

## Greetings.....

and welcome to the first RL Newsletter for 2009. I apologise for not getting into print earlier but events conspired against me and just when I thought I was in the clear, a bushfire and a couple of other issues crossed my path. Thanks, though, to Alistair who kindly and promptly posted the Nationals results on Keith's RL pages and to our hard-working Secretary, Jane, who is so diligent in keeping us up to date with RL-related news.

## A Bit Windy - RL24 National Championships, 2008/2009.

Interesting stuff, wind! We can't see it but for hundreds of years it made possible the movement of people and goods around the world. It still propels small vessels across huge oceans. Too much of it makes yachtsmen and women tremble at the knees. Too little makes them rage in frustration. When we are relaxed and yarning with friends we're said to be shooting the breeze. When we're contemplating a major decision, we're said to be sniffing the wind and I've just emerged from a situation where the presence of wind was greeted with delight and relief as a sign that my vital organs were beginning to work satisfactorily again. (Though that wasn't the sort of wind one would, by choice, sniff!)

And so to the Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club at Paynesville at the end of December and the beginning of January last. We had wind. It blew. It blew all week and on 2 days it blew so hard we couldn't race. Nonetheless, via a combination of shortened courses and back-to-back races, we managed to sail a 7 heat series. Incredible! It was unremittingly hard work for all crews and at the end of the regatta there was a queue of skippers lining up for the *Toad of Barmera Trophy* but strangely, no one was complaining. Despite the conditions or perhaps, because of the conditions, everyone thought (correctly) that they had achieved a great deal and learned a great deal. The ultimate success of the series was in large part due to the care and competence of the Race Management Team assembled by Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club. Led by O.O.D. Geoff. Hannington, the courses were set as truly as possible but of a length that could reasonably be accommodated within the widows of opportunity presented by the weather. The Association owes Geoff and his colleagues a substantial debt of gratitude for their outstanding management of a very difficult situation.

A total of 17 RLs came to Paynesville to contest the series. Amongst them were newcomers Greg Pattison with his Mark 1, *Love Life*, and John Hawksworth from Albury/Wodonga with his Mark 2 *Happy Days*. Making a return to racing at RL24 Nationals, Don Pemberton came down from Wagga Wagga with his Mark 1, *Peer Gynt*. Don previously participated in Nationals competitions at Mannering Park some years ago and it was good to see him back and *Peer Gynt* still in such great order. The provenance of *Love Life* had all the old timers scratching their heads but the consensus seemed to be that she began her career as Les Perrot's *Rebel* back in the mid 1970's when she had sail # 5. Her return to the race track was auspicious as she earned a first place in the Cruising Division. *Happy Days* was set up by Bruce and Lyn. Avery from Wodonga (or near by) in the late 1970's or early 80's. Bruce ran a business as a yacht chandler and at the time the boat set the benchmark for quality fitout. She was sold to Geoff Gronow who sailed her for many years at Rhyll Y.C. before being sold once more at which point her trail went cold (at least for your scribe). So it was a pleasant surprise to learn that John had purchased her and had returned her not only to her "birthplace" after such a long absence but also to her former glory.

Given the excellent numbers in the fleet, it was a great disappointment that the weather was so uncooperative. All skippers were forced to make judgments about whether or not they had the experience and skill on board to handle the conditions and some, wisely, decided they didn't. In such circumstances, there is no shame in pulling out or not starting and skippers making those courageous calls are to be warmly congratulated on the soundness of their decisions. For those who did start, the racing was hard, challenging and, especially in the Drop Keel Division, very competitive. Both the SK & DK Divisions had any number of races within races which weren't resolved until the last heat. For example, going into heat 7, Simon Vaughan (*Lowana 5*) was just 1 point behind Paul Corben (*Cosmic Sedso*) but a third to *Cosmic* and a 4<sup>th</sup> to *Lowana 5* in that heat saw Paul hang on to 4<sup>th</sup> overall. At the pointy end of the Drop Keel Division, honours in the heats were spread between the three ultimate placegetters while in the Swings, first and 2<sup>nd</sup> placegetters each won at least 2 heats. At the end of hostilities, Mitch. Dyer, the fleet's youngest skipper, piloted *Whatever* to a well earned victory in the Swing Keel Division just 4 points to the good of the very consistent and hard-pressing Steve Lymbery who

