

The Sea and The Snow

The South Indian Ocean Expedition to Heard Island 1964-5

PHILIP TEMPLE

Lodestar  Books



Major W M M Deacock
WARWICK
Leader

Major H W Tilman
SKIPPER
Skipper



Dr G M Budd
GRAHAME
Scientific officer

J R Crick
JOHN
Quartermaster



Dr M C Hay
MAL
Cine-photographer

A J de V Hill
ANTONY
Mate



Dr R Pardoe
RUSS
Medical officer

C K Putt
COLIN
Engineer



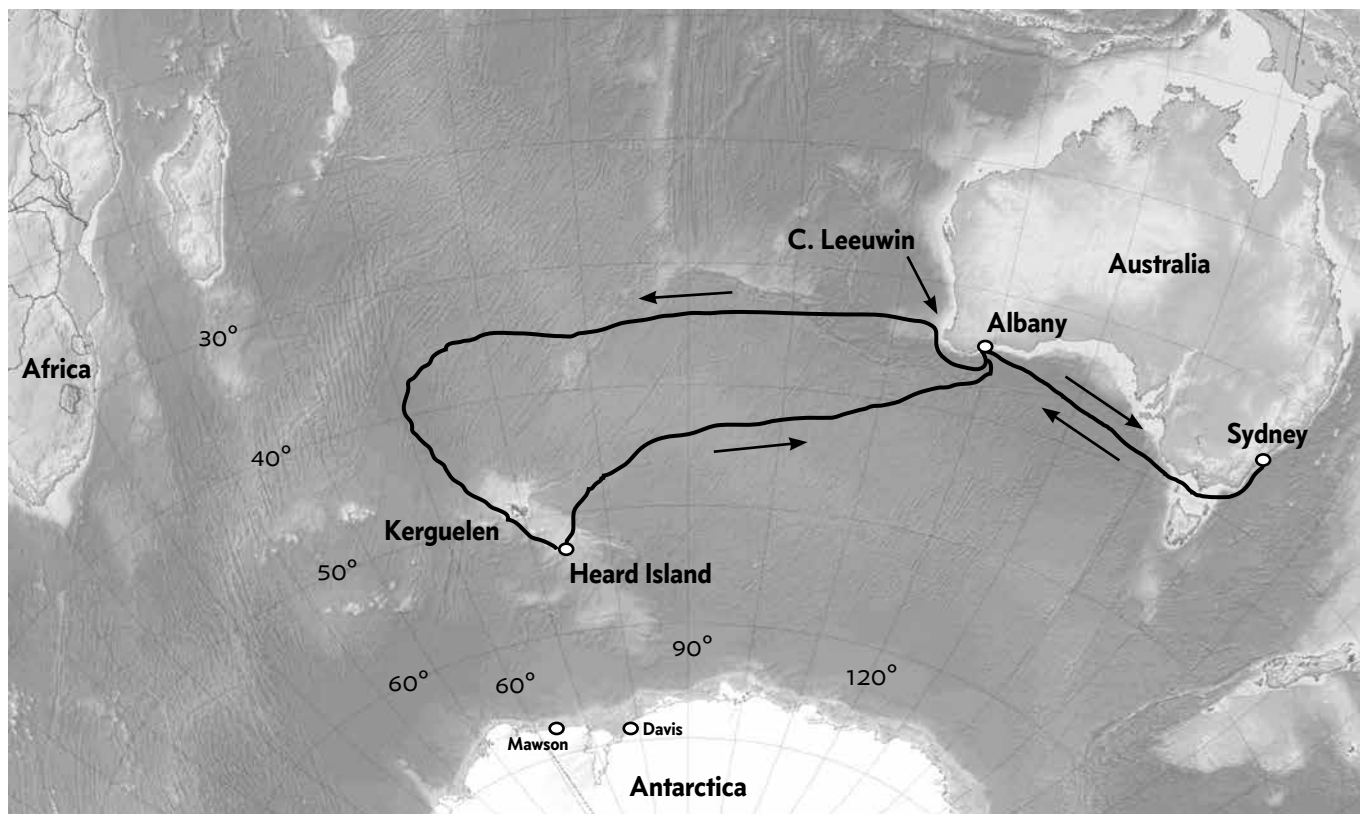
E J Reid
ED
Radio operator

R P Temple
PHIL
Entomologist



Part One: PATANELA





Base map by courtesy of Uwe Dederig

Track of Schooner *Patanela*
5 November 1964 – 14 March 1965

1 Bass Strait and beyond

THE SKIPPER NEVER SPOKE TO EXCESS, and when we were on the early watch that morning his opening gambit was very English: ‘Not very good weather is it?’ A ‘moderately rough sea’ as he told me to write in the log book. We had a fresh southerly dead ahead so we could not hoist the sails and we pitched and bucked in the short seas with the engine at low revs. At times *Patanela* was awkward to steer at south or south by west as the stern lifted and the wheel spun freely. John and I were with the Skipper on the morning watch and we looked into a white, leery dawn with dirty brown muttonbirds circling and disappearing among the waves. But it was dry to start and only at six did the rain beat down and make life cold and miserable.

