

CONTRIBUTIONS

OCEAN RACING BEFORE THE WAR - AN UNUSUAL PASSENGER

Ocean racing, like so many other sports, is competitive and always has been, but a good many years ago the obsession to win was not quite so prevalent. Being able to take part was the main object for some of us.

At an early age I was the proud owner of PAM, a Camper & Nicholson gaff rigged 15 metre built in 1913 and later converted to a yawl. Her racing days were virtually over but the Royal Ocean Racing Club inspected her, gave her a clean bill of health and a pretty high handicap and I entered her in several of their races.

As a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy I could only just afford to run her, so I drew up rules for my crews who consisted mainly of other naval officers:-

1. Bring your own share of the food.
2. Bring your own booze.
3. Give me a damned good dinner ashore at the end of the trip.

On the Plymouth to Benodet race in 1936 one of my crew brought a live duck as part of his contribution. Horace, as we soon christened him, was a friendly and likeable bird. We grew very fond of him and it was while one of the crew was giving him his morning exercise on deck, as we rounded the Saints to reach into the Bay of Biscay, that Horace decided to go for a swim.

Naturally we had to go about to pick Horace up. After all, the rules stipulate that a crew member must be picked up if he falls overboard!

I can't remember just where we were placed crossing the line at Benodet, but I do know that we were not last and also that Horace was still with us and alive when we got back to England.

E.A. Woodward. 22nd May, 1981

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THE FIRST CRUISE OF NERIDA -- 1934 (Concluded)

(Nerida is at anchor near Revesby Isd. in the Sir Joseph Banks Group).

Tuesday 20th. A very early breakfast followed by an inspection from the dinghy of the Lusby and Marum anchorages as recommended by Frank Phillips. Fixed it definitely that the one at Lusby brings the reef on its N.E. end to bear on the southern end of Kirkby with the reef on the N.W. end of Revesby just on the southern point of Winceby.

The Marum northerly weather anchorage, the rocky point on S.E. end of Marum open a little on Kirkby with the light tower on Winceby half way along the small sand and shingle spit on the S.E. side of Marum.

This day we also observed that to approach the Northerly anchorage when coming in from the S.E., you should leave Winceby on the starboard hand but keep to the middle of the Channel between the two islands; keep well over towards Partney before rounding up to the North of a fairly long sandspit on the seaward end of which a cluster of rocks is uncovered at low water. This spit lies about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the northern extremity of the Island. If it is desired to go on to the Southern anchorage, it is advisable to keep well over towards Partney and Marum before making in towards the remarkable opening in the sandhills, before referred to.

The ketch "Harold" arrived at the North anchorage at mid-day and Captain Kihlberg boarded us, as the result of his remark that he seldom saw such a nice little ship as the "Nerida" cruising in these waters. We found our visitor a most entertaining man with 31 years experience of the coast from Esperance Bay, W.A. to Cape Otway, Victoria, to talk about, and also some priceless stories of old time happenings at Spilsby, Wedge, Revesby and Snug Cove, Kangaroo Island.

None of us who heard him tell of the snake that played the piano whilst the Zion City preacher was holding forth in John Hirst's house at Snug Cove - of the landing of the stud mare

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(by Emulation, if you please) on the Wedge and William Golley's subsequent wonderment and continued asking of the animal "Now where the hell did you come from?" - of the mother of nine who was wont to put her numerous progeny to roost in packing cases and having got them to sleep would close down the lids to prevent the snakes getting in with them - of the famous race between "Janet" (Rick Simms and George Porter) and the schooner "Beatrice" from Donington to the Wedge and of the two days and nights argument that followed on the "Beatrice's" win and the challenge to a race from Wedge, round the South Neptune, thence round Liguanea Island and back to the Wedge - the challenge was not accepted - none of us, I repeat, will ever forget the tales or the masterly way in which they were told. A long walk ashore in the afternoon, all hands prepared to deal out destruction to the snakes and adders with which it is said the Island abounds more or less according to season, but nothing was seen save two harmless sleepy lizards. The "Harold's" net as well as the "Nerida's" went ashore this night - the net result 2 whiting, 1 Mackerel, 1 Tommy - no good. Captain Kihlberg and his son Eric on board for the evening and later on all hands adjourned to the "Harold" where an inspection of charts lasted until well on past midnight. A full day indeed.

Wednesday, 21st February. Up at dawn, encouraged thereto by the "Harold's" foghorn making noises like a factory hooter. She under her engines - there being little or no wind - was soon out of sight en route to Tumby Bay. Now began the first stage of our homeward journey. Again a cloudless sky. We left at 7.30 a.m. after breakfast, passing between Winceby and Revesby, under engine, and steered a course, from the N.E. corner of Revesby to Boucaut Island off the Eastern extremity of Spilsby, to avoid the reef and other dangers off Roxby. Revesby's full length from South to North presents a low rounded point 101 feet high, covered as to the top half with a fairly thick scrub of Juniper etc. then a white beach in which can be seen the opening in the sandhills (before referred to in connection with the Southern anchorage), a low dark point

