

APRIL, 1984

CLASS RULES

Your committee are currently undertaking a review of our class rules. This review is not aimed at varying the philosophy of the current rules but rather to see if clarification or more specific wording is desirable. The present rules, or wording of the rules can not be altered except by a two thirds majority of members at a duly constituted meeting. One rule variation (relating to hull weight) has already been forshadowed. Further proposals resulting from the current overall review are published in this National News. These proposals are subject to debate and vote - possibly at the AGM held concurrent with our 1985 championship regatta Rhyll. Meanwhile the class rules effective November 1977 should be strictly followed when competing as an RL24. This reminder may seem superfluous but some concern has been expressed in recent times that our rules are being loosely interpreted or even conveniently overlooked at some events. Nothing undermines the status and reputation of a class quicker, both among its own owners and the yachting world at large, than the feeling that the class association is slack in ensuring class rules are firmly established and adopted. The committee would welcome any suggestions or comment on rule amendments.

MEASUREMENT CERTIFICATES.

Is your measurement certificate current? Have those new sails been measured and signed by a class measurer? Difficult sometimes to keep current, especially in some areas remote from measurers. Well we are taking steps to appoint some new class measurers and hope that all members will be conscientious in keeping measurement certificates up to date. Certainly this will be a prerequisite for entering the Rhyll regatta in January. Names and addresses of all class measurers will be published in next Nat. News.

12th AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS - RHYLL.

The 1985 regatta will be a seven heat series over the week January 5 to 12 at Rhyll Yacht Club, Victoria. A three man organising committee has been appointed - Mick Shannon, Geoff Vaughan, Barry Aitken - all members at Rhyll. A number of on-site vans and camping sites have been tentatively reserved for us but these bookings must be confirmed by June. You must ring or write direct to Swan Bay Caravan Park to be sure of a firm booking. Write to the Park at Rhyll, 3923 or phone (059) 569220 and say you are coming for the sailing. This van park is a pleasant, shaded area with a spacious camp area and is close to the launch-ramps and yacht club. There are some holiday flats at Rhyll and many flats and motels at Cowes, a few kilometers away. For details of these write to the Tourist Information Centre, RMB 1305, Newhaven 3925 or contact any of the organising committee. The tourist brochure enclosed provides the usual visitor information - Cowes is the main holiday center on the Island whereas Rhyll is a relatively quiet fishing village with quite a number of holiday homes. The waters of westernport Bay adjacent to Rhyll provide wide expanses of excellent sailing conditions and will be a top class venue. There are a number of elevated vantage points where spectators may get good views of the courses. We are making a big effort to make this 1985 series a most memorable gathering of RL24 people. So, why don't YOU give some thought NOW to planning a summer holiday. There will be great sailing, plenty of social activities our annual general meeting, and of course great company! A big range of trophies too, including a special award to the yacht that travels the furthest to get there. If you don't know how to get there try this instruction extracted from the South Australian Association Newsletter: "Rhyll (spelled "RHYLL") on Phillip Island, Westernport Bay, 5 to 12 January 1985. Rhyll is fairly close to Melbourne. (M-E-L-B-D-U-R-N-E is the dank, dark damp tunnel you drive through on your way to the Gippsland Lakes.) If you stand on a large map of Victoria with your right foot on Mildura and your left foot on Albury (known to the Vics as "Wodonga etc.") Rhyll is a bit left and a bit up from Melbourne - S.E. to the navigators."

RHYLL

JANUARY 5TH to 12TH

BE THERE

Top Sailing

Top Venue

Top People

MARLAY POINT OVERNIGHT RACE.

Third in a row for RL24.

Jack Lucas sailed Radical Lady to a win in the 151 strong division for the fastest yachts in the 16th Marlay Point last month. Following Sasha last year and Calibre before that, Jack maintained the fine record for RL24's in this prestigious event, attracting this year 610 entries. 26 RL24's made ours the fourth largest class in the race (behind Hartley TS16, Boomerang and Sunmaid). Our performance in recent years caused the handicapper to pull our yardstick back one point this time, which just kept us in the fast division, albeit as one of the "slowest" classes, RL's sailed off 110, along with Castle 650, Farr 7500, and Noalex 25. The Seaway was handicapped at 108, Sonata 8 at 108, Sonata 6.7 at 108, Blazer at 104, Farr 740 at 104 and Ross 780 at 102.

