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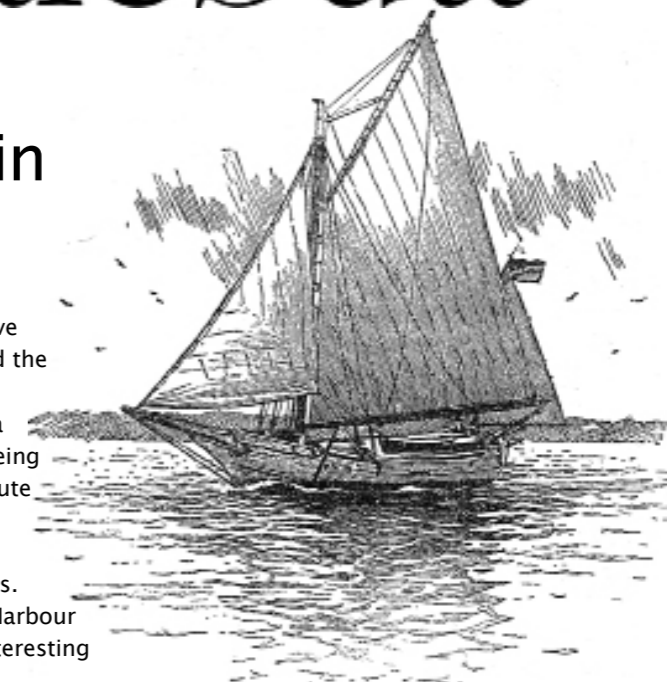
of NSW, Inc

July 2008

Scuttlebutt

The arrival of the Spray in Australia

Submitted by Dick Branson



Hands up those of you who have not read *Sailing Alone Around the World* by Captain Joshua Slocum! Not many, I see. But perhaps it is a while since you read it and, that being the case, I thought I might contribute the section of this wonderful book that deals with *Spray's* arrival in Australia, to refresh your memories. Slocum's observations of Sydney Harbour and the boats I find particularly interesting - have we changed much?

THENCE I SAILED direct for New South Wales, passing south of New Caledonia, and arrived at Newcastle after a passage of fortytwo days, mostly of storms and gales.

One particularly severe gale encountered near New Caledonia founded the American clipper-ship *Patricia* farther south. Again, nearer the coast of Australia, when, however, I was not aware that the gale was extraordinary, a French mail-steamer from New Caledonia for Sydney, blown considerably out of her course, on her arrival reported it an awful storm, and to inquiring friends said: "Oh, my! we don't know what has become of the little sloop *Spray*. We saw her in the thick of the storm." The *Spray* was all right, lying to like a duck. She

was under a goose's wing mainsail, and had a dry deck while the passengers on the steamer, I heard later, were up to their knees in water in the the saloon. When their ship arrived at Sydney they gave the captain a purse of gold for his skill and seamanship in bringing them safe into port. The captain of the *Spray* got nothing of this sort. In this gale I made the land about Seal Rocks, where the steamship *Catherton*, with many lives, was lost a short time before. I was many hours off the rocks, beating back and forth, but weathered them at last.

I arrived at Newcastle in the teeth of a gale of wind. It was a stormy season. The government pilot, Captain Cumming, met me at the harbour bar, and with the assistance of a steamer carried my vessel to a safe berth. Many visitors came on board, the first being the United States consul, Mr. Brown. Nothing was too good for the *Spray* here. All government dues were remitted, and after I had rested a few days a port pilot with a tug carried her to sea again, and she made along the coast toward the harbour of Sydney, where she arrived

on the following day, October 10, 1896.

I came to in a snug cove near Manly for the night, the Sydney harbour police-boat giving me a pluck into anchorage while they gathered data from an old scrapbook of mine, which seemed to interest them. Nothing escapes the vigilance of the New South Wales police, their reputation is known the world over. They made a shrewd guess that I could give them some useful information, and they were the first to meet me. Some one said they came to arrest me, and - well, let it go at that.

Summer was approaching, and the harbour of Sydney was blooming with yachts. Some of them came down to the weather-beaten *Spray* and sailed round her at Shelcote, where she took a berth for a few days. At Sydney I was at once among friends. The *Spray* remained at the various watering-places in the great port for several weeks, and was visited by many agreeable people, frequently by officers of H.M.S. *Orlando* and their friends. Captain Fisher, the commander, with party of young ladies from the city and gentlemen belonging to his ship, came one day to pay me a visit in the midst of a deluge of rain. **Continued on page 7**

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Next meeting

Tuesday 8 July 2008

1930 hrs, The Auditorium, Gladesville Sporties, corner of Ryde Road and Halcyon Street, Gladesville

Guest Speaker

Simon Sadubin will enlighten us on the restoration of *Taipan*, Ben Lexcen's revolutionary racing skiff.

