



RL - it's YOUR kind of boat

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**RL24 NEWSLETTER
MAY 2008**

Greetings

Late again and still without a plausible excuse! I had the belief that with retirement came time to pursue extra-curricula activities such as writing. Wrong!! I can't explain where the time goes but I am acutely aware that I've never been busier in my life. However, I see from my diary I have a free day in November 2010 so things aren't too bad and being busy sure beats the alternative.

This Newsletter has been a greater joy than usual to produce because some other people have graciously made major contributions to it. Jane Davis, our indefatigable Hon. Secretary, has written at length about the venue and dates of the next Nationals and other events. Andrew Pike sends us the story of his quite extraordinary restoration job on *Sly Fox*, something we foreshadowed in the last Newsletter. And, joy of joy, out of the blue has come a wonderfully whimsical and heart-warming piece by Theresa Pike, Andrew's wise and patient wife, giving her version of the *Sly Fox* epic and revealing volumes about her own courage and grace under extreme pressure. I had the pleasure of speaking with Theresa on several occasions at Mannering Park and in person she is exactly the same as she is on the written page – effervescent, enthusiastic, wry, honest and very keen on sailing. I am sure you will all find her story not only humorously interesting but inspirational as well.

National Championships 2009

Jane Davis reports that after much negotiation, the RL24 Owner's Association of Australia **2008/2009 National Titles will be held at Paynesville, Victoria, from Sunday 28th December 2008 – Friday 2nd January, 2009.** Invitation races will be held on the Sunday, and Presentation Night will be on Friday 2nd Jan. More details will follow in subsequent Newsletters along with the Notice of Race and Entry Form. In the meantime, those considering coming to the Nationals and requiring accommodation may find the following list of options useful.

1. Allawah Caravan Park (Canal frontage with boat ramp) (ph 03 5156 7777). On site vans and cabins (approx 15 min by boat to GLYC).
2. Resthaven Caravan Park (ph 03 5156 6342). Cabins and on site vans. (5 min from GLYC)
3. Lake King Waterfront Caravan Park (ph 03 5156 6387) tent and van sites, some cabins. (10 min drive from GLYC).
4. Eagle Point Caravan Park (ph 03 5156 6232) tent and van sites, some cabins.
5. Gippsland Lakes Escapes (ph 03 5156 0432) booking service for units, holiday homes, at Paynesville, Raymond Island, and surrounding area.
6. A'Beckett Park Raymond Island (ph 03 5156 6580) cabins and bunk houses.
7. Marriner's Cove (ph 03 51567444) waterfront accommodation with some pens. - Pam & Kevin Ryan

The results of the Survey of RL24 owners conducted at the previous National Championships indicated that Mannering Park, NSW was the first preference of venue for the next National Titles and Paynesville, Vic. the second. Unfortunately, a prior commitment to another class prevented Mannering Park Yacht Club hosting our Nationals during the requested weeks so the Committee approached the Gippsland Yacht Club which has kindly agreed to stage the next titles at Paynesville.

Drought Buster Regatta :

Jane also reports that on the weekend of 20th and 21st April last, the Port Melbourne Yacht Club, in conjunction with Yachting Victoria held a Drought Buster regatta to show support for members from Country Clubs which are without water. A total of 65 boats entered, in 6 divisions.

Two RL24's entered Div. 4, *Sasha*, skippered by Mike Reid from Lake Mokoan and *Streetcar*, skippered by Paul Davis from Colac. Perfect sailing conditions on both days made for close racing between the above mentioned boats, with Paul managing to win all 4 races on handicap. The regatta was superbly run, with very helpful and friendly club members available to assist at all times. They even allowed the trailer sailers to anchor in front of the club and provided water taxis to ferry crew back to the clubhouse! Wonderful service. A great weekend and we would recommend it for everyone next year.

News from Colac – City by the non-Lake!!

Colac Yacht Club's trailer-sailer pennant was narrowly won this year by *This-Way-Up*, over *Pipe Dream* and *Streetcar*. There was a margin of only .8 of one point dividing the three boats, so there was very close racing on the last day of sailing at Lake Bullen Merri, near Camperdown.