brought *Thingamajig* down from Jervis Bay. Ian Cook's consistent performance to stitch up 3<sup>rd</sup> place overall in the Swing Keel group was particularly meritorious (and very popular) and an excellent reward for years of hard work supporting the Association's events. Behind Ian raged a regatta-long battle between two Association stalwarts, Michael Reid sailing *Bring It On* (see next story) and Wayne Hill with his lovely *Spiral Navigator*. At the end of the week they were locked together on 27 points apiece – that's close racing. John Hawksworth with *Happy Days* finished his first heat in an RL24 National Championship with an excellent third across the line but the heavy weather then set in and while he and his family battled on stoically, they were unable to maintain their opening form. Paul Davis with the ever immaculate *Streetcar* was another who sailed consistently early on scoring an impressive third in heat 2 but wisely put the boat away in later (heavier) heats. In the Drops, Simon Walsh and his boys, Michael, Brad and Charley prevailed by sailing superbly. Even their recovery from disaster was an inspirational piece of work, their disaster being a capsizing resulting in retirement from heat 4. However, despite their dominance on the Results Sheet, out on the track they came under a lot of pressure mainly applied by the indefatigable Mick Shannon (*Lowana 6*) who finished second but also by Stewie Loft sailing Bernie Ryan's *Spud Gun* (third) and the afore mentioned Paul Corben and Simon Vaughan. Trevor Jones, sailing his faithful *Casper* did well in early heats but, recognizing the limitations of a lightweight crew, sensibly opted to remain ashore during the later races. James Shannon and *Warrigal* did likewise but while Jimmy didn't shine on the course this year, he compensated by doing an outstanding job hosting the Presentation Night.

As recorded earlier, *Love Life* took the honours in the Cruising Division but the first heat was won to popular acclaim by long time Association supporter Hugh Hetherington sailing as usual with his incredibly tolerant wife Liz and kids Cara and Howard. Unfortunately, the high winds took their toll of the Cruising fleet with most sensibly opting not to start on the heavier days.

On the Social Scene : - The welcoming BBQ was attended by 90 + yachties and their families and approximately the same numbers attended the Presentation Dinner, so the number of members who enjoy racing and socialising with other like-minded sailors are well and truly growing. We would also like to reiterate our thanks to all our sponsors who helped make this year's Nationals a great success.

And so the shouting and the tumult died, the captains and the kings departed and another RL24 National Championship was consigned to history. While the strong breezes will certainly ensure that it is talked about for many years to come, hopefully the 2008/2009 regatta will be principally remembered for its wonderful camaraderie, its great spirit and the sense of satisfaction that comes from surviving a week like that!

### **Bruce Castles Participation Award**

This year the coveted Bruce Castles Award goes to Association President Darryn Dyer in recognition of the outstanding job he has done promoting the Association's interests. As Darryn generously noted, he has not worked alone but there are countless examples of his initiative and enthusiasm on display, all of which have contributed substantially to keeping the Association not only alive but a vibrant, active player on the trailable yacht arena. This Association is indeed fortunate in having someone of Darryn's energy, ability, integrity and commitment to lead it forward.

### **No One Is An Island....** (That's a misquote but I hope you'll get my drift)

This is a story in two parts. Sharp-eyed readers of this stuff will have noted that at last month's RL24 Nationals at Paynesville, Michael Reid was an entrant but his beloved *Sasha* was not among the list of starters. Rather, Michael, (he of the Auldstone Winery in the Glenrowan district and the regular supplier of the Participation Awards for members attending the Nationals – to wit, bottles of his superb liqueur Muscat) was recorded as sailing *Bring It On*, a well presented early Mark 3 Swing Keeler. How so? Well, the story goes like this. Back in early December 2008, Michael and his crew were heading to Yarrowonga one Sunday morning, *Sasha* in tow, in order to get in a little practice for the forthcoming Nationals and to try out a new spinnaker. Without warning, the trailer tilt lockdown device failed, the trailer tilted and *Sasha* began sliding backwards onto the road. All of this at around 100kph. Without going into the gory detail, the upshot was that *Sasha* hit the deck,

