



CRUISING NEWS



NOVEMBER 2015

THE LOIRE VALLEY DOWNHILL, DOWNSTREAM & DOWNWIND

BY GRANT COLLINS

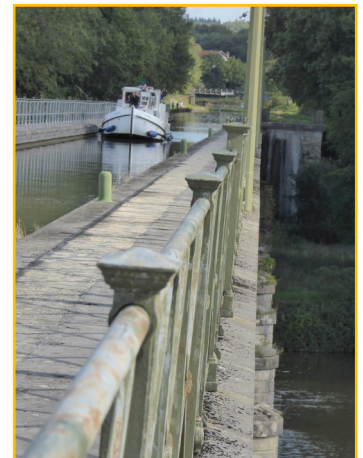


We briefly encountered this lovely region of France 4 years ago when Jenny wanted to have a look at some Chateaux after completing the Canal De Nivernais by a self drive motorboat.

That trip sowed the seeds for this one – Jenny wanted to cruise the Canal de Lateral which runs parallel to the Loire River and finishes at Briare. I had another idea which involved following the Loire downstream by bicycle until it reaches the Atlantic Ocean at St. Nazaire.

After a little research we discovered that we could hire bikes at Nevers and drop them off at Nantes 550km downstream. Our friends, Peter and Alison, were going to the UK and decided to join us in France for the bike ride and canal trip.

After picking up the bikes we took the train upstream to Roanne. A couple of wrong turns later we found our night's accommodation in the Chateau Matel (luxury). Our lovely French hostess drove us to the local fresh food market to buy some little luxuries for dinner. I made a classic Grande Salade and washed it down with a wonderful French Red. The first day's ride we only covered 30km due to the rough nature of the canal path and drizzly rain. After overnighing in a delightful 'Gite' (B&B) in a little village and eating frogs legs and snails at a restaurant we set off next morning in the rain again. Another wrong turn found us in a cow paddock but after back-tracking we stayed on minor country roads in undulating country and picked up the sealed canal path to Dom pierre sur Besbre, a trip of just over 50km. We then picked up our Penichette canal boat for a week's cruise to Briare. The Canal de Lateral is about 200km with only 34 locks, and as we were heading downstream it was easy going. The biggest challenge was crossing the Allier River at Le Guetin immediately followed by a double lock with a depth of 9.2 metres. We followed a slow, large commercial tourist boat so it took an hour to cross the bridge and go through the lock.



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With our hire bikes onboard it was pleasant to stop and ride to nearby villages and highlights. One such ride was from St Thibault over a

high viaduct and a long gusset-busting ride up to Sancerre which is perched on top of a peak giving glorious views of the valley. The ride downhill was quite a hair-raiser as our navigator (I won't name her) took the wrong fork in the road and we hurtled down a busy highway at breakneck speed.

We met quite a few interesting people including a French couple living onboard a beautiful 105 year old Dutch yacht which they were in the process of restoring. There was also a Dutchman who has been living on his superbly restored 100 year plus barge which had travelled down from Holland on the canal network.



The final part of the voyage was to Briare where the canal crossed the Loire River via a bridge whose steel works were designed by a Mr Eiffel whose name is associated with a certain structure in Paris. At this point the helm was handed to Jenny who has wanted to pilot a boat over this bridge since she saw it 4 years ago.

The following day it was out of the boat and onto the bikes. The two days of wet weather riding before the boat were now made up for during the following nine days of glorious sunshine. As we were heading west we thought we would encounter head winds as the prevailing winds are westerly. However we had 9 days of easterlies. Like sailors, cyclists love running before the wind rather than beating into it. Our longest days ride was 80km and the shortest was 15km. The cycle path along the Loire Valley is very well signposted following bike paths and minor country roads through picturesque villages as well as along the top of the

levee banks along the river. However we did miss a couple of turns. We became lost in Tours as unbeknown to us bridge works obscured one of the signs. Also in Angers we became hopelessly lost trying to find accommodation in peak hour traffic. But we were rescued by a very kind local woman who booked us into accommodation, turned the hazard lights of her car on and lead four lost cyclists across town to the bike path that took us to our hotel. How differently cyclists are treated in France to Australia!