TOO MUCH CHAMPAGNE?

Accompanied by the usual ceremony that is traditional with launching a new ship, Archena slid down the ramp at Marlay Point to wet her bottom for the first time. Doug Lee had spent many months in a labour of love to fit out his new beauty and looked forward to her first race in eager anticipation. Even in his most optimistic moments Doug did not expect to find himself at dawn right up in the leading bunch. But.....dismay and disappointment when he realised he had started with the division 1 fleet 1/2 hour ahead of the rest of us !!

HAVE ROSS 780'S SEEN THE LIGHT?

Russell Wallace (Karingal) reports that after sailing through the Paynesville finish line he continued on to Sperm Whale Head. While replacing a broken center-plate cable (incurred when running aground near Hollands Landing) Karingal's crew were amused to see a well known Ross 780 sail off sporting an RL24 mainsail!

ANALYSING THE LOGS.

Bruce Castles has taken out the following figures from the RL24 logs. See where you went wrong?

BOAT	SKIPPER	STRAITS	PT TURNER	CANTON BANK	SHAVIAL PT.	TAMBO BLUFF	PT KING	M'NILLAN STRAIT	FINISH
RADICAL LADY	J. LUCAS	11.20	4.50	5.25	6.12	6.40	7.08	7.40	7.43
ARCHENA	D LEE	11.33	5.20	5.40	6.40	7.10		8.13	8.18
PEGASUS	B CASTLES	11.54	5.34	6.07	6.54	7.22	7.55	8.23	8.26
LOWANNA VI	M SHANNON	12.05	5.35	6.10	7.00	7.25	7.50	8.25	8.30
SASHA	K HACKETT	12.06	5.43	6.10	7.10	7.35	8.05	8.30	8.38
PARA HANDY	A RUSSELL	12.00	5.45	6.18	7.08	7.38	8.12	8.35	8.42
LOWANNA V	B AITKEN	12.05	5.46	6.22	7.11	7.37	8.10	8.39	8.45
STREET CAR	L RIPPINGALE	12.25	5.58	6.34	7.20	7.50	8.23	8.54	8.59
SPLICE	K RAINEY	12.19	6.08	6.45	7.30	8.00	8.35	8.50	9.11
COLDUCK	K WESTCOTT	12.12	6.04	6.40	7.28	8.00	8.34	9.00	9.15
JEWELTIME	D HALE	12.07	6.10	6.45	7.32	8.07	8.46	9.14	9.20
KINA	C ASKEW	12.25	6.10	6.48	7.40	8.10	9.10	9.19	9.23
JACOUI	D LEWIS	12.33	6.17	7.14	7.44	8.15	8.47	9.24	9.30
LADY JANE	M LAIRD	12.29	6.17	6.56	7.46	8.15	8.51	9.25	9.31
TAPUI	D CAMERON	12.30		6.43	7.33	8.06	8.47	9.28	9.33
IMP	C MECKIFF	12.30	6.15	7.00	7.45	8.15	9.20	9.30	9.38
RAMENA	D EDWARDS	11.30	6.20	7.00	-	-	-	-	9.44
ZILLAH	ROBINSON	12.40	6.25	7.51	8.23	8.51	9.13	9.40	9.49
SOLACE	D ARMSTRONG	12.48	6.23	7.04	7.57	8.28	9.03	9.45	9.50
KARRINGAL	R WALLACE	12.33	6.20	6.59	7.52	8.27	9.01	9.45	9.50
FINISTERRE	B BOWMAN	12.45	6.30	7.10	8.04	8.38	9.12	9.55	10.01
SUNDANCE	J VENABLES	1.17	6.30	7.10	8.10	8.40	9.15	10.02	10.06
PAMPERO	T ROMULO	12.30		6.45	8.30	9.00	9.30	10.15	10.22
BANANA BOAT	D MCARTHUR	2.00	5.25	7.27	8.20	9.00	9.35	10.32	10.40
TREKKA	P COGAN	12.50	7.07	7.46	8.35	9.12	-	-	10.47



Dick Voller (Big Deal) sailed well to finish behind Lowanna VI at 8.36.16 but does not appear in the table as when we came to plot the figures we couldn't find his log.

