

## The Bay to Bay History - Colin Verrall

There will be some important names inadvertently missed and apologies are extended to those persons.

No one at a meeting at Andy Postan's house in Maryborough on 18 April 1980 could have imagined the Bay to Bay would catapult into a Trailable Yacht Classic of Australian sailing scene second only to the Marley Point Overnight Race in Victoria.

At that meeting of Hervey Bay Sailing Club Trailable Yacht members Ivan Barnes, Andy Postan, Noel Glanfield, Jim Lyall, Greg Clifford, Doug Young, Bevan Brown, Jim Affleck, Bob Maslen, Trevor Cecil, Jim, Chris and Cynthia Wiklund and Allan Bowen a Bay to Bay committee was formed with Ivan the Race Secretary, the course between Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay was decided to be sailed in two legs as the 87km course was considered too long for one day, the Queensland Labour Day May long weekend was chosen because Bureau of Meteorology records showed this weekend was likely to provide moderate south easterlies for a fast downwind race and the course was to follow the main shipping channel.

Twelve months of meetings, organizational and preparation work under the stewardship of Ivan Barnes followed. Andy, originally a logging contractor on Fraser Island flew over the course to confirm the course and the locations of rounding marks as the leads that marked the shipping channels were unsuitable for setting a sailing race course. Andy also removed hundreds of discarded logs from the channel, beach, bank and behind and cleared a helicopter pad just south of the barbecue area in case an emergency medivac was required.

The shipping channel was marked mainly by leads with very few beacons or buoys and only stakes to mark the winding channel out of Tuan, Boults Gutter and the southern entrance to Garrys through which the thunder boxes had to be delivered on the Saturday for bush toilets to be dug and stakes placed off the beach at Garrys by local fisherman Wayne Fuchs to ensure orderly anchoring and the grass mown.

Navigation obstructions such as the engine block west of Ungowa were marked only by a stake. The logistics of cleaning up Garrys Anchorage, organizing sponsors, trophy donors, publicity, Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions, course maps, trophies, race officials, invitations, receipt of entries, allocation of divisions, boat numbers and ratings, course official boats, mark buoys, ground tackle, flags, sound signals and other race equipment, barbecues, the food and equipment to run a barbecue at a remote location on Fraser Island, Friday evening and Saturday morning buses to ferry skippers and crew who would drive their cars and trailers to Hervey Bay and travel by bus back to Tin Can Bay for the Friday night festivities and the race on Saturday morning continued in earnest in the twelve months between 18 April 1980 and 2 & 3 May 1981.

Many hours were spent procuring the support, assistance and cooperation of Radio Station 4MB, Hervey Bay Town Council, Widgee Shire Council, Queensland Department of Harbours and Marine, Harbour Master Mike Lutze, pilot boat coxswain Col Loney and other staff, Queensland Department of Forestry, Tin Can Bay Progress Association, Gympie Power Boat Club, Tin Can Bay Coast Guard, Sandy Strait Coast Guard, Hervey Bay Air Sea Rescue, private owners of mark and rescue boats, other individuals, local newspapers, trophy donors and sponsors. Inflatable buoys were procured and sign written with sponsor's names major sponsor Local Radio Station 4MB, Dunhill, Suncorp, Fraser Island Rent a Yacht, Osbornes Travel, Gas Cylinder, Sunstate Airlines, Mitre 10, Beresfords, Hyne & Son, Bundaberg Rum, Haymans and Crab Cruises.

After work on the Thursday before barbecues, tents, tables, chairs, lights and leads were delivered by club tinnies loaded up to the gunwales with the return journey made in the dark without lighted navigation marks. A brave volunteer was left with a couple of cartons to mitigate the sand fly attack on the Thursday night and Friday before Andy and Helen would deliver a generator and the Walkers, Clyde Long's motor launch, Cliffy Cockburn's trawler, Jimmy Riley, other fishermen, and others turned up in various boats on Saturday morning to set up the lights, tents, barbecues and tables and unload the meat, salads and drinks and ice down the drinks in salted ice, too much salt and the drinks would freeze, in readiness for the night ahead.

One night, Ronnie Barnes woke to find that dingoes had chewed his thongs and chewed the plugs off the extension leads thankfully the dingoes were a bit fussy and Ronnie was OK. A HBSC member Tony West was another volunteer for that precarious job.

It is probably fair to say that without the involvement of Walkers employees, local fishermen and community members of Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Gympie and Tin Can Bay the Bay to Bay might not have been possible.