We arrived at Nantes on Saturday afternoon with only 50km left to ride to St. Nazaire and the Atlantic coast but needed to return the bikes to the depot at Nantes. Unfortunately the restricted Sunday train timetables didn't allow us to get the bikes back in time so we dropped them off at the depot on Saturday afternoon. Jenny and I



caught the train to St Nazaire on the Sunday to see where the Loire met the Atlantic ocean. Just as well we didn't do the ride as on Sunday it was raining and a westerly blowing.

Like sailing, cycling is very weather dependant and we were most fortunate in that regard. We were limited in what we could carry in two panniers and a small backpack each. Although slow ways to travel, canal cruising and cycling give a feel for the country you travel through, as you go to places and by routes you would never discover by car. The locals seemed fascinated by 4 Australians who had come so far to ride a bike!

Highlights – almost too many to name. Quaint villages, flowers everywhere, food, wine, friendliness of locals, delightful Gites and chamber d'hotels (B&Bs) hidden off the beaten track, countless varieties of bridges and the beautiful Loire River itself.



WHICH ANCHOR FOR MUD?



The new generation of anchors – Excel, Rocna, Supreme, Delta, Spade et al – came close to being good all-round anchors that cope with most bottoms, except of course for heavy weed or kelp, where the Fisherman still reigns supreme, even if it is rather heavy if it is to be effective in a decent blow.

However, as shown in the trial documented in the November 2015 edition of Cruising Helmsman, the modern anchors, along with most of the older traditional anchors – e.g. claw, Danforth and CQR – did not fare well when used in soft mud. If the wind starts to be vigorous when hanging off of these anchors in mud then appointing an anchor watch or setting an anchor alarm would be a very prudent decision by the skipper.

Only one anchor stood out, or more accurately, got stuck in soft mud, the Fortress, and then only if the flukes are set at an angle of 45°. The Fortress is the only anchor that has two options for the fluke angle, 32° or 45°, with 32° being also the fluke angle on the other anchors. For soft mud the optimum fluke angle is 45°.

The Fortress anchors are aluminium and for a yacht up to 50' the FX37 is recommended with a weight of just 9.7kg, and so if

you buy one for those occasional nights when you anchor in mud and the wind is piping up, it is a good weight for stacking in a locker and manhandling onto deck when required. The Fortress can also be dismantled to a small size making stowage below easier.

The light weight and small size also make it easy for Santa to stack in his sleigh!



This 'Skipper's Tip' contributed by Brenton Smith.

Please share your 'Skippers Tips' by emailing them to The Editor, robina_smith@hotmail.com

THE SPIRIT OF HAIDA GWAI

BY BARBARA BURNS

Is intended to represent the **Aboriginal** heritage of the **Haida Gwaii** region in **Canada's Haida Gwaii**, formerly called the Queen Charlotte Islands.

We almost changed the name of the boat, until we read the myth surrounding the name, so we figured that it would be a good idea to keep on side the spirits of the Haida Gwaii people!

The Spirit of Haida Gwaii shows a traditional Haida cedar dug-out canoe which totals six metres in length. The canoe is crammed with a bewildering variety of paddlers and passengers: **Raven**, the traditional **trickster** of **Haida mythology**, holding the steering oar; **Mouse Woman**, crouched under Raven's tail; **Grizzly Bear**, sitting at the bow and staring toward Raven; Bear Mother, Grizzly's human wife; their cubs, Good Bear (ears pointed forward) and Bad Bear (ears pointed back); **Beaver**, Raven's uncle; **Dogfish Woman**; **Eagle**; **Frog**; **Wolf**, claws embedded in Beaver's back and teeth in Eagle's wing; a small human paddler in Haida garb known as the Ancient Reluctant Conscript; and, at the sculpture's focal point, the human **Shaman** (or *Kilstlaai* in Haida), who wears the Haida cloak and woven spruce root hat and holds a tall staff carved with the Seabear, Raven, and **Killer whale**.

Consistent with Haida tradition, the significance of the passengers is highly symbolic. The variety and interdependence of the canoe's occupants represents the natural environment on which the ancient Haida relied for their very survival: the passengers are diverse, and not always in harmony, yet they must depend on one another to live.



This fabulous sculpture of the Jade Canoe by Bill Reid is housed in the Vancouver International Airport.

