

Squadron Beverage Policy By-Law HS11

The Squadron, its Members, visitors and Squadron staff are required to comply with the Code of Practice under Section 41 Liquor Licensing Act 1997, which shall be publicly displayed for the information of those consuming alcohol on the licensed premises of the Squadron.

In particular, staff are instructed not to supply liquor to individuals who appear to be intoxicated. Members are requested not knowingly to supply liquor or to purchase liquor on behalf of other Members, who may be intoxicated or have been refused service by Squadron staff, as they too may be subject to penalties under the Act.

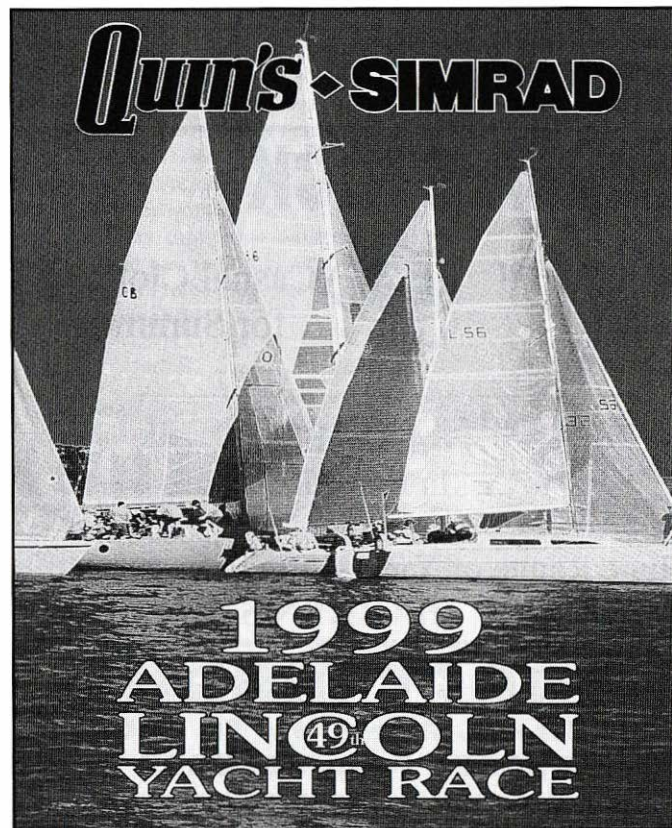
Members and their visitors are required to comply with the requests of staff concerning consumption

of excessive quantities of liquor and also in relation to behaviour which may be an offence to others.

Members and their visitors are required to comply with the requests of staff in leaving the licensed premises when directed to do so.

Clause 17.1 of the Constitution applies, namely The Management Committee shall take such action as is required to comply with the Liquor Licensing Act 1997. All Members, employees and other persons allowed access to the Licensed Premises shall at all times abide by the requirements of that Act, including accepting relevant directions from employees.

The complete Code of Practice is to be displayed in the Upstairs Bar and Jimmy's Bar and may be perused at the Office. SQ



SPECIAL SERVICES SPONSORSHIP

**Marlene Jay
(Crusader)
Shiny Bright
Laundry**

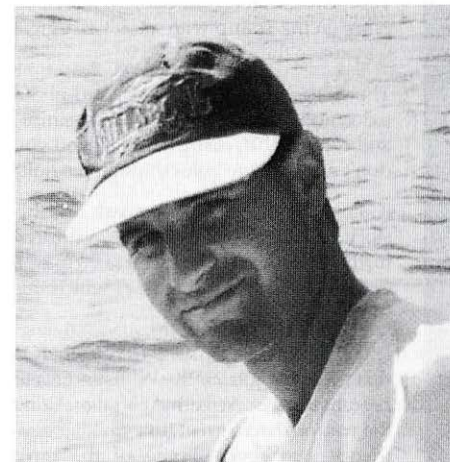
Thank you for continuing support & provision of the washing machine & dryer located in the main dinghy shed.

**Ken Roberts
KCR Car Rentals**

Thank you for once again providing a vehicle for use by visiting crews.

Photograph by Janet Christian

Kango, Willgo, Gone



Anthony Gates (Gatesy)

The story starts as most stories do. In the beginning there was a boy, who just loved sailing. He was born near the ocean, and never felt really at home unless he could either hear it or see it. At an early age he learnt how to swim, paddle, surf ski, handle a sailboard and race a dinghy, but something was missing. He had the bug to travel. Knowing that it would take a long time and be tiring to swim round Australia, and it was too far to paddle, sailing became the only option.

An apprenticeship was required. After ten years racing dinghies, he found a position crewing on a Division One racing yacht, *Outside Edge* with Dave Morphet. One day he got an offer to go cruising and racing up north. After five months aboard the lovely yacht *Lara III*, Dee and David Henshall had taught him a lot, as they were experienced and always well organised.

[For Don Malcolm's account of returning on *Lara III* after the race from Darwin to Ambon, see *Squadron Quarterly* March 1998: 30-34.]

Being the hard to please boy he was, this still wasn't enough, as he wished upon a falling star that one day he would own his own boat, and this is where the story really begins.

While Up North he found the SE trade winds and air and sea temperature perfect for cruising, and that you spend most of your time on deck, as it gets too hot below. His bank balance displayed

that a forty-foot cruiser was out of the question. Must he wait until he's old enough to retire? Or rob a bank? Or buy something smaller? But small boat=slow and small boat=small cockpit/cabin, and he liked a party or two. Now catamarans are fast and have plenty of deck room. Month after month he studied *Trader Boat*, searching for his ideal. He looked at International 23s, Warrams, Graingers and Fastbacks, dreaming of Crowthers. None fitted the bill, until he saw a Seawind 24 flying across Lake Alexandrina.

This was the boat for him, and he is me.

My first problem was to find one in good condition, not only for sale but (more importantly) for sail. Adelaide is far from Up North, but I didn't want to miss too much on the way. After arriving in Sydney with six months clippings from *Trader Boat*, and looking at eleven, I found the one for me.