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scrub covered, a short white beach backed by low scrubby hills, a dark point, then a long white beach the middle of which is backed by slightly higher country scrub covered. This beach terminates in a long dark point behind which on its inner end may be seen the sandhills fronting Morton Bay, the indentation which faces Winceby to the North. Turning from Revesby to the SW. the following Islands came into view: Dalby, Langton, Blyth (which differs from all the other islands of the group in that it appears to be composed of white sand covered with a low sparse scrub), Hareby, Roxby, with Spilsby and Boucaut on the horizon. Still under the engine, passed close to Seal Rock and stood across to Buffalo Reef where according to the late Sir William Bunday, snapper were to be had at a distance of 1 mile with the reef bearing W.S.W. No sooner were the lines down than the Master had a small one on: Eimer followed with another, but the catch stopped there. About sundown a light breeze came in, but dead ahead. As the sky reddened behind the disappearing sun a queer mirage effect was seen - the Islands of the group, all of a dark blue color and strangely distorted as to shape, came up above the horizon as if to give us a farewell look.

The first tack carried us well within range of the Corny Point Light, with that on the Wedge still in sight. Coming about on to the port tack we soon picked up Althorpe Light. In the early hours of the morning a wheat ship under full sail passed quite close by - a dim light was shown by her in response to an electric torch flashed on to the "Nerida's" mainsail.

"Ships that pass in the night and speak each other
in passing; only a signal shown,"

but the quotation should stop here, as there was no "Distant voice in the darkness." We learned at the Althorpe this afternoon that a ship had passed out about daybreak and had long since disappeared behind Cape Borda.

Once again in a wonderful three weeks, the sun came up in a cloudless sky. His arrival signalled a flat calm, so Eimer

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was robbed of two hours of his watch below, he being the only one capable of talking suitably to the engine. Under power we went to within 3 miles of Emmes Reef, then the Master changed his mind and we turned back for Pondalowie Bay and breakfast. Entering this bay from the South, you keep Althorpe Island well open on Reef Head and Royston Head to the North, well in view, so as to avoid the reefs and foul ground on the South corner of the South Island. Steering due north on this line you proceed until a high sandhill with a large windswept opening to the North of it bears 105 degrees Magnetic: you can then sail straight in leaving South Island about a cables length to starboard. The anchorage for southerly weather is about half way along South Island at a distance of approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ cables in $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 fathoms of water.

This is a very beautiful bay and when South Island has been rounded, it appears to be completely land locked. The two narrow entrances lie between South and Middle Island and Middle and North Island but from the Southern anchorage Middle and North Islands close one on the other, giving the appearance above referred to.

As we "steamed in" we passed first "Vamp" then "Stormy Petrel" both outward bound and going home.

Left Pondalowie at 11 a.m. and just as we cleared the entrance the B.H.P. Co's. steamer "Iron Knob" passed us, bound for Newcastle with iron ore. "Chugged" on across a sea with not a ripple on it and at 2 a.m. anchored at Althorpe Island about 100 yards east of the jetty. Quickly made acquaintance with the head-keeper, one Martin, and then the Master and Dempster equipped with rods and reels left for the Pinnacles to catch sweep, Eimer and Ford electing to climb to the top for the sake of the view to be had from the Light Tower. And the view was worth while, which is a good deal more than could be said of the fishing. We found the Island simply riddled by Mutton Birds, present literally in thousands.

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The two assistant keepers, Mackrell and Starr on board the "Nerida" at the skipper's invitation, but little was learned from them. Since the almost universal installation of "wireless", lighthouses have practically ceased to function as signal stations and the sole occupation of the keepers is to see that the light burns brightly.

SPERO LUCEM CLARIORUM

says the tablet on the Cape St. Alban's Light Tower.

Quite recently Mrs. Martin, wife of the head-keeper, was in urgent need of medical assistance - a steamer passing close to the Island was signalled by flags, but no notice was taken. Either the signal was not seen (which appears unlikely for what is more natural when approaching a light house than to have a look at it) or "commercialism" run mad, demanded that a time table should be adhered to, though it meant that some poor unfortunate should suffer. After some days anxious waiting, assistance was procured and the sick woman was still seriously ill in hospital in Adelaide when the story was told to us.

After dinner (another excellent Dempster effort) we got under way at 8.15 bound for Troubridge 48 miles distant. Wind light from the S.E., and with sheets eased up the "Nerida" moved along nicely. Just before midnight, however, it died right away: for an hour or so we banged about, and then in it came again from the same quarter. At 1.15 a.m. "Minippa" passed close at hand, en route to Port Lincoln.

Just before daybreak, the wind increased - came in good from a little east of S.E. and the yacht started to make up for lost time. After 3 hours splendid sailing it eased again and becoming lighter and lighter, it was not until 8.20 that we had the Marion Buoy abeam. Against a strong ebb tide and with an ever failing wind we made slow progress - it took us until 9.20 to reach Troubridge. Then as we poked our noses round the shoal, we saw "Vamp" - again leaving an anchorage as we

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approached her. She stood straight across whilst we proceeded to Pt. Vincent where we anchored at 4 p.m. having taken 19³/₄ hours to sail 72 miles. Dempster and Ford ashore for provisions, Eimer charging the batteries and the Master resting his eyes: they were suffering a bit as the result of several days of Prismatic Itch (Plattitis). There had been a grass fire near Vincent and the firefighters were found in force fighting the battle over again and quenching the inner fires with copious libations. We helped them to their and our satisfaction. The stores including fish (bought, this time, not caught) were got on board. Dempster went his hardest in the preparation of dinner and nearly achieved his masterpiece. Then to bed.