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Scuttlebutt

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No adverse weather would stop skipper and the racing crew of *Monte Cristo* to make the most of the day in the Queen's Birthday Regatta on Pittwater. Photo by Rob/Fran Hardy.

A day on Pittwater

President's message
by Chris Goddard

Lars Frostell, our Scuttlebutt editor, was on the phone suggesting that I should participate in the Pittwater Queen's Birthday Regatta on the long weekend. "Come on my boat" he suggested.

Since my vessel was still without an engine, an opportunity to sail on someone else's yacht was a great proposition. I knew Lars had a very tidy ketch of Swedish design. I particularly enjoy sailing on someone else's boat. Each skipper has his own way of sailing, stowing and undertaking the various things that need to be done on a boat. He continued, "Pack your sleeping bag, if it's a good post race BBQ, you may not want to be driving home".



Matang, Monte Cristo and Buccaneer, the latter showing off her new national insignia, on the morning after the bbq.

The drive up to Pittwater was relatively quick, with little traffic on the roads on the cold and grey Sunday morning. The windscreen wipers were operating most of the way so I was glad I'd packed the Goretex. When I arrived it was chilly, I figured packing the thermals had also been a good initiative.

Lars' wife, Helen, had prepared an appetizing early lunch for us prior to the race. I knew it was going to be a good race when Lars suggested "a little tot of rum before the race to warm the bones".

The race is a staggered start based on a handicap system. We were one of the last to cross the

"It was a great weekend", said Mark Pearce about the Pittwater Regatta, "but the sail up from the Harbour was perhaps a little too exciting, we seem to have broken the Ranger worlds speed record, we hit 11.8 knots, recorded on GPS. It was a very enjoyable race, it

start line ("You are two seconds late, Asterisk", Paul Burchall on the Committee boat called out. Ed.) The forecast was for a lot more wind than what we saw throughout the race with almost continuous drizzle, interspersed with periods



Ross MacClein and his beautiful little Cat Boat *Buccaneer*. The little sailing tender, tied up in the background to Bernie and Kate's boat "of exotic construction", is the *Burdekin*, designed by legendary American Joel White. Photo Helen Frostell.

of no wind whatsoever.

Winter sailing is cumbersome, because you are wearing so many layers that you can't move smoothly around on the boat. You don't really know where your body ends, so you catch your sleeve or your hood or your collar on boat parts. Buried in all those layers, only your face can feel the variations in the wind speed or direction. It's still fun, of course, but you can't perform as well as you would like to.

We were on the second last leg of the race and there seemed to be only four boats left in the race. I figured the slower boats, like Faerie and Monte Cristo must have sailed a shortened course. Disappointingly, we were of content in the lead when the wind died. We ran out of time. The prize of a bottle of rum was beyond our reach.

Back at the Lovett Bay Boatshed, kindly made available by Michael Rich, we tucked into some excellent pea & ham soup prior to

was good competitive racing". "Did you know the story that the first person Slocum met when he entered Sydney was Cliff Gale", Mark continues. "Hence the Amateurs Club has the Captain Slocum Trophy Race. I believe that Cliff was 9 years old & rowing somewhere

devouring the BBQ, washed down with suitably warming beverages. The soup, I understand, is a tradition by the Tullett's and most welcome it was in the wintry weather. Helen Frostell introduced me to BBQ'd bananas, a delicacy

I had not tried before. How the bananas got to the BBQ, I don't know, as I know that nobody would consider taking bananas on a boat.

Our Editor resigns

On a sad note, I have to advise you that our Scuttlebutt editor, Lars Frostell, has decided to step down from the position with the publication of the September issue.

Lars has been the editor of our monthly newsletter for five years, originally taking on the role while holding an executive position on the committee. Our newsletter has improved dramatically over that period with Lars exercising his ability as a graphical designer. Even in those dire times when content was at a low ebb, Lars always managed to find some appropriate material to fill the void. He has set a challenge for the next editor, however, we are confident that someone else can be persuaded to step in to the role in time for the October edition.

near Manly when he saw the Spray come in the Heads and he rowed over and was asked aboard. Bill Gale will no doubt know the full story".