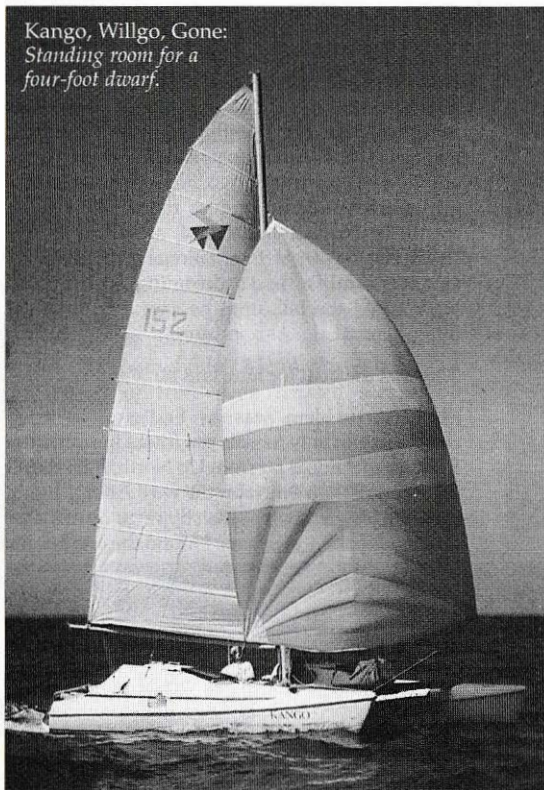
Kango was her name, and that says it all. Several weeks and a lot of money later, she had a new GPS, solar panels, dinghy, water and fuel tanks and was ready to go. The name was great, but it didn't necessarily mean she would go. Changing the name is bad luck, but two hulls provided the justification for doubling up. Hence she is *Kango and Willgo*, and the dinghy is called *Gone*.

Kango and Willgo is a Seawind catamaran, which I've set up for cruising. She is 24 ft long, with an overall beam of 16 ft 6 in and a maximum hull beam of 4 ft 6 in. The draft is 5 ft with the centreboards down and 18 in with them up. When fully loaded with food for six weeks, 75 litres of water and 120 litres of fuel, her freeboard is a mere 18 in. That can be quite close to an inquisitive crocodile! The deck layout is simple, with an anchor well forward in each hull, a huge comfy trampoline in between the forward cross member and the main beam with plywood hard decks aft, supported by a fibreglass centre console housing an 8 hp outboard, fuel tank, compass and winches. Forward of the companionway are two 40 watt solar panels.

The boat is helmed with a tiller from the captain's chair (a K Mart plastic BBQ chair with chopped off legs), and by an ST800 autopilot. Navigational equipment includes a hand-held GPS and a fish-finder depth sounder.

She is powered by a fractional rotating mast of

Kango, Willgo, Gone:
Standing room for a
four-foot dwarf.



37ft, which carries a fully battened mainsail, genoa, No 3 headsail and an asymmetric spinnaker.

Living quarters below are a squeeze, with standing headroom for a 4-ft dwarf. The port hull, working aft, contains a single bunk, esky, a bench seat to starboard and a work bench to port. This is used as a nav station, and further aft is mounted a double burner metho stove for cooking. Sitting in the galley is cramped, but everything is easily accessible and within reach. Aft the companionway are the batteries and storage space. The port hull forward contains tools and spares, with the master bunk amidships and storage underneath. Further aft, under the companionway are the water tanks and an emergency grab drum, before you get to the fuel drums.

Living on board takes a while to get used to. You need to be a contortionist to get in and out of the bunks, and it definitely helps if you don't get claustrophobic. You have to like the heat, as it gets quite hot down below, and there is no shade on

deck apart from the sails, but often when beating to windward a wave will cool you. Things aren't all bad, however, as lying on the Tramp with a G&T is a great way to see the sun set.

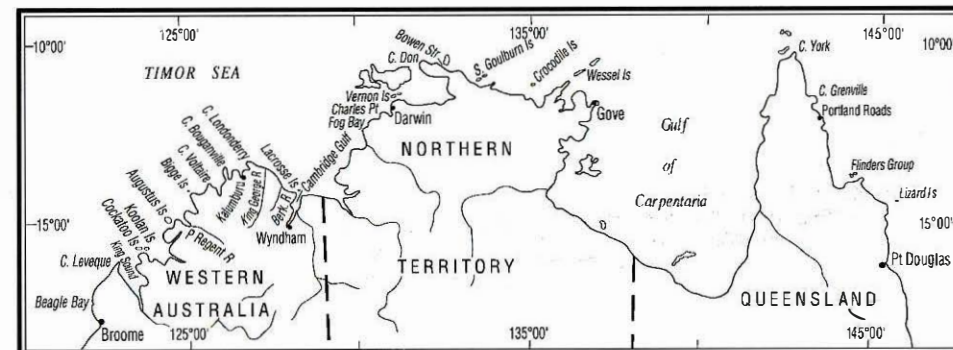
The Editor, being a doctor, asked about toilet arrangements. A bucket is simple and comfortable, easily emptied, and you don't need to bore holes through the hulls

[Gatesy went up the east coast, and his story is taken up when he ventured further north and west. He wrote a circular letter to his friends, of which this is an edited version.]

I spent the winter of 1997 'Up North' (Oz that is) cruising from the Whitsundays to Broome in NW Western Australia. Along the way we had a great time making new friends and seeing some of the most beautiful and isolated parts of Oz. I can't and don't know if words are adequate to describe some of these places, as they only leave a feeling of wonder in my mind. Anyway, late May saw my mate Bret and myself arrive in Bowen, a sleepy little ghost town in north Queensland. The boat was just as I had left it. After four days of hard work and several beers at the yacht club bar, it was back in the water loaded with stores, fuel and water.

We left Bowen heading north, with sore heads, beating to the sound of the outboard pushing us slowly along at our economical four knots, bound for Hinchinbrook Island.

