

Pavana – part of South Australia's boating history

By Colin Doudy - photographs courtesy John Angus

New Racing Yacht Launched!

'A new racing schooner-rigged yacht, the Pavana, the first of its type in South Australia, was launched in the Port River yesterday. It will compete in the Royal Yacht Squadron's race to Kangaroo Island on January 26. The Pavana was built by Mr. J. P. Clausen, of Peterhead for Mr. R. F. Angus, of Angaston, to plans drawn up by a New York draughtsman. Her sails, comprising a jib, mainsail, staysail, top sail mizzen and fisherman's staysail will cover an area of about 1300 square feet. Members are looking forward to seeing Mr Ronald Angus's Pavana under sail in the New Year. If she performs as well as the Malabar, by the same designer, she will be a fast and desirable class of yacht.'

This was how the launching of the 52 feet long Pavana was described in the Advertiser on December 19, 1933. Colin Doudie goes on to tell her story....

I first became aware of Pavana's existence when spending a night at the Collingrove homestead of the Angus family. While sipping a pre-dinner sherry in the library and admiring some family silver, I noticed some of the silverware comprised of trophies presented by RSAYS for winning various races around the Gulf. Further inspection revealed a couple of photos of the said yacht, hanging on the wall and demanding further investigation.

Ronald Fife Angus (1899-1978) was the great grandson of South Australia's founding father, George Fife Angus and a member of the Squadron where he raced Pavana during the 1930's & 40's with considerable success. Pavana is another name for the Hindu God Vayu, God of the Wind. By interrogating newspapers of the time (courtesy of Trove) I uncovered some of the rich history, not only of Pavana but of South Australia's early yachting. I have not been able to examine the Squadron trophies for a more complete record of her achievements but fortunately the sporting journalists of the day found yachting more interesting than they do today.

By mid-January 1934 Pavana was rigged and ready for her first Island Cup over the January long weekend. The Advertiser reported;

'The big schooner yacht, which is built on American fishing boat lines, presented a fine sight as she sailed through Port Adelaide. It was her first try-out, and probably she will do better and look more graceful when she is ballasted down to her proper sailing lines. If she lives up to the reputation of the Malabar from the plans of the same designer (Strang) she should be a difficult boat to beat in the long ocean races'.

All who have raced in the Island Cup will be able to relate to the detailed account below of the fourth annual event, taken from the Advertiser, 30 Jan. 1934. Unfortunately for Ronald Angus, carrying a 39 min. handicap, was unable to beat the smaller 35 ft Wylo to which he had to give nearly six hours time under handicap.

155 MILE ISLAND CUP RACE

For the second year in succession Wylo, with M. Burnley at the helm, won the 155 miles Island Cup race of the South Australian Royal Yacht Squadron. Previous winners have been N. Ford's Anyndah and T. C. Angove's Stormy Petrel.

The enthusiasm shown by yachtsmen in building a fine seaworthy type of yacht to compete in this race and for extended cruising has fully justified the bold step taken to initiate this class of racing in South Australia. There were five starters in the first race four years ago, and on this occasion eight passed over the line, notwithstanding that two previous competitors were absent. The starters were:

Stormy Petrel (T. C. Angove), 55 ft. yawl, scr.; Pavana (Ronald Angus), 52 ft. schooner. 39 mm.; Nerida (T. M. Hardy), 45 ft. cutter. 1 hr. 7 mm.; Norallie (H. W. McGregor), 40 ft. cutter, 1 hr. 59 mm.; Vamp (L. G. Haselgrove), 40 ft. Marconi sloop, 4.16; Wyrana (C. Vincent), 43 ft. cutter. 4.26; Wylo (W. Burnley), 35 ft. Marconi sloop, 6.20; Solace (J. S. Verco), 26 ft. Sloop, 8.26



Ronald. Angus

The race was started at 3 pm. last Saturday from Mr. S. R. Delmont's motor boat Para. Nerida was first over the line, followed

closely by Norallie and Stormy Petrel on the 70 mile beat against a steady south-west wind to the mark at the entrance of American River. Stormy Petrel took the lead passing Escort House and Norallie then sailed into first place. As the wind lightened approaching Glenelg the three leaders were becalmed, but Pavana, Wylo and Wyrana, still holding a breeze, came up to within a quarter of a mile, followed by Vamp and Solace.

Fast Passing Along the Coast.