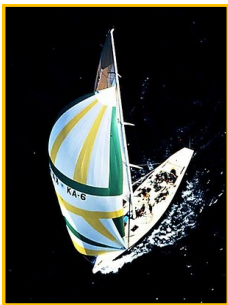
This modern version is a Catalina 36mkii housed at Brighton in Arm 1 and owned by Barbara Burns and Geoff Brewster.



Have you ever wondered why some of the boats in the RBYC marina are so named and what that name means? This is a new series explaining the meaning of some of the boat's names or why the name was adopted. Might even come with some cryptic clues but you, the readers, need to tell me if you want a puzzle..... and as always I need contributions.

OCTOBER FORUM DINNER AUSTRALIA II REVISITED

BY ROBINA SMITH



Where were you on September 26th, 1983 as Australia II crossed the finish line ahead of Liberty to be the first non-American yacht to win the America's cup?

In our household Brenton, the optimist set the alarm to watch the race from the beginning. Me, being the pessimist and having to go to work that day opted for sleeping but was

woken in the early hours as Australia II was on the final leg to watch with incredulity as Australia II was first over the line to win the series.

The Cruising Group decided to revisit the win (prompted by the passing of Alan Bond) with a fun social night before Old Timer's sets in and we can no longer remember. We didn't think we could wait another 23 years for the 50th Anniversary!



Lyn & David Bingham in that shirt!

With the dress code stated as 'Dress for the America's Cup' the options were wide open for creativity. Some came patriotically dressed in Australian colours (with the Drummonds utilizing some figure hugging bobsled lycra suits). Grant dressed as he would have looked in 1983 complete with mullet. Others dressed as if they were going to watch the races with a nautical theme evident. David Bingham was wearing his 1980's Hamilton Island Race Week going out shirt, that seems to have a story attached that involved ladies!

The trivia quiz organised by Brenton Smith and Pam Merritt set us thinking about that day, the history of The America's Cup and the part John Bertrand (who is a member of RBYC) played in it all. We were divided randomly into 3 teams which was a great way to meet people you don't normally chat with at Cruising dinners.

What was the offhand comment that John Bertrand said that stopped the Australian people in their tracks after he was 3-1 races down?

"Basically nothing has changed. After the last win we had to win three boat races. Today we still have to win three boat races. Nothing has changed."

Ever the optimist!

And what did Bob Hawke say on National television after they had won?

"Any boss who sacks anyone for not turning up today is a b..."

I liked the idea of that but I suspect my twenty five preps wouldn't understand!

Do you know how The America's Cup was so named and in what year it started? The trophy was first awarded in 1851 and renamed the America's Cup after the yacht *America* won the first race around the Isle of Wight in England. So did the America's Cup start in that year or the following series when it was contested? That caused some controversy but the quiz master and Wikipedia are always correct!

And how many crew positions were there on Australia II? My team thought there must have been 14-16 although they could only name 11- the correct answer.



Sue Drummond, Pam & Will Merritt, Bryan Drummond

Pin the 'Winged Keel' on Australia II (yacht profile reproduced by Vanessa Twig) would have given Ben Lexcen some interesting ideas to explore in the testing tank (not sure attached to the mast would have worked) but Bryan Drummond (To Be's) managed to place it in the correct position and Wendy Pollard (Bondies Mullet) was not far away.

The scoring was close but team 'Bondies Mullet' won with 'Australia II' and the 'To Be's' following in their trail.

We were then treated to a presentation compiled by Peter Strain and Rod Watson of some of the early boats to win the America's Cup, some of the magic/scary moments through the years and that final leg of the last race when it was clear that Australia II was going to win the 7th and final race and so win the America's Cup. The first non-American boat to do so.

Although numbers were down a fun and enjoyable evening was had by the twenty two who attended.

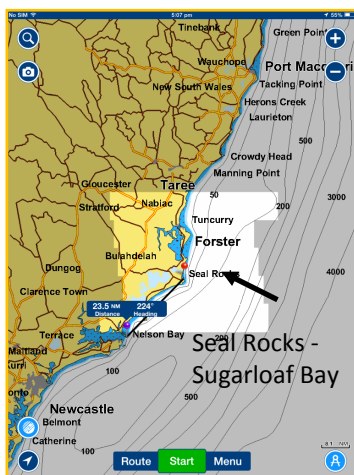


Sandy Watson, Grant Collins and Robina Smith.