Second in our division, 12 minutes corrected time behind Radical Lady was a Seaway from Sandringham, third was a Compass 750 from Canberra. Line honors went to a South Australian Ross 780 with modified rig.

SEQUOIA SOLD.

Rob and June Legg have sold Sequoia BUT, there's a new one on it's way.

BOAT SHOW.

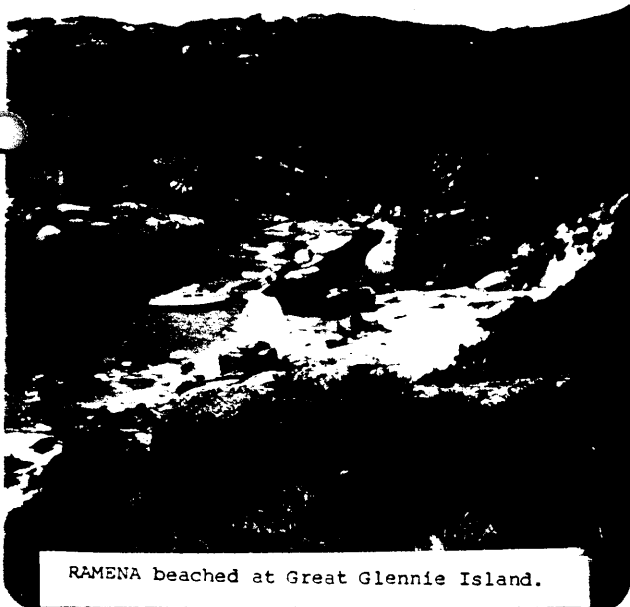
Last years National Boat Show in Melbourne was considered by most yachties as pretty tame. This year your committee have decided it's just not worth all the effort and will not be exhibiting an RL. However we own some quite good display material if any other State are interested to use it for a boat show.

SAILS FOR SALE.

Main and two headsails (one mylar) made by Hood Sails for Sasha just before '84 State title. Successfully used in championships to score equal first and are in absolutely as new condition. Carefully cut to measure right up to 20 square meters. Huge reduction on new price - \$700 for all three sails !! When sold Sasha is changing to a skiff rig. Enquiries Ken Hackett (051) 444346.

24' SURF BOARD.

The Edwards family live in a delightful part of Australia but rather remote from Yacht Clubs. Their farm however, overlooks the beautiful stretch of water that is Waratah Bay, formed partly by Wilsons Promontory. Dick relates stories that fill us more urban dwellers with envy - day sailing around the most southern coastline of mainland Australia, beaching on uninhabited islands amongst wild, unspoiled scenery. Of course these waters are notorious for strong winds and big seas but the intrepid Dick Edwards has a ball in Ramena, and with mostly reefed main and small jib, the RL 24 is very comfortable. Also he has become adept at riding the surf in to tiny bays on isolated shores - "its just like riding a 24' surfboard." Like surfing though it has its moments when you are not quite in control, as Judy can confirm! It seems on one exhilarating ride a sudden broach found Judy not hanging on and left to swim the last 200 meters as Dick surfed Ramena into the quiet beach. Must be something of a first, learning to hang ten in a RL 24?



RAMENA beached at Great Glennie Island.

COPY DEADLINE. Material for June National News must be with the editor by 1st June. What about some copy from N.S.W., Qld., and W.A.? RL's must be doing something in these States. Lets hear about it.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARINE RADIO (PART 3).

Concluding our 3 part series on using your 27 MHz radio.

Normal Operating Procedure.

A call to another station should be made as follows:

The call sign or name of the station called (not more than 3 times); the words 'this is';

The call sign or name of the station calling (not more than 3 times) and the word 'over'.

