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The Angas yachts: *Valeria* and *Pavana*

Peter Last

The Angas dynasty is an integral component in South Australian history, starting with George Fife Angas (1789–1879), a merchant banker, landowner, philanthropist and devout Baptist Christian. He came from Northumberland, but his family were originally Scots, and he is often referred to as being such himself. His father traded in Honduras mahogany, and George was apprenticed to him as a coach-builder in Newcastle-on-Tyne. After his father's death, GF Angas expanded his interests into banking, and applied his deep Christian principles to almost compulsive participation in charities. He was attracted to the antipodes as missions, which drew him into the group lobbying for South Australia as a prospective colony for Protestants who were non-conformist and dissented from the established Church of England. [Hence the title of Geoffrey Pike's magisterial *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829–1857*. Melbourne, Longmans, Green and Co. 1957.]

In 1836 GF Angas bought land in the not-yet settled colony, and sent out two whalers, a storeship and a coastal trader. Through his influence, the South Australian Company dominated Port Adelaide and its road to Adelaide. He recruited colonists of like Christian persuasion, and underwrote the two batches of dissenting Lutherans who migrated under the leadership of Pastors Kavel and Fritzsche.

George Fife Angas had two sons and three daughters. George French Angas became a painter and naturalist, apparently not much involved in the family's business affairs. That responsibility fell to his even more pious and philanthropic younger brother, John Howard Angas, who was sent to supervise his father's South Australian interests in 1843, at the age of 20. Their father migrated in 1851 and became a reactionary Member of the Legislative Council. John Howard Angas had a son, Charles H Angas, who was educated in England before returning home. He was elected a Member of the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron on 11 September 1896, and was active in races, as well as serving on the Committee.



Valeria.

CH Angas imported into South Australia the three-rater *Valeria* in 1897,

...having purchased her of the Earl of Albermarle... in a dismantled state. The *Valeria* is nearly 40 ft overall, and she draws about 6 ft 6 in of water. Her bulb weighs one ton 15 cwt and it runs to a depth of five feet from her bottom. She has been tried on the Port River, and she is said to possess good sea-going qualities.

There is a newspaper report of a race held on 22 January 1898—

Mr CH Angas's *Valeria*, helmsman owner, scratch; Messrs Tassie, Smith & Angell's *Maggie*, helmsman Mr FS Angell 8m 15s; Mr C Ring's *Leander*, helmsman Mr W Playfair 10m; Mr A MacFarlane's *Ada*, helmsman Mr T MacFarlane, 16m; Mr EF Belt's *Tern*, helmsman Mr A Rymill 20m 30 s; Rear-Commodore Sanderson's *Meraltie*, helmsman owner, 20m 30s; Mr G Pedler's *Waterlily*, helmsman owner, 25 in 15s.

With such a diversity of style of yacht, ranging from the low-counter class, now out of date, represented by the *Ada* and *Leander*, and the more modern racing machines of the *Valeria*, *Tern* and *Meraltie* order, an interesting contest was expected.

Such proved to be the case, for, although the *Valeria* and *Tern* showed their superiority over the others, there was no lack of excitement by the initiated spectator. In annexing the first prize by time allowance the *Tern* had a popular victory, and one that was thoroughly well earned, for throughout she was splendidly handled.

CH Angas steered *Valeria* to victory on 8 March 1898. In many races he gave the helm to others, as on 10 December 1900, when the paper reported,

Mr Angas's *Valeria*, with Mr R Woolnough, who has renewed his active participation in the sport after two year's absence, at the tiller, seemed to stretch like a racehorse from the point to the beacon, and was almost back to No 7 beacon before the second boat, *Melangi*, had thrown round.

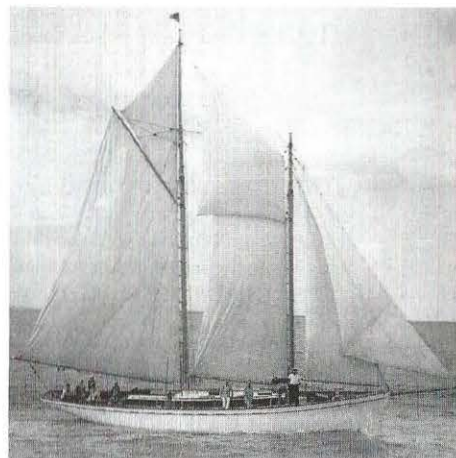


AG Rymill's Valeria as an 'oil launch'. One weekend she was a platform for the Rymill brothers to shoot 3,000 shags at Wells Creek, using Winchester repeating shotguns. We don't know where that is (or was).

