about bearings on Marum, Stickney, Roxby, Kirkby and all the other "bys" was indulged in by Westerman and his host while the rest of us did a little quiet drinking. Judging from a remark dropped subsequently by Westerman, visiting yachtsmen apparently do not cultivate the fisherman to any extent. Which is a pity, for a fairly long experience of the men on the cutters has shown them to be, in the main, a splendid lot of fellows, obliging to a degree and ever ready to tell the amateurs as much as they need to know about the locality they happen to be visiting. But we'll spare the Master's blushes, by closing the incident.

After dinner, a Maclurcan curry - (logged it is) the gill net went ashore but the catch consisted mainly of small carpet sharks, who being devoid of backbone are able to contort themselves in a fashion that would make Ferry the Frog go greener than ever. They didn't do the net much good.

Tuesday - 13th February. Tea on the table at 6 a.m. and the anchor was hove up. Arrived at that very beautiful spot Memory Cove, where we breakfasted. Then ashore to look upon the tablet which was erected in place of the one made by Flinders to record the loss of John Thistle, the Master, William Taylor, Midshipman, and six men of the "Investigator's" crew, Lewis, Little, Grindal, Hopkins, Smith and Williams.

Flinders in his Journal of a voyage round Australia wrote that the party had gone ashore at Memory Cove to search for water. The background of densely clothed hills of considerable height would naturally suggest the presence of water soakages, but the party were unsuccessful in their quest: they were seen to put out into the Thorny Passage but were apparently caught in the tide ripples and capsized. The inscription on the tablet records the disaster in terse seamanlike fashion, as follows:-

MEMORY COVE

H.M.S. Investigator. M. Flinders, Comr.
anchored here February 22nd, 1802.

Mr. John Thistle, the Master, Mr. William Taylor, Mid'n. and six of the crew were most unfortunately drowned near this place from being upset in a boat. The wreck of the boat was found but their bodies were not recovered.

NAUTICI CAVETE

Flinders felt the loss of Thistle keenly and expressed his sorrow in unmistakeable language - he was apparently one of England's lesser worthies - men who in Newbolt's fine phrases:

"Whether their fame centuries long should ring
They cared not overmuch
But cared greatly to serve God and the King
And keep the Nelson touch.
And fought to build Britain above the tide
Of wars and windy fate;
And passed content, leaving to us the pride
Of Lives obscurely great."

So matter of fact were these "dogs of an elder day" that but for the disaster that befell the men of the "Investigator",

the world would have known of Bass only as a member of the boat's crew that sailed and rowed from Port Jackson to Westernport Victoria - the wonderful journey that led ultimately to the discovery of the fact that Van Diemen's Land was not a part of the mainland of Australia. But Flinders in his notice of the passing of his Master mentions that he accompanied Mr. Bass on his voyage in the ship's boat and subsequently was one of the eight men who volunteered to man the "Norfolk" when Flinders and Bass set out to put at rest all doubts as to the existence of a strait between the two lands.

Fishing at the cove no good, so after a bathe, sail was made and with the wind fresh in the South East, enough clouds hurrying across to cast a diversity of shadows upon the dark green scrub on the mainland, we passed on to Snug Cove, Thistle Island. A day of glorious sunshine, the water all aglow and considerable surf breaking on every exposed point. The anchorage at Snug Cove is about a mile W.S.W. of Observatory Point with a low rocky point just closing on Cape Catastrophe - the highest point of Thistle Island bearing S.E. The anchorage can be further identified by a lone she-oak on the sandhills backing the beach, just clear of the cliffs marking the Island's highest point.

On landing, Mrs. Tapley was visited and her permission obtained to shoot turkeys. Dempster showed himself to be a great gun: he knocked his first turkey at a distance of at least 20 yards. It was not a "sitter" - the bird was walking at the time, head down, feeding and blissfully unconscious of what was coming his way. Several hares were sighted: they were in Eimer's department and were quite safe, he being unable to distinguish between the respective carrying capacities of a .303 rifle and a choke bore sporting gun. The flies, of a small black and very persistent variety, finally drove us down to the beach and into the water.