Note: Where good communications are normally expected it is not necessary to give call sign or name more than once.

Example: Vessel 'Hawk 39' calling base VH2AB.

(Call) VH2AB-VH2AB-this is 'Hawk 39'-'Hawk 39' -over

(Reply) 'Hawk 39' - this is VH2AB - go ahead

(Message) VH2AB- this 'Hawk 39' - am leaving Huskisson for Greenwall Point - anticipate arrival time 4 pm - three persons on board - over.

(Conclusion) 'Hawk 39(- this is VH2AB - romeo - out
This is 'Hawk 39' - out.

Distress Urgency & Safety Procedure.

The distress frequency is 27.88 MHz.

When a ship has a distress or urgency message to pass it may elect to handle the traffic on channel 88 or to shift to channel 86 or to a working channel. In the case of distress, the vessel in distress may elect to retain control of all distress traffic or to pass control to another station. The latter is probably the more desirable choice for small vessels.

Once distress or urgency communications are established all stations concerned should change to channel 86 or any mutually acceptable working frequency and normal working may then be resumed on channel 88, provided nothing is done which will interfere with or impede the handling of distress traffic. The controlling station should determine the appropriate time to make an announcement asking stations to change frequency. Safety messages are to be sent on a working channel after an initial announcement on channel 88.

S.A. NEWS.

Yardstick Racing. The S.A. Trailer Yacht Council ran a series to determine local yardsticks at Glenelg Sailing Club prior to Christman. Three yachts formed a team for each class. "FIFI IV", "GALATEA" and "FINESSE" (Brian Lawrie, Bill Young and Dick Clampett) formed the RL24 team which won the teams event. "FINESSE" won the individual line honours for boats in classes, although pipped on one race by a hybrid (a Hartos 18 "stretched" to 25 feet and with a rather large rig). On reflection, it may not have been too clever beating the bigger Farris for handicap purposes, but it was very pleasant at the time.

WARRIGUL TAKES TITLE.

Bob Perkins sailed Warrigul to a convincing win in the S.A. State Titles and did not need to sail the last heat on March 31st.

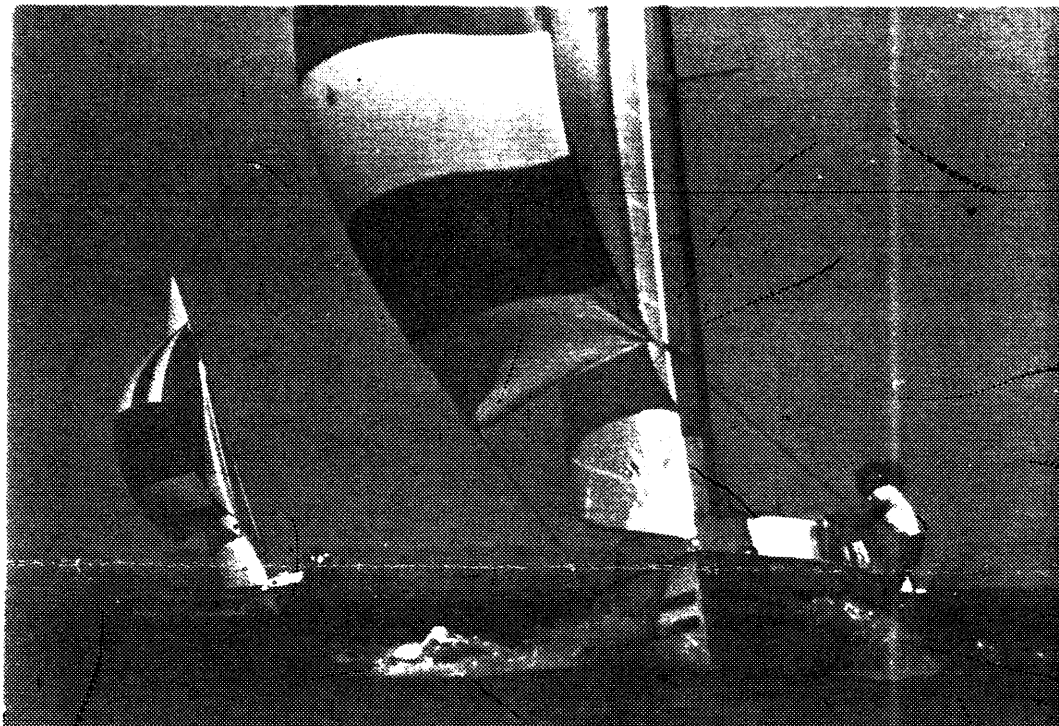
VICTORIAN NEWS.

