



Albatross

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Obsession in Great Taylors Bay

*Newsletter of the
Cruising Yacht Club of Tasmania*





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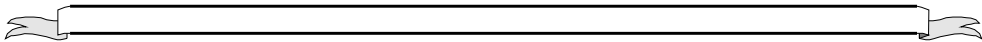
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Editorial

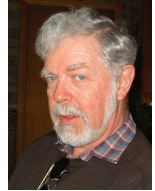
Dave Davey

Have you read any interesting nautical books lately? Consider writing a review for the *Albatross*.

Do you have a good photo of your boat or that of another *Club* member? I'd like to continue to feature *Club* boats on the cover, but need your help.

Dave

Windclimber



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<i>Club Calendar</i>	
March - Tuesday 1 st - Sunday 6 th - Saturday 12 th to Monday 14 th - Friday 25 th to Tuesday 29 th	General Meeting to be held at the Tasmania Fire Service Training Depot - Cambridge Clean Up Australia Day - Barnes Bay Norfolk Bay Cruise Easter Cruise to Recherche Bay
April - Tuesday 5 th - Saturday 9 th /Sunday 10 th - Saturday 23 rd to Monday 25 th	General Meeting Quarries Cruise New Norfolk Cruise
May - Tuesday 3 rd - Saturday 14 th /Sunday 15 th	General Meeting Navigation Cruise

Commodore's Comments

Helen Stewart

Meridian

Our weekend has been a busy one – the last few days have seen us move from the top floor to the ground floor in preparation for stage two of our house renovations. Needless to say, home is fairly chaotic at present, but we managed to drag ourselves away from unpacking for a couple of hours to visit the Wooden Boat Festival. Congratulations to the organisers – what a huge amount of work must go into planning and staging an event such as this. And congratulations and thank you to the exhibitors and volunteers who put in hours of work to make it all happen. Judging by the crowds people are captivated by the romance of Australia's maritime culture and keen to admire the skill and craftsmanship that goes into building such a range of boats as those on display.



It was good to see many *Club* boats looking resplendent in the sunshine. I know that a number of members have been busily working to prepare them for the festival. As Commodore I feel a special pleasure seeing how our members get involved at various levels, exhibiting their boats, displaying their dinghies and the boats they are building themselves. We are fortunate to have a rich skill-base within the membership of the CYCT.

After several rounds of review, the *Guide for the CYCT Committee* has reached the stage where we are satisfied that it covers most matters that the Committee needs to consider during the year. I hope it continues to be added to as a useful tool for Committees in the future.

Last year we received an enquiry from a South Australian visitor about the height of the transmission lines over the Huon River, several kilometres south of the Huonville bridge. I enquired then about the height but the fellow who was going to measure them didn't get back to me. I re-enquired recently and was advised that a yacht with a mast 18 metres high would get under safely at high tide. (The Transend man wasn't sure what the tidal range is that far up the river.) It was pointed out at the time of the enquiry that the transmission lines are not indicated in the *D'Entrecasteaux Waterways*. I will find out where it should be marked and circulate the location.

Good cruising, Helen

Vice Commodore's Report

Rosemary Kerrison

Obsession

Aren't we lucky to live in such a beautiful state. Our harbour is one of the best in the world and lends itself to so many events connected with water, one of which was the Wooden Boat Festival. Visiting the festival on the Sunday, and talking to many people gave me an insight into how much work and planning goes into running such a successful event. Members commented that everything ran smoothly and this was evident with the smiles on the faces of the organisers.



Many *Club* members with their respective boats participated in the wonderful spectacle.

Sunday March 6th is Clean Up Australia Day and the *Club* will be cleaning up in the Barnes Bay area from 10am. Bags, gloves etc will be supplied and can be collected from Obsession on arrival in the bay. Hope as many as possible can attend. A barbecue or picnic will follow in an appropriate place.

March Long Weekend 12th, 13th and 14th March we will travel to Norfolk Bay leaving at 8.30am Saturday 12th to get across Storm Bay before the sea breeze, assembling at Sloping Main in the afternoon for the evening. Sallie and Tony Creese have very kindly invited members by boat or by car to their shack at Eaglehawk Bay for a barbecue on Sunday 13th at 12pm. I suggest that we leave the bay later in the afternoon to travel to Lime or Monk Bay for the night before heading back to the Channel or Hobart on Monday.