Several days later and after passing Lucinda jetty, which must be one of the longest in the world, we entered Hinchinbrook Channel, planning to spend a week in this area of mountainous peaks and prehistoric jungle. Arriving on the high tide we entered a creek, and after travelling three miles up it and when we could go no further due to overhanging trees, we anchored to have a late lunch in this beautiful place. The tide had started to ebb and the plan was to dry out and go for a walk when all of a sudden the breeze stopped. At first there were only one or two sandflies, but before we knew it we were being attacked by swarms of the little buggers. In the forty minutes it took us to get out of the creek, while scraping over shallow bars and applying liberal amounts of Rid I accumulated some 400 itchy bites on each leg. We were lucky really. Imagine what would



have happened if we dried out and weren't able to leave until the morning high tide; nothing would have saved us then. There was no way we were going to spend another night around this jungle, now that we knew what killed the dinosaurs, so on to Dunk Island.

This would have to be one of my favourite islands, primarily due to the great walks through tropical rain forest. There are huge strangler figs, vines, maidenhair ferns and in the valleys plenty of blue and black butterflies, not to forget the oysters on the rocks.

We had a great sail from Dunk to Fitzroy Island. Carrying the kite all the way, we cracked a top speed of 14.7 knots, overtook a 40-ft cat and had some great surfs down waves. It wasn't until we got back to the boat after a couple of drinks and a bit of bragging that I noticed 15 strands of the 19 strand forestay had broken. The remaining strands were the only things holding up the mast. Jury rigged we sailed into Cairns for new rigging.

With still a long way to go we left Port Douglas, but didn't get far, as a high pressure system over Adelaide threw a lot of wind in our direction. It didn't seem that much until we turned to face it at Hope Island, to experience 40 knots true wind. The boat handled the conditions well with two reefs and a goosed out No 4 headsail. The adrenaline was definitely pumping when we were about to gybe, as Cape Tribulation was fast approaching on the bow, and the fishing line went off. Just what we needed! Land was fast approaching and there was a 3-ft. spotted mackerel on the line at 12 knots. We landed it with a spare four metres under us. As we gybed, the boat was covered in blood, but a nose dive and two feet of green water over us soon cleaned it and cooled us off as well. Hope Island is a great little island, but after five days of 40+ knots

I was happy Mum had given me a copy of James A Mitchener's 1,500 page book *Texas*.

Finally on to Lizard Island. 'What, the Marlin bar only opens on Sunday's! What do we have to do for a drink? All we need anyway is water.' We left Lizard early next morning in rain, which continued all day while the wind increased. The GPS decided it wasn't really waterproof. Luckily, as the visibility was down to under one mile, there were two other boats around us, which we followed into our planned anchorage. That night I did a lot of reading on coastal navigation. Although I knew how to do it, I had never had to depend on it and I just prayed that the electronic hand-bearing compass had enough battery power for the distance in and out of the reefs to Thursday Island.

The Flinders Group of islands was nice and needed more exploring, but as we now couldn't safely navigate at night and were behind schedule after getting stuck at Hope Island, we needed to move when we could. We motored the next day to Bird Island, with a strong wind warning but no wind at all. The next day, however, saw us do 86 nautical miles in eight hours, absolutely hooting along all the way to Portland Roads. After a couple of phone calls I had another GPS sent to Thursday Island for the crossing of the Gulf of Carpentaria, thanks to Dave Morphet, my skipper in Adelaide, and my folks.

Cape Grenville will be remembered for the masses of large star fish in the shallows when the tide went out and for being the first day we had dropped out our two reefs in the main sail since Lizard Island. The next day we were abeam of Shelbourne Bay when another boat joined us heading north. When it popped up a fluoro pink kite and took off, both Bret and I were flabbergasted at its superior speed and spent the

rest of the day guessing on what sort of race boat it must be to beat us. We had not once been overtaken since leaving Bowen.

Finally I reached one of my milestones. Cape York wasn't Cape Horn and it wasn't even the first time I had sailed around the most northern part of mainland Australia, but it was the first time I did it as master of my own vessel, so that was reason enough to celebrate. We had our first cold beers since Port Douglas at the Wilderness Lodge. Four people walked in wearing T shirts displaying a very flash looking yacht with a pink kite called *Lady Catherine*. They were the ones who overtook us in a 66-ft Chris Dickson design. The owners Mayer and Catherine were very nice and generous people. They paid for our meal of oysters, prawns and Moreton Bay bugs, with enough left over for next day's lunch on Horn Island while we ran around cursing, looking for the GPS sent from home.

In front of us was the Gulf of Carpentaria, which would be our longest crossing to date and I was happy that we didn't have to rely on dead reckoning now we had a working GPS — or did we? You wouldn't believe it, but twelve hours later we had two broken GPS on board! I suppose it just wasn't meant to be. 'If in doubt head left. At least that way we won't miss Australia, but where will we end? After 48 hours of unknown currents, leeway and helm error, even though the log's reasonably accurate, over that distance a small error could mean a quick stop.' Again luck came through, as just when the sun was setting I spotted a mast on the horizon directly in front of us. It was *Afterglow*, a schooner sailing for Gove. After that, it was simply a matter of slowing down and following their masthead light and calling up at each change of watch for a position fix.

There were 87 boats at Gove getting ready for the 'Across The Top Rally'. We promptly drove to the front of the pack and anchored walking distance from the club. We watched and laughed while other yachties left their tender out further than our boat, as we dried out at low tide and only had to pull our shorts up at high tide to get ashore. This is a definite advantage in a catamaran. Over a couple of beers at the yacht club we decided that since we couldn't join the rally, we'd set up our own rebel tour. We were the 'Grotty Yachties' while they were the 'Snotty Yachties'. We even had our own secret radio channel and salute. Members included *Farr Star*, *Esprit De Mer*, a Japanese comedian Masa and his wife Mae of *Holo Holo III*

and ourselves. Our course was similar to the 'Snotties', but our main aim was to have fun and beat them to Darwin, the prize being the best anchorages in Fannie Bay.

For those who haven't been fortunate enough to cruise across the 'Top' I rate it as one of the best cruising grounds in Australia and arguably the world. The Wessel Islands offer a large choice of protected anchorages, with great fishing, heaps of oysters and apparently crayfish for those eager to go diving in crocodile infested waters. The vegetation is more shrubby and dry than the tropical rainforest of the East Coast, but the green-blue water, especially around sunset, sets off the olive green of the eucalypts and acacias on the red-brown rocky cliffs. The area is not without danger to the cruising sailor, with strong tidal currents at over nine knots in places, a huge tidal range and plenty of rocks and coral reefs.

