

There's a lot of life left in the old girl yet

It did more than scare the oilskin pants off her crew, the day "Norallie's" mast came crashing down just off the Outer Harbour entrance a couple of months ago.

For owner Bruce Main, it meant a rude and sorry reward for countless hours of scraping and varnishing such a massive spar.

And for "Norallie" that unfortunate case of metal fatigue meant a decisive break with a rich and noble past.

When the new mast went up recently, a gleaming "tin stick" stood where the wood should be.

Says Bruce: "There's just no way I could have got another wooden mast for her, no matter how much I wanted it. Craftsmanship like that costs a fortune these days . . . it was out of the question."

Norallie is one of the oldest boats in the Squadron, though few would believe it now as a result of all the work Bruce has put into her since buying her in 1972.

Gone has her huge mast (in more ways than one), gone has her huge unwieldy boom, gone has her long bowsprit . . . gone has a great deal of that indefinable character that marked boats of her ilk at the turn of the century.

"Norallie" may have been built in 1905, but today she's very much a boat of the 1970s.

And if ever there was a classic case of "three new broom handles, two new broom heads, same old broom", this is it.

"Norallie" was built by well-known Port Adelaide boatbuilder Ben Wright from a design by C.D. Mower in the American "Yachting Magazine".

She started out life as a centre-boarder but was converted to a keel boat in 1907. Her sole purpose in life was to outrun the local flier "Reverie", which coincidentally, shares a neigh-

Norallie

By Roger Holden



Follow that boat . . . "Norallie" in traditional dress.

bouring mooring to this day.

The result was some classic duels that to this day are preserved in Squadron records, and in some memories as well.

In 1932, "Norallie" went through her second major facelift when her owner, H.W. McGregor raised her topsides by 9in., increasing her length by 6ft. to 36ft. on a beam of 9ft. 4in., and a draught of 5ft.

By 1972, when Bruce Main bought her, she had slumped to a pale reflection of her former glory.

Ten months ago, "Norallie" took her first sail in at least four years — and old hands at the Squadron's opening day sail-past would have been hard put to recognise her.

Apart from the greatly scaled down rigging and re-cut sails, Main had totally rebuilt the coachroof, gutted the interior, and sliced several inches off the counter. "Norallie" was back in business.

Many traditionalists may prefer to have seen "Norallie" totally restored to her former glory, spreading her massive rig and impressive wardrobe of sail along the coast in battle with the ghosts of "Reverie" once more.

But as Bruce Main would put it: "Mate, where do you get the money to do that kind of thing these days . . . and where do you get the crews to sail them?"

"Angie (his wife) and the kids can help me sail her with ease these days. They wouldn't with all the heavy gear she once carried.

"And quite apart from that, isn't it better to have her the way she is instead of rotting away in some backwater?"

"After all, how many boats do you know in South Australia as old as 'Norallie' that are still out sailing?"

Point taken! It certainly is nice to know there's a lot of life left in the "old girl" yet.

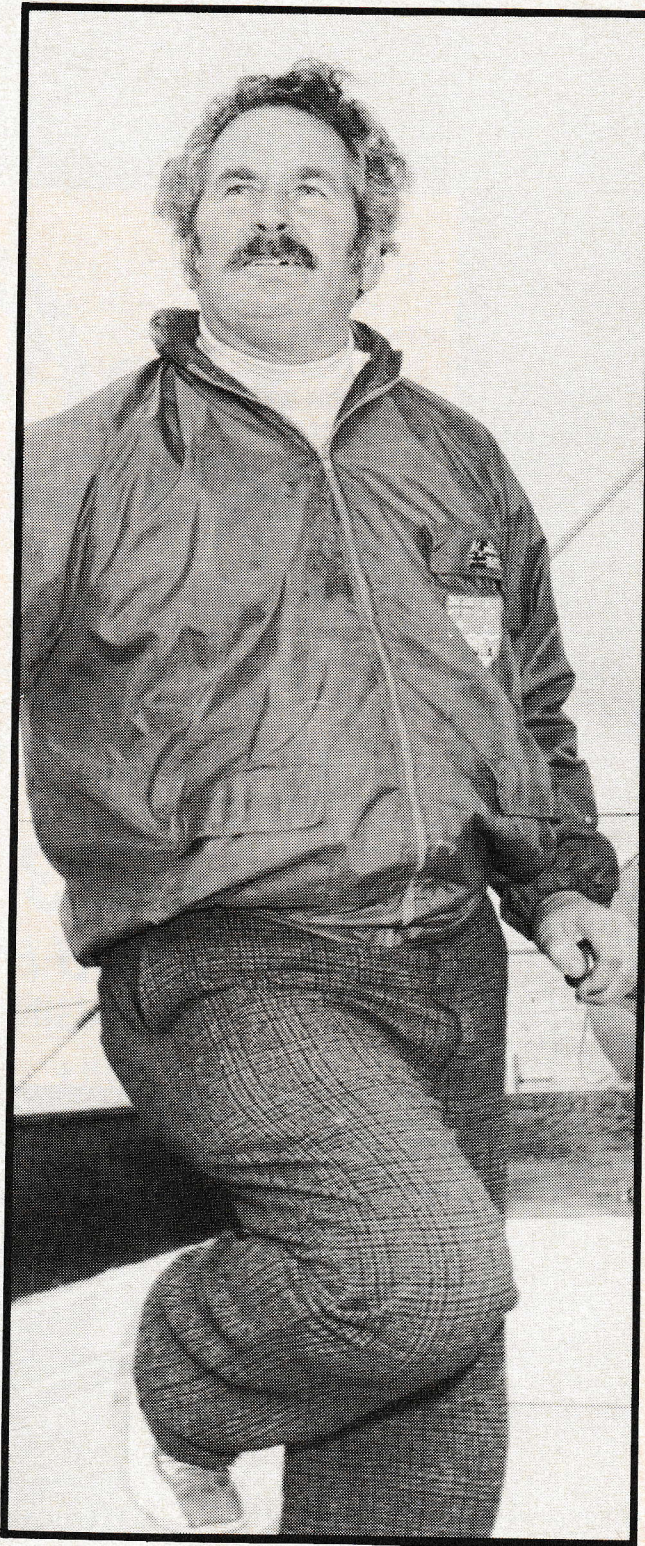
Norallie



Heads down for action . . . "Norallie" as she was in her early days.



The new "Norallie" . . . alongside at the squadron.



Skipper Bruce Main at the helm.