Easter is to Recherche Bay and for those who would like to travel in company I suggest that we leave early (7am) on Good Friday morning from Little Oyster Bay area to travel to Recherche. For the rest of the Easter break we will be in and around the bays in this area.

A reminder to keep 14th and 15th May free for **The Donald Sutherland Cruise**, which will take place that weekend. There is plenty of time to get a crew together. Barry Hine is the organiser of the Cruise and would really like your support in taking part in this fun day.



New Members



Welcome to:

Bernie White

Solemer

53' Roberts centre cockpit ketch



Rear Commodore's Report

Wendy Lees

Kiap

It was great to see so many members at the Barbecue at the Mariners cottage. A happy evening, - the rain held off until we had cooked our meat.

March Meeting

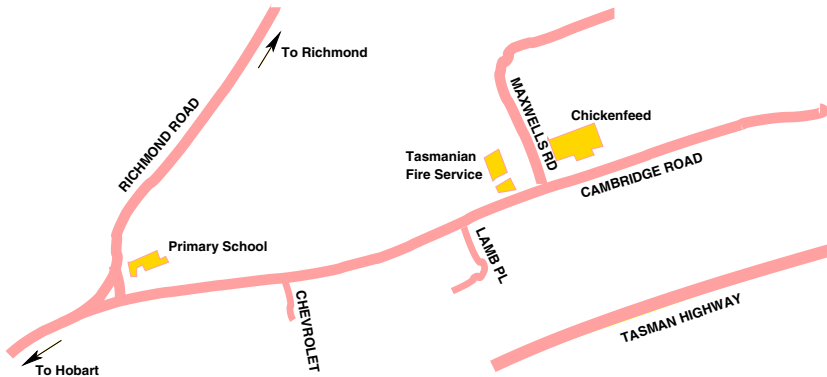
1st March at 7.30 at the Tasmanian Fire Service at Cambridge (see map below). marine fire safety night. Warm clothing.



April Meeting

At our meeting on 5th April, Allana and Roger Corbin from Rotor Lift Helicopters will talk about Air Rescue, their backgrounds of extensive flying in helicopters and the formation of their company ROTOR-LIFT. Allana launched her autobiography *The Best I Can Be* in October 1998. She taught herself to walk and fly again after suffering a broken back in a Cessna 210 crash in 1990.

Wendy



Low Fat Fruit Cake (suitable for diabetics)

Pam Skromanis

Barquero

The following recipe is for a very quick and easy low fat fruit cake that several members sampled on the recent club cruise to Mickeys Bay and Taylor Reef. They liked it so much that they asked for the recipe, so here it is for all to read:

2¾ cups (500g)	mixed dried fruit
1 cup (250ml)	apricot nectar
1 teaspoon	honey
1 cup	mashed pumpkin
1½ cups	self raising flour
1 teaspoon	mixed spice
1 teaspoon	carbonate of soda

Grease 14x21 cm loaf tin (I use a 15cm square tin). Cover base with baking paper.

Combine fruit, nectar and honey in saucepan. Bring to boil, simmer uncovered 3 minutes. Cool. Stir in pumpkin, flour, spice and carbonate of soda. Bake in moderate oven about 1 hour. Cover tin with foil as soon as it comes out of the oven. Cool cake in tin.

This is a very moist cake.....delicious.....enjoy!

Serves 12 - each serve contains 810kj, 1g fat, 3g fibre, 45g carbohydrate (which is equivalent to 3 carbohydrate portions for those with diabetes).



Bruny Island's Quarantine Station - In War and Peace

Kathy Duncombe, a resident of Bruny Island, has recently published a book on the history of the Quarantine Station at Barnes Bay, Bruny Island, which includes photos and names of many returned soldiers who were quarantined there on return from the war due to the Pneumonic plague pandemic of 1919.

