

**'Cruising to Lord Howe Island'**  
by James Merrington

Presented on 22 May by Club Members Robert Dickson and Commodore Jim Dunstan who undertook this voyage on Boxing Day 2018.



Norske and Zeus left Sydney on Boxing Day in company, however the forecast Southerly morphed into NE winds which quickly strengthened to over 30 knots. What happened next informed their talk 'Cruising to Lord Howe Island.'

Rob discussed his long-term plan to cruise to Lord Howe Island and ex-Commodore Jim Dunstan, veteran of more than 30 Sydney Hobart races, decided it would make a great alternative to heading south on Boxing Day. They discussed idyllic cruising in company with favourable winds all the way to Lord Howe Island with the boats in sight of each other.

For the passage to Lord Howe however, Zeus had a late crew withdrawal meaning that there were only three on board: Jim, his wife Judy and a new but experienced crew member. Judy had found a seasickness tablet, the highly effective Stugeron on their travels in South Africa, so she was confident she could be comfortable on the trip to Lord Howe Island.

On board Norske there were three generations of Dicksons. Norske's crew comprised Robert, his father Bruce, his cousin Andrew and Rob's nephew. Commodore Bruce Dickson sailed both ways on the boat.



The 30 knot Nor'easter separated the boats upon leaving Sydney Heads. Zeus pounding to windward, just like most Hobart races. Norske took a more comfortable Easterly approach. Their plan to communicate via VHF proved to be unsuccessful, as they weren't in sight of each other.

They described the process for entering the lagoon at Lord Howe where there are two channels: North and South. They entered under instructions from the harbourmaster who directed them from the shore where he had visual contact. There were also numerous channel markers to aid safe passage through the channels. Norske and Zeus booked the moorings for their time in Lord Howe but Lord Howe has seven moorings for passing visitors.

Whilst there, they enjoyed island life and the facilities. Rob proposed to his partner after climbing the steep Mt Gower. Led by Jack Shick as their guide, the hike is one of the many interesting things to do on the island.

Mrs Dickson joined Norske for the sail home in beautiful, comfortable conditions. She reflected that for years they had told her about their arduous sport, but to her standards it was quite delightful. Zeus had a great trip home taking 2 ½ days.

Following the talk, our speakers took several questions from the floor and we heard several attendees' perspectives on the best communication systems while at sea. Norske utilised the Garmin InReach system, another recommendation was the Iridium Go system, both of these pair with your smartphone, the Garmin system allows SMS messaging, while Iridium allows phone calls as well. However, if your boat is fitted with HF radio then scheds can be arranged with Charleville radio. Jim recommended using HF radio as being the most reliable and a combination of two systems being optimal. We also heard tips on where to buy fuel, provisions, the best hiking tracks and cafés. All very useful information.

Thanks to Jim and Rob for a lively and entertaining discussion.