rolled, speared off the road taking an unlucky cocky's fence with her and leaving Michael and his crew facing the direction from whence they'd just come. And very shaken too. But, in case you hadn't noticed, he's made of very stern stuff is our Michael and, with composure recovered, he and his boys retrieved *Sasha* and quietly trundled her home. Although RL's have a fine reputation for being as tough as they come, it was immediately clear that *Sasha* could not be repaired in time for the approaching Nationals. However, not wishing to forego the event which he enjoys very much, Michael was soon on the phone to what he called the *RL Family*, the first time your scribe had heard the term used in that context. Private schools and churches trying to extract yet more money from impoverished parents or adherents often use the term "family" as a sort of emotional blackmail but Michael's use of the term was entirely more altruistic. As the telephone tree spread, and "family" members put the word about, it wasn't long before Michael heard from Bernie Ryan who was able to put him in touch with Darryl Brookes at GLYC. Darryl ("Dazza" to one and all) had recently become the new owner of *Bring It On* and as it turned out, was not sailing the series having been recruited to serve on the Committee Boat. In a wonderful act of generosity and sportsmanship he readily agreed to loan *Bring It On* to Michael thus ensuring that he was a participant after all and that the fleet was not depleted by *Sasha's* absence.

And now part two. As recorded elsewhere in this Newsletter, during the course of heat 4, the Walsh's lost control of *Ohau Rua* during a gybe and as a result found themselves swimming. This was new territory for Simon's boys although Simon, if he had the time, may have had a touch of déjà vous recalling the night years ago in a Marlay Point Overnighter when he put *Ohau Rua* in the soup off Loch Sport. You may well ask how come he was right down at Loch Sport and it was still dark? Easy. Simon had rigged up an 18ft. skiff spinnaker (about 1100m<sup>2</sup> worth!) on *Ohau* to take advantage of the forecast westerlies which eventuated. *Ohau* took off like sand off a shovel but it was too good to last and in the end they succumbed. An interesting but irrelevant side issue is that Simon's dad, the venerable Jack, was on board *Anitra* when your scribe turned her upside down at the Rhyll Nationals in 1985. But back to *Ohau*. With the Committee boat quickly on the scene and a number of other helpers on standby, there was absolutely no danger but she was unable to complete the race. After much deliberation it was decided to tow her around to the south side of Raymond Island and retrieve her across the beach there. Prima facie, this presented a whole new suite of problems as the site chosen, while giving trailer access, terminated in a steep bank about ½ metre high. Further, a nasty chop was breaking on the shore which consisted entirely of stones. However, and here's the point, word had passed around that Simon needed a hand and as a result, a team of about 20 or 30 "family" members assembled to pitch in. Without wishing to single out the contribution of any one member, I recall vividly the image of Jeff Germaine and Trevor Jones looking like shipwrecked sailors and up to their eyes in the water struggling with the pitching *Ohau* as they helped tow her by hand towards the beach. Wayne Hill was in there up to his neck as were many others including, of course, Simon. The dilemma on everyone's mind was how were we to prevent the boat being pounded on the rocks lining the shore? This had us stumped for a while until voila! Darryn Dyer stumbled on not one but three truck tyres carelessly but fortuitously left in the water nearby by some long departed angelic litterbug. The boys soon had them in place as a ramp, a rope was attached to the bow and the assembled family heaved like there was no tomorrow. And like Phoenix, *Ohau* arose and fairly leapt onto dry land. Paul Corben had the trailer in tow and before long the entire entourage was wending its way through the bush back to Jack's house. Along the way we passed a koala in a tree and I swear I saw it wink and give us a "thumbs up" salute. It set our spirits soaring even higher. I counted 20 souls riding in or on the boat and another 8 or so were jammed in the 4x4. Still others had their own transport and we all rendezvoused back at the house where the clean-up operation commenced. It was a great feeling and the icing on the cake was the extraordinary speech Simon gave at the Presentation Night when he rose to speak about his experience. And there was that word again. He thanked the "RL Family" with deep sincerity and spoke briefly about what it meant to him to be part of such a group. It was a most moving moment.

So there you have it. Two blokes getting about the business of pursuing a sport they love and suddenly overwhelmed with adversity. But what was that about no one is an island?