The inshore tactics adopted by most of the skippers was fully justified when the south easterly came in about 6 p.m. Norallie set a balloon foresail and moved ahead. As the breeze freshened Stormy Petrel, Pavana and Nerida increased their pace, and when Hallett Cove was reached Stormy Petrel had taken the lead, with Nerida close handy. Pavana, Norallie and Wylo appeared to sheet a direct course for Carrickalinga head, Nerida and Stormy Petrel sailed close inshore and Wyrana, adopting the same tactics, was catching up. At nightfall Stormy Petrel was about a mile ahead of Nerida. Pavana was abeam, and all were travelling



Pavana. Full sail, gaff-rigged.

fast with decks awash. With an increasing south-easterly the yachts had a thrilling race through the short steep seas of Backstairs Passage. Pavana passed to windward of Nerida still carrying her topsail well. Mr. Angas's schooner made a fine picture logging more than nine knots in the clear moonlight and throwing off clouds of spray as her bows hit the waves. Stormy Petrel and Pavana ran into a calm patch in Eastern Cove, allowing Nerida to draw ahead and round Vice-Commodore Mitchells Grellia (the American River mark boat), at 2.35 a.m. on Sunday, five minutes ahead of Pavana. Stormy Petrel followed 2½ minutes back.

Making For Troubridge.

Spinnakers and reaching jibs were quickly run up for the long run to Troubridge. On clearing Ballast Head (KI), Norallie came up fast. Dawn again showed Stormy Petrel out in front, with Pavana in close attendance on Nerida. Two other boats were seen hulls down astern. Wylo then came into view about two hours sailing time behind Stormy Petrel. Nerida went ahead again in the falling wind as afternoon approached, and was first past Troubridge shoal lighthouse at 11.25am and Norallie half a mile astern of Stormy Petrel was just passing Pavana. Wylo and Wyruna were just visible astern. With a falling wind slow passages were made on the run to the Orontes pile light, which Nerida rounded at 5pm. Stormy Petrel followed. 10½ minutes later, and Norallie was 25 minutes behind her. Balloon foresails were set on the last leg home. With sheets slightly eased. Stormy Petrel, taking full advantage of her additional length, took the lead from Nerida at 6.15pm. and Norallie was picking up on Nerida. Night fell again and nothing was seen of the other boats until they drew into the moorings at the Outer Harbor. Sixty or seventy yachtsmen, after more than 30 hours strenuous sailing, went straight to their bunks to pick up the many

hours of lost sleep. The finishing and corrected times were: — Stormy Petrel, 9.25.40. 9.25.40; Nerida, 9.56.47, 8.49.47; Norallie, 10.7.0, 8.8.0; Wyruna, 11.41.0, 7.21.0; Wylo, 11.56.0. 5.36.0; Pavana, 12.5.0. 11.56.0: Vamp and Solace came in yesterday morning, and their times were not taken. The placings were: — Wylo, Wyruna, Norallie, Nerida.'

However, Pavana quickly proved herself by winning the 1934 Orontes Cup, averaging close to 7 knots over the 61 mile course in the record time of 8hr 45min. The race was sailed in a strong south to south-east wind with much of the fleet damaged on the hard run to Long Spit. Torn mainsails, blown jibs and broken spinnaker poles featured among the less fortunate. She also took the Orontes Cup in 1935 and 1936.

The following year Pavana (1935) won the Island Cup for the first time in the record time of 29hr 37min, beating the previous time of 31hrs 15min set by T. C. Angove in the 55ft yawl Stormy Petrel, considered by some as the fastest yacht in Australia at the time. In the same year the Kintore and Orontes Cups joined the Island Cup on the Angas mantelpiece.

Ronald Angas was still racing Pavana in 1947 when she won the Island Cup for the third time while setting a new record of 28hrs 37mins, finishing at 7:52pm. (These times suggest a 1515hrs afternoon start, unlike the current 1900hr start. Ed.) This race was also sailed in brisk winds, causing Vamp to retire into American River with damaged sails. Seevogel (W Harris) was second and Nerida (C P Haselgrove) was third. Wyruna, sailed by two women, 'Mesdames C. W. Houlgrave and A. A. McCormack' limped home on Sunday afternoon with damaged gear.

Pavana sold!

By 1951 Pavana had been sold to George Mayne, the Commodore of the Pt. Lincoln Yacht Club.

