

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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RL24 – It's YOUR kind of boat

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Just Cruisin'

What is the truth? There are as many answers to that simple question as there are people on this planet but at least one of those answers is that I don't have any news with which to construct an RL24 newsletter. Not that it bothers me because, as all amateur volunteer newsletter writers know, most facts are merely impediments to a good story and in any case, the absence of news goes with the territory. As a famous American newspaper proprietor once remarked, "if you aint got no goddamn news, make it up!" In any event, my mind is focussed on something else.

Tonight, (the last week in May) the sun went down a ball of orange fire. There is no wind and there hasn't been for the last 4 days. It promises to be cold – a three dog night at least. From this you will gather that Victoria is in the grip of a huge and powerful high pressure weather system and that fills my addled brain with wonderful memories of great winter cruises to Refuge Cove and other exotic places. That raises the question for me as to whether or not there is much serious cruising being done in RL24's these days.

One of the many joys of being an RL24 owner is that you have the best of both sailing worlds. Everyone knows that an RL24 is a fairly handy bit of gear to have if sailboat racing is your scene but it's also true that a quick, sea-kindly boat makes a great cruiser too and over the years many RL owners have taken full advantage of the boat's utilitarian capacities to enjoy cruising adventures off the beaten track. In the case of the Corben family, our cruising resume' is not particularly comprehensive but in addition to the mandatory three month Whitsunday trip (upon which we embarked when Paul was just 7 weeks old in 1977) and frequent visits to the incomparable Gippsland Lakes, we have, over the years, visited the Coffin Bay area in S.A., the Myall Lakes in NSW and some odd spots such as Dartmouth Dam (illegally!) and Rocky Valley Dam above Falls Creek.

However, many others, I know, have cruised much more extensively (and frequently) Recently, I spent an enjoyable evening trawling through some old copies of the RL24 Newsletter in which I discovered to my great interest a number of accounts of quite adventurous expeditions made by intrepid RL24 owners in the early days of the Association.

Two stories, in particular, stand out. The first is reprinted below from the Oct/Nov. 1976 RL newsletter and was written by Jo Robjohn who describes herself as First Mate and Galley Girl (!) aboard Merv. Allwood's RL24 *Falcoln* (sail # 137). She and Merv. spent a delightful two months sailing *Falcoln* from Mackay (where they were living at the time and may still be) to Cairns. The second is an account of a cruise to the Abrolhos Islands off Geraldton W.A. which we will bring you in the next Newsletter. If you, too have a favourite cruising story you'd like to share, we guarantee to be publish it here – all you have to do is let us have a few details and we'll do the rest. In the meantime, here's Jo's yarn.

"The RL24 is undisputedly the fastest trailer sailer and we have been very happy with our race results in Mackay against deep keelers and other trailer sailers.

But Merv. and I have also proved this small yacht to be a comfortable cruising boat offshore, spending two months sailing before the S.E. Trades up the Coral Coast from Mackay to Cairns and enjoying every minute. We also made use of the RL's

trailerability on the return journey. What would have been a hard slog into the wind in a deep keeler was an easy 420 mile trip on wheels in 11 hours!

Falcoln had been gradually fitted out for cruising over the last 2 years and when we set sail on April 16th. 1976 she sported a 2 burner and griller gas stove, small 'fridge (the gas cylinder being fitted in the cockpit) and a 20 gallon water tank. Not surprisingly, with all hatches full to capacity, *Falcoln* was 3 inches below her water line!

The winds for the first few weeks were 15-20kts. as we sailed up through the Cumberland and Whitsunday Islands. At the end of April, Cyclone Watorea was forecast and we spent a few wet days with the mast down and *Falcoln* tied securely to mangroves in a muddy creek near Airlie Beach. Fortunately, Watorea passed offshore and blew herself out to sea.

The overloaded *Falcoln* wasn't entered in the Airlie Beach Sailing Regatta but her skipper scored a crewing job on Ross Mc.Kee's Townsville RL24 *Escapade* coming 2nd. in the Trailer Sailer class. First prize went to that purple terror from Townsville, Doug Baker's RL, *Nathalie Bee*. Herb. Secombe's RL wasn't in the race; Herb, being Commodore of the local sailing club, had his time cut out organising the event.