### **New Rob. Legg Perpetual Trophies.**

This year our Committee unveiled a marvelous surprise at the Presentation Night following the 2008/2009 Nationals – identical and stunning trophies for the winners of both the Swing and Drop Keel divisions. The trophies consist of a highly polished plinth into which has been inlaid, in a contrasting colour, a very accurate

scale profile of an RL24. Details of each trophy are engraved on a polished stainless steel plaque secured to the plinth below the profile. They look magnificent and it should come as no surprise to learn that the genius lurking behind them was none other than Rob Legg himself. Rob donated the original Perpetual Trophy, a handsome polished metal urn, at the time of the first RL24 Speed Week at Southport in 1974 (won by Des Stanaway sailing *Scarlet Lady*). It served until 1990 as the prize for the Class Champion and since then, as the trophy for the Drop Keel winner. Following the advent of the Swing Keel Division in 1990 at Lake Cootharabra, skippers in that Division have sailed for a trophy provided by the Boreen Point Hotel but without the imprimatur of a Rob Legg perpetual, it has never been fully accepted as having the same status as the original. Very mindful of this, our Executive of Darryn Dyer and Jane Davis put their heads together with Rob and thanks to his generosity, the outcome is superb. These trophies will serve the Association for many years to come and apart from anything else will act as a landmark reminder of the contribution Rob has made to this Association since the day it coalesced around his incredible vision. Furthermore, with identical trophies for the champions in each Division, skippers in both can pursue the development of their boats knowing that their efforts, if successful, will be rewarded with equal status and recognition. The Association can be very proud that this sense of equality between the two configurations within the one Class is at last a demonstrable reality rather than some esoteric, unconvincing and shaky notion.

### **Life Membership Award.**

In a Presentation Night dripping with highlights, one of the very best was the inauguration of the doyen of the RL24 Association, one M.J.Shannon Esq. Mick ( "Doc" to some) Shannon has been a member of the Association since 1975 when he arrived with *Lowana 3* and a Volvo wagon full of kids. Over the years, there were more *Lowanas* and more kids but the essential Mick has remained the same – a marvelous bloke of extraordinary generosity, a tough, clever but scrupulously fair competitor and an outstanding and durable ambassador for our Class. His response to the presentation was deeply sincere and moving but the acclamation at the end of his speech left none in doubt about the popularity of the award. The citation and motion for Life Membership presented to a specially convened meeting of the Association (unbeknown to Michael) was passed unanimously and reads as follows.

“It is my honour to propose that Michael Shannon be appointed as a Life Member of the RL24 Owners Association of Australia.

This motion is propelled by a recognition that Michael has been a most active and loyal supporter of this Association since he joined it in 1975. He has served as its President, has organized National Championships, has won National Championships and has been an outstanding ambassador and defender of the Class in many sailing forums both in Victoria and interstate.

In the halcyon days ofailable yachting, he represented the Class with distinction in open competition around the Victoria. His performances and his good grace in competition were outstanding examples of the very best standards of sportsmanship and this Association was fortunate, during those troubled years for the Class, to bask in the reflected glow of his success and reputation as a competitor of unimpeachable integrity. Much of the credit for silencing the many critics of our Class at that time belongs to Michael (and, as he would readily admit, his crew from St.Trinians.)

Michael has also made substantial contributions to the Class through his development of the boat's performance. The fact that RL24's remain around the top of theailable yacht performance tree is due in large part to his tireless search for improvement. This is not to detract from the efforts of others but Michael has always been the one to take the big risks often only to prove that something won't work as expected. It speaks volumes for the man that despite the cleverness and sometimes the audaciousness of his ideas, none ever come near to challenging the letter or spirit of the Class Rules. It is also true that in making the boat faster and easier to handle and sail, Michael has helped make RL24's even safer. As a result, every person who sails an RL24, Association member or not, can be the beneficiary of his quest for improvement.

Perhaps the most important contribution Michael has made to this Association and the sport of sailing generally is the way he has consistently and persistently put *family* back into the notion of family sailing. Happily, it is an idea which has wider currency these days but for many years after he arrived on the sailing scene, Michael was the only competitor whose boat was crewed exclusively by his immediate family. He had the view that all the *Lowanas* were family boats and that his family had the right to join him in participating in this marvelous

sport. While he has pursued success vigorously, he was never tempted (or needed) to find crew outside his family which, of itself, is enough to distinguish him as a special sort of person.