A big thankyou for the great contributions to the July issue. It sure is a joy to be Editor with such back-up.

For sale

WBA members may place a non-commercial ad free of charge if the member's name and phone number appear. Non-members are charged \$10 for a text ad (maximum 25 words), \$15 with a picture. Ads will run for two issues, members' ads longer if you ask for an extension. Submissions close on the 20th of each month.



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MOORING SWAP

Would like to swap my mooring in the Hawkesbury for 6 months and go to Sydney Harbour. Boat is 38' long, *Georgina*, 13 tons. Phone Rick, 0411 624 679.

The arrival of Spray in Australia.

Continued from Page 1

I never saw it rain harder even in Australia. But they were out for fun, and rain could not dampen their feelings, however hard it poured. But, as ill luck would have it, a young gentleman of another party on board, in the full uniform of a very great yacht club, with brass buttons enough to sink him, stepping quickly to get out of the wet, tumbled holus-bolus, head and heels, into a barrel of water I had been cooping, and being a short man, was soon out of sight, and nearly drowned before he was rescued. It was the nearest to a casualty on the Spray in her whole course, so far as I know. The young man having come on board with compliments made the mishap most embarrassing. It had been decided by his club that the Spray could not be officially recognized, for the reason that she brought no letters from yacht-clubs in America, and so I say it seemed all the more embarrassing and strange that I should have caught at least one of the members, in a barrel, and, too, when I was not fishing for yachtsmen.

The typical Sydney boat is a handy sloop of great beam and enormous sail-carrying power; but a capsized is not uncommon, for they carry sail like vikings. In Sydney I saw all manner of craft, from the smart steam launch and sailing-cutter to the smaller sloop and canoe pleasuring on the bay. Everybody owned a boat. If a boy in Australia has not the means to buy him a boat he builds one, and it is usually one not to be ashamed of. The Spray shed her Joseph's coat, the Fuego mainsail, in Sydney, and wearing a new suit, the handsome present of Commodore Foy, she was flagship of the Johnstone's Bay Flying Squadron when the circumnavigators of Sydney harbour sailed in their annual regatta. They "recognized" the Spray as belonging to "a club of her own," and with more Australian sentiment than fastidiousness gave her credit for her record.

Time flew fast those days in Australia, and it was December 6, 1896, when the Spray sailed from Sydney. My intention was now to sail around Cape Leeuwin direct for Mauritius on my way home, and so I coasted along toward Bass Strait in that direction.

WBA merchandise

Polo shirts	\$25.00	Australian Wooden Boat Book (incl postage)	\$15.00
WBA burgee, small	\$20.00	Rugby shirts, by order	\$45.00
WBA burgee, large	\$25.00	Business shirts, by order	\$40.00
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8 - November

Bantry Bay Tea dance. More info to follow

November 1 - 2

RMYC Timber Boat Festival Pittwater

March 2009

WBA Cockle Bay Raft Up

New members

The following distinguished boaties have in recent weeks joined our select group:

Kevin Lenaghan	Mona Vale
Gregory O'Keefe	Erskinville
Ross Thirlman	Balgowlah
Nick Doust	Balmain
John Aldersley	Gordon
Peter Cowie	Beecroft
John Flood	South Wentworthville

WBA meetings

	General	Committee
July	Tue 8	Mon 14
Aug	Tue 12	Mon 18
Sept	Tue 9	Mon 15
Oct	Tue 14	Mon 20

Disclaimer

Opinions and advice expressed in this publication and at the Association's meetings are those of the individual originator's only. The Editor and the Association's Committee do not necessarily endorse views expressed at such forums.

From the Editor

by Lars Frostell

Sydney 2008 Timber and Working With Wood Show

By Tony Curtis

Once again we were given a centre stage position and an opportunity to display an eclectic collection of wooden boats and expose ourselves and our ideals to prospective future members and other interested bystanders.

A last minute decision to divert Ian Smith's 2 ft boat cradle for his grandson Lucas

Ian's Smith's Balmain Bug, Ron Balkwell's Rubytoo, Dave Pedalo's Renegade and George Gear's 12 ft putt-putt were the centre of attention and raised many queries and a reminiscence of related craft. John Wagemans' display of putt-putt engines included the rare Blaxland with a cast bronze cylinder and allowed one to view

close up some of his recently advertised offerings.