One hundred and fourteen entries had been received and trailable yachts began arriving, rigging and launching at Tin Can Bay on Friday 1 and Saturday 2 May 1981. At that time the Tin Can Bay Yacht Club, Tin Can Bay Marina, Luxury Afloat and Barnacle Bills had not been built and Snapper Creek had not been declared a Boat Harbour so trailable yachts were free to anchor in the shallows downstream from the trawler jetties and past the Coast Guard Tin Can Bay building.

There was excitement in the air at Tin Can Bay and on the buses, returning from Hervey Bay. Friday night saw a big party at the Sleepy Lagoon and on the shores of Snapper Creek where the Tin Can Bay Yacht Club now stands. Despite plenty of warning the influx of about 500 participants saw there wasn't a loaf of bread or a litre of milk left in the shops of Tin Can Bay.

Race registration, sign on and the competitors meeting were set up at the Coast Guard building on Saturday morning. Great care had to be taken when it was realized the microphone of the antiquated 240 V PA system was live and thankfully all the welcomes, introductions, thank yous and race briefing were completed safely.

The trailable yachts proceeded out of the creek to the starting area between Norman Point and Smooger Point south east of the Snapper Creek entrance with a crowd of about 100 spectators lined up on the sand of Norman Point entertained by a running megaphone commentary from Maryborough Sailing Club stalwart Alan Larsen.

The fleet was started in the order of Division 4 multihulls then Divisions 3, 2 and 1 monohulls and Wayne Fuchs in his lead boat Foxy proudly flying a large HBSC pennant lead the fleet up the course making sure all marks and mark boats were in position.

The boats sailed north under colourful spinnakers at a brisk pace in a moderate south easterly along the Tin Can Inlet, past the Wide Bay Bar, across the Wide Bay Harbour and along the Great Sandy Strait to a finish at Fig Tree Creek and then into Garrys Anchorage where skippers and crew could catch their breath, sort out the gear, share a yarn or two about the exciting run to Garrys and be entertained by the famous Ronnie Roberts' wind dance, Billy Bones' toe wrestling in the black sand and Kenny Ekert's table top baby crocodile race commentary.

The barbecue was a roaring success with plenty of food, beer and rum cheer to go around. Treasurer Colin Verrall was out of his depth that night sitting in the sand trying to give out change from two gallon buckets with sailors throwing their notes into the bucket saying don't worry about the change mate your prices are too cheap anyway.

The barbecue was cooked and the drinks were served by the Walkers crew and HBSC sailors and officials and others backed up to help serve the food while some of the stronger members of the shore crew kept anyone stepping out of line on the straight and narrow. We took over \$6000 dollars that night and for security spread it around three boats in three Gladstone bags with a locked chain through the handles.

Bryce Nelms was declared the Mayor of Garrys and subsequently given a brass plaque to commemorate the award and in the years to follow there was light hearted and good spirited banter between the Hervey Bay Mayor Judy Rice and Bryce about who was the real mayor at future presentation events. The Mark A buoy was marked on the course map at the intersection of the lines of the leads at Inskip (there was no T1 back then) to provide definite pre planned sailing angles however the power boat people setting and checking the mark could not see the point sailing right out there and determined the anchor would never hold there anyway so logically placed the buoy about where the navigation beacon T1 is now situated.

This led to calls for redress as the leaders went wide in search of Mark A where it was meant to be but those following saw the leaders turn to proceed across the Wide Bay Harbour, saw the mark and cut the corner. All was sorted to the leaders satisfaction and the race results stood. The following year a very heavy large anchor with a long chain and rope was supplied with strict instructions to put the buoy in the correct place but after the fleet passed the anchor could not be retrieved, the rope had to be cut and Mark A was moved over to where the power boat people thought it should be for future races.

Despite partying until well after midnight all were up bright and early (we were 40 years younger then) to the sound of Ivan Barnes's, Bryce Whittaker's and Robert Ulman's bugle rendition of Reveille before proceeding to the start of the Sunday leg adjacent the southern entrance to Garrys in a moderate south easterly.

However, Sunday was to be a day of surprises.

After a tricky dog leg course around Mark A and B, past the Moonboom Islands, the original shipping channel marked by leads, a quick spinnaker run up to Mark C and a brisk reach across the Sheridan Flats most of the fleet became becalmed under the shadow of the South White Cliffs near Deep Creek on Fraser Island.

Excitement and drama lay ahead because once the fleet cleared Ungowa and the topography of the Island flattened out the wind gradually increased to reach about 35 knots at times from north of the North White Cliffs, past Duck Island and Picnic Islands to about two thirds of the way along Big Woody Island after which the boats would turn past the black buoy, black and red beacons to fight the outgoing tide in a decreasing breeze to the finish near Round Island.