There were a few haggard and grey crew members at breakfast. We had not yet been at sea for a day, and frequently above the rumble of the diesel I heard the horrid sound of retching over the rail. Warwick was cook and his rushes to the side while doling out food were not conducive to good digestion. Russ looked ghastly. Gaunt, white, eyes staring glassily at the sea, he sat hunched by the rail in his foul weather suit as Jim twirled the wheel with professional ease and lit a cigarette: ‘This is the best cure for seasickness!’ Jim had come for the trip round to Albany, our only port of call before the sub-Antarctic. He proved invaluable in those early days when half of us could not tell a peak halyard from a bobstay. He was tall, redheaded, freckled and weatherbeaten from eleven years at sea in fishing boats off his native Tasmania. And he had served with the Beast of Bass Strait: a legendary skipper who preferred a rope’s end to a reprimand. Jim’s tales of him were hilarious and frequently, if one were steering a few degrees off course, his throaty voice would growl in imitation: ‘Don’t bother to call the next watch.’ Though several would have welcomed missing a watch at that stage, we were all glad to be under way, that the expedition had become a fact and not a project. The apprehensions and worries were still there but now we could come to grips with them. Heard Island seemed lost in time and distance and for those of us who had not sailed before, the biggest challenge was the long voyage in our

← Page 23:
Reefing the mainsail

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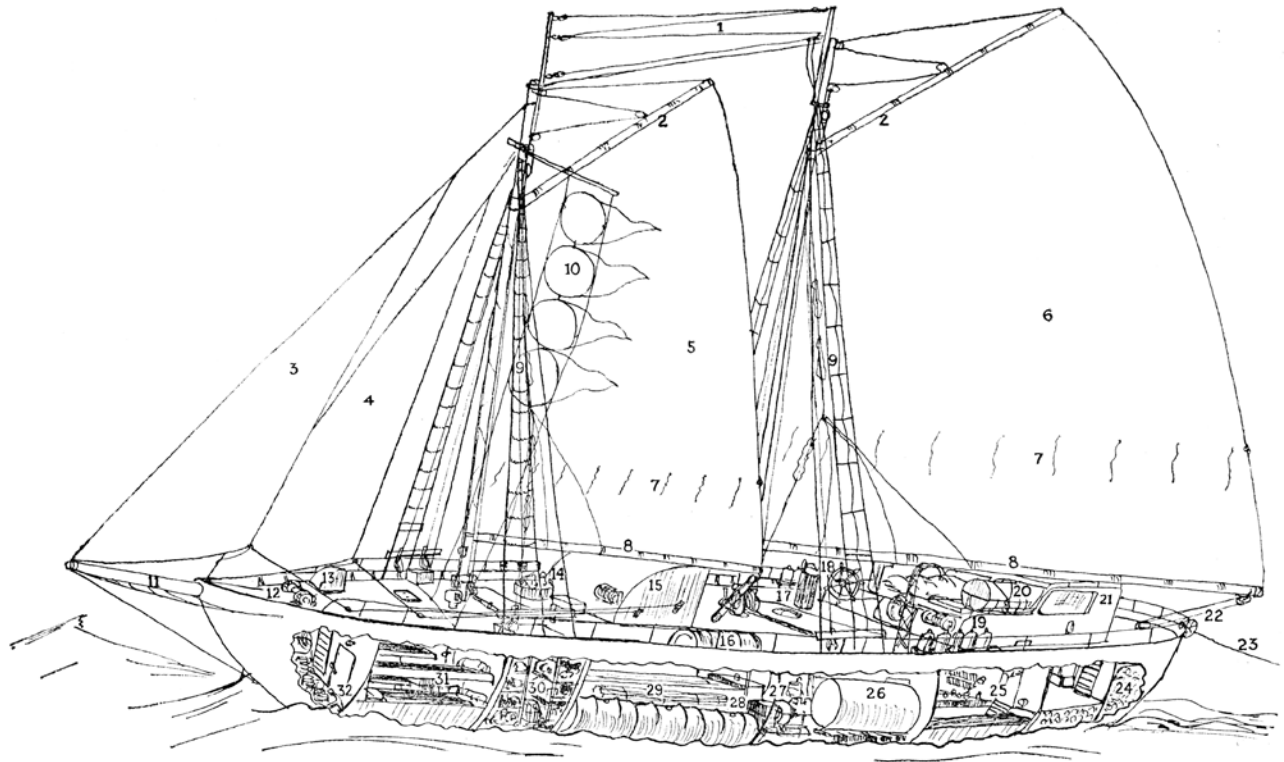
small ship. All our eggs were in its one basket and there could be no miscalculation that would jeopardise its safety.