One particular bombie taught us a lesson by chopping through our anchor rode. During the night I awoke to a gut-wrenching crunch as we landed on the rocks. Still half-dazed, it took me a moment to work out what had happened, but I was soon over the side fending off while Bret got the motor working. On inspection in the morning, there were some nasty scratches on the hulls and two chips through the gel coat, but as we were taking on only a 1/4 cup every twelve hours we left the repairs for Darwin, where I had to antifoul anyway. My feet weren't so lucky, and as lovely as oysters are to eat, bad cuts hurt and take a long time to heal.

While the 'Snotties' were having some social problems being such a large group, we in the 'Grotties' were having a ball, with BBQ's, fishing expeditions and everyone meeting on a different boat each night for drinks and dinner.

Leaving the Wessells, we did an over-nighter to South Goulburn Island, passing north of the Crocodile Islands, which Don found with his radar to be further north than shown on the chart. We shared an anchorage at South West Bay with the 'Snotties'. Charlotte and Joe from *Lady Catherine* brought us up to date with the gossip, and let slip that they had found our secret radio channel. Everyone wanted to be a 'Grotty'. The next day we left in company with the 'Snotties' en route for Valencia Island, and anchored for more protection in the lee of the mainland. After this varied sail, in which we gybed more times than we care to remember, with the wind changing in both strength and direction at every corner, we arrived

hot and salty. The water looked cool and inviting, so we both stripped off for a quick swim and wash, followed by a nap. Later, while having drinks on *Holo Holo III*, Don mentioned that he had seen a croc, or as the locals call them, a 'handbag'. At first we thought he was just winding us up, but he was adamant and Dave from *Farr Star* confirmed that he had also seen a 12 to 14 ft handbag crawl down the beach and into the water just prior to our swim. Later in the evening we didn't feel quite so safe rowing our 10-ft inflatable dinghy back to the boat, with one of us sitting on the transom.

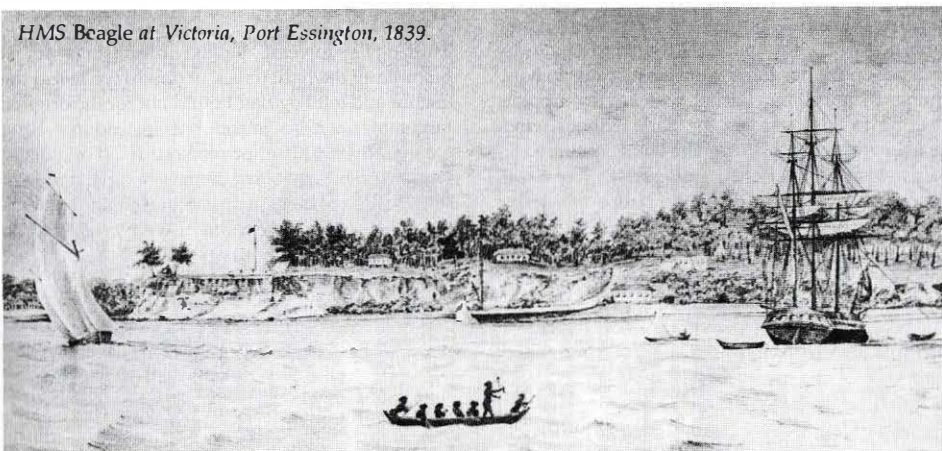
We left at 0630 the next morning for the 54 nm trip through Bowen Strait to Black Point. The day started with light airs, but it was a lovely broad reach and the tide was with us. What concerned us were boats motoring in these ideal conditions. Even if the wind was a bit light, it was with us, and if need be even motor-sailing is more economical. I suppose this was our train of thought as we didn't have a lot of fuel and I was unsure if any was available at Black Point.

There was diesel but no petrol at Black Point, which didn't help us at all, but we still had adequate fuel to get us most of the way to Darwin. We jumped on *Esprit De Mer* for a day trip to Port Essington. On the way down Denis spotted a dinghy floating in the middle of the harbour some distance from shore. He took it in tow and informed the Ranger. We couldn't believe later when he returned it to the owners, who had forgotten to tie it on, that they didn't even say thanks, just what took you so long? After looking around the ruins of Victoria, which was an English

settlement to deter the Dutch from heading south from the Dutch East Indies, you wonder what life must have been like there in total isolation in an inhospitable country of tidal mangrove mudflats and baked hard rocky earth. Supply ships often didn't arrive and when they did it was only once a year bringing basic necessities and disease, as the cemetery tells all.

[See *Fine Romance* from Darwin to Cairns, See *Squadron Quarterly* December 1993: 12-18. Victoria on Port Essington was established in 1838, but it was a dreary and haled place. In a devastating cyclone, Government House was moved nine feet from its stone piers. The sea rose 10 1/2 feet and HMS *Pelorus* went ashore on her beam ends, buried nine feet in the mud and with her keel in the air. Twelve men died in this disaster. Captain Owen Stanley succeeded in refloating her, but many valuable things were lost. The settlement was formally abandoned on 30 November 1849, but remained a minor trading post in 1911. (Searcy A. By Flood and Field: *Adventures Ashore and Afloat in North Australia*. London: G. Bell, 1912: 45 and *passim*.)