During Skandia week back in January, Darryl Langdon from *This Way Up* and his wife, Elaine were on a different sailing trip cruising around Noumea and other islands in the South Pacific. The breeze was up one day as was a big swell and Darryl said that at one point the ship was leaning so much he was waiting for the skipper to call "Tacking!!" over the speakers and he resisted the urge to rush to the up-side. But in true Darryl style he didn't spill one drop of his Bundy during the entire cruise!

Knot Going To Be Left At Home!

As promised earlier, here is the remarkable story of a brave woman's introduction to an RL24. Theresa Pike writes.....

"My husband Andrew, who has sailing in his blood, had to sell his beloved Nacra Cat. eighteen years ago in order to buy a house and marry me who he loved marginally more. Our marriage is great and soon we had two boys, Michael and Jason to prove it. Wind surfing became a passion for a while but was just not quite the same as sailing. Years passed and hearing from time to time from our dear friend Darren Dyer and his adventures sailing an RL24 with Simon Walsh really started to hit the mark.

About 5 years ago, after looking for a while, an RL24 called *Sly Fox* came on the market at a good price. Andrew went to take a look. All keen and eager, he took me along for a second look. I didn't know much about boats but when I set eyes on this thing I thought it was a sight for sore eyes. I didn't think it would float let alone sail. Things were growing off it! I was sure it was ready for Davey Jones Locker. Andrew, on the other hand, could see its potential. I hadn't seen him so pumped up over something for a long time. Knowing how clever he is at fixing and doing things up, a deal was struck. If he fixed it up and made it seaworthy, I would give sailing a try but could not promise I would like it. I have always been a land-lover, refusing over the years to go out on Moreton Bay with friends in various "tinnies". But I have always been the type to give something new a go. So *Sly Fox* became part of the family. Andrew and Michael towed her home and to this day we don't know how the trailer made it. Luckily Mr.Plod didn't see it too. Before starting on the boat, the trailer had to be practically rebuilt.

On closer inspection of the boat, we are almost sure she had been on her side in the water for quite a while as the mast was full of sea sponges, shells and God knows what. A real task to flush it all out but using the height of our back deck we managed. (The boys learnt many colourful words during this time!) Rob, a mate who is a panel beater by trade, was called in to help sand and paint her. I always thought Andrew was fussy (near enough is NOT good enough) but Rob was just the same and sanding took a very long time. Well worth the effort, though, as she looks a real treat in her shiny light blue.

After about a year of hard work and lonely days and nights for me, we were ready to try her out. Andrew decided the Brisbane River under motor would be a good start for myself and the boys just to

get a feel for the boat. Things were fine and all enjoyed a great picnic lunch. However, on the way back the motor failed and we started drifting towards an oncoming tug. After a little panic (me mainly!), the motor came back to life and we were fine. Ready for our first sailing experience, we headed to Moreton Bay between the mainland and an island called Coochiemudlo. With land on both sides it helped to settle my nerves. We had about 5-10 knots of wind – “perfect for beginners”, said Andrew. Determined not to show my fear to the boys, I kept a forced smile on my face and held onto Andrew’s leg. The claw marks were there some time afterwards. After sailing for about 15 minutes we pulled the sail down and started motoring back. There are a lot of sandbanks in this area and we found one. The keel hit the bottom and we were stuck. Poor Michael lost the plot and started to panic. Well, I could see the funny side to this and started to laugh telling Michael to stop panicking as we weren’t going to drown as the water was only about waist deep. In the end, he was convinced that we’d survive and he started to laugh too. After several more sailing trips and holidays at Yamba sailing the Clarence River, our confidence and skill built and we decided we all loved sailing.

In December 2005 I was diagnosed with colon cancer. I had surgery followed by chemotherapy. I did not let this get in the way of my new love and enjoyed sailing in between and during my treatment. In a way, sailing became part of my treatment as I found it so relaxing I was able to forget my problem. Around the same time Andrew was toying with the idea of joining the Moreton bay trailer boat club racing group. I encouraged this as I wasn’t sure how sick I would become and thought it would be a good outlet for him and the boys. Gary, Andrew’s brother, said he would crew for him and once again I said I would give it a go but wouldn’t promise anything as cruising is one thing and racing is a whole new kettle of fish. I had to miss the first race as I was still not well from the chemo. My feelings were very mixed when I helped them launch. Part of me didn’t like being left behind and the other part was relieved. On their return all four were really pumped up with stories to tell. Michael and Jason had become real sailors (according to them. Most work was done by Gary and Andrew!). So the challenge was on. With my chemo finished, the second race was here. We had 10 to 15 knot and two smaller races for the day. I had a ball! Scared? Yes, you bet but the adrenalin rush was fantastic. A bit sea sick between races as it was a quite rough and I was still getting over the chemo but I decided I was *not* going to be left behind again.