AGM Highlights.

The annual general meeting was held on Feb 26.

Here are some highlights:

1. Previous committee re-elected for further term.
2. Current financial membership 51.
3. Membership fee for next year set at \$5.00
4. 1985 State title to be seven heats held concurrent with Australian Championships at Rhyll, Jan 5 to 12. Eligibility restricted to financial members who have sailed in minimum of three races in Victorian waters in 12 months prior to Dec 31st 1984.
5. An invitation weekend for RL24's to be arranged for December, 1984 at Lake Wellington - probably a 3 heat series.
6. 1986 State Title to be held just prior to '86 Australian Title series. Portland Yacht Club to be approached



RHYLL WEEKEND

Pictured is Mike Shannon and the girls bringing home Lowana VI ahead of Sasha in the race for Olneys Gong. Neither were good enough however, to take out the magnificent trophy which went to Casper, sailed by treasurer Trevor Jones, who sailed well above his handicap to easily beat the keen fleet of thirteen RL's. Trevor finished off a good weekend for him by winning the raffle at the evening BBQ!!

Again this traditional annual get together of the Victorian Association was a great success. Glorious weather helped of course, and to quote our host as we lazed on beautiful Silverleaves beach on Sunday "the Whitsundays wouldn't be any better than this would they?"

WINTER SERIES:- PORT PHILLIP BAY

Trailable Yacht Club of Victoria.

The TYCV intend to run a winter series of 5 races.

The heats to be held monthly commencing on Sunday 29 April, 1984.

The RL24 Association of Victoria is invited to participate.

Launch at St. Kilda marina for 1100 hours start (synchronized to the ABC time signal)

Sailing instructions will be available from the Commodore (Gerrard Van Maanen) at the ramp.

Gerry may be contacted on (03) 743 5987.

This race series is a new venture and the RL24 Association recommends to its members this opportunity for regular competition through the winter months. Yachts competing will initially receive the VYC CBH, thence a skipper handicap. The RL24 Association recommends non members of TYCV contribute \$2 per heat (Total \$10). i.e. Membership to TYCV is \$24 single or \$26 per family membership.

Sailing off St. Kilda/Point Ormond is a central Melbourne location and offers good launching facilities. Some RL24 skippers have already indicated they will be taking part. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to mix it on the water with old friends. See you there on Sunday 29th April, for a start at 1100 hours.

DRAFT - RL24 CLASS RULES & RESTRICTIONS.

Effective from 1st February 1985.

RL24 yachts shall comply with the AYF definition for Trailable Yacht and must comply with the following in order to qualify for a measurement certificate.

Hull & Cabin.	Strictly one design. Hull, cabin and deck shall conform to R. Legg registered design produced from a mould approved by the designer.
Hull weight	The completed hull, dry and in sailing condition complying with the AYF definition for "Trailable yacht", shall not weigh less than 454 kg. This weight includes : (a) those fittings bolted, riveted, glued or fibreglassed to the hull for the purpose of attaching standing rigging, or for the purpose of attaching fittings for running rigging. (b) rudder pintles (c) winch or tackle for raising centre plate. (d) any plates or brackets for mounting auxiliary motor (e) sheet winches (f) instruments permanently mounted (g) all built-in furnishings
	Items that shall be removed for weighing include keel, rudder, rudderbox and tiller; spars and all standing & running rigging; auxiliary motor & fuel; readily removable furnishings such as bunk cushions, marine toilet, stove, floorboards and similar sundry equipment that the class measurer considers is not permanently fixed.
	Any ballast weight to bring a hull up to minimum weight shall be securely fixed as near as practical to a position 240mm above the inner keel line and 4000mm aft of the top of the stem.
Cabin Head Room	The shortest distance from underside of cabin top at mast to inside hull skin or moulded floor at yacht's longitudinal center-line shall be 1.3 meters minimum.
Keel	(no change)
Rudder	(no change)
Mast Height	8.3 meters maximum, measured from cabin top to center line of halyard sheave.
Foam in Mast	(no change)

Working Sail Area

The combination of mainsail and headsail in use at any one time shall not exceed 20 square meters maximum measured area; sail plan is otherwise unrestricted.

