

21st May 2020

Lord Howe Island Voyager Logbook

This book contains entries made by visiting yachtsmen to Lord Howe Island between February 1969 and November 1980. The logbook was kept and maintained by the Postmistress Mrs Hazel Payton during her period operating the Post Office on the island.

The original book was in a much deteriorated state when shown to me by Hazel on several occasions over a cup of tea on the verandah of her house on the island. She gave me the book on my last visit to her in November 2017 so that we could make a printable copy to ensure that this piece of island and yachting history could both be preserved and made available to a wider audience. Sadly Hazel died in 2018 aged 92 but the yachtman's visitors book will live on – now in printed form.

For interest we have reproduced a sailing story* from the Clark brothers who sailed their yacht *Maluka* out to the island in the early 1930's. *Maluka* is flush decked gaff rigged sloop, 28 feet long with a bowsprit and a 10 foot beam so she has a stout and sturdy hull suitable for ocean sailing despite her small size. It has been restored in the last decade by Sean Langman to compete in the Sydney-Hobart Race which it has done 3 times in recent years as the smallest boat in the fleet. The Clark brothers' story gives a good description of the conditions that can be experienced voyaging to Lord Howe Island in a small yacht with minimal navigation aids.

Whilst Lord Howe Island has been a well known destination for adventurous cruising and racing yachtsmen, the early years recorded in the Logbook show that there were not many yachts which made the trip to the island. In 1970 there were only 12 visiting yachts recorded, 27 yachts in 1971 and 17 in 1972. The commencement of the Gosford to Lord Howe Island yacht race in 1974 increased the number of yacht visits significantly and remained the main source of visiting yachts for many years.

The range of yachts visiting the island was considerable. Some very small boats made the trip in the 1970's. Tom Simmet from Neutral Bay in Sydney sailed his 17ft cutter *Tom Thumb II* out to the island in February 1970. Gerry Clark, an orchardist from New Zealand, visited the island in his 21ft bilge keeler *Ketiga* in May 1970 stopping off during the Trans Tasman Solo Race. Another adventurous solo sailor, Col McDermid, voyaged out to the island in his Hood 23 *Hoodwink* in May 1975.

Well known ocean racing boats also visited the island – particularly in the period from 1974 when there was an ocean race out to the island. The race from Gosford to Lord Howe was conducted for 41 years until the last race in 2014. There were 11 competitors in the inaugural race in 1974. A name which appeared for the first race and many times after was that of the 26ft yacht *Jelly Bean* – sailed by Ross and Olive Sheldon who visited the island regularly, both cruising and racing. In some of the last entries in the Logbook in October 1980 there were 21 boats recorded from the Gosford-LHI race. These entries included *Onya of Gosford* – sailed by Peter Rysdyk who sailed the race regularly from 1974, and *Satin Sheets* sailed by Andrew Strachan, also a regular competitor in the race. Earlier year visits by

famous ocean racing yachts in the 1970's included *Stormy Petrel* (1971) and *Ragamuffin* (1972) both sailed by Syd Fischer, *Salacia* (1973) and *Wraith of Odin* (1970).

Jack Earl, a famous Australian sailor with a strong connection Lord Howe Island, visited the island many times but is recorded in the Logbook in January 1971 with his yacht *Maris*. Subsequent visits made by *Maris*, with then owner Ian Kiernan, were recorded in 1972, '73 and September 1974 on their way to San Francisco. American yacht designer Ron Holland visited in his yacht *Spirit of San Francisco* in November 1970 on his way from Auckland to Sydney. Inspection of the Logbook will reveal the visits of many interesting yachts which visited the island between 1969 and 1980.

Since 2002 a group of cruising yachtsmen, led by Nigel Stoke in his yacht *Fidelis*, have gathered at Neds Beach each November for what is called the Great Australian Bar B Q and to raise funds for the Lord Howe Island School. This cruise brings a group of cruising yachts to the island each year. In addition now there is a steady stream of cruising yachts visiting the island on their passage from the Pacific Ocean or crossing the Tasman Sea or simply sailing out from the mainland for an ocean voyage with a stunning destination.

Philip Brown, *Anitra V*

* Story published in "The Amateurs" 1972

National Library of Australia Card No. and ISBN 0 9598829 0 1