Now two seasons down the track with three operations behind me but more treatment ahead, Michael and I have become proficient at the kite and jib while Jason takes the helm at times. We have become a real family team. Our last adventure on Moreton Bay put us all to the test. Sailing in 25 to 30 knots and with 5 foot waves making all of us feel a little uncomfortable, we were rounding the last marker when the rudder broke almost putting us on our side. However, we quickly got her under control and battered and bruised, we motored home. Sail again? You bet! I’m not going to be left behind.”

Bay to Bay

Rob Legg kindly sent me particulars of the Entry List for Wide Bay Water’s forthcoming Bay To Bay Classic conducted by the Hervey Bay Yacht Club. As at 27/04/08, over 175 entrants had nominated but the main purpose of Rob’s communication was to alert me to the fact that 17 of those entrants were RL24’s (3DK’s and 14 SK’s). What a turn-out for the Class!! No other class, and there are quite a few, come anywhere near the numbers of RL’s competing. Two of the entrants, Ken Donaldson (*High Spirits*) and Andrew Pike (*Sly Fox*) were participants at the Mannering Park Nationals last January and will no doubt use the experience gained there to good account. In addition to the 24’s, there are at least 5 RL28’s participating. We wish all those representing the class good sailing and fair breezes - we know our class will be represented with distinction no matter what the conditions.

A Sly Fox Lives Again!

First, a bit of history! Back in January 1977, I (ie Ross, your scribe) participated in the first RL24 Nationals to be held in Victoria. The venue was my home club, Lake Wellington. A big fleet turned up – 28 boats if I recall correctly. In those days, the hot shots employed a man on trapeze to help keep the boat flat but not being numbered amongst those with a talent for performance, I hadn't equipped our *Timtarri* (sail#105) with the extra gear. In any event, not having a trapeze was a very convenient and well used excuse for finishing a race after dark. As it happened, Bob Bull, the widely known shipwright from Metung who was Rob's agent at the time, put up a very nice tacking compass as a trophy for the first non-trapeze boat in the regatta so there was something for us also-rans to sail for. Now, at this time there was a dairy farmer in the club whose name was Clyde Pike. He was a very clever bloke and had built himself a timber trailable yacht which I think from memory was based on a set of Roberts 21 plans. It was a lovely boat and ideal for Lakes cruising but not something you'd want to race extensively (although Clyde did!) As well as the boat, Clyde had some offspring and as we rigged up for the first heat of the '77 Nationals I became aware that the youngest of them was hanging around our boat. He was a skinny kid, built like a bit of stainless steel wire, and would have weighed 40kg or less wringing wet. He'd been trying around the fleet to con a ride but had no offers and in desperation turned his attention to *Timtarri*

Feeling sorry for the little blighter, I told him he could sail with us. I was about to add that he needed his dad's blessing but before I could get the words out, he was on the foredeck hanking on the jib, sorting jib sheets and shackling halyards to sails. Talk about keen!

Such was my introduction to Andrew Pike. In the event, we had a great series finishing 10th and with Pikey's help, we actually won Bob Bull's trophy. I still have it and treasure it as it remains one of the few things I have ever won in my life. Not a long time afterwards, the Pikes sold the farm and went to Queensland. I lost touch with them. So you can imagine my delight when, some 30 years or so later, Andrew rang me from Brisbane to tell me he'd purchased a Mk1 and was in the process of rejuvenating it. When I saw it at Mannerling Park in January this year, I could scarcely believe an RL24 could look so good. The quality of its finish and equipment is extraordinary and it is very thoughtfully laid out. It is a great credit to Andrew's skill and determination to see the job through (with a lot of help from Theresa!) and his story of the reincarnation of *Sly Fox* follows.