Errrrrrrrrr goes the motor as all the 'Grotty yachties', including new members *Lady Catherine*, *Vision* and *Arian*, leave Black Point in glassy calm conditions bound for Darwin via Cape Don. The situation didn't look good and we needed to conserve fuel. When we experienced adverse tides approaching Cape Don, we headed inshore, scraping down the side of the reefs and inside small islands trying to keep out of the tide and use the eddies to our advantage. *Holo Holo III* kept out to sea and lost heaps of ground, while the bigger boats just increased their revs and guzzled more juice. At 85 nm to Darwin we had 25 litres left, and we were going to end up 15 nm short unless we could do some sailing. Mayer on *Lady Catherine* heard our conversation on the radio, and as he passed dropped off ten litres of fuel, two cold



HMS Beagle at Victoria, Port Essington, 1839.

beers, some chocolate and a couple of apples to keep the doctor away. We were very thankful, as the prospect of having to anchor and wait two or three days for wind so near to our destination didn't sound like too much fun. *Farr Star* was also having trouble, having run out of fuel in the Vernon Islands when they still believed they had a 1/3 of a tank. Luckily Masa was nearby on *Holo Holo III* with a spare can. Both our GPS's were still out of action, so we relied on Kirsty's navigation, which safely took us through the Vernons early that morning, and by sun up Darwin was in view. We had made it with five litres of fuel left.

Bret hopped off in Darwin and my girlfriend Rachel joined the crew, just in time to assist in scrubbing the bottom, patching holes and giving the boat a new coat of antifouling. We spent seven perfect sailing days working relentlessly from sunrise to sunset. If it weren't for the help of people and the Darwin Sailing Club, there would have been no way that we would have been back in the water as quickly as we were.

We left Darwin very heavily loaded, with five weeks of stores, 100 litres of fuel, 80 litres of water and Rachel's lovely present of 30 metres of anchor chain (Bombies don't eat chain). There was a strong wind warning, but that had been current since leaving Port Douglas. The wind was light in the afternoon, the tide was right and we were both rearing to go. Kimberleys here we come! By sunset we were motoring with no wind around Point Charles and I was bagging the Weather Bureau. — 'Strong wind! I'm wasting fuel with no wind'. Around 2200 the wind began to increase on the nose, and we were just able to hold course by pinching. Rachel was having trouble steering to windward in the dark without wind instruments, so I took over. The wind continued to increase and I shortened sail, first to the No 4 headsail, then one reef, then the next. At least the angle was improving slightly and Rachel took watch again from 0100 to 0400. When I came back on deck it was blowing over thirty knots, the sea was short and steep, and we were wet and cold. The boat was taking a lot over the deck. 168 nm of this to Lacrosse Island? No thanks! The closest land was 14 nm away, straight on the nose, so I dropped the sails and started the motor. Flat out we were making 2.7 knots in flat spots and were

stationary after each set of waves. Cold, wet and tired with cramp we motored on, only just being able to read the GPS through my blood-shot and salt-encrusted eyes. It was a relief to be safely anchored in Fog Bay. Although I had been out in windier conditions, the sea and the wind angle made this the worst I had experienced in *Kango* and *Willgo*. Cats just don't like going to windward. In hindsight we shouldn't have left, but nothing was broken and we were just a little cold and wet. Our fuel situation wasn't as good as when we left, but we were out of Darwin and on our way. I was proud of Rachel. Not once did she complain, but took each wave physically on her chin.



We spent five days at Fog Bay, with winds over 30 knots every day, and with the large tides we had to anchor 1/4 mile offshore. This made it impossible to row in and go for a walk, so most of the time was spent reading. At the time we were reading Hugh Edwards' *Kimberley Dreaming to Diamonds* and found the following relevant passage: To set a Kimberley schedule by clocks and calendars, is to risk having nature impose her own program. When the Fitzroy floods bridges, bushfires rage on a 100 km front, or drought dries and cracks the earth, confrontation achieves nothing. Waiting for the right time is the only answer, patience the only virtue. That is "Kimberley Time". We were both eager to get to Western Australia and the Kimberley coast, but with our last sail still fresh in our minds we weren't going anywhere until either the weather improved or we got a good forecast.

Thursday's forecast looked promising, so at piccaninny daylight (crack of dawn) we raised the anchor and left Fog Bay, bound not for the original target of Lacrosse Island but instead for King George River. This improved our wind angle and was also a bit of a short cut in saving a couple of days sailing. Things just weren't meant to be. A pessimist might have thought we were jinxed, as we were only two hours out when the mast fell down. I thought we were lucky.

The log reads: 'By 0930 the wind was light and dead astern, but enough to hold us at three and a half knots with the kite up. I had just taught Rachel about sailing by the lee and was taking a rest on the tramp to leeward watching progress, when all of a sudden the mast was falling towards

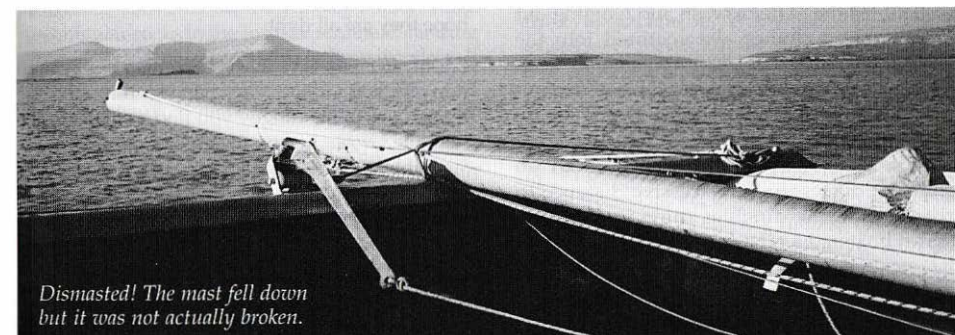
me. I rolled out of the way as I saw it crash down right where I was lying. Quickly we got the kite in, which was straining as a sea anchor, but ripped the main bringing it in over the solar panel. After some work, we got everything aboard, to find that the hounds leeward side-stay shackle had come undone. No one to blame but myself! I distinctly remember doing it up double tight with a large shifter and then taping it, and the tape was still holding the pin. Whilst tidying up I found the port one also loose, but broke the screwdriver trying to undo the forestay. I always tape shackles to prevent this from happening, as it has occurred to me in the middle of a national title series, but I believe that the rotating rig wore through the tape and worked the shackle undone. We were lucky. The weather was fine and it didn't happen the other night in the storm, when we might have had the chance of either losing the rig or having it put a hole in the hull. It missed the solar panel and me, and there was only minimal damage. The shackle was bent, there was a small rip in the mainsail and the mast rotator arm had snapped off. We could fix everything now, but needed some muscle to get the mast back up.