At Rushcutters Bay she had seemed massive alongside the sleek and fragile yachts but on the open sea *Patanela* shrank to a toy, if a sturdy one. Only sixty-three feet long—it hardly seemed possible that ten men and all their accumulation of gear and food for five months had been jammed and hidden beneath the small decks. But she was beamy with spoon bows and we suspected her draught was more than eight feet six inches when she left in her overloaded state. The main engine tanks were full, the cray tank was chock-a-block with forty-four-gallon drums of diesel, the water tanks were full and every nook and cranny was overflowing with tins and bags of food.

Sleeping room for ten men seemed to have been allowed as an afterthought. The Skipper said that it did not matter where anyone slept since all the bunks were ‘equally bad’. Allocation of berths was easy. Logically, Warwick slept in the galley next to the stove with the Skipper on the port side, handy to the charthouse and sextant. Both the lockers at their heads and the space beneath their bunks were full of food and Warwick adopted strange bedmates in the form of a mountain pack, kitbag and box full of papers which he insisted would stop him falling out when the ship rolled. There was nowhere else to put them anyway. The smokers were in the fo’c’sle, away from the fuel. That meant John and Ed in the lower bunks, port and starboard respectively, me and Jim, later Grahame, in the top bunks. The bottom bunks had lee boards to prevent us from rolling out but, curiously, not the upper ones. Jim and I did not have far to fall, however, since the deck was buried to a depth of three feet in cartons of bottled beer and cigarettes—a glorious cushion. It was appropriate that the fo’c’sle hatch was permanently labelled in blue paint: *Saloon and Bar*.

Amidships was a wide hold that was normally filled with seawater for keeping freshly caught crayfish. We had cleaned it out, knocked away most of the rust and fitted in bunks made of rough timber above the lower layer of diesel drums. There were two long bunks, about ten and a half feet, so Russ, Antony, Albert and Alex (later Col and Mal) had to suffer an uncomfortable overlap and play midnight footsie until improvements could be made later in the voyage. But here was felt the least motion of any part of the ship, and the cray tank always seemed to remain snug and warm.

Colin wrote and told me in New Zealand that *Patanela* had ‘flush decks’. This undoubtedly must be some technical term for, rather than presenting the streamlined



Schooner *Patanela*

Western Tasmania aboriginal word meaning 'Spirit of the Storm'

Built in Hobart, registered in Strahan as a crayfishing boat.

Patanela was re-registered for the expedition as a private yacht with the Cruising Club of Australia, Sydney.