Spinnaker

Shall be symmetrical when folded along its centerline with the leeches together. Maximum measured area 20 square meters. Shape otherwise unrestricted.

Sail Area Measurement

The area of all sails shall be measured in accordance with the simplified extract from the AYF Racing Rules 1973-77, Addendum E, as appended to these class rules.

Number of Sails

Only one suit of sails shall be used in any single race.

Only one mast and one suit of sails shall be used during racing in a State or Australian title series. A suit of sails shall consist of no more than one mainsail, two headsails and one spinnaker.

In the event of damage during a series dispensation may be granted at the discretion of the race committee for that series.

Spinnaker Pole Length.

(no change)

Safety Requirements.

At all times RL24 yachts shall meet the following requirements which are based on the AYF Safety Regulations; Bouyant & Self Righting. The yacht shall be (a) bouyant and (b) when laid over to mast tip at water level shall remain essentially watertight and floating and shall have a positive self-righting moment with plate down and sails wetted.

Note 1: Bouyant for the purpose of this clause shall mean that the craft when swamped shall float and have sufficient bouyancy to support 10 kg per bunk space or crew member, whichever is larger. Bouyancy should be disposed as to float the boat on an even keel when swamped. Where bouyancy is in the form of sealed compartments, a drain hole and screw type plug shall be fitted to each such compartment. Nothing shall be stowed in these compartments. Where bouyancy is in the form of closed cell foam, it should not be located below bilge level.

Ballast & Heavy Equipment. All loose items over 5 kg in weight shall be securely fastened in such a manner as would retain the fittings in position with the yacht to its beam ends in a sea way.

Keel Lock-down and position indication. A substantial and positive non-friction device shall be fitted so that after launching the keel can not retract more than 75% of its wetted area. That is a minimum of 25% area must be exposed at all times. A keel position indication visible to the helmsman shall be fitted.

Storm Boards. Solid stormboards not less than 10 mm thick shall be carried sufficient to render the companionway essentially water tight for a height of 300 mm above the cockpit floor. Storm boards should be fitted when reefing is required.

Cockpit Drains. The cockpit shall be selfdraining through at least two drain holes, each a minimum of 25 mm diameter. Cockpit lockers shall be fully isolated from the internal volume of the yacht.

Fire Extinguisher. An approved portable extinguisher shall be securely fastened in position. Extinguisher shall be minimum 5 BC rating (.9 kg) and one of following type: dry powder, CO₂, B.C.F. or other vaporising liquid having toxicity rating not less than 5 on the underwriters classification scale. Extinguishers shall be serviced/ tested at time intervals specified by the maker.

Bailing Buckets or Bilge Pump.

Yachts shall carry a bailing bucket or bilge pump. Bailing buckets shall be of stout construction, minimum 8 litres capacity, and with a suitable lanyard securely attached. Bilge pumps shall have minimum 25 mm suction and discharge connections.

Anchors. An anchor shall be carried of equivalent holding power to a Danforth size 135, with a minimum 3.5 meters of .6 mm chain and 40 meters of 1350 kg breaking strain warp.

First Aid Kit. A first-aid kit shall be carried comprising :

- 1 small pack of combined dressing or Army field dressing.
- 2 x 75 mm crepe bandages.
- 1 packet of waterproof band-aids.
- 2 x 60 gm of cotton wool.
- 1 pair of stainless steel scissors.
- Basic First-Aid and Resuscitation book.

Rudder Retention. Rudders, tillers and rudder blades shall be so secured to the hull that they cannot become disengaged.