A huge crowd had gathered on Dayman Point to watch the fleet finish, HBSC colour ribbons were run out to the line honours multihull and monohull boats, the ribbons were run up the masts and proudly displayed as the leaders made their way into the Urangan Boat Harbour followed by the rest of the fleet throughout the afternoon.

All of the sailors were pleased to take a much needed break after a torrid week end of racing and partying especially in the strong winds of the second leg. There were no public pontoons and there was only a modest three lane ramp in those days and the boats lined up along the northern rock wall waiting for their trailers. However, thanks to the mighty energetic effort of the boat ramp crew Dell York, Marilyn Barnes and Val Roberts the boats were retrieved in an orderly manner and no complaint was heard.

The finish times were driven up to Maryborough to be processed by Goodsall's Computer Services. We did not have the convenience of mobiles, personal computers, websites and emails back then.

While there were some hard luck stories and damage to masts particularly around the Picnics on the second day the exuberant sailors shared stories of exciting spinnaker runs and fighting survival conditions and this was to continue long into the night at a rowdy and vibrant presentation function at the Melanesia Village (now the Kondari Resort) while the elapsed times were being processed to decide handicap corrected time overall and division placings and delivered back from Maryborough for the presentation of trophies.

Despite some gear failure and retirements 70 boats were given a place and the race was voted by the sailors, organizers and supporters a great success with Garrys the greatest Auzzie Barbeque and a 40 year epic of Bay to Bay sailing had begun.

The overall winners were Monohulls Wildfire Ian Wright of Brisbane 1<sup>st</sup> Place corrected time and the monohull race record and Multihulls 1<sup>st</sup> Place corrected time Lindsay Wieden of Maryborough and race record Bob Maslen of Hervey Bay.

The Overall and Division trophy winners and Race Record Holders for the past 39 Bay to Bays can be viewed in the Bay to Bay Results and Race Records in the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Bay to Bay Trailable Yacht Race Souvenir Program assembled by Julian Leighton.

Key personnel for the 1<sup>st</sup> Bay to Bay included Race Secretary Ivan Barnes, Marilyn Barnes, Race Officer Les York (HBSC President), Starter Colin Verrall (HBSC Treasurer), Finisher Keith Bell, Handicapper Ross Bews, Sailing Committee Mike Lutze (Department of Harbours and Marine), Joss Topfer, Trev Jones, Colin Verrall, Noel Glanfield, Jim Wiklund, Jim Affleck and Terry Jackson, Protest Committee Colin Verrall, Les York, Trevor Jones, Joss Topfer and Ralph Coles, Public Relations Trevor Cecil and Noel Glanfield, Results Goodsall's Computer Services, Urangan ramp Dell York, Marilyn Barnes and Val Roberts and Garrys Andy Postan. The Mayor of Hervey Bay was Bill Elson-Green and the Chairman of Widgee Shire Council was Cr A.D. McClintock. Early course official boats/owners included Saturday Start Bounty, S. Murray, Marks Campeona, Victory, Vidette Finish Alice, Bobby Magee Sunday Start Bounty,

Neefai Marks John Braun - Challenge, Rum Runner, R. Stevenson, B.P., B. Franklin, X-Ray, F. Ross, Marina Finish Sea Strike, Billy Campbell - Billy C. and Lead boat Wayne Fuchs - Foxy.

The Bay to Bay instantly became an important event on the Australian trailable yacht, HBSC, Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay calendars and the Garrys barbecue was described on national television as the greatest Aussie barbecue.

While the successful format of the Bay to Bay remained the same for many years a lot has been learnt and changes have been made over the 40 years from 1981 to 2020.

Hervey Bay became a city and now sports street lighting, traffic lights, roundabouts and large shopping centres.

Both Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay have grown almost beyond imagination, Hervey Bay now sports a national airport and both boast impressive yacht, sailing and boat clubs, accommodation, tourism and boat harbour, marinas, boat ramps, car parks and secure car and boat storage and both centres provide magnificent facilities for staging the start and finish of the Bay to Bay.

Handicapping and corrected time results had difficulties with many questions about ratings during and after the event despite the genuine hard work and best efforts of Ross Bews and his handicapping committee.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Bay to Bay preceded the Australian Sailing Trailable Yacht Rule CBH, Australian Sports Boat Association SMS and the Multihull Yacht Club Queensland Rule OMR rules and ratings and we made do with a VYC rating system originally developed for off the beach boats. Now with mobile phones, websites, social media, emails and online entries a reality and the norm each entrant is emailed their Boat Type, Class Status, Race Number Division, CBH/SMS/OMR and PBH ratings and Entry Lists are periodically put on the website so all entrants can see, raise and sort out issues with theirs and other boat classifications and ratings before the event.

