

46TH Squadron ANNUAL CRUISE 11 – 18 APRIL 2015

By Cruising Division Chairman Richard Lawson

As I write this outline of our recent Cruise, Sydney is recovering from a week of a severe East Coast low. How fortunate were we that our Cruise week was the week before the bad weather, and, apart from a threatening thunder storm on the Wednesday night, the weather was outstanding throughout. The Cruise culminated in a magic sail home to Sydney on the last day in a building nor'easter.

This year's Cruise had a slightly modified format from previous years, as we returned to Pittwater for a highly successful week. The program featured two lay days, two raft-up dinners, a four race Cat 7 series and two coastal Cat 4 passage races. The Monday lay day saw a wonderful extension to the popular Galley Gourmet Challenge - canapés were served to all those ashore at the Refuge Bay beach party...and they were good! The beach party was held on a beach somewhat diminished by the high tide, but spirits were high as about 50 people assembled, ankle deep in water, for an enjoyable end to the day.

The opening day of the Cruise dawned with very light breeze, so the twenty one Cat 4 boats proceeded in company under the follow me flag as far as Bangally Head, where Rob Ridley, our ever-popular Principal Race Officer, started a short race to be concluded north of Barrenjoey Headland in approximately seven knots of breeze. However, the early start to the Halletts Beach get-together was a great opportunity to catch up with all other Cruise participants on a superb afternoon and evening.

Sunday's opening inshore race was a cracker in a building southerly breeze. Some Div 1 boats were recording upward of 25 knots at the weather mark in a building seaway. Some minor damage was experienced on a couple of boats and sadly for Chris Reed on Div 3 Rafiki, the timber bumpkin on his old double ender collapsed in the bumpy conditions. Although his rig was in danger, he recovered the situation by winding on his running back stays, and he had the situation in hand.

Our first progressive raft-up dinner was scheduled for Mushroom Bay which looked spectacular with all the masts from 33 racing yachts and 11 support yachts and motor boats. Two of the yachts that were new to the Cruise (Tonic, Robert Pizzey and Tashtego Joe English) fully joined in the spirit of the occasion and Sandy and I enjoyed a fantastic 13 person dinner party aboard Tonic (Hanse 55), as it was voted that Rapunzel's saloon would have been a touch tight for the occasion.

The Galley Gourmet Challenge, Part 2, was held at the Pinta Bay raft-up, and Judge Sue Swanson said she was 'blown away' by the standard of the food produced from standard yacht ingredients and prepared in limited facilities.

The races on both Tuesday and Wednesday experienced superb conditions, in particular Wednesday's 12 kt easterly afforded a perfect sail for all divisions. Once again, Rob set great

courses which just suited the conditions. The sunken Greater Mackerel mark posed a dilemma for a few on Tuesday, but a laid RSYS mark solved the problem for Wednesday.

On Thursday we visited Coasters Retreat (The Basin) for our second lay day and approximately 80 people went ashore for a BYO picnic/barbecue and enjoyed a perfect afternoon in the sunshine under the Basin's pavilion roof.

Friday turned out to be another beautiful day, albeit a little cloudy and with minimal wind. Once again a good call by Rob who set a limited alternative race course on Pittwater, thus staying away from the quite large tidal flow of the Broken Bay/West Head area which would have affected the racing. After about 90 minutes of racing in very light conditions, Code flag S was flown at the Scotland Island mark and about 32 boats proceeded to the RMYC for a marina berth, showers and a meal ashore in the Club's function room.

We all enjoyed a very pleasant evening where spirits were high and our Galley Gourmet Challenge judges made their awards for all classifications of the Challenge, which included canapés on the beach, entrées, mains, desserts and Junior Chef.

Finally our Cruise for 2015 was drawing to a close. The Cat 7 boats made their way back to Sydney in company with others, whilst the Cat 4 passage fleet started their race at 1100 east of Barrenjoey Headland. At the start a 10 kt northerly prevailed which gradually clocked to the north east, building as the race progressed to about 15 – 18 kts, allowing all boats to enjoy a beautiful sail back to Sydney. Midnight Rambler and About Time finished in about two and a half hours, whilst we on Rapunzel brought the building breeze with us and finished in about three hours off Watsons Bay.

All in all the general feedback is that the modified format, along with the excellent weather, made for another successful Cruise. However, this result could not have been achieved without the work of an excellent committee, together with Margaret Carney and Chris Stone in the RSYS Sailing Office to keep us on track, and Rob Ridley and his crew, who once again ran a fantastic week for all of us to enjoy.