Last but not least, I got down and dirty as a dolly boy in a flurry of activity on Sunday afternoon on my 8ft tender with the assistance of Peter Gossell, when we steam bent ribs and fastened and roved them home. Another winner was Don Roberts who gained 3 black stars for signing up 3 of at least 7 new members. Well done, Don.

Many thanks for all the support of the rostered members who manned the stand and pulled their weight. Keep in mind that we are looking for a new co-ordinator next year. It's a great job, meeting other exhibitors and pulling it all together and finding a better way to get the likes of a boat the size and weight of the Balmain Bug up the 87 steps of the Balmain Sailing Club.

Tony Curtis gets down and dirty with the dolly while Peter Gossell calls the shots from the inside.



Another successful 3-day display at the Hordern Pavilion completed. Terry Lance, always on the spot, supplied the photos.

William into the competition on the next door stand for general woodwork category was victorious, gaining 1st prize against some very stiff competition and amazing woodwork. Well done Ian, a fitting reward for your support in recent years with your historical skiffs that have been features of our displays.



Some seamanship

A stout painter from the forefoot of the ship's boat is made fast to the boom. A fender was attached to the topstrake just outside the bulwark door. The ship was running with the boom pinned in and the peak eased off. The boom was run out with the punt towing alongside.

The ship being kept steady was suddenly gybed. The boom went over and dragged the punt round with its bows pointing at right angles to the boom, and as the boom flew up and over, the punt was lifted up on deck.

When the helmsman saw it well on the way he jumped forward from the tiller and, seizing the stern of the boat, wrenched it violently round to bring it alongside the bulwark opposite.

This extreme technique was practiced by Bristol Channel cutter men.
From the Yachting Monthly 1906 – 206 centenary magazine, submitted by Bob Tullett



The life and times of a small wooden boat



Launching in October 1954

EVERYBODY HAS HEARD OF Orient Point.

"Where?", I hear you ask.

Our family moved there in the late 1940s and for the few of you who have not heard of it, I'll tell you – 25 km by road east of Nowra and forming a peninsula on the Crookhaven River system. The slightly better known Greenwell Point is a mile or so upstream.



Then a very isolated spot, the last 15 km of road to Orient Point was, until about 1960, unsealed and those who recall the 1950s may well remember that it was a pretty wet decade with frequent floods. As a result, the road for much of the time was virtually impassable. Five or six cattle gates added to the difficulties. Consequently, few people who lived there (and there weren't many) had a car. Boats were the accepted means of transport – for going to work and school, getting supplies, etc.

After using numerous boats on a borrowed basis for a few years, in 1953 my father, Harry

Branson, decided to build his own boat. A design was acquired and, on New Years Day 1954, the keel of a 23-footer was laid. He (and I) built her over nine months, working every available hour when not at school (Harry was then a teacher).

In mid-October 1954, Guniong (aboriginal for black swan – she was initially painted

black) was launched. She had been planked with spotted gum and oregon on spotted gum ribs and was fully decked with a self-draining cockpit, resulting in her being quite seaworthy. She was powered

by a 7hp Coventry Victor diesel engine.

Guniong was put to work immediately, taking 10 or more local children to and from Greenwell Point each day and fishing in the Shoalhaven Bight each weekend (and sometimes on weekdays) as weather conditions permitted. She quickly proved herself to be a beautiful little boat. Sadly, Harry died a few years later, and with a better road, the need for a boat diminished. Accordingly, she was sold and in early 1962 I delivered her to her new owner in Wollongong, where she remained for the next 40 odd years.

While Guniong was in Wollongong I had kept an eye on her but in her later life there, she did not get the maintenance she deserved. Also, she was moored fore and aft in a shallow part of Belmore Basin and although this is protected by stone breakwaters, there is often a fair amount of surge which at times of very low tide resulted in her keel hitting the



Guniong painted white just prior to delivery to new owner

bottom occasionally. One of her owners met his demise in her at sea and the boat carefully ran herself onto rocks in front of Woollongong lighthouse!

About five years ago, while anchored in Starlight near Quarantine Park for a WBA raft-up, I saw Guniong coming towards us. I called her over and met her new owner, Fraser Forsyth, and spent a very happy hour or so looking over her and acquainting Fraser with her history. He had plans to do work on her and a couple of

years ago placed her with a boat repair business at Seven Hills. Work was slow and Fraser (now one of our members) eventually removed her to his home, the repairer having apparently gone out of business. At Fraser's request I had a look at her recently but found her in a sad state and was disappointed to have to tell him that, in my view, she wasn't worth repairing.

