

47th Annual Cruise April 2016

By Richard Lawson

Once again weather guru Roger 'Clouds' Badham and the weather gods were kind to us throughout the week. The Saturday Passage race was our typical 'follow me' at 1030 hrs with our PRO (Rob Ridley and team) getting us started north of Blue Fish headland in a gentle nor'east breeze. There was sufficient pressure to race all the way to the Flint and Steel finish line, however the sail into the Hawkesbury estuary was very slow as the nor'easter was not penetrating past West Head.

The weather pattern for the week continued, except for Sunday's first Inshore Cat 7 race on the Alfred's Barrenjoey Circle, when we experienced an 18 kt sou'easter and an outgoing tide. It was a bit bumpy, but ensured a great sail. This was the first trial for the reverse order of starting procedure with Div 3 leading off. This concept seemed to be well received and greatly appreciated by all Div 3 entrants, as we were able to experience seeing our bigger sisters passing us fully powered up.



The remainder of the week was characterised by very 'quiet' evenings (i.e. water wise), fog and mist falling into the various anchorages only to burn off by 0930 hrs. Additionally the moon was visible throughout the week as it slowly waxed to full size by Thursday evening; truly magnificent.

The only day the weather gods let us down was Saturday for the reverse Passage Race when we were forced to postpone the return leg of the Alan Payne Memorial. Fortunately the sailing instructions provided for a spare day

on Sunday. As a result, the return Cat 4 race was started on time, off Barrenjoey Headland, in a 15 – 18 kt breeze, steep choppy seas due to the outgoing tide in the Hawkesbury, and leftover swell from the southerly the previous day. Once all the starters cleared Bangally Head, the sea state improved, and all competitors and crew had a very pleasant sail to the Watsons Bay finish.

About Time, Julian Farren-Price, and *Limelight*, Alan Husband, dominated this return leg with *Limelight* victorious on PHS and *About Time* hanging on for grim life - their 'cruising sails' were delaminating throughout the race and probably would have failed completely during another half hour of racing!

The racing throughout the week was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. We had three Divisions for the inshore races with approximately 9 – 10 boats in each division, although we did have some boats withdraw, or compete as casual entries. That is to be expected as it is part of the Cruise culture. At the same time we had a small but active 'Cruising in Company' group who maintained an interesting and busy schedule on all race days. The co-ordination of this group was undertaken by John Hancox who did a wonderful job with this new initiative of the Cruise Committee.



The Club's new Management and Handicapping System, first trialled during the 2015 cruise, proved to be very successful. Each race in each division was won by a different boat, and the final point score for each division resulted in only a

few points separating first place from most of the fleet. This is a great outcome for such a varied mix of boats and crews in this type of racing. We, the sailors, could not ask for a better outcome and acknowledge the work done by John Maclurcan and his crew.

The Annual Cruise is as much about 'other activities' as it is about yacht racing. The two lay days and the Galley Gourmet Challenge are very high on the agenda. This is typified by the popularity of the Mid-Calf Water Level Beach Party', held under the waterfall at Refuge Bay, where crews display their prowess with the Canapé Challenge. This lay day afternoon has become one of the highlights of the Cruise, with about 80 people gathering on a fast-diminishing beach while being fed and entertained by the Canapé Challenge entrants. This was truly a very funny and enjoyable occasion for all and a great opportunity for the young people to get together on land. Who will forget the sight of people clambering aboard the RIBs, via 'Scotty's Chair', in the semi darkness!



Our traditional first evening gathering on Hallets Beach continues to grow in numbers as more and more crews stay on after the ocean race for post race camaraderie. We had approximately 120 people for the BBQ of sausages, bread rolls and condiments prepared by our Club Chef Ian and cooked off on the beach by the Committee. The two scheduled progressive dinners were very

successful, particularly the first night at Mushroom Bay at which each Committee member acted as a host boat to all the new attendees and those returning to the Cruise after a short break.

The main Galley Gourmet Challenge was conducted at Pinta Bay during a 36 boat raft-up! It was a simply stunning, balmy evening, with many new entries to the challenge. This has become one of the Cruise's 'must-do' events, and our judges, Max and Sue, were amazed by the quality of the presentations. Thanks to all who participated and made Max and Sue's judging job so difficult. Please see the separate report on the Galley Gourmet Challenge compiled by our co-ordinator and guiding light, Trish Stanley. (Well done Trish).

This article brings to an end my time as Annual Cruise Captain and I am pleased to announce that Arthur Psaltis, *Into the Mystic*, will be taking over and heading the Annual Cruise Sub Committee for the next two years. Both Sandy and I have thoroughly enjoyed our time and could not have achieved what we have without the support of a very happy and co-ordinated committee, along with the outstanding work of Rob Ridley and his crew, together with Chris Stone and Margaret Carney in the Sailing Office. All the Club's staff have been most helpful and willing in every phase of our time working together. Thank you one and all.

I will be staying on as Chair of the Cruising Division for another year, so will not be far removed, and *Rapunzel* will be a definite starter for next year's Annual Cruise Saturday 13 - 20 April, 2017 – please save the date!

