

2008 Lincoln Race on *Reprieve*

David Barnfield

The 2008 Adelaide Pt Lincoln Blue Water Classic was a challenge for all skippers and crews. A number of boats were obliged, or chose, to withdraw. But on the vintage timber yacht *Reprieve*, though her LWL is only 7.54m (24' 6") and she weighs approx 9 tonnes fully laden, the treasonous 'W' word was never mentioned. Here owner and skipper David Barnfield tells the story of a long, hard race.



We got a pretty good start with clear air – there was heaps of breeze – and we would have been in the first third of the fleet across the line.

Luckily, we managed to keep out of the way on starboard and everyone was happy.

This was *Reprieve*'s first race since the previous year's Lincoln when we retired early due to water coming in between a couple of planks in the counter-stern. Several seams had dried out. The area only goes under when the boat is heeled over and lack of use and a harsh dry summer had taken their toll.

This time we had the No. 4 headsail up and with a heavily reefed main we were making seven knots towards Cape Jervis. So began a long afternoon, evening and early morning beating to Marion Reef.

The wind was on the nose the whole way and strengthened to gusts of 40 knots. Life in the cockpit was wet but down below the repaired seams were fine and we had no trouble with the bilges.

The mast was re-stepped in early January and had a fresh coat of varnish and looked great. We'd tightened the backstay for the race and although the shrouds could have been a bit firmer, overall the rig was okay.

In their first race together the crew did well. Spirits were high. Whenever the life-rings bounced overboard someone would dutifully drag them back in. Conditions were quite rough. A few of us had a big hurl before night-fall, followed by egg and bacon pies.

One very annoying equipment failure was the close-hauled meter. It only worked on port tack. This made it much harder to keep the boat at the best angle to the wind after dark. The mast cables had been refitted professionally and the electrician's ears would have been burning all night.

On a positive note, the water was warm so although it was a bit wet helming, at least it wasn't cold.

At times we put in what seemed like a really good tack only to end up back where we started! *Reprieve* can only make 45 or 50 degrees to the wind and loses a lot of ground on the rest of the fleet in these conditions.

Strong south westerlies, a strong flow of water up the gulf and lack of match

practice kept us this side of Marion Reef until daybreak on Saturday, which is unheard of!!

Although things had lightened a fair bit by then, all day we had to beat along the foot of Yorke Peninsula towards Cape Spencer. At one stage we passed close to Davenport Shoals and continued on in less than ideal conditions with full main and No 2 headsail.

No-one was hungry.

The seas remained pretty lumpy and towards evening we had to change down to the No 4.

Our boat speed was okay most of the time.

Helming probably left a bit to be desired now and again and we must have covered close to 250 miles in total. Towards evening a yacht called up to say he could see us in the distance. He was concerned about the faint echo on his radar and recommended we put up a reflector.

Emma called as well from KI to offer encouragement.

The fleet was some distance ahead by now and without putting too fine a point on it, quite a few crews were already celebrating in Lincoln!

We ran the diesel motor to get some charge into the batteries but after 10 minutes it faltered. After tacking, we let the downhill tank fill and isolated it, and then spent an hour mucking around trying to get the engine running again.

A big long tack toward Kangaroo Island at dusk on Saturday was the best thing we did all day as we managed to lay the Althorpes. Luckily, the breeze stayed in as we neared Cape Spencer and this made navigating Emmes Reef and Reef Head easy.

The only minor hiccup was a ship as we approached the Althorpes. At first it was difficult to tell what they were doing so we didn't take any chances and held up a radar reflector and shone torches on the sails.

Eventually the ship headed roughly southwest at a very slow speed and we sailed astern.

The leg to Dangerous Reef was challenging. By now everyone was weary and there were no stars visible to help keep course and no stern lights to follow! The main compass is hard to see

properly at night and we relied mainly on the GPS.

We really could have done with a kite during the early hours.

As it was, the spinnaker went up after dawn with Keith Flint's *Aquila*, looking very impressive, just to the north of us nearing Dangerous Reef.

By now we were well aware the new 6am cut-off ruled us out of a brave finish; but who cared?

We held the kite until just after Cape Donnington.

The sail across Boston Bay to Brennan's Wharf was memorable for everyone on board. For a while we had wondered if we'd ever get there.

At last count only 7 RSAYS boats finished. We did well from an historical perspective although as a very loyal friend kindly observed in a widely distributed email 'how anyone can possibly get excited about coming absolutely last and DNF'ing is completely beyond me.'

Suffice to say the crew were really happy to make it. *Reprieve* was the oldest boat in the fleet and apart from the multihulls, the yacht most disadvantaged by all the windward work.

For what it's worth, this was the most difficult race I can remember for a few years and it's a credit to everyone on board that nobody breathed a word about the possibility of pulling out until we had tied up at the jetty.

Two crewmembers deserve a special mention. Sam (as in Samantha) Clark and Darren McGlade from Hecate came along and as this was their first overnight race and their first offshore event we all say: 'Well done! It's bound to be better next year!'