Rudder pins or pintles shall be drilled and fitted with a stainless steel retaining pin.

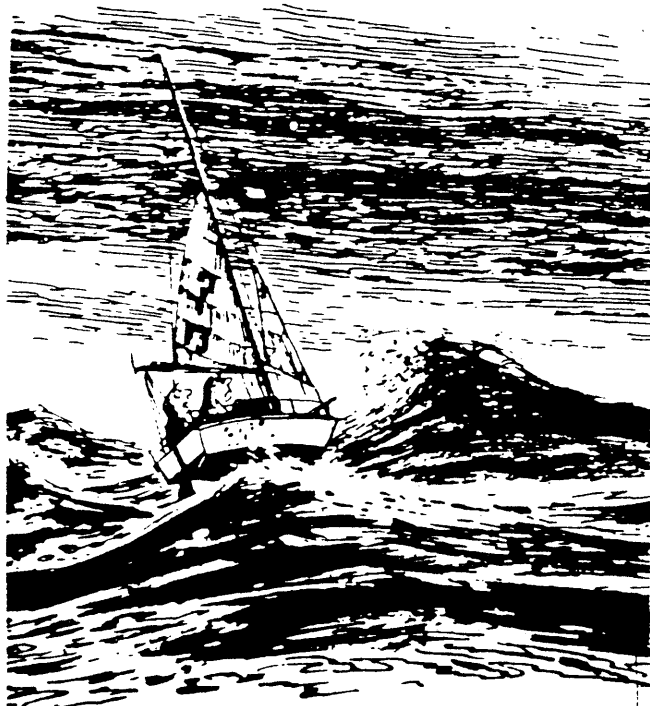
Rigging Cutters. Effective wire rigging cutters shall be carried.

Bouyancy Vests. One bouyancy vest or life jacket, complying with AS1499 or AS1512 respectively and branded with the appropriate SAA mark of approval, for each crew member, stowed in a readily accessible place, preferably in the cockpit area, shall be carried.

Outboard Motor. An outboard motor not less than 4.5 KW (6 HP) shall be carried together with at least 9 litres of fuel.

Crew. Unrestricted.

Mast Section. (no change)
(delete note re provisional)



"Do you think the next leg will be too shy for the kite?"

COFFIN BAY CRUISE

"Coffin Bay" sounds like something straight from the Famous Five or Secret Seven books of our childhood or if your literary taste was more sophisticated, a name you found in a tale by Robert Louis Stevenson. But be assured, the place really does exist although many people, even those fortunate enough to have been there, still romantically believe the name is derived from the shipwrecks, drownings and other tragedies which have studded the history of this part of Australia. However appealing this notion may be, the truth is that this beautiful place was named by Matthew Flinders to honour his friend Sir Isaac Coffin in 1802. Coffin Bay is, in fact only the first, albeit the largest, deepest and most seaward of a series of 5 interconnected bays located at the foot of Eyre Peninsula some 50kms west of Port Lincoln. The others are Port Douglas, Yangie Bay, Mt Dutton Bay and Kellidie Bay. Taken as a whole, the area is broader but shorter than, say, the Gippsland Lakes system and some of it (for example much of Yangie Bay) is quite shallow and requires a good deal of patience to navigate. But in general, as a place to cruise, it is simply magnificent which probably explains the conspiracy of silence maintained by Sth Australian yachties when talk turns to the cruising waters of their State.

The Corben family ("ANITRA") visited Coffin Bay for 3 weeks in Dec/January last to assuage a long standing curiosity about the area. Enquiries to the Melbourne office of the Sth Australian Tourist Bureau resulted in a comprehensive sheaf of information and a phone call to the Sth Australia Department of Ports & Harbours produced a good chart by return mail. We also phoned John and Val Rogers who are permanent residents of the Coffin Bay township (which is not actually near Coffin Bay) and who sail "TEGWIN" a handsome Mk 2 RL24. They are both wonderful ambassadors for SA and through their subsequent help, guidance and hospitality, we enjoyed an unforgettable holiday.