Personal Based Handicaps, calculated by averaging past back calculated performance on personal computers, were introduced to allow entrants with below champion level performance to have the opportunity of a podium finish without resorting to putting up oversized sails and other tricks. Boats must be class compliant, measure for a CBH, SMS or OMR rating. Such ratings are only allocated from official published custodian lists.

All boats sail on PBH rating. There is no room for handicapper personal opinion or guess work as all ratings are based on predefined measurement, performance and mathematical formulas. There is little room for argument and largely we can just go sailing and enjoy the event.

Originally Goodsall's Ltd (Noel Goodsall) and Walkers Ltd (Leanne Jamison) computers calculated corrected time results as a community service. One year when the computers were down a team armed with calculators sat down at Trevor Jones's (not oopsie Jones) and manually calculated and sorted about 150 finish times. With the advent of personal computers Ross Bews' son John wrote a results program, Colin Verrall used spreadsheets and all of that pioneering work is now included and developed into a spreadsheet based program written and maintained by Allan Burgess.

Now finish times are entered and corrected times calculated in real time. The results are sorted and published on personal computers onboard the finish committee boat soon after the last boat finishes. However, according to Murphy's Law some hiccup seems to arise each year to spoil that dream but the presentation of trophies can now start at 7:00 pm and we can all get to bed a lot earlier than in past years.

Increasingly the leads along the course were replaced by dozens of red and green lateral, cardinal, special and isolated danger aids to navigation so inflatable marks are no longer required and marking the course is now much easier. The course has been shortened slightly by moving the Saturday start north of Snapper Creek to avoid the increasing moored boats, the Sunday start north to near Dream Island and the Sunday finish back to near the Red Beacon to alleviate some of the problems of sailing against the tide in light winds.

The trailable yachts have undergone an unimaginable transformation. Both the Monohulls and Multihulls have been divided into Standard and Sports Boat Types to facilitate fair competition between boats of markedly different performance characteristics. Looking at the boat photos on page 15 and 35 of the 39<sup>th</sup>

Bay to Bay Souvenir program and thinking about Wildfire, the RLs and the Seawind 24s in 1981 no one could have envisaged such powerful monohulls and multihulls sailing the Bay to Bay. Rob Legg the designer of the RL Class sailed to second place on corrected time in 1981 and the RLs have had the largest class numbers for every Bay to Bay race which is an enviable record never likely to be repeated. Time has seen the loss of the Hartley 16s and the emergence of a large Careel 18 fleet under Paul Trotter's persistence and enthusiasm.

Elliott 7s, RLs and Ross 780s remain the strongest classes. Alan Dau's RL24 has competed in every Bay to Bay, Daryl Dorset led the way to high performance sports multihulls, Andrew Wiklund has moved on from the family Sunmaid 20 Cold Duck skippered by his father Jim to 1<sup>st</sup> place overall corrected time in the second Bay to Bay 1982 to 1<sup>st</sup> places in both elapsed and corrected time on his Sports Boat Crank and Jamie Berndt has continued the Col and Barry Berndt's Bay to Bay tradition on his Sports Boat Situation Normal. Chris Chapman and Peter Hackett are continuing long time multihull competitors.

Local Radio station 4MB sponsored the first Bay to Bay and remained sponsor for 18 Years followed by Boral 1 year, The Sportsmens Club 1 year, Wide Bay Water 11 years and the Hervey Bay Boat Club 9 years and it is hoped the Boat Club will remain major sponsor for many years to come as it is well placed for that and other support roles.

There has been a changing of the guard over the 40 years with memorable contributions made by Ivan (Race Secretary) and Marilyn Barnes, Andy and Helen Postan (Garrys and meeting venue), Rob Batchelor, Ross Bews, Trevor Cecil, Geoff Harper, Leigh Hewish, Allan Layne, Col Loney, Bill Ward (HBSC), Ray Churchwood, Ray (MSC) Clarrie and Doris Noble, Russel Shannon (TCBYC), Dave Brown (Tin Can Bay Marina) and Robert Ulman, Vicki and Stan Armstrong, Barrie Franklin, Roy Martin, Neil Murphy, Bryce Nelms, Bryce Whitaker (Walkers Ltd employees), Ray Earle, Alex, Marilyn and Allan Burgess, Warren Hilliard, Warren Persal (Jan Lee), Bunny Watson and John Gate (Gympie Power Boat Club) with continuing contributions by Gail Duck, Irene Francis, Mike Gibson, Julian Leighton, Clare and Paul Neeskens, Cheryl Maslen, Lindsay Patterson, Daryl Peterson, Steve Portbury, Terry and Belinda Thompson, Jan and Peter York, Joe Cassell (HBSC), Julie Geldard (photos) and Peter Hackett (multihulls). Colin Verrall supported by wife Sandra took over Race officer from Les York in 1982 and has held that position since for 39 years, been Starter for 40 years, and took over the handicapping from Ross Bews in 2001 and held that position for 20 years.