SUGARLOAF BAY- SEAL ROCKS

BY ROBINA SMITH



As always while cruising, plans can change according to forecasts and conditions at a moments notice. This is how we ended up in the delightful open roadstead anchorage tucked behind Sugarloaf Point in Sugarloaf Bay with the fishing settlement of Seal Rocks on its shores - not an anchorage used often by cruisers heading north or south.

By mid afternoon we had anchored on a pristine sandy bottom in 4m of water. There was some activity on the beach with fisherman bringing boats in and congregating by their humpy to have a drink. We observed the haul out system for their boats - an old tractor!

During the afternoon we took the dinghy ashore with a gentle landing at the beautiful white sand beach. The weather was warm, the sea was sparkling and as we walked along the beach we watched the setting sun reflect on the cloud formation.

With the anchor light on we settled back to enjoy the evening only to be visited by a myriad of fishes swimming under the boat in the light. We didn't put the fishing line overboard but were tempted.

In the morning we checked the weather forecast again. 30 knot northerlies were now forecast in two days and we didn't want to be stuck in one of the smaller anchorages as we had deadlines to meet for arrival in Brisbane.

Plans changed. We did an overnigher to Coffs Harbour and were glad we were safely tucked up when the northerlies came through - plus we met a fabulous couple in Coffs Harbour who we continued to meet up with as we made our way north and still keep in contact with as they sail to Indonesia and Malaysia.

We had planned to spend some time exploring Nelson Bay/ Port Stephens but on downloading the forecast found that the following few days would be perfect to day hop into some of the smaller anchorages north. A passage plan was made and tidal information sought.

We quickly made ready and sailed off with Forster/ Tuncurry in our sights and a high tide in the late afternoon to get into the anchorage.

What we didn't anticipate was the strength of the East Australia Current - in the wrong direction for where we wanted to sail. Consequently in the early afternoon we realised we would not make it to Forster/ Tuncurry before dark and looked at the other options available.

The sea state was smooth, little SE wind, little swell and on consulting Alan Lucas's 'Cruising The New South Wales Coast', decided that Sugarloaf Bay would give us all the protection we needed in such benign conditions.

Seal Rocks settlement.



THE CUP WEEKEND CRUISE TO QUEENSCLIFF: OCTOBER 31st - NOVEMBER 3rd

BY BARBARA BURNS AND PAM MERRITT

The weather looked OK for Queenscliff and therefore the decision was to go.

There were 7 boats in all. *Andulacia*, *Emma Kate*, *Enya*, *SunKiss*, *Aquacadabra*, *Haida Gwaii*, and *Lara*.

We commenced the weekend with a delightful night at the Royal Brighton Yacht Club. Relaxing drinks, followed by a very nice meal. A great way to begin! Most of us stayed on our boats so that we could have an early start. Unfortunately the 'weather gods' thought it fit to shower us with rain, and not a lot of wind. Some had boats with enclosed cockpits and I am sure they felt very smug and superior. In fact one of them had a whinge because small drops of water came dripping down the inside!

The rest of us put wet weather gear on. I am always amazed how we can all start out at about the same time and yet spread out all over the bay, and so we were motoring along with yachts far off on the horizon when we started to gain on *Emma Kate*, and realised they were not moving. Unfortunately their motor wasn't cooperating so we towed them out of the shipping channel, hoping it would give them time to get the motor going. Not to be, so they called a very grumpy Coast Guard who referred them to the Water Police, who I must say turned up very quickly and towed them back to Brighton.

Rod and Sandy then drove to Queenscliff where Rob and Nona offered them very comfortable accommodation on *Aquacadabra* for the duration of the cruise.

We continued on our way hoping for some wind, but it remained very light so we just put a head sail up, which certainly boosted our speed.

We all arrived at QCYC within a hour of each other, and started the serious business of relaxing. We gathered in the early evening to enjoy a preparatory drink and our ritual game of 'Klop'. Will, who was a bit of a slow starter, in fact we all thought he would go out, won with some very clever throws at the end.



The Enyans.