The book documents research into all aspects of human occupancy of the Quarantine Station site at Barnes Bay on Bruny Island. It starts with the early Aboriginal occupation by the Nuononee, a band of the South East tribe, and ends with the Proclamation of the area as a State Reserve in 2003. The story includes free settlement in 1856 by the Cox, Johnston(e), Beemer and Martin families; the establishment of a State maritime quarantine station in 1884 as a defence against infectious diseases in appropriate buildings erected to accommodate boat passengers; its acquisition by the Commonwealth Government in the early days of Federation; internment of German

nationals in 1914 at the beginning of World War I; quarantine of soldiers returning from the war during the Influenza Pandemic 1919; and plant quarantine usage and techniques from 1955 - 1971.

It depicts the history and changes in State and Federal responsibilities, and the change in public health regulations, management and techniques. It includes the sequence of settlement and usage of the area, the buildings that were erected, and those that have survived.

Documentation of this history highlights the neglect of the buildings over the early years, and the poor quality of renovations undertaken which constantly needed repairs. To date no documentation can be found of a caretaker being on site during the 15 year State Quarantine period 1885 - 1900 which may account for the lack of effective maintenance in this early stage of usage.

Frequent inspections are documented from State and Commonwealth bureaucratic experts who wrote extensive reports and recommendations and drew up numerous alternative plans, many of which appear to have been ignored and not implemented.

How effective the Quarantine Station has been over its various phases of usage is left to the reader to judge. The need for such a facility for use in the event of an emergency is not questioned, but its state of readiness often left much to be desired.

The site is significant as a rare Tasmanian example of a late 19th century quarantine station for people demonstrating their institutional attitudes towards social class and health. Despite some building losses which have eroded the site's importance, the place still has a high cultural significance at the State level.

The book contains over 100 photographs and illustrations, most of which have never been published. Copies are available at \$28 from leading book stores, or by contacting Kathy directly.

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YO HO HO & A BOTTLE OF RUM

A cruise in the Caribbean

Erika Johnson

Rum: *"A friend and brother to me alone in the dark, a warm blanket on a chilly night, an excitement in the cheek and an inspirer of bold and brave deeds."* (Sir Henry Morgan)

The Caribbean conjures up school lessons about Christopher Columbus and rum-sodden pirates sailing the Spanish Main. From the other side of the world this was the limit of our knowledge, but an email from cruising friends promised to rectify this. Gill & Derek had been cruising the world for nearly 25 years and were on their third circumnavigation. Their yacht *Ginseng* was in South Africa, poised for an Atlantic crossing. Their invitation to visit them in the Caribbean was received enthusiastically!

The history of the Caribbean is the history of foreign imperialism. When Columbus arrived in 1492, the islands of the Caribbean had already been invaded. The very name, *Caribbean*, perpetuates the warlike Caribs who moved north from the South American mainland in the 14th century, ousting the peaceful Arawak islanders. Then by 1496 the Spanish had made the first European settlement in the area and enslaved the native people. The English, French and Dutch had also established settlements by the mid-1600s and there followed a century of conflict as European colonial powers jostled for control of the islands, loosely known as the West Indies. A second wave of slavery brought Africans to the islands to work in plantations and it is the mixed-race descendants of the slaves that form most of the population today. Until the early 20th century the islands remained pawns of the imperialistic powers of Europe. The United States entered the scene in the late 19th century and today it is the region's dominant influence.

Pirates also dominate the history of the Caribbean. Spanish wealth was redistributed with the tacit approval of the British, French and Dutch crowns. Famous pirate Sir Henry Morgan was knighted for his exploits and ended his life as the Deputy Governor of Jamaica!

Sint Maarten/St Martin

Our flight out of Hobart took us via Sydney, Los Angeles, Fort Lauderdale, San Juan and ... eventually ... to our destination, Sint Maarten, one of the Leeward Group of the Lesser Antilles Islands in the Caribbean Sea. It was here that Gill & Derek met us. *Ginseng* was anchored nearby in Simpson Bay Lagoon.