In the early days non HBSC members who assisted in the Bay to Bay were offered a carton, a night out at a after race function at Nobodies Inn or in the case of private boat owners \$60 in recognition and thanks for their contribution and that worked well. However, after about 20 years over bearing opinion, ambition and bad manners by some, the influx of unwanted non sailing visitors at Garrys, the passing of time and aging saw the loss of Andy Postan, the Walkers Ltd employees and Hervey Bay fishermen and it became no longer possible to run the Garrys barbecue.

A few organizations tried for 7 or so years but for a variety of reasons the Garrys barbecue was no longer possible and the memorable tasks of the ladies Friday morning salad cut up in the HBSC clubhouse, loading of the drinks on to Clyde Long's boat, from the Boat Club (Irwin Thiess) and the loading and unloading of the barbecue meat from the "Mad Butcher's" Ronnie Roberts shop on to Cliffy Cockburn's trawler, and other supplies onto Jimmy Riley's and Wayne Fuchs's boats are now just distant and fading memories.

The VMR Hervey Bay, Coast Guard Sandy Strait and Coast Guard Tin Can Bay and kindred clubs Maryborough Sailing Club, Tin Can Bay Yacht Club (originally Clarrie and Doris Noble) and the Hervey Bay Boat Club (originally Erwin Thiess now George Duck) have been there for the full 40 years. Other long term boat owners include John Braun - Challenge, Ross Clarke - WOFTAM, Michael Cook and Robyn - Rainbow Warrior, Cec Cross - Happy Hunter, Cyril & Russell Day - Challenge, Len and Ann (Kapalua II), Gary Myers (White Pointer), Mr Jurrs (Gnome), John Madill (Anne II) and Frank, Denise, Chris and Glen Watson (Watsons Marine) and continuing Peter Heaslop, Peter and Janelle Ison, Ray and Jenny Salmon, Casey and Stacey Ison, Paul Atkinson, John Sproxton, John Maslen, Phil House and Gail Duck (Boat Club), Mick Manning and Graham Young and Kath Graham.

Whalesong (formerly Jason Brigdon and now Doug Greenshields) has played an important part as finish committee boat and Garrys accommodation for race officials and first aid. Prior to that we slept in tents on shore.

The crew for the 40<sup>th</sup> will include Race Officer, Starter and Handicapper Colin Verrall, Committee Chairman, sponsors, souvenir program and sponsorship Julian Leighton, Handicapper Multihulls Peter Hackett, Finisher Lindsay Patterson, Support boats Steve Portbury, Daryl Peterson, Mike Gibson, Joe Cassell, Sign on and Off Cheryl Maslen, Sandra Verrall, Jan and Peter York, Urangan Ramp Jan and Peter York, Presentation Clare and Paul Neeskens (Trophies), Terry and Belinda Thompson and Peter and Jan York, rescue VMR Hervey Bay, Coast Guard Sandy Strait, Coast Guard Tin Can Bay and Maryborough Sailing Club, Tin Can Bay Yacht Club and the Hervey Bay Boat Club (George Duck) and photography Julie Geldard and course boats John Maslen, Peter Heaslop, Russell Day, Casey and Stacey Ison, Peter and Janelle Ison, Ray and Jenny Salmon, Gail Duck, John Sproxtton, Phil Woodhouse, Mick Manning.

There are a lot of memories and stories to share but many will remain untold, unshared as it will be impossible all the tales to be told and all the yarns to be spun and no person will ever know the full story of the Bay to Bay.

Everyone will have their own Bay to Bay highs and lows, thrills and disappointments. So many will hold their own special memories of their own special Bay to Bay experiences and we will remember with thanks so many of those that have passed during the 40 years of Bay to Bay sailing. Others will have sailed before you, sailed with you and will sail after you but what matters is that you have been there and sailed a Bay to Bay.

After the 40<sup>th</sup>, the Bay to Bay will be able to claim approximately 6,534 boat passages at 4 crew per boat that is approximately 26,136 person passages at an average of 163 boats and 652 persons per year with an additional large support and spectator fleet which are figures that few sailing events will be able to beat.

Where to from here for the Bay to Bay? Only the future knows and the story is yet to be told.

Once again apologies to those names that I should have remembered and included.