LOA 63ft, beam 16ft, draft 8ft 6in, sail area 2,000 sq ft, engine 165hp Rolls-Royce diesel.

1	Aerials	12	Anchor winch	23	Log
2	Gaffs	13	Fo'c'sle hatch	24	Food stored in bilges
3	Jib	14	Vegetable crates	25	Galley, and bunks of Skipper and Leader
4	Staysail	15	Cray tank hatch	26	Fuel drums, engine room
5	Foresail	16	Water kegs	27	Radio in engine room
6	Mainsail	17	Binnacle	28	Fuel in cray tank
7	Reef points	18	Wheel	29	Bunks on fuel drums
8	Booms	19	Gas bottles	30	Deep freeze
9	Ratlines	20	RFD liferaft	31	Fo'c'sle
10	Insect nets	21	Wheelhouse	32	Forepeak
11	Bowsprit	22	Mainsheet		

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aspect of a submarine that I expected, she was as cluttered on deck as she was below. The basic superstructure (see plan) consisted of a welded deckhouse in keeping with the rest of the ship, an engine-room hatch, a large cowling like a gun turret to cover the cray tank, a deep-freeze hatch and a small cowling to cover the fo'c'sle entrance. But apart from these there were a dozen large cylinders of propane gas for the stove, oxy-acetylene cylinders, a cluster of pipes to be used for a radio aerial, a drum of benzine, three eighty-gallon drums for water, a Beaufort life raft for ten men, two store lockers, two pumps, three winches, three air vents, engine exhaust, two escape hatches, anchor winches, anchors, a davit, two barrels of rum and a large tin of biscuits. Add to this the compass binnacle and main steering wheel for'ard of the deckhouse, the full heavy gear of a gaff-rigged schooner, and some other bits of paraphernalia which took several days to identify, and 'flush decks' became something of a joke.

Despite all our efforts we could not cram in enough fuel to feed the 165hp diesel for the round trip. Although we would refuel at Albany there were at least 4500 miles to cover before we returned there. The engine would have to serve as auxiliary, except when rounding Australia, and our main motive power lay in the seventeen-ounce terylene sails. Though she was eleven years old *Patanela* had never been seriously sailed and had spent most of her life pounding away under engine at high speed in competitive crayfishing. So even her owners could not tell us how she would handle under sail. With his raw crew, and no opportunity for working up, the Skipper was in for an interesting time. Not that this situation was new to him.

Although sixty-six years of age, the Skipper had not begun ocean cruising until 1954. Until then he had made a series of mountain expeditions that will live for ever in alpine history: Mount Kenya in 1931, Nanda Devi in 1934/5, Mount Everest in 1938. In 1950 he was the first to approach Everest from the Nepalese aspect and thus paved the way for the successful ascent in 1953. Added to this was service in both World Wars, the DSO, Military Cross and Bar, and fighting with Albanian partisans in 1944. Later he looked to a fresh challenge and chose to sail to his mountains. Since 1954 he had covered some 100,000 miles in his forty-five-foot cutter *Mischief*; circumnavigated South America and Africa; made four trips to Greenland and the Arctic; and sailed from England to Kerguelen, 300 miles north-west of Heard Island, in 1960. On all his trips he had trouble finding an experienced crew with the time and energy for a long, hard voyage. Raw hands were nothing new.

This time he had the added responsibility of a strange ship, and a steel ship at that, with 'iron things all over the place'. She was stiff and unbending compared to *Mischief* and, for him, there were too many mechanical contrivances on board. Before long the automatic pilot was banished, the echo sounder looked at askance and a suggestion that we motor and sail at the same time treated as sheer sacrilege. Clean, pure sailing was the object and there is no doubt that for unadulterated enjoyment and a comfortable ride the sails had it over the Rolls-Royce every time. Then the jerky unnatural motion and the noise would be gone as the ship, clouded in white terylene, dipped and slipped through the swell to the soft rustle of the sea, with the occasional flap, thump or creak of blocks.