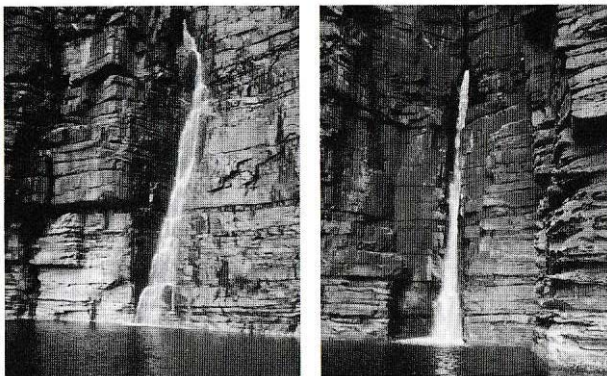
We had two choices — back to Darwin or on to Wyndham. I did a quick fuel calculation: 140 nm to Lacrosse Island, then 45 nm up Cambridge Gulf with a strong tidal stream. If we worked the tides right, our 75 litres should make it, with 10 to spare for emergencies. Time was quickly zapping by, but at least we were nearly at the Kimberleys. Explorers, drovers and stockmen had a harder time getting here, often not knowing what was round the next bend. By 1400 the next day Lacrosse Island was in view, and when we arrived there at 1800 the tide was still with us. We kept going up Cambridge Gulf until 2200, when we anchored on a shallow sandbar in the middle, with the tide now ebbing at four knots. From here the channel

narrowed, and the chart indicated tidal streams of up to ten knots, with whirlpools and overfalls. This section must be negotiated on the morning flood. I didn't sleep well that night, with the sound of water moving past the boat and in the early hours heard a motor approaching. It was the *Sina*, a local trading vessel on its way to Wyndham. I called them on the radio, explained our situation and asked about facilities in town. They said that the jetty was very ordinary for small craft, and our best option was to tie alongside them and use their crane. This offer I gladly accepted.

We arose on the change of tide, to watch the sun rise over the mountains and we were amazed at the beauty of our surroundings. I was happy to be finally in the Kimberleys, which reminded me of the northern Flinders Ranges, except that the cliffs didn't finish in barren land but in water. By that evening, with the help of *Sina's* crew and a crane capable of lifting the boat, we once again looked like a sailing ship and were sipping cold beers at the Wyndham pub. The friendliness of the townspeople was heart-warming. We borrowed a hire car from three Tasmanian farmers, and had our sail repaired for free by the local tailor. The harbour master drove us to the servo and the present owners of the famous Durack hardware shop offered to open on a Sunday. In two days the boat was shipshape, restocked and ready to go.

Our next stop was the Berkeley River, which was a bit disappointing, but maybe we didn't explore far enough up river, or maybe we were just getting fussy. The next day we arrived at King George River, which is one of the most amazing and beautiful places I have ever seen. Its only similarity is to Katherine George, but on a vaster scale. Words can't adequately describe this place, but just being there created an almost spiritual feeling of wonderment. For 12 nm we followed





King George River, as far as a yacht can go.

the twists and turns of the snaking river, at places less than 75 metres wide and surrounded by sheer red-black cliffs up to 400 metres high. The climax was two waterfalls at the end, each in its own auditorium. Hawks and ospreys filled the air; a seasnake tried to board the boat; an eagle ray dived clear of the water; and we saw our first salt-water crocodile. We spent a day gathering oysters and climbing to the top of the cliffs, where the boat looked very small and distant. Swimming at the top of the falls I wondered what had caused this chasm, where all the water came from and how many people had stood here and admired the view of this remote place, which is only accessible by sea. Then a plane flew over to break my train of thought as the Japanese tourists clicked photos of a naked white fella on top of the world.

Regretfully we left, hoping one day to return. Heading west we surfed under No 4 headsail at twelve knots round Cape Londonderry, making our way several days later to Honeymoon Bay. Les French is the proprietor of the campsite here, which boasted hot water showers and excellent fishing. After a wash and hanging out our now clean clothes, we ventured into the mangroves for oysters. We intended to keep some for bait, but they were too delicious to put on the hook. We had a feed of fish that night, by courtesy of a Victorian family who come all the way to NW Australia each year to go fishing. It does seem an excessive distance to drive, but all the dinghies came in full. One eight-ft boat had a nine-ft shark tied alongside. The next day we headed into the local community of Kulumburu in the back of Les's ute. This astute businessman charged us \$50 for the bumpy 27 km ride to buy \$40 of fuel at

\$1.35 per litre. We were lucky in that we shared the ride with the crew of another vessel called *Consensus* and that filling our tanks drained the rest of the fuel the community had until the next fuel barge came three weeks later. Early the next morning, in company with *Consensus*, we left for Freshwater Bay.

Plotting the course the night before I noticed scrawled in pencil on the chart a note from Dave, 'Leave middle rock to starboard, tide very strong, ebbs west.' Excellent, I thought. We can get the flood tide

through Geranium Harbour and the ebb through the passage. We'll be there in no time. Wrong! We were past the harbour by 1100, motoring in glassy conditions, but middle rock wasn't getting any closer. I hoped that this was the last of the flood tide, but its speed was increasing and I could see white water in front of us. Our little 8 HP motor was capable of seven knots and it was roaring flat out, but we were only just moving. If it wasn't for some manoeuvring behind rocks, sucking up into the eddies, there is no way we would have got near Middle Rock. Now we had to enter the white water, wondering if the breaking waves were caused by shallow rocks or the speed and amount of water rushing out. We plunged in. '11m of water, and yes we're moving forward. Stuff Dave H! I'm leaving the rock to port.' We made it into Freshwater Bay late and a bit lighter in fuel, cursing Dave's name, but we were safe, *Consensus* also got through, but had more drama when they touched the bottom several times, with the added worry of the continuous sound of the motor overheating alarm. Two days later a boat in the same passage ran into trouble. We don't know the details, but they were experienced sailors and I hope they are all right.