The cutters "Jennifer" and "Britannia" anchored close to us -

the former with a new party on board - W. Flannagan, Robert Lee, Jack Thompson, Frank Knabe and Phil Levy. Flannagan, Levy and Thompson came on board to find the Master concentrating on the problem "Why does the fat froth?" His passion for exactitude in all things save place names, caused him to reject the flippant answer "Because the froth fats." Mystery duly solved and henceforth pepper to be added only when the cooked article is on the plate and not while it is in process of being cooked. This valuable scientific discovery to be included in later editions of Beeton and Maclurcan. The outboard dinghy this night laid the net on Observatory Point, L.J.C. Wigan officiating. A large catch of Tommies resulted. "Those as catches em, cleans em," being the rule, Dempster and Wigan were kept busy for quite a while, but they had a fine night for it.

This evening the wind came in fresh from the S.E. and the temperature dropped, appreciably. Very late to bed.

Wednesday - 14th February. At 7 a.m. Dempster ashore to shoot another turkey and if possible a hare. Our gun was reinforced by one from the "Jennifer", Jack Thompson on the trigger. Dempster slaughtered (there is no other word for it) two birds and Thompson one. The hares were quite safe - they were able to move at a respectable pace. Many were sighted, and they'll keep until February 1935.

After breakfast prepared by the Master, who used frothless fat for the first time, the anchor was got and we proceeded to Whaler's Bay. Hove the yacht to with Horney Point just closed on the South Eastern extremity of the Island and with the most prominent tree on the skyline over Cook's House, snapper the object of our heart's desire. No luck - sharks very busy on anything the moment it was hooked. One cocktail brought to the surface and caressed with a hammer, but he got away. Whilst we were still losing bottoms (hooks and sinkers, I mean) the "Stormy Petrel" sailed in from Wedge Island. On board Messrs. T.C. Angove, R.H. Martin, A.B. Harvey, Pat Evans, Roger Angove and Victor Anderson

and Alf Glansford forward. Wind now in the South West with some light rain. The "Jennifer" then arrived and it was observed that Jack Green took her much closer in to Horney Point than we had ventured. His passengers were soon fishing and, what was better, catching them, so after Eimer and Ford had been put ashore (Eimer still threatening the hares) the Master accompanied by Dempster and Wigan anchored as close to the "Jennifer" as they dared and they too caught some quite decent travalli and whiting.

Presents of quail from the "Stormy Petrel" and crayfish and oysters from the "Jennifer" put the chef, Dempster again, in possession of the making of a meal, and it was some dinner indeed. Then A.B. Harvey came aboard and a touching exchange of various compliments took place; a bottle of Martin's Bodega Sherry with compliments responded to by a bottle of Hardy's Liqueur Port: Harvey left, accompanied by Dempster (still in his chef's uniform) he having arrived at a state of mind which positively demanded his attention to social duties. It was early in the morning ere Dempster returned but no one observed or heard his arrival.

Thursday - 15th. In the early hours of the morning the wind came in fresh from E.S.E. and with the tide ebbing an uncomfortable swell set in to the Bay. We rolled about for a while - then coffee - then the anchor - and then we left for Snug Cove and breakfast in comfort. The wind against the tide kicked up a quite considerable sea. One only, came aboard - slopped over the coaming of the cockpit and gave the poor old cook a nasty fall. It was not the weight of the water so much as its unexpectedness and coolness as it penetrated his little khaki shirt, that caused him to sit down violently. Then the recovery roll brought his ribs in contact with the cockpit seat and he changed color visibly. The medical stores were broached, for the first time, and after a stiff brandy the cook recovered so quickly as to justify a suspicion that he'd

done it on purpose. And then we remembered his attention to social duties the night before. Truly, there are ways and ways.

Stood well up past Observatory Point and then down the line between Black Rock and Lewis Island until the cliffs on Thistle bore S.E. and shortly after the anchor was down and we were busy on a breakfast - fish caught on the previous afternoon.

Breakfast over, the anchor was got and through a small but somewhat confused sea we went to Lincoln - easy sailing with the wind a little aft of the beam. A curious effect resulted from a quite distinct range persisting from the S.W. although the wind had been for some hours and was still blowing quite fresh from East of South East - evidently caused by the foul ground and numerous reefs between the islands in Thorny Passage.

On arrival at the Town Jetty, Eimer and Ford went ashore to replenish the bread locker etc., the "Nerida", cynosure of all eyes, lying hove to. On return of the shoppers, the headsails were adjusted and there ensued a delightful sail to the head of Proper Bay, the wind all the time hauling round until it was due East.