Michael Shannon has given generously of his talents to this Association. Many of his contributions have been unknown to most of us but they have all been made in a spirit of high regard for what this Association means to him. I submit that the time is right for us to acknowledge what Michael means to us and I invite you to join me in supporting this motion that Michael Shannon be appointed a Life Member of the Association.”

Motion moved by Ross Corben

Seconded by Darryn Dyer.

### **The Toad of Barmera**

The Toad of Barmera Trophy is presented annually to the RL24 skipper who, in the opinion of a specially convened committee has demonstrated “conclusive consistency” in the pursuit of any given course of action either during a race or on land provided it is related to the business of participating in an RL24 National Championship.

Readers of this scruffy little sheet will recall that for the last couple of years, skippers at the Nationals were derelict in their duty to compete purposefully for the *Toad*. As a result, fields were thin and there were times when the Committee almost despaired of finding a winner. However, this year, I’m pleased to report, the Ladies and Gentlemen of the RL Chorus took their work rather more seriously and we had a competition. Perhaps the stiffer breezes helped!

In no particular order, the field included **Trevor Jones** and **Jeff Germaine** sailing Trevor’s *Casper*. Rounding the gybe mark but having dumped the kite as a precaution, the mainsheet somehow fouled and the gybe went horribly but amusingly wrong. Down went *Casper* on her beams ends and out of the cockpit popped most of her crew but with the drop keel locked securely in place she righted quickly. Those remaining on board equally quickly fished out those in the water and pretty soon they were banging their way up the course – wetter but wiser.

Next to step up was **Paul Corben** in *Cosmic Sedso*. After leading the fleet for the first two legs, he lost his way at the gybe mark but rounded without drama. That was to come. Sailing hard up the next beat on a port tack he attempted to slide behind **Simon Vaughan** on starboard in *Lowana 5* but a big gust overwhelmed the rudder and *Cosmic* rounded up right in the path of *Lowana*. You could hear the crunch in Bairnsdale but remarkably the damage to *Cosmic* was superficial and *Lowana*, despite having her bow in *Cosmic*’s cockpit, was unscathed. Not to be outdone, by its more elderly sister ship, *Lowana 6* hit the suds spilling its Senior Citizen skipper (**aka Mick Shannon**), sheet hand **Fred** and foredeck gorilla **Charley** (both also Shannons) into the water. Safely remaining on board was the skipper’s son-in-law **Paul Bird** known universally and affectionately as “**Birdie**”. Now **Birdie** is a very sensitive youth and whether it was loneliness or a sense of guilt at being the only one not swimming or whether he was overcome by some sudden vision of Titanic proportions we will never know but suffice to say that with no great lapse in time, **Birdie** abandoned ship and joined his family splashing about in the murky depths of Lake Victoria. Free of her crew, *Lowana 6* righted herself instantly then waited patiently until the swimmers had re-boarded before resuming the race with no damage other than that inflicted on the pride of the boys.

An early bidder for *Toad* honors was **Ian Cook** and *Screamin’ Blue Murder*. Clearly bored with the race, he and the boys from Colac decided to trawl for skipjacks (or maybe tailors) using the kite towed behind the boat as a net. When I saw them, they weren’t making much progress through the water (in fact they weren’t making *any* progress through the water) and I don’t know if they caught any fish but judging from the shouting and arm-waving, they appeared to be having a good time.

**Mitch Dyer** skippering *Whatever* was another to make an early dash for *Toad* glory. At the beginning of the first heat, the mainsail began to assume a most peculiar shape with a serious loss of boat speed as a consequence. After being summarily dispatched to investigate, the boat’s owner and sheet hand, **Darryn**, reported that he didn’t have a clue. And he was correct. The mainsail had divorced itself from the gooseneck at the clew and was not so quietly beginning to destroy itself. Deciding to return to shore to effect repairs, who should they come across but **Jimmy Shannon** who, being without an experienced crew, had wisely elected not to start. James was motoring *Warrigal* out to the track to watch and they’d hardly got closer than hailing distance when *Warrigal*’s main was being hoisted on *Whatever*’s mast and the Dyer’s returned to the fray. Another serious contender was **Mick Reid** whose efforts in launching *Sasha* onto the road at high speed attracted the attention of the judges but when all was said and done, it was clear that Michael and all the

claimants for Toad Glory were simply pretenders compared to the efforts of Simon Walsh and *Ohau Rua*. In accepting the Toad, Walshy noted that although he had won the trophy previously, he always had the feeling that he didn't merit it to but on this occasion he believed the award was thoroughly deserved and well earned. The point was beautifully emphasized by son Brad who noted in passing that it was Dad who forgot to put in the keel lockdown pin. From out of the mouths of babes!