Columbus sighted Sint Maarten on 11 November 1493 on his 2nd voyage to the Caribbean. The Spanish didn't settle and it wasn't till 1630 that Dutch and French

settlers came to the island. This incited skirmishes with the Spanish and numerous disputes between the Dutch, French and British. Today, it remains an island with a split personality, the smallest island to be shared by two sovereign powers. According to popular legend, the division of the island was settled by a foot race. In 1648 a Dutchman and a Frenchman stood back-to-back and walked in opposite directions to circumnavigate the island. A line from where they started to where they met again would determine the border. The Dutchman had a bottle of Gin and the Frenchman carried a flask of wine. In a story reminiscent of the Hare & the Tortoise, the Dutchman stopped for several swigs of Gin and covered less ground than his rival Frenchman with the result that the Dutch now occupy only 17 square miles of the 37 square mile island. On Sint Maarten/St Martin today you can pass through two countries in a single hour but no border is to be seen. The differences and contrasts between the two parts make a perfect marriage.

Our anchorage in Simpson Bay Lagoon was beneath the flight path of the international airport and conversation paused as jumbos reverberated overhead. Hundreds of cruising craft from all corners of the globe lay at anchor or tied up in marinas in the 12 square mile lagoon. Access to the sea is via two lifting bridges - one on the Dutch side and the other in French territory and twice a day a procession of vessels congregated at the entrance. Low-lying sandspits front the lagoon on two sides while the rest of the island is rolling hills. Ashore we could see a conglomeration of buildings and a steady stream of traffic winding its way up and down the hill.

Marigot, the capital of the French sector, is at one end of the lagoon. We visited the market with its colourful stalls of local produce, clothes and handcrafts. The streets of the tiny town were a-buzz with traffic, all driving like crazy on the right-hand side of the road. On either side of the street were chic French boutiques. Dominating the town is Fort St Louis, built in 1767 during the reign of Louis XVI. A half-hour minibus ride away is the Dutch capital, Philipsburg. Here colourful colonial architecture lines either side of Front Street and boutiques and duty free shops entice tourists from visiting cruise ships. Grocery shopping is a necessary part of cruising and we had a hot, sweaty walk through back streets where the crumbling pavement fronted the poorer part of town. At the supermarket we were pleasantly surprised to find free coffee and cold water to quench our thirst. Choosing what we wanted was more complicated. While the fruit and vegetables were readily recognisable, packets and cans were written in either French or Dutch so choosing the right product took some time. Currency also posed problems. While the Dutch sector used the Netherlands Antilles Florin and the French, the French Franc, the US dollar was also universal and supermarket checkouts were adept at making conversions from all three.

Gill & Derek had worked on Sint Maarten on their last circumnavigation and had some catching up to do. The local sailmaker, Ernst and his wife Jill, took us in for showers and a meal in their home on the hill overlooking the lagoon. Other friends arrived by boat - Marcel and Martine blew in from France and Rob and Dorothy had

last been seen in South Africa. Overseeing all the comings and goings were the two ship's cats, tabbies Cocos and Keeling

Despite the fact that *Ginseng* had been at anchor for nearly a week they had yet to clear with Customs. Although we were anchored in the Dutch zone, the French Customs were nearer and in our best French Alan and I were added to the manifest. A few days later we joined the queue of boats motoring towards the lift-bridge and by 11am were making our way out to sea.

Anguilla

A short distance away from Sint Maarten, but worlds apart, is the British island of Anguilla. Northernmost of the British Leeward Islands, Anguilla retains the laid-back character of a sleepy backwater.

Only 13 miles long, *Anguilla*, or eel, was not permanently settled by Europeans till the British arrived in 1650. Its arid nature thwarted the development of large plantations and after a peak in population in the early 1800s, the island slid into a slow decline, largely forgotten by the rest of the world. Britain attempted to loosen its colonial ties in 1967 by forcing the island into a confederation with neighbouring St Kitts and Nevis. However, the Anguillians wanted no part of the new state and revolted. After a two-year stand-off and a peaceful invasion by British forces, it was agreed to once more make Anguilla a British dependency.

The island is low, flat, dry and scrubby, pockmarked with salt ponds. Goats run wild and with no permanent water, supplies must be produced by desalination. Anguilla's main appeal to visitors is its beautiful white beaches, aquamarine waters and coral-encrusted islets, popular for swimming, snorkelling and diving.

It was a pleasant sail along the coast past rows of white villas perched on the cliff-top. Shoreward of our anchorage at Road Bay was a white sandy beach and a commercial jetty at which a small freighter was loading sand. The next morning we called at the Customs office only to be told that to cruise beyond the bay would cost us US \$100! Not a very friendly gesture we thought, so we decided to remain at anchor.

