



Ian Moncrieff

The Birth of *Pied Piper* – a Pion design by Van de Stadt

Rick Ottaway and Ric Halliday wrote stories in the 2014 Spring SQ referring to the Half Ton class of racers so popular from the 1970's into the 90's. Here Ian Moncrieff describes how he got started in that class.

Barlow winches were on special. Sitting up in bed I was reading Whitworth's catalogue. What to do? Loving wife Annette suggested, "Buy them, then build a boat to match."

And so *Pied Piper* started. But I must back track:

I raced Lazy E's, a one design dinghy, off the beach at Somerton Yacht Club.

When family constraints eased I joined the Squadron, for a sea going vessel beckoned.

Lazy E sailors usually built their own dinghies so I was encouraged to find that many RSAYS members had built their own vessels too, either entirely or with professional help. A bigger boat is always of course, a matter of finance.

In January 1976 I purchased a bare hull Adams design Tasman 26, 1/4 toner, from a yard in Botany Bay. Annette and I trailered her home at 50mph maximum on a single axle trailer. I was on a steep learning curve for two and a half years, working nights and weekends to construct *Tom Thumb* in the back yard at home. There was plentiful advice from experienced Squadron members and the lads at Searles Boatyard in Port Adelaide.

I raced in third division at the Squadron, consistently with a mixed fleet. My education in keel boat competition had begun.

Regular crew on *Tom Thumb* included Andrew Ikin and (now the late) Graham Needham. We became acutely aware of an exclusive group of vessels classified as the Half Tonners.

Mainly Spencer 30's and Pion 30's, their crews were very enthusiastic and fiercely competitive. They battled around the cans on Saturdays, raced in all the Gulf offshores of 60-70 nm, did the fabulous Pt. Lincoln Blue Water Classic and several tackled the Sydney-Hobart.

Andrew, Graham, and I had to be a part of this action. We each ordered a bare hull, deck, rudder and lead keel from Mander Marine in 1983. You see, I already had the primary winches! Richard Fidock Jnr. did the fibre glass lay-up and his workmanship



was excellent. That year he added a total of six Pions to the Half Ton Fleet.

Pied Piper, spent 18 months in our backyard under the gum trees and a rough roof shelter. The variety of tasks required to fit out any vessel is endless. To do it, it needs to be a pleasure. It was for me. On launch day at the Squadron, Annette named and blessed *Pied Piper* with a christening splash of champagne. Many enjoyable years followed in competition and cruising, in the fellowship of good friends.

As time goes on and classes are superseded by more advanced designs so we all move forward. However memories of the Half Ton days and the friendships will never fade.

Ian Moncrieff and his wife Di now own and sail Tasmanian waters in the cruiser *Pied Piper* 11, a Jeanneau 38 Sunshine, built in 1988.

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