During the night it rained steadily for some time. We heard next day that the township recorded 60 points and the surrounding district up to 1.25.

Friday - 16th February. Wigan's last day with us, his leave approaching expiry. Even the heavens were weeping. The projected walk across to Sleaford Bay (named by Flinders after Geo. Bass's birthplace) was a wash out in every sense of the word. A thin driving rain showed no sign of abating and as it was urgently necessary that Wigan should catch the "Minippa" sailing that evening, we up anchor and returned to the township. The "Stormy Petrel" was again close at hand. The Master this day was able to exercise his undoubted flair

for entertaining. Messrs. Muir, McFarlane, Peter Mitchell, Puckridge, Town Clerk Sharley, Fisheries Inspector Randell, and Percy Mundy, Critic, came aboard. Much talk on boats ensued, Mundy faulting the "Nerida" in one particular - the brass work needed polishing.

All groceries, drinks, vegetables and meat having been stowed, Wigan was given a hasty meal and left to our general regret, as well as his.

Saturday - 17th. Awoke to find the clouds of yesterday dispersed. A humid day and our efforts at drying the clothes wet by yesterday's steady drizzle, were more or less futile. Got a very early start, our intended destination being Revesby, with a call on the snapper at Berlin Rock en route. Wind very light so after clearing Maria Point the engine was started. In fact is was started many times and ran fitfully, when it ran at all, encouraged all the time by Eimer whose language (the day was hot and muggy) rivalled that of Masefield's Mate who in his hour of trial said things "that turned the port light grassy green and the starboard rosy red." No fish were caught at Berlin Buoy - we gave them much encouragement but without result. The day's disasters included Dempster's discovery that a Thistle Island Turkey, shot at a cost of 5/- and a cartridge, had gone bad on us. He was thrown overboard near the Berlin Rock at 2 p.m. - a fact worthy of note in view of a later development. With only two hours of daylight available and with no desire to spend some hours amongst the, to us, little known islands and reefs of the Sir Joseph Banks group we turned westward and stood inshore for the anchorage behind Cape Bolingbroke. Found this to be a good spot; but approaching it from seaward some care has to be exercised as a reef with depths as low as 5 feet to 3 feet extends from the Westward of the point for a distance of 2½ miles. In addition there is a reef extending for half a mile in a Southerly direction from the point. This night the chef put on Roast Turkey - one of the birds he shot at Thistle Island. On being deprived of its foliage

it was found to be about as big as an undersized fowl, but having hung on the rigging for days it was at least tender. The cook moaned like a damned Yankee crooner about his alleged lack of judgement on the matter of vegetables, but the dinner simply shouted for logging. Early to bed.

Sunday - 18th February. Early to rise on a beautiful day. Two cutters which we had observed drifting about on the horizon all the previous day were seen at anchor about a mile South of us - in fact right under the point. The Master, ever avid for local knowledge, suggested a visit to the fishermen, so the dinghy with outboard attached, was called upon for duty. Charlie Olgren of the "Olga" told us enough to satisfy us that the Skipper's extraordinary activity with the prismatic yesterday, was a wise precaution. According to Olgren, on approaching Peake Bay from seaward, Kirkby Island should be kept well open on Bolingbroke and before turning for the anchorage, a distance of at least 2½ miles should be covered. Then a course should be steered for the Rocky Point, at the South end of Peake Bay, for upwards of a mile, before turning East again for the anchorage. Note. These instructions were later discounted by Frank Phillips and then, still later, confirmed by Capt. Kihlberg. Two to one, on the side of caution - or if we include the Master, three to one. Caution has it.

This morning we gave the ship a thorough overhaul and cried aloud "Fetch out your Mundys". Then the anchor was hauled up and a second attempt at Revesby began. Having reversed yesterday's procedure, we rounded the end of the reef and very nearly collided with the turkey, which we had consigned to the deep 21 hours before. Sharks, about which we hear so much are evidently as few and far between as the snapper.