The Coffin Bay Yacht Club welcomes trailable yachts and unstintingly puts its considerable facilities at the disposal of visitors. By signing on as honorary members visitors have unrestricted use of the clubs' showers, toilets, and, most conveniently the clubs' jetty and marina pens - all free. The Club has the only source of water available to cruising yachties and although it is bore water it is quite drinkable and its supply is unrestricted. There are no launching facilities at the club but an excellent two lane ramp is located about 1km further on. It too, is free. The club encourages visitors to return their cars/trailers to the club site where they can be kept under surveillance, although one gets the impression that the apparent dishonesty of modern life has yet to spread to Coffin Bay. Until recently the launching ramp was flood-lit at night but during our stay the overhanging support-arm for the mercury vapor light was rearranged with the help of a sturdy Austral 20 Mast. The authorities removed the wreckage and at the time of "ANITRA'S" retrieval it had not been replaced but it may well be in the future. What a pity authorities can't be taught to get it right! The ramp runs into deep water and is flanked either side by fendered cat-walks. It can be used in all weathers and tides but a bit of care is needed during the last ¼ of an ebbing tide which sweeps past at considerable speed. For reasons which we were unable to discover there are only 2 tidal movements per 24 hours - a flood during the night and an ebb which seems to finish around 1100 hrs. The range appeared to be about 1 metre but locals talk about a phenomenon known as "dodge" tides when

there is virtually no movement at all. These seem to occur towards the end of each month and certainly we noted virtually no movement in the water level during the last couple of days of December '83,

The township of Coffin Bay has 2 stores both of which sell petrol and ice. One is also the Post Office. The store directly opposite the yacht club sells block ice which lasts much longer than the crushed "party" variety and is therefore to be preferred given that Coffin Bay settlement is the only source of supplies and water in the entire system.

On arrival at Coffin Bay, one is immediately struck by its beauty and charm. The waterways are bordered sometimes by sheer rocky cliffs, sometimes by sandhills covered in bush and sometimes by sand dunes. At every turn in the coast line there seems to be a snug little cove with its own beach and rocky outcrops at the ends of each golden crescent of sand. In many respects, it matches the attractiveness of the tropics though it's a bit short on palm trees. It can blow like it does in the tropics too and indeed during the 12 days we were actually on the water the wind speed rarely dropped below 15kts and most often was in the 20-30kt range. We were assured by the locals that this was quite unusual, the normal range being around 10-18kts. The breeze is predominantly from the S/W but a change brings the wind S/E then thru North to the S/W again. In S/W and southerlies there are dozens of snug anchorages but in southeasterlies the number of options diminishes a little. In easterlies & northerlies there are really only 3 or 4 good anchorages and only one of these (Little Douglas) is gale-proof. Fortunately, the yacht club is also located in very sheltered water and so becomes a popular haven in a blow.

Navigating around the system is simple but the chart is essential if the numerous sand spits are to be avoided. In some areas of Port Douglas it is necessary to keep to the channel which for the most part is well marked and lit. The waters are crystal clear and the bottom is generally sandy although some areas are covered in weed. Although we didn't test their claims, the locals told us the fish are suicidal and certainly we saw some impressive catches. Our sailing was enhanced most days by the companionship of dolphins which accompanied us for dozens of miles cavorting around the boat but somehow miraculously avoiding a collision with us and between themselves. Apart from wild brumbies, emus and a sign warning of the infestation of tigersnakes, we saw no wildlife ashore but, by way of compensation, the whole area teems with a staggering variety of birdlife.

There are three other major impressions left with us after our visit to Coffin Bay. The first is the lack of population. Whereas the number of T/Ys on the Gippsland Lakes would be in the hundreds, we counted carefully and could find no more than 25 TYs and 4 keel boats actively cruising the Coffin Bay system in the 12 days we were there. Second, the friendliness of the yacht club and the other cruising folk was overwhelming. As the only interstate visitors we were "adopted" and looked after in the most heartwarming manner.

Finally, Coffin Bay has no flies and is virtually mosquito-free. That feature alone is enough to ensure that we will soon return to this beautiful corner of Australia.