Valeria won the trophy presented by Dr EW Morris by a margin of seven minutes.

The 1902 Kintore Cup was won by CH Angas's Valeria. There were five competitors, of whom only three completed the course. Miranda's main rigging carried away before the start, and she had to be nursed home.

Later that year CH Angas sold Valeria to AG Rymill, who grossly mutilated the elegant yacht by converting her to a motor launch. Her subsequent fate is not known. A photograph of a model yacht in the possession of John Angas was published in the issue of *Squadron Quarterly* for June 2000: 39. This was in the style of Valeria,



Pavana with all sails set, including topsail and the 'fisherman's staysail' on a triatic halyard. There were no sheet winches. (Colin Angas)

although there are differences in the hull form from the photographs of her big sister. The half model of *Matangi* in the Club House gives a good idea of the style of vessel she was.

★ ★ ★

CH Angas's eldest son Ronald inherited his father's interest in yachting. He chose the American marine architect, John G Alden of Boston Mass, who was prominent between the wars for his elegant designs. Alden strongly favoured a schooner rig, although in local waters there were overwhelmingly more ketches.

Pavana was built at Fletcher Road, Birkenhead by Peter Clausen and his son Harold. Construction time was of the order of two years, and she was launched using the large Harbors Board floating crane in 1933. Her dimensions were — Length 51 ft 9 in, Beam 14 ft 1 in, Draft 7 ft 2 in, 27.36 registered tons (33 tons TM)

Ronald Angas was good with his hands. He did much of the metal work himself, such as mast and boom fittings. These were of mild steel, which was then galvanised. Stainless steel did not arrive until after the Second World War, and the only similar material they had was an alloy called Monel, which was popular for propeller shafts. He made his own halyard winches from steering boxes of Model-T Fords, which had epicyclic gears. There was some brass and a good deal of Admiralty bronze.

Sails were all by Rex of Hobart, who had a high national reputation at the time. The engine was a 'marinised' Essex car engine, with a locally built reduction gearbox, the source of a lot of trouble. Ronald Angas's son Colin recalled a conversation with Commodore AG Rymill, then an old man. They stood on the wharf at Outer Harbor, watching *Pavana* put to sea. Mr Rymill remarked that it was surprising to see such a large vessel so well propelled by a little engine. AG Rymill died in 1934, so *Pavana* was then a very new boat, one of the largest in the pool. She was maintained by a full-time hand, Clarence Todd, who was a former ketch skipper. In addition to knowing the two Gulfs intimately, he had the added asset of being an excellent sea cook.



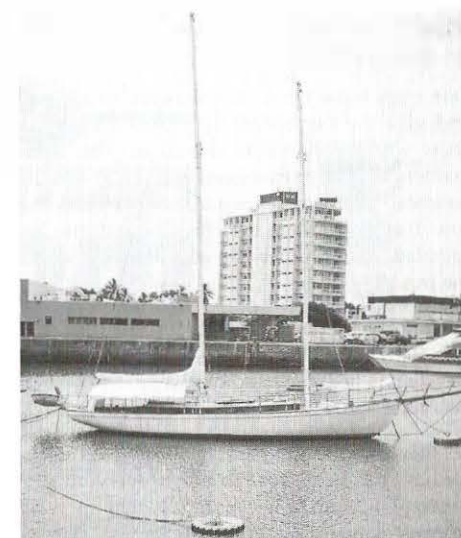
Ronald Angas at the helm. (Colin Angas)

They raced in Squadron events, including the Island Cup, and cruised to Spencer Gulf. There were no sheet winches, so a lot depended on the cooperation of skipper and crew to hand and bind sheets precisely in time with tacking and gybing.

The RSAYS 160 mile race to Kangaroo Island and return this year attracted seven contestants. A well-timed long leg out to sea gave the race to the largest craft in the fleet — the Alden-designed 52 ft schooner *Pavana*, owned and skippered by Ronald Angas. ... After rounding the Island (*sic*), *Pavana* picked up a sou'westerly and romped home in record time, followed by *Seevogel*. *Norallie* and *Nerida* finished third and fourth, well behind the first two, while the remainder had to use their engines to complete the course. *Seacraft* March-April 1947 (Volume 1, Number 5): 71.