With a splendid breeze from the South on our beam, we stood across giving Kirkby a wide berth to starboard so as to avoid the Theophany Reef and the foul ground that lies between it and Marum and Partney Islets. Picked up the light tower on Winceby, stood in to the Northern end of Revesby

but seeing a cutter, the "Goldetta" at anchor under the small spit on the North Eastern end of Marum, we went across and anchored close by in 3 fathoms. After a walk round Marum we tried for fish but without success: our failure was apparently owing to our lack of decoy lines - a device new to us. In the evening Frank and Len Phillips came aboard and gave useful information about the Revesby anchorages. In Frank Phillips we found not only a fisherman but an enthusiast on all matters pertaining to boats. He claimed to know all there is to know about the Group - he has been fishing hereabouts for some 10 years and should be able to justify his claim. On hearing of our method of approaching the Bolingbroke anchorage, he said it could be attained without making the passage round the spit, which according to him has sufficient water on it anywhere from a cable length off the rocks to half a mile inshore, to allow a boat of "Nerida's" draught to pass over it and so save the best part of 6 miles sailing.

See previously expressed opinion of Charlie Olgren and plump for "Safety First". These fishermen many of them with rather shallow draught boats and all of them with a wide local knowledge, can run risks, or appear to do so, that amateurs do well to shun.

Phillips' directions for various anchorages near Revesby are worth recording against possible future visits.

Lusby. Kirkby Island in line with the outermost exposed rock on the reef extending from the N.W. side of Lusby, about 1 cable off shore in 2 fathoms.

Revesby, South Anchorage. Opposite a wide gap near the Southern end of the sandhills, with Kirkby Island bearing 250° magnetic. About 2 cables off shore in 2½ fathoms.

Revesby, North Anchorage as described in the Pilot.

Marum (In Southerly weather). Off N.E. side of Marum, about

1 cable off shore in 3 fathoms with the small sand spit extending from the N.E. side of the Island, bearing approximately South.

Marum (In Northerly weather). Winceby light just open on the end of the small sand spit extending from the N.E. side of the Island with Kirkby just open over rocky point extending from the S.E. side of Marum, about 1 cable off shore in 2 fathoms.

Very late sitting, Phillips Bros. not departing until well after midnight. During the night and especially in the early hours of the morning, the wind freshened until it was blowing fairly hard from East of South East; but the anchorage was quite comfortable and bore out all that Phillips had said of it.

Monday - 19th. "Abluting" a bit late this morning, Frank Phillips again on board with an offering of fish for breakfast and also as an excuse to satisfy his curiosity regarding the "Nerida's" gear. Breakfast stowed, we up anchor and went across to Revesby South Anchorage, where we came to rest in 2½ fathoms, about a quarter of a mile off shore.

In addition to the "Goldetta", three cutters "Ruby", "Olga" and "Elena" were working these grounds. During the afternoon a sail was observed on the horizon it appeared to be the "Stormy Petrel" making from the direction of Thistle Island, or perhaps more likely, Dangerous Reef.

A most beautiful day, with a fresh South Easter blowing, and a walk ashore was enjoyed by all hands. Went round the nobby south end of the Island and had a fine view of Marum, Lusby, Kirkby, Sibsey, English, Dalby, Blyth, Hareby, Langton and Roxby Islands, with Spilsby and Boucaut in the far distance. Although we had heard much talk of Adders and Black snakes, saw none. There was abundant evidence of sooty petrels and other members of this bird family, the ground being honeycombed with their burrows. On reaching

the high ground, we found it blowing hard from S.E. with considerable surf on every headland and reef. In the evening the net went ashore but very few fish were caught, the conditions being unfavourable. The fishers met the sole occupant of the Island, one Sawyer in charge of 812 sheep and 1 dog. This night the chef fell from grace: he put up a performance that shook our faith in him as a culinary artist and authority on everything pertaining to gastronomics. For three days he had indulged himself in a morning and evening smell at the meat hung in the rigging then he pronounced it just right for the waterless cooker. But immediately the heat was applied, abusive language burst forth from two of the crew. The cook quite imperturbed contented himself with the remark that the stink would die down as the cooking progressed. In this view he had the support of the Master. But they were both wrong and when the lid was lifted Eimer and Ford dashed with one accord for the forecastle, banging the door to behind them. Even here it penetrated every nook and cranny, oozed out through the ports and beat up to windward against the strong breeze that was blowing. But it beat the cook himself. He attempted to eat some of it: his gorge rose and the meat fell - overboard. Of all the woeful smells, this was surely the worst. A very scratchy meal followed, but the beer was still good.

(To be concluded)