Border Island was one of our favourite islands, lying as it does a few miles due east of Whitsunday Island and with a perfect sandy shore for beaching *Falcoln*. We usually tied a stern rope to a strong tree on the beach and a bow anchor to hold the bow to seaward and the RL sat perfectly upright except when there was a strong side wind as happened once when she lay slightly to starboard – not uncomfortably so but the gas 'fridge objected and ceased functioning until an air lock was removed.

Our 7'3" fibreglass dinghy was towed most of the time for, although it just fitted on the foredeck, it made it difficult to flatten the jib and also to handle the anchor. We were towing the little dinghy when leaving Border Island. With a good weather report and a fair barometer reading, we had full sail up but soon found ourselves in a 20-25 kts wind and 5' – 6' seas. The main was double reefed (7' out) and we were still doing 12kts at times when, to our dismay, the painter to the dinghy broke. The genoa ripped as an attempt was made to roller furl it in the strong wind so we motor sailed back looking for the white tender but with its pale blue interior, it was impossible to spot amongst all the whitecaps. So – be warned! Paint your dinghy a bright colour.

Bowen has a sheltered little boat harbour with good shore facilities but the skipper was a bit disappointed on arriving to find it was a non-racing weekend for he had hoped to compete against Bowen's only RL. We had met Don Maclean at the Airlie Beach Regatta and a few challenges had been thrown out.

The long stretch of coastline between Bowen and Townsville with Cape Upstart the only suitable anchorage in between was not as formidable as we first thought. With early starts and good conditions for square running we covered the second leg, ie Upstart to Townsville (66naut. miles) in 11 hours with some spinnaker flying and fast surfing down the waves - *Falcoln* handling well. On reaching Townsville an enjoyable sailing weekend was spent on and around Magnetic Island with another RL

owner, Graham Power and his family on *Lime Fresh*. A lot of time was spent dinghy hunting but we were unable to get one small enough and on June 1st. we continued north towing a canoe!

Passing Great Palm Island, we anchored at Orpheus island a couple of days and then headed for Hinchinbrook Is. with its wooded hills and majestic peaks. The heavy mangrove forest extended to a maze of channels on the western side while its rugged seaward side had enticing but mostly inaccessible beaches. One could spend weeks exploring and I was very sorry to leave as we continued up to Bedarra and Dunk Islands spending a night in the beautiful natural little harbour of Mourilyan before fetching up in Cairns on 15th. June.

A few weeks were spent in Cairns where we met Fred Hole with his RL *Contessa* and Ken Laycock with *Wide Horizons*. We raced with the local club, did a bit of land lubbering and joined the Cairns Cruising Yacht Club on a cruising weekend to Fitzroy Is. One of the things that impressed us most was the friendliness of sailors and land lubbers alike along the coast and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the RL skippers and their families for their hospitality while we were in their ports".

Editors prologue: *Falcoln* was (is) a Mark1 RL24. Merv. made a few alterations for offshore sailing eg a stronger and larger rudder blade with stronger stock and pintles; the lower stormboard rose 5" above the cockpit seats and was permanently bolted and sealed; there was a positive lock-down device on the swing keel and heavier turnbuckles fitted to the shrouds.

30th. Anniversary Nationals.... A Reminder

As recorded in the last Newsletter, our next National Championship regatta is to be held once more at Loch Sport commencing on Sat. 3rd. Jan. 2004 with the presentation Night scheduled for the following Friday (ie 9th.Jan.) A Notice of Race will be forwarded to all members in due course. As this is our thirtieth anniversary, your Committee is working hard to present an innovative, inclusive and interesting programme of events – something for everyone as Barnum and Bailey would say. However, the programme is a long way from finalisation and if you have ideas or suggestions which you'd like incorporated in the regatta, please don't hesitate to call Trevor, Jeff or Ross and let them know.

Grinning Skippers

Here is a fine bunch of merry sailors displaying their winnings at Loch Sport. Don't miss the next Nationals and you too will collect a prize.