Freshwater Bay isn't that spectacular, but at high tide if you follow a channel through the mangroves in the dinghy you find a small stream with the sweetest tasting water cascading down a smooth rock face. It is a lovely place to swim and cool off without the worry of crocodiles. In fact this is only one of the few spots in the Kimberleys where we did swim. Although the sea looked so tempting on these 30° days, the knowledge that you could and probably would be sharing it with a large handbag that is an ultimate predator, left us cooling off with buckets of water the rest of the

time. Later in the trip we were to experience and learn why you don't swim from the boat.

The next day the ship's log describes an average day's sailing and motoring that we were to experience all through the Kimberleys. 'Raising the mainsail, we motor-sailed out of Freshwater towards Cape Bouganville, holding the headsail for a while before the wind went further forward. The wind is now against us, but at least we have the tide in the right direction, pushing us along at 7 knots on the GPS while the log shows three. One day we might even get the wind and the tide in the right direction and sail, saving ourselves fuel, time and our hearing. The chart notes on tomorrow's course through Voltaire Passage, 'WARNING: short/steep 2m. waves occur in wind against tide situations'. This sounds fun.'

We passed through the passage easily, with the tide sucking us in before spitting us out, but our day was not without excitement when we found ourselves heading straight for a reef with water breaking over it. We checked our coordinates and they were correct, so after steering around it we corrected the chart by moving the reef a mere $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile further north. It was also in this area that we saw our first whales for the trip, when a pod of humpbacks came by. They were followed by another pod of minke whales that really got Rachel excited. She wanted to turn the boat around and follow them in the wrong direction.

[Minke: A small whalebone whale. *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*; also called the piked whale or lesser orqual. *Oxford English Dictionary*.]

After several days of average anchorages that weren't protected from the light afternoon sea breezes, we arrived at Prudhoe Island, which I will always remember for its scenic beauty. We entered Shelter Bay from the north through a narrow 25-m wide passage surrounded by high cliffs, which is hardly visible until you are directly abeam. Towering above us on the cliff tops stood huge rectangular rocks in the form of sentinels standing guard over the entrance to this impressive place. It is totally protected from all wind angles and definitely earns its name of Shelter Bay.

Upon coming to anchor, Rachel spied a cave high up in the boulders at the top of the island and knowing the area to be famous for Bagshaw Aboriginal rock art, assured me that such a prominent spot must contain some of the best unexplored examples. It didn't look far from the boat, but after an hour and a half of scrambling, climbing and cursing we finally reached the top.

The travelling wasn't hard as long as we could jump from boulder to boulder. Problems occurred when it came to traversing the gaps, unsure of what was under the spinifex and long grass. There were two ways of overcoming these obstacles — either slowly checking every step as the spinifex rose to your waist, or moving quickly and lightly. I chose the latter and came unstuck several times, to end neck deep in grass. Rachel's method of following me was probably more sensible, but she too did not escape unscathed. To our disappointment the cave didn't contain any rock art, perhaps due to the difficulties in getting there. It did provide an impressive view of the island and surrounding area.

Hot and itchy, but not discouraged, we returned to the boat for water before searching out more caves on the other side of the island. The disappointment of no luck in the rock art search was soon forgotten as this island amazed us with quartz crystals perfect for pendants and rocks that were rusting due to their high iron content. We were told on Cockatoo Island that the iron content of the rocks is so high that it is possible to weld two of them together.

[As a point of lexicographic trivia, the first citation in *Oxford English Dictionary* for spinifex is taken from John Lort Stokes' account of his exploration of this area, published in 1846. He is the subject of the outstanding book by Marsden Holdern, *Mariners are Warned! John Lort Stokes and HMS Beagle in Australia 1837-1843*. Melbourne University Press, 1989. Stokes's own prose is somewhat ponderous in the two volumes entitled, *Discoveries in Australia; with an account of the Coasts and Rivers explored and surveyed during the Voyage of HMS Beagle, in the Years 1837-38-39-40-41-42-43*. By Command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. Also a Narrative of Captain Owen Stanley's Visits to the Islands of the Arafura Sea. The accounts of sandflies and other biting insects on the Kimberley coast are daunting. — Ed.]

Time, however, was our constraint, so the next day it was on to Biggie Island, 15 nm to the south. According to my GPS the whole island is 1 nm further north than its charted position. We first tried to anchor in Weary Bay, knowing the existence of rock art in the surrounding cliffs, but due to the bay's name and the close proximity of reefs to any possible anchorage, we decided to move on to Boomerang Bay. The log reads, 'It was almost low tide so we motored all the way into the beach behind the rock fingers, where we found turtle tracks leading to a nest and saw small black-tipped reef sharks chasing mullet. On the beach Rachel found a large conch shell. We both got a fright on returning to the boat when a rock turned into a sting ray at least four feet across the beam.' In the afternoon we anchored further out, ready

for an early start in the morning. Just on sunset we heard a loud rumbling noise, but could see neither plane nor boat. We later found out that the noise was an earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale, which made it bigger than that at Newcastle. Friends in Shelter Bay on Prudhoe Island reported rocks falling from the cliffs into the water surrounding them.

We motored most of the way in glassy conditions to Careening Bay. Captain Phillip Parker King beached HMS *Mermaid* on the slowly shoaling sand bottom to careen her – that is, to clean and repair the hull. Inland from the beach you find the huge double boob tree on which the carpenter of the vessel carved HMS *Mermaid* 1820. [See Book Review on page 44. Ed].

Regretfully we passed the entrance of the Prince Regent River, as due to the lack of wind we didn't have enough fuel for the 60 nm. trip to King's Cascades and then back out again. The area is also infamous for crocodiles, as in 1989 an American model was taken and then after the body was retrieved it was again stolen from the bow of the boat on which it was being transported back to Cockatoo Island. We headed instead for Adieu Point on Augustus Island, a lovely sheltered bay where we had our own crocodile problems.