"I bought *Slyfox* knowing full well she needed major work to bring her back to a good performing, respectable looking boat. As far as I could tell and from what I was told by the young guy I bought her off (who only had her for a short period) the original owner had left her in the mangroves for some time. So when I got hold of her she was in a sad state with barnacles and all sorts of things stuck on the hull below the water line. The first thing I checked for was osmosis of which there was none. The rig was a short one with a main made out of two sails crafted to make one. And the jib? Hah, hah! Moving on to the spinnaker, that wasn't too bad and I still use it. As for the trailer well, that needed all new running gear and rollers and a complete make-over. Before you think I must be some sort of idiot (you're probably right) this thing was really cheap and there is nothing like having a project in the back yard. At least, that's what I told She Who Must Be Obeyed. First thing I did was spend 3 months cutting, welding, grinding and with both boys armed with paint brushes, got the trailer to a stage that I could get it registered. First bit finished. That wasn't so hard.

Now for the bit I had been looking forward to. THE BOAT. That was now sitting on 2 4x4 hardwood beams which were in turn sitting on our old steel framed kitchen chairs (never throw anything out. You just never know when you might need it!) Above the water line the hull had been brush painted with gel coat with the view to being sanded and polished (wrong!) so I had to strip the whole hull. I started underneath, first trying with a random orbital sander to grind the gunge off. Not a good move. The barnacles just screwed up the discs and threw them at me. So with a very steady hand and the angle grinder fitted with sanding attachment, I set to work. With the rough stuff off, I went back over

it with the random orbital sander again and a month later the hull was stripped and smooth. Next step was to call in Rob, a spray painter mate. Another bad move. He took one look and shook his head saying “you’ll have to fair this thing”. So after a 20 min tutorial session I was on my way with a flexible sanding board and a long thin wooden batten that I rubbed with lead pencil on one side then rubbed that over the hull to highlight the high spots.

After a month of fairing, the hull was ready for final sanding and a 2pack undercoat. Next step, I thought, was to dry sand the undercoat with the random orbital and 250 grit paper. “No!” said Rob. “Use a flexible sanding board”. I didn’t know whether I liked him now as much as I had before. But I did what I was told and then came a mist coat with water thin acrylic blue paint followed by another sanding with 400 grade wet & dry. All this all took 2 weeks and my arms and shoulders were starting to ache but the sight of the top coat going on made the pain go away. A second mist top coat was applied and hand sanded with 2000 grade wet & dry to take out a slight peel, this taking 38 hours. I counted every one! By this time my arms and shoulders were wrecked and I really *didn’t* like Rob any more - well, for a while anyway. We then cut and polished the job to bring the shine back. Fantastic. I love ya Rob!

Now that the hull was finished it was time to replace the woodwork. All the gunwales, handrails and trim around the companionway and front well had to be replaced. The boat was starting to take shape but I still couldn’t sail her as I didn’t have a jib. That’s where Ross Corben came to my rescue with a very nice jib he had stored away in his shed. All that was left to do before we hit the water was to set up some sail control systems and run all rope tails to the back of the cabin. The project to this point had taken 16 months from the time I bought the boat and I was totally sick of working on the damn thing. I just wanted to sail it. Over the next couple of years, while cruising, I made a motor tilt system in the engine well. Then it was time to go racing but that was the time when the mainsail, which resembled a well worn bed sheet, started to show its flaws. By this time my lovely wife had forgotten about all the money I had spent so now was the time to carefully suggest a new rig. I got the go ahead and after millions of phone calls and emails to my good friend Darryn Dyer, I now have a Gold Spar mast and North Sails. The boat looks good and performs well. The whole project has been very satisfying and has saved a boat from the scrapheap but it will be a good while before I do it again!

Now, Something More Prosaic....

Jane Davis reports that an electronic copy of the RL24 Owner’s Association of Australia **CONSTITUTION** is now available – please e-mail her at Streetcar269@bigpond.com if you would like one.

And Finally.....

Ladies, don’t forget the fund-raising Rummage Sale. It’s a chance to get rid of all those things not worth keeping around the house. Don’t forget your husbands.

RL24 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS PAYNESVILLE 28/12/08 TO 02/01/09

Phone Darren (03)51 447150 or Jane (03) 52 314686 for details