The case for the development class

There has been much discussion lately about the CBH or handicap rating of the RL24. This system of handicapping will never be fair but it is probably the only realistic way of reaching a result in mixed fleet racing. You only need two different classes of yacht to race and one class will always perform better depending on the circumstances. One may go faster in light winds while the other will perform better in heavier winds. Likewise some classes perform better to windward and others perform better down wind. There is no possible way to level the playing field in yacht racing even though that is what the CBH system is intended to do. The only fair yacht races are where you have all boats identical in every way. The problem with that is there is no scope to improve a boat's performance or to try out innovative ideas. A boat that suits one person may not suit many others. Any limitations or bad points the boat may have you are stuck with. The class will soon become unpopular and may disappear eventually. There are some excellent one design boats around eg the Laser, but most people who wish to sail in one-design fleets need to do a lot of travelling to find these fleets and that is often not practical or possible, especially for country dwellers. The most practical solution for the majority of sailors is to decide where they are going to sail most of the time, will they be cruising and racing, can the boat be towed and stored easily, how much will it cost and they will eventually reach a compromise which suits them. If they also like tinkering with boats they will lean towards a development class which allows them to try some of their own ideas with rig set-ups, fitting out etc. That is why we have chosen the RL24 as the best boat for us. Then we come back to the argument of handicapping. If no two RL24s are the same, how can you have fair racing? Every RL24 owner has the same chance to win races if they wish to put the time and effort into developing their boat as well as practicing their sailing skills. There are class rules to limit how far you can go. It is my opinion that there should be just one handicap for the RL24. After discussions with many RL24 owners I have formed this opinion for the following reasons. The present system of two handicaps is not an accurate reflection of the performance difference between two almost identical RL24s, one with a swing keel and one with a drop keel. I don't believe that the handicap difference between swing keelers and drop keelers is due to a slot behind the keel. In fact there are a few swing keel RL24s around which will out perform most drop keelers. There are so many other factors that affect performance like rig configuration, weight, shape of keel, crew weight etc. which probably have more effect on performance than the type of keel fitted. In fact if someone wanted to push the rules to the limit, drilling a hole through a drop keel and case and fitting a shaft would instantly convert it to a swing keeler with a big handicap advantage. The keel may not swing very far but the rules don't specify how far it should swing or how big the slot should be. Yachting Victoria have deemed that a swing keel yacht fitted with slot stoppers shall be handicapped the same as a drop keel yacht. Maybe there should be more than two handicaps as some have suggested but this becomes very complicated to administer. Seriously though the RL24 was always meant to be a development class and whether one chooses to set up their boat with a swing keel or drop keel should just be a matter of personal preference, the same as selecting what type of mast or sails, how heavy your boat should be etc. When all is said and done, what other trailer sailer performs like an RL24, can be towed easily, can be cruised fairly comfortably and won't cost you a fortune? I can't think of any. And if you think you have a great idea on how to make a boat sail faster, the RL24 lets you put your ideas into practice within the basic class rules.