Sandy Ground, the 'town' at Road Bay is a curious mixture of palatial mansions in various stages of construction overlooking the simple fibro cottages of the native people. The sandy beach is lined with restaurants. Each morning the beach is swept clean with the open besom broom common in the islands.

It was my birthday and Gill & Derek dropped us ashore after breakfast. Although our taxi was left-hand-drive, here they use the British system and drove on the left. Another change of currency too, this time to the Eastern Caribbean Dollar. However the US dollar was also accepted and we paid US\$12 plus a tip for a 10 minute ride to the capital, The Valley. The town is very spread out and there was some distance between the bank, post office and shops. Down a side road we found the equivalent

of a CWA shop selling locally made arts and crafts, then a hot and sweaty walk down Crocus Bay Road brought us to the Loblolly Gallery. We were welcomed with a long, cool drink and Barbara plied us with stories of her native Boston and the beauties of Anguilla. Of course we bought a picture and her son later drove us back to town where I had a very late birthday lunch. - barbecued ribs, potato, rice and peas - a dish common throughout the islands.

We were able to circumvent the high cost of cruising in Anguilla by taking the dinghy along the coast to favourite dive spots. Rocky cliffs daubed with outcrops of cactus overlooked crystal clear water. Seaweed swayed back and forth in the surge while rainbow coloured fish darted amid the offlying rocks and coral, quite unafraid. Danger, however, lurked from above. Flocks of brown pelicans soared overhead, swooping again and again to pick up an easy feed.

Our next destination, the British Virgins were 70 miles and an overnight sail away. After an early dinner, we prepared for sea. Cocos and Keeling took up their positions under the dinghy on the cabin roof as we raised anchor. A soft breeze caressed our cheeks as the sun, muted by the misty atmosphere, dropped below the horizon. With so little wind we soon had to turn on the motor and its rumble kept us alert as we stood watches three on/three off through the night. Daylight dawned with Virgin Gorda still some distance away.

British Virgin Islands

Once a hideaway for buccaneers and brigands, the islands now attract a different type of visitor - tourists enticed by a balmy climate, steady trade winds and well protected anchorages. Indeed, well known cruising writer - Donald Street - who started cruising in the area in the 50s, said "the bareboat industry is not a growth industry but an explosive industry"!

Columbus named the islands Santa Ursula y las Once Mil Virgenes (St Ursula and the 11000 Virgins). As Spain declined as a colonial power, ownership of the islands chopped and changed until the Dutch established a permanent settlement on Tortola in 1648. The British finally ousted the Dutch from the islands in the late 1600s. At first most of the planters were only interested in piracy and smuggling but by the 18th century they were displaced by more experienced planters and a settlement of hard working Quakers. For the next century the islands prospered, producing sugar, cotton, rum, indigo and spices. However, with the abolition of slavery in 1830 and the introduction of sugar beet in Europe, the economy declined. Today the economy is based on off-shore banking and a tourist industry with over 300,000 visitors a year.

Another day and another country. We made our landfall at Virgin Gorda (Fat Virgin) and, with the sun almost at its zenith, coned our way through coral reefs in to the anchorage at North Sound. The anchorage is almost landlocked and in 1595, Sir John Hawkins moored his entire fleet of 27 ships in the Sound. Astern of *Ginseng* was the

low scrubby island called Prickly Pear while on the opposite side of the Sound, the upper slopes of the forested hills are part of the island's network of national parks. On the peninsula to our east was the expensive Bitter End Yacht Club Resort.

We had not yet cleared Customs and the following morning we set sail down the coast to Spanish Town. Here we found a tortuous buoyed channel and expensive marina but we were able to anchor off and take the dinghy ashore for the entry procedures. Along the coast is the popular dive spot, The Baths. Hundreds of boats make a bee-line for this area each day. Despite the crowd, the underwater scenery is unique. We swam between huge boulders, through grottos, floated through huge fronds of seaweed and clumps of coral. Fish of all colours of the rainbow swam within our reach amid clouds of glittering silver bubbles, dancing in the surge. Time was getting on and in the evening light we sailed down Sir Francis Drake Channel, once known as Freebooters Gangway, and entered Road Town the capital of Tortola Island.