Here she continued her racing record and, skippered by Jack Randell, was first over the line in the Pt. Adelaide to Pt. Lincoln race in a time of 21hrs 36min 15sec, although handicap honours went to Seevogel. Moored in Pt. Lincoln, she suffered her first misfortune in the hands of her new master. In April 1951 she was blown from her moorings by a stiff nor'easter and driven ashore. Fortunately she was refloated and suffered no damage.

In December that year Captain B H Buck, former captain of the Minipa, delivered Pavana to Sydney to compete in the Sydney-Hobart race on behalf of George Mayne. She gave a good account of herself in that race, leading the fleet for the first day, but losing the lead to smaller boats as the wind dropped out. Seevogel won the race with Pavana finishing a credible seventh. I believe she also competed in the 1952 race.

Pavana started in the 1952 Neptune Island race but was over the line at the start and while returning back over the

line, collided with Vice-Commodore Haselgrove's *Cooroyba* during pre-start manoeuvres in strong winds. *Cooroyba* suffered significant damage to her stem and both yachts retired. A re-match the following year was sailed in light, fluky headwind which ultimately saw *Cooroyba* win by 20 seconds (probably on handicap Ed.) after 250 miles of racing.

Club historian Peter Last recalled the incident, which he observed from the Outer Harbour wharf. "The participants were running back and forth near the line, intending to start close to the wharf on the port tack with sheets eased. All except one. Colin Haselgrove took *Cooroyba* to the far end of the line and tossed her on to the starboard, to call each of the others in turn to give way. That was a fine manoeuvre in dinghy racing, but silly with keel boats in confined waters and a good breeze. Especially *Pavana*, for she had no sheet winches. Her big jib was hauled in by every member of the crew heaving together, pausing repeatedly to attach a handy billy to achieve more tension. She had a long run with a wide turning circle, and was quite unable to manoeuvre deftly. George Mayne tried to fetch off, but they couldn't ease sheets quickly enough, and *Cooroyba* struck *Pavana*'s stern with a rending crash, while Norm Howard ran through a roll of film.

I got on to the back of his motor bike (Norm's) to go to the Squadron in time to see them both tie up alongside each other at the short pontoon of the day, and I heard the discussion between them in *Cooroyba*'s cabin, which was amicable and without overt tension."

George Mayne again sailed *Pavana* around to Sydney in September 1953 to compete in the Sydney to Noumea race. The Canberra Times reported "the South Australian schooner *Pavana* has moved up from last place to challenge the Newcastle yacht *Irene* for the lead in the Sydney – Noumea race. After covering more than 1000 miles the four leading yachts are within 14 miles of each other with 120 miles to go." The race was ultimately won by *Irene*. On the way back to Sydney *Pavana*'s crew went without food for two days as the voyage took longer than expected as the yacht was becalmed for some time.

Not having had enough excitement for one year, George entered the 1953 Sydney-Hobart race. The Port Lincoln Times reported; "The Port Lincoln schooner *Pavana*,



Pavana getting ready to set sails



Pavana in Derwent

skippered by Mr George Mayne, retired from the Sydney-Hobart yacht race after three of its principal sails were badly torn in strong winds off the Tasmanian coast. *Pavana* was lying fourth on the first night out, taking a course well out to sea. A 70 knot gale hit the vessel, whipping up mountainous seas and blowing *Pavana* 82 miles off course. As the storm was expected, no damage was done to the yacht.

All other yachts were blown off course except Solveig which hove to. After 12 hours the storm abated and *Pavana* resumed a south-west course. Later the wind freshened again and both spinnakers were blown out. Soon afterwards the balloon stay sail was torn to ribbons. At this stage *Pavana* was lying seventh, well down the coast of Tasmania. Having lost the main sails for running down wind, it was decided to withdraw and continue under power.

The Port Lincoln members of the crew (love this bit! Author) declared on their return that they had had a wonderful trip and the meals prepared by Mr George Richardson were described as very good!"

Pavana competed in a number of races to Pt Lincoln and won on handicap in 1957. It is believed that she may still be sailing around Queensland, but I could not verify this. Interestingly, she turns up as belonging to a Bill Brown who entered the schooner *Pavana* in the Sydney – Hobart race (year unknown) as an entry from the Royal Papua Yacht Club. More pictures and information about the yachts mentioned in this article can be found in Dr Last's excellent book *Hardy and Haselgrove*, available from RSAYS office.