Like many man-made objects, boats can have a finite life and it is probable that Guniong has 'lived' somewhat longer than my father might have anticipated. That said, I am sure she has given her numerous owners much pleasure. She certainly was a splendid boat for me to spend almost every day of my teenage years aboard – just mucking around!

Dick Branson

Serious boat building in the West Pacific by Jim Willett

Frankly, I expected to find a slipway and some repair work on being told "Oh yes they are still building quite big wooden boats there." So on a recent trip to the Province of Malaita a spare Sunday was put aside and with two other people we hired a 20 foot fiberglass boat with a 30 horsepower outboard to find this so called boat building.

The island of Malaita, the most populous in the Solomon Islands with about 150,000 people, is half an hour flying time from the capital Honiara or about six hours on a cargo/passenger ship. There are eleven language groups but most people speak pidgin and varying amounts of English.

The boat building is located within the Langa Langa lagoon where there are various 'floating islands'. The islands in the lagoon have been built up by carrying stones from the main island and coral from the



copper rivets clenched over on the ribs. The boat had a very high prow with a nice sheer. This was serious stuff.

The origins of the industry were due to Chinese traders in

finished usually continue to be owned by the village people who then use the vessels to trade between the islands and the capital. No outside finance is used during the construction.

The engine is installed and superstructure built after launching. There are no cranes, lifting equipment or any mechanical equipment. Based on the finish on the planks there are probably some basic planers or other wood working equipment powered by diesel generators but we couldn't see any machinery.

We estimated that there were about 5 to 10 sites were boat building was underway in the area but could not find out the size of any of the other vessels under construction.

The timber is obtained by going into the forest, selecting suitable trees, purchasing the log from the owners, the 'bush



1920s requiring vessels to trade between the various islands for collecting copra and delivering household goods for sale. They had brought in boat builders from China who had trained local people. The Chinese had long since departed but the local people had acquired the necessary skills and continued on with the boat building.

It takes about 5 to 10 years to build a boat because progress depends on earning the cash for the materials. All the labour is 'free' and supplied by the village under the guidance of the boat builders. The boats when

people', and then with a chain saw cutting the logs into flitches and carrying the sawn timber to the village for drying and further processing into the dimensions required. The timber would make anyone drool! We were standing on sawn timber around 24 inches in width, 2 inches-



plus in thickness and over 40 feet in length. Dead straight - no cupping, no warping, no twisting - just dead straight without a blemish. The material for the knees was 2 foot in cross section and had been adzed to shape. Different trees were used to provide timbers for different parts of the vessel.

The launching technique was a little unclear due to my lack of knowledge of pidgin and their difficulties with English.

From what I could gather two logs are placed under the stern running parallel with the knee, the bow is jacked up and the boat slides down the logs into the sea. To prove the above and that I was not drinking the locally brewed firewater, just look at the photographs!!!



reef and over time gradually extending the areas usually covered by the rising tide. These coastal or salt water people are fishermen, 'money makers' and boat builders.

We arrived at the location that had been arranged for us to visit, to be greeted by the sight of a wooden boat under construction of about 90 feet in length and with a beam of 34 feet. The planks were around 9x2 inches and the keel measured about 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 feet in cross section. The ribs were spaced at around 12 inches. The planks were being secured using

Pittwater news and views by Robert Tullett

I had high hopes that this Queens Birthday Regatta (after a couple of wet windy years) the gods would look favorably upon us and bestow the weather that sailors dream of, 12-15 knots, a dry day, if it's sunny that's a bonus, but it's not important. It's not much to ask for, but regrettably it was not forthcoming.

The day dawned wet and overcast and that's exactly how it stayed, a little breeze came and went and went and went away, with the result that there was no

result. Nobody finished within the allotted time, a DNF for all eleven competitors - that's the way it goes.

The owner of Lovett Bay Boat Shed, Michael Rich, had cleared his jetty and the smaller boats were able to lay alongside which enabled everyone to come ashore where hot soup and a gas BBQ were provided. He is very good to us, we had a very enjoyable couple of hours. Ross Mclean hoisted a Red Duster to replace an American rag that had flown from the gaff of his beautiful

little Cat Boat and named her Buccaneer; we supped bubbly and cheered loudly as the rain came down. It was all very enjoyable and made more so by the boats that traveled up from the harbour; Rob and Fran Hardy Matang, Count Gino Monty Cristo, Bernie and Kate Burdekin (plus another vessel of exotic construction), Mark Pearce Cherub, and the afore mentioned Ross Mclean. The visitors were most welcome and almost outnumbered the locals.