Our evening meal is always very cosy as people get together and share the cooking. After dinner it was Halloween Night and the Enyans, as only the Enyan's can, made a grand en-

trance into QCYC's dining room and frightened the life out of us all!! Heather, John, Kathy and David were almost unrecognisable with their witches/skeleton costumes and revolting 'goo' dripping down their faces. Witches brew indeed - must have taken a lot of their 'drinking time' to organise and very scary, especially when they tried to kiss you. Will, not to be out-done, looked decidedly magnetic with a black wig and tights



The Enyans with Will & Pam.

Then the decision had to be made whether we would sail on to Geelong the next day or stay at Queenscliff. The feelings were mixed. *Sun Kiss* had to get back to Brighton on Monday, and I heard they had an exciting time surfing down some largish waves as the wind came up quite strongly. *Andalucia* stayed at QCYC with *Sun Kiss*, *Enya* headed up to Docklands for Cup Day festivities and *Aquacadabra* and *Lara* moved on to overnight at Geelong. *Aquacadabra* had some engine problems too, although they sorted them out and were able to head off.

Haida Gwaii also stayed due to an unfortunate incident with a petrol pump that was hiding under the guise of a diesel pump. We had to have the tank pumped out! However my justification was that the tank needed to be cleaned out anyway, and why not now? A good excuse for hanging around and not doing much. *Andalucia* had instrument problems with neither Autopilot or Wind Instrument working. It was one of 'those' weekends!

Another lovely night at Queenscliff where we joined Will & Pam, David & Sally and Tom & Alison, who very kindly drove us from the Queenscliff Marina to the Queenscliff Lonsdale Yacht Club for drinks and nibbles.

Meanwhile the Geelong contingent enjoyed the hospitality and facilities of RGYC.

Will and Pam then left in the morning to sail to Portarlington where they were later joined by *Aquacadabra* and *Lara*. *Aquacadabra* berthed alongside the jetty with *Andalucia* rafting alongside and *Lara* anchoring nearby. It was a great anchorage in the strong southwesterly wind which eased to almost nothing overnight. We went for a brisk walk around Portarlington before gathering on *Aquacadabra* for sundowners

and dinner.

Cup Day dawned calm and sunny and *Aquacadabra* headed back to QCYC for a few more days. Although the morning breeze was too light for sailing, as *Andalucia* and *Lara* proceeded up the bay the southerly filled in nicely and provided a good sail home.



Sundowners on *Aquacadabra* at Pt Arlington.



Crew Disembarking at Pt Arlington.



Rafted up at Pt Arlington.

REMINDER ABOUT NOT HAVING PETS ON BOATS WHEN VISITING QCYC

QCYC is on an island used by some migrating and local birds and has been declared a bird sanctuary by Parks Victoria. Accordingly PV has made it a lease condition that boats must not berth at QCYC with pets on board.

We have been requested to remind our members of this requirement.

MEMBER NEWS

Brenton and Robina Smith, have headed to Brisbane to sail *Chakana* back to a berth at RBYC after 18 months in which they cruised the east coast of Australia and New Caledonia. Tony Garvey has joined them for this cruise/delivery trip. Latest is they called into Coffs Harbour to have a new auto-helm freighted up and installed by the Ships Engineer, Brenton. This newsletter is being completed in Pt Stephens while they wait for more northerlies.

Sue and Bryan Drummond, *Gypsea Rover*, are heading back to Malaysia in the middle of November with some months to cruise around until the current plan to join the East Malaysia Rally in April which sails from Langkawi to Borneo. Kathy De Garis and Alan Richardson are joining them in the sail to Phuket.

Allan Haddow, *Ophelia*, is still enjoying working his way around the Whitsundays. His criteria for a good anchorage is good internet....and out of the northerly wind!

Tom Hinton and Alison Roberts Wray, have moored *Boomooroo* in the marina at Queenscliff while waiting for a pile mooring to become available. They have joined Queenscliff Lonsdale Yacht Club and took line honours in their first race. They are now called 'The Bolter from Brighton'!