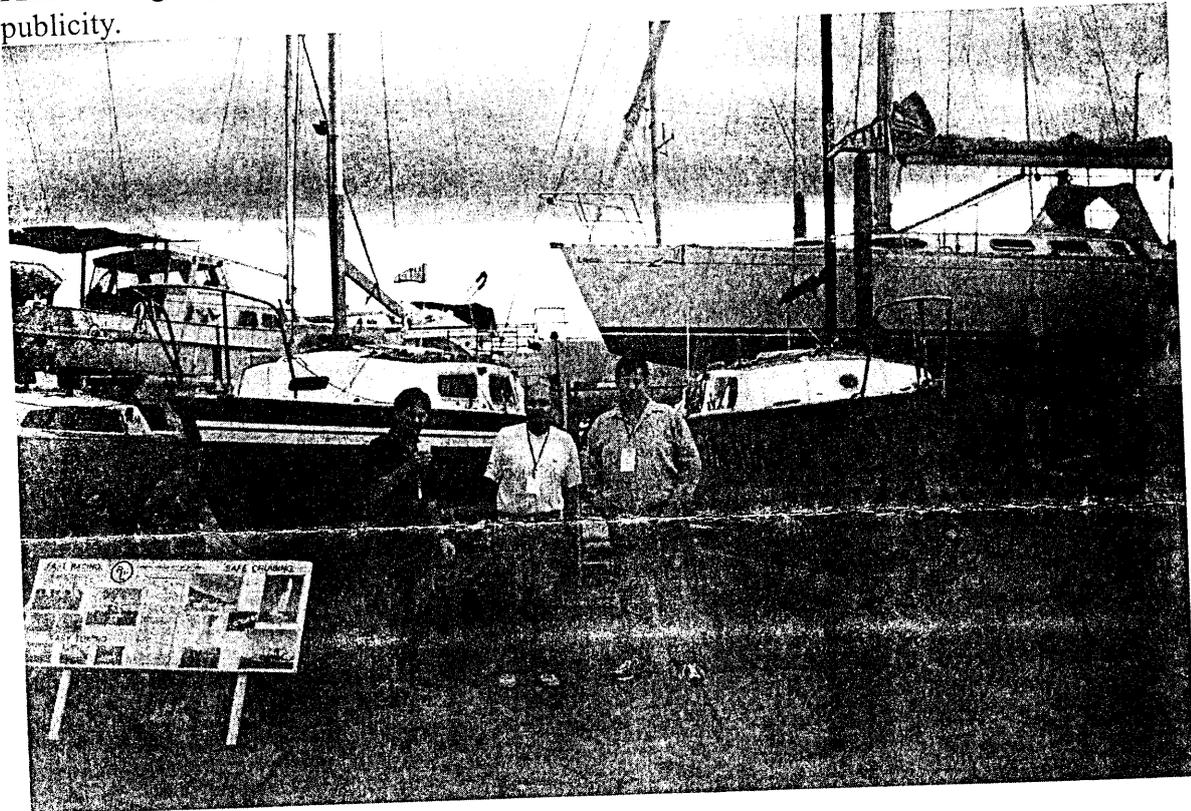
SAIL BOAT SHOW

On Sunday 3rd April, Jeff Germaine and I travelled down to Melbourne to man the RL24 display at Sandringham Yacht Club. Lloyd Graham and Les Browne had done a great job in setting up their RLs and in the few hours that we were there, plenty of interest was shown in the class. Maybe someone will start making the RL24 again some day, its still one of the best and with modern materials and manufacturing techniques it could be even better. I'm sure there is a market out there.

There was an excellent display of trailer sailers, off the beach boats and cats. Most classes were represented and there was also plenty to see in the hall (I had my eye on an inflatable PFD which I have since received for a birthday present). It was a great idea meeting my daughter there.

The day was fairly blustery and there was not much happening on the water, however the 14ft skiffs ventured out for a race. With a line of thunderstorms on the horizon they soon cancelled the start and everyone headed for shore. This proved to be a wise move as not long after the heavens opened. On our return trip to Sale, we were forced to seek the shelter of the Fountain Gate shopping centre to sit out the storm as the Highway had flooded with the torrential rain.

Thanks again to Les and Lloyd for setting up their boats for display, it helps to keep the RL24 class going with such publicity.



Annual Fees

Once again it is time to fork over those annual subscription fees. Without them we could not cover newsletters, postage etc. Speaking of newsletters, please send in your contributions for publication. Anything to do with sailing or things of interest to RL24 owners would be appreciated.

Wanted and For Sale

We have had a few enquiries from people interested in buying RL24s. If you hear of any for sale, please let me know and I will pass on the details. We have also had a request for a second hand swing keel so if anyone is doing a drop keel mod or has one they wish to sell, here is your chance. Also on the wanted list is a stainless steel pulpit.

This Way Up

I must apologise for not mentioning Ian Lane and crew in the last newsletter. They not only won the National Championships in the Swing Keel division, but have been giving the other classes a hiding down Geelong way. Here is a picture of the crew at work. Congratulations, Ian.