Originally both masts were gaff-rigged, with topsails. The mast hoops acted as convenient ladders to climb aloft when the vessel was on a wind. Before the Second World War, Ronald Angas converted the mainsail to Bermudan rig. In the 1950s *Pavana* was sold to George Mayne of Port Lincoln. He was the first to enter her on *Lloyd's Register of Yachts*, where her vital statistics were recorded.

I watched the start of the 1953 race to Port Lincoln from the wharf, in company with Norm Howard, who hastily photographed the drama as it unfolded. In a classical fresh SE sea breeze, all boats in the fleet prepared to start on the port



Pavana in Townsville in 1998. (John Angas)

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tack, except one. This was Colin Haselgrove's *Cooroyba*, newly arrived from Sydney and starting in her first Squadron race. Colin bore down on the starboard tack, calling for right of way. With the best will in the world, George Mayne could not tack in time. It took every other man on board to haul in the jib sheets, as there were no winches and the task could only be completed with a handy-billy. Having missed stays, too late George let the mainsheet fly and tried to bear away, with violently cracking

heavy canvas. We saw *Pavana's* bowsprit slide across *Cooroyba's* forestay and her mast came crashing down. In due course it was repaired with three iron bands, which remained in place for the next thirty years or more. *Pavana*, of course, instantly withdrew and returned to the pool with her disappointed crew.

I do not know what happened to *Pavana* after she left Port Lincoln. She was last heard of in 1998, well maintained at Townsville. SD

Handicaps

Colin Smith

I like handicappers. They are, in the main, an honest and hardworking lot. I was one myself once, long, long ago. Yes, at this Club.

Until I became the handicapper I didn't realise what a delightful personality I had. People would greet me in the most friendly way. They phoned me during the week to enquire after my well being, and some of my dear friends would call at my home, with the odd bottle of whatever in order to enjoy what was obviously my sparkling personality.

One man, more open than the rest, would call and give me the benefit of his calculations to show what his handicap should be. This same gentleman, many years later, went on to win the handicap points prize for a number of years in a row. I can only hope the effort he put into his calculations and other like activities was worth the trouble to him.

For my part, I don't want to win the handicap points prize, because it makes it clear that I have a system to beat the handicapper, and very soon everyone will. I know. Imagine the loss of face!

All this leads me on to the big question. What do we have handicaps for? To ensure everyone gets a prize? I thought we got past that in early primary school. We presently have a system, which hands out prizes on a more or less equal

basis, because we want all of our sailors to be happy, and as a result will come back and race again. Now I am all in favour of attracting our sailors to come back next week, but I wonder whether we are doing it in the right way.

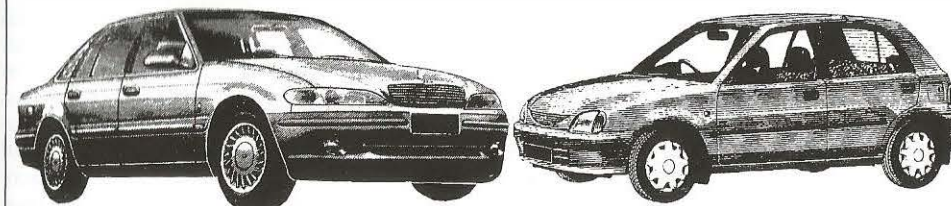
The present distribution of goodies follows a handicapping system, which in one form or another tries to spread the prizes evenly. This happens whether we are sailing well or not. The sad result of our caring endeavours is what we could call Planned Mediocrity. It follows that striving to do well in your yacht will be applauded this week and will be penalised the next. How sad!

Perhaps we should change things a bit. How about we allow the best sailors to win the races? After all, they are the best. Then to keep everyone happy, let's have a series of encouragement trophies — most improved in position or time, a wet T-shirt competition or whatever. This way we would have Planned Improvement, because to win you must get better. It is not a new concept. In other parts of the world they have been doing it for years.

Now, you may ask, what about the ones who don't want to improve? Give a prize to the best non-improver, but don't give him a prize for winning the race.

Seamus O'Hooligan
Colonel Black Guards Regt. [ret'd.] SD

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