Lloyd Hetrick and crew delivered *It's a Privilege* to Gippsland Lakes. Peter and Susie Strain have a mooring in Bancroft Bay and enjoyed Cup weekend with friends in Metung. Had some drama when the mooring broke after renewing all the tackle over the weekend and the *Privilege* drifted onto the shore at Riviera Nautique. Fortunately only superficial damage. Lakes work boat dragged us free and now in the Cunningham marina at the lakes. Will be back at RBYC end November.

There is a discount for Yacht Club members when renewing Subscription of Cruising Helmsman.

New Cruising Name Badges available to pickup from the Office for Bryan & Sue Drummond, Lloyd & Shanna Hetrick, Mel Chambers, Paul Wise, John Scott and Alan Richardson.

Rob and Nona Hurrell returned to QCYC after all the boats had gone home after the Melbourne Cup weekend. They are having a new starter motor installed. They enjoyed this magnificent sunset in 'Paradise'.



There are lots of ways to contribute to this newsletter. 'How I Started Sailing, Best/worst anchorage, cruising stories, Skippers Tips, the story behind your boat name. This newsletter relies on a flow of member contributions.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FRIDAY 20th NOVEMBER FORUM DINNER MEETING

Guest Speaker: Alex Parry MBE
Cape Otway Lighthouse - Beacon of Hope



In September 2014 Alex retired from the police service after 25 years' service (during which time he was awarded an MBE by the Queen for services to Law Enforcement) and relocated to the Otways, Victoria with his Geelong born wife Kim. In December 2014 Alex was recruited into the position of Guide at the historic Cape Otway Lightstation, the oldest surviving First-Order Lighthouse on the mainland, established in 1848.

In August 2015 he took up the position of Guide Coordinator at the Lightstation, responsible for supervising those engaged in guiding, acting and volunteering duties. He is also responsible for the historic interpretation of the site.



As usual, gather at the Club about 6.30pm, members draw at 7pm, followed by the meal and the talk.

Please book with the office (95923092) no later than Wednesday November 18th. Bookings essential.

FRIDAY 4th DECEMBER

Meeting for Annual Bass Strait Cruise in Company 2016

For all those interested in cruising from Saturday 27th February to Monday 14th March 2016 there will be a meeting at the Yacht Club on Friday 4th December at 6.30pm. If you are unable to attend the meeting but want to register interest please contact Robina Smith. robina_smith@hotmail.com.au

SATURDAY 12th DECEMBER HARDSTAND CHRISTMAS PARTY

Don't miss this popular Cruising Group event! From about 6pm on, out on the Hardstand and hope for some good weather. Load up the barrow for a BYO everything BBQ including folding tables and chairs and don't forget to start tuning those carol singing voices! We managed good weather last year but the alternative is always the verandah.

FRIDAY 15th JANUARY 2016 RBYC CRUISING GROUP 25TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER DANCE WITH HARRIS TWEED BAND

Come and celebrate the 25th Birthday of Cruising Group.
Book with Mandy in the office. More details out soon.

You are invited to participate in a new RBYC Sub-Committee - Women & Girls @ RBYC.

The Sub-Committee would like a suitable person from Cruising Group to be their representative on this committee. If you are interested please contact Cruising Group Secretary.

EYE CARE

Armchair Chat

During our recent and all too brief holiday in South Australia I was browsing through the November 2015 issue of well known monthly journal 'Cruising Helmsman'. An article, 'Eye Eye Captain' caught my attention. The author, Professor Gerald Sutton is an internationally respected ophthalmic surgeon

A great deal of my life has been spent outdoors, in my work life as a farmer, as a very amateur golfer and as a recreational sailor. My UV exposure has been and is very high. Consequently I have suffered eye damage and will be having corrective surgery in the coming weeks.

I urge you to read this article and particularly to pass on to younger generations the information about how to minimise the risk of eye damage from ultraviolet radiation.

Roger Walker



Captain Coxswain's Corner

'TELL TALES'

In my primary school days, children would chant, "Telltale tit, your tongue will split and all the little puppy dogs will have a little bit". They were, of course, totally unaware that the word 'telltale' was originally only applied, on old sailing ships, to a small magnetic compass mounted above the captain's bunk. This allowed him to monitor the ship's course even when he was resting in his cabin. The word was later applied to any simple device which could impart useful information. Ribbons attached to sails to reveal airflow patterns will, hopefully, be familiar to our readers.