Tortola (Turtle Dove) is the hub of the British Virgin Islands. The capital of Road Town, despite being a commercial port, is picturesque with brightly painted wooden and brick colonial buildings on either side of Main Street. The anchorage was very busy, chock-a-block with boats on moorings. The town clings to the steep hillsides and roads, reminiscent of jeep tracks, wind up steep hills. While in the flesh-pots we took Gill and Derek out to dinner. The restaurant, *The Virgin Queen*, overlooked a busy market place and, despite the late hour, the market was still in full swing. Once again, barbecued ribs were on the menu and we learnt the secret of how to prepare this national dish.

The supermarket is a good place for people watching. The local women take great pride in their appearance with colourful tops and dresses and intricate plaited and beaded hairstyles which must take hours to create. Men, too, are often decked out with dreadlocks, earrings and gold bands. Despite being called the British Virgins, the American Dollar held sway and stocking up with groceries was an expensive business.

Competing with the charter fleets, we sailed across Sir Francis Drake Channel. The many small islands must have made good pirate hideaways in days of old. There was Ginger Island, Cooper Island, Salt Island and Dead Chest Island where pirate William Teach is said to have marooned some recalcitrant crew. At Peter Island, once associated with the pirate Blackbeard, we were able to avoid the resorts and found an almost secluded anchorage in Little Harbour. Ashore we found the ruins of a stone 'fortress', once used legend has it, by landowner Sir Brundell Bruce to take pot-shots at boat owners who dared to throw their rubbish overboard! The shores these days are quite pristine. However, not so the sea floor. In anchorages frequented by yacht charterers, Derek and Gill made a habit of exploring for underwater treasure. Conning the depths from an aquaplane towed by the dinghy they found many items dropped overboard including a towel, T-shirts and even an expensive dive watch - still

going!

Norman Island is reputed to be the setting for R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, published in 1883. We could well imagine Captain Kidd and Long John Silver lurking in the dense subtropical forest, sword fights on the sands and buried treasure. In the heat of the day the birds feasted on the brilliant yellow Century flowers and frogs croaked in the mangrove swamps.

It was a short sail back across the Channel to Tortola where we stopped in the crowded anchorage of Sopers Hole for supplies. Rounding Thatch Island Cut we sailed up the coast to Cane Garden Bay, the site of the British Virgins oldest operating Rum distillery.

As Lord Byron said "There's naught no doubt so much the spirit calms as rum and true religion". Rum, a universal drink wherever sugar cane is grown, is a very affordable drink in the islands. Along the road at Cane Garden Bay we found an assortment of attractive villas and fibro shacks with chickens scratching along the road verges. A peeling sign advertised the Calwood Distillery hidden in the shrubbery behind a collection of wrecked car bodies. Outside the ancient stone building was a battered copper still and, at the back, a rusty crushing machine and concrete vat - a health department's nightmare! Inside, amid the dust and cobwebs were kegs and demijohns, looking as ancient as the distillery itself which is reputed to have operated for about 400 years. Sampling the brew didn't seem to have too much effect on us - maybe the microbes had been anethetised too! With our purchases we staggered back to the boat.

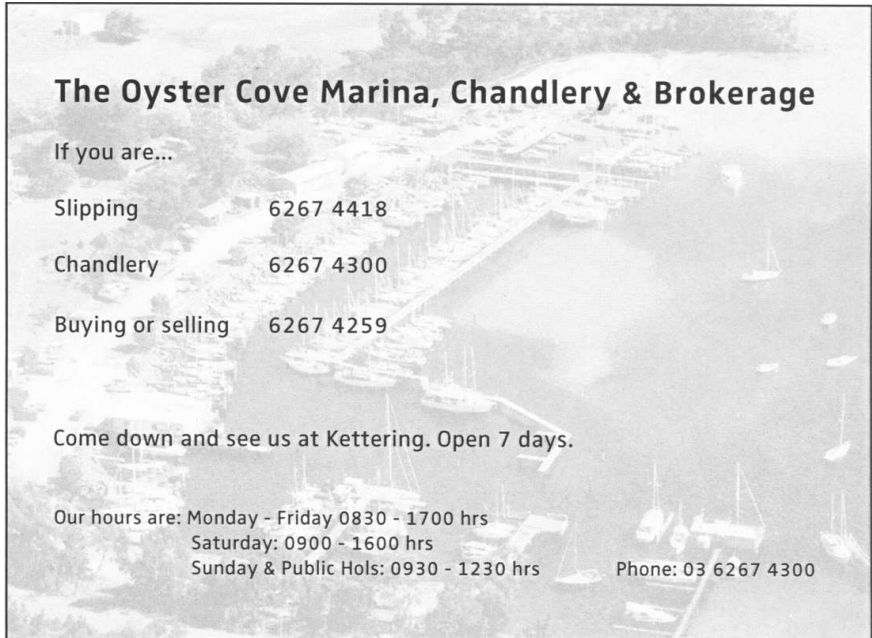
Our time was running out. We had almost circumnavigated Tortola when we sailed into Trellis Bay beneath the flight-path of the Beef Island airport.