I need to report that profes-

sionalism has crept into our regattas. The owners of Asterisk employed a very experienced Sailing Master/Tactician (heaven alone knows what it cost, these people don't come cheap) but to no avail, the weather won in the end, which incidentally I hold him and the Prime Minister responsible for. Thank you for attending, Chris.

It's hard to believe, Barbara, that the crew of Magic found it necessary to ask the Skipper during the race "are we having fun yet".

Sand-gropin' and mud-floppin' with Westwind

Behind Queensland's South and North Stradbroke Islands there is an amazing labyrinth of channels connecting Southport and Moreton Bay. Names like "Whalleys Gutter", "Tiplers Passage", "Tiger Mullet Channel", "Never Fail Island" and what about "Coochiemudlo Island"? It is enough to send a thrill through any serious mud hopper, what's more, all of these channels take you away from the stinkboat Mecca of Southport.

When your ship draws two meters there is not a lot of relaxing to be had in those 28 miles of waterway and the high tides when we went through were very low but the peace of the anchorages amongst sandy mud and mangrove is more than worth it.

We anchored one afternoon in Browns Bay behind an island that was not yet exposed; on the mainland side there was a line of wearies stuck in the mud and lucky there was. Such a peace descended and as the tide receded another world was revealed, wader birds began their graceful foraging, rust coloured osprey circled and dolphins and turtles combined to tattoo the evening ambience into our memories.

About half way along this

inland interlude and just south of Jacobs Well there is a mile long stretch of water with not very much water in it at all, if there was any less water it would be dusty. I could not help compare it to some of the horror stretches on the old Ayre Highway across the Nullabor after heavy rain. According to the VMR's tidal information we arrived at this notorious stretch one hour before high tide, albeit a low high and not by accident. My mate Gilli informed me that the bottom was coming up to meet us. Bump, bump, bump but we were still going - then we stopped. Thinking we had only half an hour of the flood left we launched the dinghy with the main halyard, I half filled it with water and swung the wee thing out on the end of the boom. It never fails to amaze me what can be done with levers and a bit of tackle. We hauled in the main sheet and leaned the 10 ton yacht over lifting the keel a precious few inches off the bottom - we were afloat and on our way again. I quickly released the dinghy; if we took the bottom again whilst leaning we had no more cards up our sleeve. We bumped once more, the dinghy sideways half full of water on the end of the boom.

Alan Lukas sent us a message that there were rumours of a blow and we should be careful anchoring in the broader reaches of the channels. As we often do we paid our respects to the local VMR who reckoned the next few days would be fine with 10-15 knots from the south-east. They also thought the tide was coming in when it had been on the ebb for three hours. 24 hours later I called them up after we had dragged our anchor in 35 knots off Coochiemudlo Island to ask for the latest weather forecast. "Ten to twenty knots SE", the voice came back! I will say they were such jolly chaps and immaculately dressed and there were a lot of them. The whole Queensland coast copped it shortly after that but it was a delight to experience the breaking of their drought.

We also caught up with Ross Muir, son of Jock who built Westwind. He managed to organize three generations of Muirs who invaded us at 7:30 one Sunday morning while we were at Manly (Brisbane) marina.

There has been some water under our keel since then, Moreton Bay, Mooloolaba, Wide Bay and as I write we are anchored off one of the most amazing islands in the world, Fraser.

The Great Sandy Strait, which separates the mainland from Fraser (or joins it if you are a sailor) is magnificent and vast and as is often the case at the entrance to a paradise, fraught with adversities, not the least the notorious Wide Bay Bar.

We enjoyed a great night sail from Mooloolaba in a fluky westerly, crossing the bar in one of its more benevolent moods. During the night of our first anchorage it blew up from the south west opposing a 2.5 knot tide. All was confusion when I came on deck, other yachts were re-anchoring and an enormous stink boat was dragging unchecked. I prepared to get under way as I felt sure we also were dragging.

Before starting the engine I thought I should turn the plotter on to check our position and sure enough we were moving at a slow and steady rate. Just then the first mate and navigator appeared wondering why I was playing around with one of her navigating tools. "We are dragging," I said, "See how the figures are changing by the second!" "Yes, my dearest", she said smiling, "they are indeed changing by the second. You are looking at the clock, not at the coordinates."

Chris Dicker