Saturday, 24th February. All good things must come to an end. After breakfast we tied down one reef, just in case there was wind outside. A distinct change had come in during the night and a sharp rise in the barometer suggested that the wind would increase as the day drew on. This prediction was not borne out, the breeze remaining steady for the journey across. Rounded the Spit at 11.58 a.m., so the cook, Dempster, said, but if he were correct, then the "Nerida" sailed as never before or the Orontes Pile Light is not positioned as shown on the chart. This was put to Dempster but he resented the suggestion that he couldn't tell the time and the topic was not persevered with.

Passed the light on the revetment mound, 4 hours 10 minutes out.- A mile and a half of anchored boats confronted us, the occasion being the Australian Motor Boat Championship, so we too anchored just in time to see McEvoy's "Cettien" win the second heat. As soon as the local champion "Tortoise" had shown that she would race no more, by falling to pieces during the third heat, we lifted the anchor for the last time and went under power to the moorings. And so ended "Nerida's" first cruise -.

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First is written deliberately and with all due deference to the ladies who went in her to Kangaroo Island during the 1933 Christmas holidays. That journey was merely something in the nature of a preliminary canter - a trying out of gear - a sail stretching trial against the long looked forward to 3rd February 1934.

NOTE:

The whole of the "country" traversed by the "Nerida" was discovered by Captain Matthew Flinders during the voyage of the "Investigator" in 1802. That Flinders looked upon this discovery as his most important work is suggested by the care he bestowed upon the naming of its most prominent features. Everywhere one finds him recalling names of people associated with the voyage, people who had befriended him, members of his crew and above all place names peculiar to Lincolnshire, the county of his birth - names of places in which he had wandered during his youth and during his infrequent visits to his home folk after he had adopted a sailor's life as his profession.

The appellation Kangaroo Island explains itself - Pt. Marsden at the Island's North Eastern extremity commemorates Jas. Marsden, assistant to Sir Evan Nepean, Secretary to the Navy. The Gambier group after Admiral Lord Gambier comprises Wedge Island "from its shape" and North Island. Reference has already been made to the disaster near Cape Catastrophe and the subsequent naming of the Islands in the Thorny Passage to preserve the memory of the men who were drowned in the wreck of the ship's boat.

Attention should be called however to Waterhouse Bay on Thistle Island, named after Captain Henry Waterhouse who was in command of the "Reliance" under Hunter when the latter sailed to take up his appointment as Governor of New South Wales in succession to the First Governor, Phillip. With Waterhouse sailed George Bass as surgeon, Matthew Flinders as Midshipman and Samuel

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Ward Flinders as a volunteer. Bass later on married Waterhouse's sister Elizabeth and Flinders with his customary appreciation of the apposite, put Sleaford Bay close by. It was at Aswarby a suburb of Sleaford that Bass was born but the proximity of Sleaford Bay to Cape Catastrophe was surely accidental as Bass did not disappear until he set out on his last voyage in February 1803.

Approaching the Port Lincoln Harbor; Cape Donington, after Flinders' birthplace, Port Lincoln after the chief town in Flinders' native country, Boston Island after the chief market town in Lincolnshire, Bicker Island, Stamford Hill, Spalding Cove, Surfleet Point, Grantham Island, Kirton Point, all Lincolnshire names of places familiar to Flinders. Proceeding northward we come to Louth Bay and Island and Point Bolingbroke, both Lincolnshire names.

Sir Joseph Banks group was named after the Patron of the voyage, him who had accompanied Captain Jas. Cook in the "Endeavour". Of the Islands comprising the group, Langton, Lusby, Kirkby, Roxby, Sibsey, Winceby and Hareby are all after villages in Lincolnshire. Dalby after his friend Revd. M. Tyler's parish, Marum after the residence of Mr. Stephenson, Sir Joseph Banks' agent. Spilsby after the town where the Franklins lived. Partney after the village where Miss Chappell lived and where Flinders was married to her. Revesby after Revesby Abbey, Sir Joseph Banks' Lincolnshire seat. Spencer Gulf and Cape after Earl Spencer, first Lord of the Admiralty, Yorke's Peninsula after Hon. C.P. Yorke, afterwards Lord Hardwicke, of the Admiralty, Althorpe Islands after Lord Spencer's eldest son; Troubridge Hill and Shoal after Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge, one of Nelson's most famous fighting men. St. Vincent's Gulf after Admiral Lord St. Vincent and Cape Jervis after the Admiral's family name.

LOST : PROPELLER

Would the member to whom I lent a two bladed fixed 13 by 10 propeller sometime last year to try out, please contact me as I have another member who would like to try it out on his MDI Volvo.

B. PRESTON