As an adherent to the Ministry of Rum, Gill and Derek had tasted Rums from all round the world. So, too, had Nick Skeates of *Wylo II*, another round-the-world sailor who they hadn't seen since the Cocos Keeling Islands. Together in the same anchorage after more than 12 months, we got together for a Rum Tasting. We sniffed, savoured and passed comments on several new brews, giving each a rating out of 10 and a description of the flavour. A very enjoyable exercise! So far they have sampled and assessed nearly 200 different brews! Edward Hamilton, known as the Minister of Rum, has even written books on the subject!

Beef Island International Airport was in the midst of an expensive upgrade but the outdoor passengers' lounge with a few hungry chickens had a charm all of its own. As we took off we could see *Ginseng* setting sail. The hurricane season was nigh and Gill and Derek were keen to get north to Florida.

*Fifteen men on a dead men's chest,
Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of rum!*

*Drink and the devil be done for the rest
Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum
(R.L. Stevenson)*



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Tales from the Foc'sl

- submitted by Brian Kirby

"Now imagine that you're anchored in a 20 knotter and the wind comes up another 10 knots. What would you do?" asked the examiner.

"I'd let out more chain" said the old skipper.

"And if the wind came up another 10 knots?"

"I'd let out more chain." replied the O.S.

"And if the wind came up **another** 10 knots?"

"I'd let out **more** chain" said the O.S.

"Wait a minute!" said the examiner. "Where are you getting all this chain?"

"The same place you're getting all your bloody wind?!" said the exasperated O.S.

Batteries Part 6

Roger Locke

Andromeda

Those who were at the CYCT dinner at the Derwent Sailing Squadron club rooms, may have noticed an advertisement for "calcium" batteries. So what is a calcium battery, which didn't even rate a mention in my articles on batteries for boats.

In the discussion on batteries, I have limited myself to lead acid batteries, that is those which use lead and lead oxide in the plates or grids, and sulphuric acid as the electrolyte. If I've lost you already, just scan a few lines until it gets interesting again.

Pure lead is a soft metal and so is not suitable for battery plates, which must remain stable and put up with vibration and movement of vehicles and boats. To overcome the problem of the lack of structural strength of lead, it is alloyed to provide a stiffer stronger metal for use in batteries. I have read that a French Scientist, Gaston Plante, invented the lead acid battery in 1859. He used sheets of lead separated by rubber strips, rolled up and immersed in a 10% solution of sulphuric acid. Since then there has been considerable development of the lead acid battery.

Three types of alloys have found favour with battery builders. The most common is the low antimony alloy, which contains about 1.75% antimony, plus some tin and arsenic. The other two common options are calcium alloy, which is about 0.1% calcium plus some tin and aluminium, and silver alloy, which contains about 0.06% silver, with calcium, and some tin and aluminium.

There are three common types of battery made for cars and boats. The low antimony is the most commonly known, with this material used for both positive and negative grid plates. Then there is the hybrid battery, which has antimony alloy positive plates, and calcium alloy negative plates, and finally the calcium/calcium battery, which funnily enough has calcium alloy in both grids. Silver alloy batteries are specialised cells. Other alloy types are used in some applications, and development continues.