### Notes from the AGM

Elsewhere on this website you will find a complete copy of the Minutes of the Association's AGM held at GLYC on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2008. However, a few matters arising from that meeting should be noted here.

- (i) The meeting unanimously reappointed **Darryn Dyer** as Association President and **Jane Davis** as Secretary/Treasurer. Jane generously accepted the additional role of Treasurer after **Trevor Jones**, Treasurer for at least the last 10 years or more, sought to be relieved of this responsibility. The meeting expressed its appreciation of Trevor's long distinguished service to the Association in this regard.
- (ii) A motion moved by Paul Corben and seconded by Michael Shannon that the 2009/2010 Nationals be held at Mannering Park was carried comfortably. An offer from Mannering Park had previously been received by the Committee.
- (iii) A motion moved by Darren Dyer and seconded by Wayne Hill "that Swing Keel RL24's fitted with keel case fillers, blocks, flaps or similar devices or which have modifications to the keel itself to fill the centre case slot to reduce drag while sailing will (for the purposes of handicapping and Divisions at Championships) be treated as Drop Keels" was passed 19 for and 2 against. As this motion is an addition to the Class Rules, it had previously been circulated to all financial members of the Association at least 30 days prior to the AGM as required by the Association's Constitution. Furthermore, the voting outcome satisfied the Constitution's requirement that the motion be passed by a two thirds majority.
- (iv) It was moved by James Shannon and seconded by Darryl Langdon that the following paragraph be added to RL24 Class Rule 13. "Notwithstanding the above, when required to be carried for racing, the minimum engine weight shall be 20kg. Any ballast weight required to cover any shortfall in engine weight shall be carried as fixed ballast in the stern compartment of the hull." This motion was passed 15 for and 6 against and having been previously circulated appropriately satisfies the Constitutional requirements.

### And finally...

I would like to record my sincere appreciation of the lovely gesture of the Association in sending me a magnificent display of native flowers during my recent stay in hospital. I regard it as yet another example of the RL Family at work and I am very grateful.

Ross Corben  
Knoxfield

PS

Hi, it's me, Jane. Just sending a special cheerio and best wishes for a speedy recovery to Ross who has returned home from a recent hospital visit. Ross tells me he's getting better each day and is well on the way to a full recovery. From my recent conversations with him, he's certainly sounding like his old self again.

## **NEXT NATIONALS - information on the 2009/2010 CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The next RL24 Owner's Association of Australia National Championships will be held at Lake Macquarie, NSW. Mannering Park Amateur Sailing Club (note the name change), will be our host for the event at lovely Mannering Park. *The dates are Monday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2009 until Friday 1<sup>st</sup>. January 2010.*

We strongly suggest that you organise accommodation as soon as possible, especially if you wish to stay in the park adjacent to the Sailing Club as it is a very popular place. The contact details of the Park are -

BIG4 Lake Maquarie Monterey Tourist Park

Lot 26 Monterey Avenue

Mannering Park NSW 2259

Ph. 02 43591033

[www.monteraypark.com.au](http://www.monteraypark.com.au)

Email : [fun@monteraypark.com.au](mailto:fun@monteraypark.com.au)

### **SKANDIA GEELONG WEEK**

3 RL24's entered the Four Seasons by Sheraton Trailer Yacht Division, being Ohau Rua(Simon Walsh), Whatever(Darryn Dyer) and StreetCar (Paul Davis).

Simon finished 1<sup>st</sup>, and Darryn finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, from a fleet of 14 boats. Well done to you both!!

As Simon & Darryn were the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> RL24's respectively , they will be awarded RL24 State Title holders for 2009.