The morning was a sleep-in as we waited for the correct tides to make our way through the passage to the north. Rachel was cooking pancakes for breakfast. I was just having coffee and admiring our surroundings, when a little angel fish came ambling along. Looking tired from challenging the tide, he chose the eddy of our transom for a rest and to display his beautiful colouring and delicate wings. Not long afterwards I noticed another ripple, and presuming it to be a snag or rocks I grabbed the binoculars for a closer inspection. To my surprise



Rachel at the *Mermaid* tree, carved in 1820.

the snag had two large eyes and was approaching us. I told Rachel to be quiet, as I was hoping it would come close enough for a good photograph. It moved very slowly and cautiously up behind our anchor buoy some 20 metres away, opened its mouth and had four good bites at it before finding it inedible and spitting it out. Wanting to get better photos and have some fun, I took the lure off the wire rope trawling line and attached a lemon squeeze bottle, yellow being a croc's favourite food colour. I let it drift back into his path. Chomp, chomp, perhaps a bit bitter for his taste? By now the croc was a mere 10 metres away, with his 9-ft. form clearly visible and still approaching. The deck of *Kango* is only 18 inches from the water and we were starting to get worried.

'Babe, start smashing the saucepan lids together while I throw things at it.' It didn't flinch and just kept coming.

'I'll start the motor, that will scare it.'

'No, we're out of here! Get the anchor up!'

Not wanting the handbag to win, I had two gos at trying to run over it, but it just ducked under the water and came back to the surface after we had passed over it. I learnt two things about crocodiles that day. They are prime evil hunters, and man doesn't scare them. I believe this makes them the most dangerous man-eaters, as they will eat anything that moves. PS. The night before the croc spotting we slept on deck, inches away from the water.

After motoring through the passage to the north of Augustus Island, at times doing up to 10 knots with the tide, we set sail on a light NE towards Sampsons Inlet, passing a pod of humpback whales on the way. Our fresh water was starting to run low, and Dave had told me of fresh waterfalls at the end of the inlet. These we were unable to locate without a long row in the dinghy, so after admiring the scenery and doing a bit of housework we left the next evening on an over-nighter to Cockatoo Island and civilisation.

Again we motored most of the way, to arrive just at sun up to the brilliant rusty reds of the two iron islands of Koolan and Cockatoo. BHP has mined both islands, but Koolan has closed. With Cockatoo winding down, half of its buildings were sold to Alan Bond five years ago with the idea of turning it into an exclusive island resort. Bondy went broke, but not before spending millions on

refurbishing and painting the old weatherboard bungalows. The resort runs under a new owner and the advertising slogan of 'Australia's best unknown resort'. This proved true, as there were only four paying guests on our visit. Although the dusty pink paint now peels and the wood splits, you can for a couple of thousand dollars stay in an original miner's bungalow with no windows, just huge shutters and furnished with wrought iron chairs and tables, cane sofas and cedar cupboards in a tropical Indo/Asian style. The restaurant overlooks the pool, which balances high on a precipitous 70 metre cliff, directly above the sea. The water flowing over the side makes it the most aesthetically pleasing pool I've ever seen. We planned on enjoying a meal here. The guests made us welcome and were entertained by our story, being obviously bored at not having a TV or a phone. The management didn't like the colour of our money until they charged us \$1.45/litre for fuel. To everyone's amusement we showered and did our washing under a fire hose, before having a lovely meal of antipasto and red wine.

The next day saw us make our way to Silvergull Creek, where we met Phil, Marion and Gary, who have set up camp in this lovely part of the country. Trying to escape the rat race, they have chosen a prime spot next to a spring on a small spur looking down a green-blue creek surrounded by high cliffs and steep mountains. They live under a corrugated iron roof, and walk around in their underwear as they make whatever money they need by carving black coral and pearl shell into dolphins, mermaids and whales. They also produce an excellent home brew, which left us all with sore heads in the morning when we headed for Crocodile Creek.

My directions from Phil were to anchor at the bottom falls, but only swim above the second. It sounded easy, but on arrival we saw a waterfall but no way could I get near it in the boat, so I anchored where I thought appropriate. We were later amazed as the tide began to ebb two metres from our transom and the water began to roll over a rock. Several hours later we were sitting in a pond, as the rest of the creek dried out. Our anchor was three meters above us and there was a 15 metre waterfall just behind us. Going ashore, we had a lovely freshwater wash, before relaxing under a shelter made by the miners of Koolan Is. and admiring mementos left by previous visiting yachties.

[For the Ulletts' illustrated account of their experience here, see *Fine Romance* on the Wonderful Kimberley Coast, *Squadron Quarterly* March 1993: 28-30.]

We stopped at Silicon Beach on Hidden Island, where the sand squeaks under your feet as you walk, but didn't stay long, as the shallowest anchorage was 30 metres in three to four knots of current. Instead we decided to do an over-nighter to Cape Leveque, crossing King Sound. The chart indicated tides of up to ten knots from various directions, with whirlpools, eddies and overfalls. That explains what we got, but the mighty Mariner 8 HP motor pulled through again, even though at times I believe we were pointing in one direction with the motor full belt and going another. I was just glad that there wasn't any wind against tide, as the overfalls we encountered crossing the two ridges were more than enough. We arrived at dawn, but again I wasn't happy with the anchorage and with the wind now increasing made for Beagle Bay.

On approaching the Bay we were called by HMAS *Wollongong*, who explained that they were escorting fifteen illegal Indonesian fishing vessels to Broome. It was amazing that the boats made it to Australia at all. They will now be burnt, the crews will be sent home and the skippers charged. Beagle Bay was a bit disappointing, but by now we had been very spoiled. Unfortunately there was no access ashore to the Catholic Mission, all decorated with shells.

As the sun rose next day we were in Broome, and I had sailed half way around Oz in a 24-ft catamaran called *Kango and Willygo*, with a dinghy called *Gone*, after everyone told me it couldn't be done. Over the next couple of days we organised storage for the boat and saw the town. We enjoyed ice creams and cold beer, before hiring a car to explore inland and gain a different perspective of the Kimberleys. But that's another story.

I'm now back in Adelaide, working to earn fun tickets for my next adventure and getting my sailing fix racing a Farr 40. The travelling bug has got me, and I'm hanging to go away. [SQ]