Calcium was proposed as an alloying material for batteries at least as long ago as the 1930's, because of the advantages over antimony alloy of lower water loss during charging, and lower self-discharge characteristics. Original systems had the disadvantage of grid failure due to growth and cracking, and corrosion leading to early battery failure. Modern techniques have improved calcium alloy batteries due to the demands of the aviation industry, the military and large vehicle manufacturers.

A company in the USA developed batteries using calcium alloy positive and negative plates and absorbed glass mat electrolyte system, providing sealed lead acid batteries for the aviation industry which could be mounted in any position and could be transported as safe cargo. These are now generally available as are a variety of calcium/calcium batteries. General Motors sought a battery which could be put into a car built anywhere in the world, and be expected to start the car when it was sold

many months later, quite often in another country. These demands have led to the development of reliable calcium/calcium battery plates.

The calcium/calcium battery typically discharges water (by conversion to hydrogen and oxygen) at one-third the rate of a low antimony battery, as it is being charged. This allows construction of a "maintenance free" battery, which cannot be topped up with water. The story doesn't necessarily stop there of course as there is still some loss of water. The better batteries have cases which can withstand a build up of pressure and allow recombination of the gases in the cell. They have pressure relief valves in case of too much pressure building up.

A typical antimony alloy battery loses 25% of its charge in 3 months. An equivalent calcium alloy battery loses the same amount in 8 months. For this reason, many of the world's car manufacturers are now specifying calcium/calcium batteries as original equipment. As battery factories of the world are replaced, they will be more likely to be producing calcium alloy batteries than antimony alloy batteries. The equipment used for producing the plates is different, and older style factories will disappear. Factories in Australia are making calcium hybrid and calcium/calcium batteries, but the number of factories is less than it was some years ago. Already many of the batteries in Australia are imported, and this will increase. Any new factories, or modernisations, in Australia, will have to incorporate calcium/calcium technology, at the least, in order to retain a section of the market.

One of the other differences between antimony and calcium alloy batteries is that the calcium batteries accept a faster rate of charge. When combined with other technologies, the internal resistance can be very low, allowing for very fast charge rates and reduced risk of thermal runaway, which I mentioned in part 3 or thereabouts. Lower internal resistance also allows for a higher discharge rate or an increase in cold cranking capacity for an otherwise similar battery.

What this means in practice, is that batteries with very low internal resistance will suck every amp they can get out of the charging system, and can in some circumstances be overcharged because the regulator doesn't realise that full charge has been achieved. This can lead to gas discharge from a battery which cannot be refilled without specialist equipment, or overheating of alternators not accustomed to working so hard. RACT advise that a small number of calcium/calcium batteries which have been installed in older cars, have developed one of the problems noted.

So should you put calcium/calcium batteries in your boat ... I did, although I bought them because they had absorbed glass mat technology, rather than because the plates are made with calcium alloy. I have been watching the alternator to see if it can cope, and it has made it through the first year – which probably means I should be carrying a spare. My 4 amp Realistic mains charger just goes into shock and overloads in about 20 seconds, it can't cope with the low resistance. The solar panel regulators seem to cope and show voltages around 13.6 to 14 volts when fully charged.

This seems to be within the capability of the batteries, they don't warm up at this level.

If you fit calcium/calcium batteries, check that your regulator is set to about 14.2 volts or less, or that you have an up-market regulator system set for the particular type of battery you have installed. Some references suggest that trucks with calcium batteries as original equipment are being set with regulated voltages of 13.8.

The pragmatic view is that you are not going to have a choice in the long term. As the big customers demand calcium technology, that will become the commonly available type of battery, and the older style antimony cell will gradually disappear, or become the high cost item. Mind you, there are other groups such as the cable TV industry, which decry the use of "calcium" batteries because of the risk of corrosion of the plates, and advocate using "tin" batteries. These use more tin in the alloy, but are still basically a lead acid battery and provide 2.1 volts per cell from a fully charged battery, as do the antimony, calcium or silver batteries. Now if you asked about the aluminium-air, lithium-ion, nickel-cadmium, nickel-metal hydride, nickel-zinc or sodium-sulphur cells, the story would be quite different.

At present, lead-acid batteries have the best energy density in their price range, the longest life cycle, and offer the best environmental solution, despite their toxic ingredients, because a reported 97% of lead in batteries is recycled.



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