We had little opportunity to sail on our way round Australia although the Skipper would make use of any favourable shift in the headwinds. On the second day out, as we neared Green Cape close to Bass Strait, a sou'wester freshened. The Skipper turned to Albert and said 'Can't we switch the engine off? Don't you want to look at it or something?' There was a twinkle in his eye at the prospect of a brisk sail. Soon we hoisted all plain sail—mainsail, foresail, staysail and jib. But our seamanship was poor and, as we held her bows into the wind while Albert braked the propeller, we swung on to the wrong tack and set off at a fast lick back towards Sydney. The wind was increasing and only by manhandling the staysail and jib were we able to bring her back to a southerly course. Absorbed in these manouevres, we had neglected the log line and our circling had wrapped it firmly around the rudder. To further complicate matters, the peak halyard became detached from the jib and ran to the masthead. While Russ hung over the stern and spent an hour disentangling the log, first Jim and then Antony went aloft until the halyard was retrieved and the jib hoisted.

All this time the wind strengthened, the swell increased and the crests were being whipped from the waves. It was exhilarating, forging ahead. 'B—the exhilaration,' said Antony. 'I'd like to lay back and sunbathe.' Even so he enjoyed his trick at the wheel and it was after noon before he let me take over on the new watch. Taking the wheel for the first time in a strong blow, I felt suddenly alarmed at the feel of a heavy, powerful ship fighting to pursue her own course. Feeling very small and inexperienced, I stood with my back to the midships wheel, eyes moving regularly from compass to the stiff sails and then to the lee scuppers, more and more awash as the sea and wind increased and an overloaded hull rose sluggishly to meet each swell. Spray began



to fly, so that we blessed our rubberised suits, and metal became gritty to the touch from a growing layer of salt.

There was no warning. I looked to port and next, out of the corner of my eye, I saw to starboard a huge wave leaping over the rail. Instinctively I ducked and hugged the binnacle stand as it hit.

There was thick, green water, the sudden silence of immersion, and dimly I saw John dashed to the deck. Behind me the Skipper was thrown so violently against the deckhouse that he broke the wooden cleat for a lifebelt and damaged his ribs. Staggering up with a mouthful of water I was amazed to find we were still on course and that nothing of importance had been washed away.

The danger was increasing every moment and the sails had to be lowered. The minutes seemed to drag until everyone was on deck, and then began the excruciating labour of hauling in against a powerful wind. All our rigging was heavy duty: bulky terylene sails, full weight terylene halyards, heavy sheets and massive stays, designed to cope with the rigours of the Roaring Forties. But there were no mechanical aids for raising or lowering sail and all depended on manpower. Pulling in the main boom was the hardest task of all and three men were needed to haul on the mainsheet. The Skipper brought the ship into the wind to ease the pressure on the mainsail. But this would fluctuate and sometimes the boom swung back violently as we took in slack, once almost pulling John overboard. Finally we had it in, muscles and wrists straining and we lowered and lashed the sail. Russ knelt on the deckhouse and clung to the boom as he worked with the ship's violent rolls and I looked up to see a red stain on the white sail from a badly lacerated hand.

Then we were hove to in a buster and we drifted out into the Tasman Sea waiting for the gale to abate. It was a sharp lesson at an early stage that did us all good. It seemed hard at the time, fresh from the fleshpots and pubs, but we learned about the ship and sailing by having our noses rubbed into it. There was a distinct strain on everyone from the seasickness, the gale and an irregular timetable that demanded one be dragged out of bed at midnight or 4am to stand a four-hour watch, whatever the state of the weather, one's mind or stomach. Hands became blistered from the unaccustomed rub of rough ropes. It took time to become used to the coating of salt on one's face and clothes; the blankets sticky as one tried to sleep for an hour in the exasperating pitch and roll before the next call.

A balmy day in the Bight: the Skipper splicing a rope

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There was little conversation in the galley and Warwick snarled as he fought to produce meals on time, which he did without fail. But a tuna we had caught a day before hung untouched from the rail and the roll call for meals grew smaller and smaller.

The worst time of all was the middle watch, or the ‘bastard watch’ as it came to be known. This was from midnight to four in the morning, the only watch when we could be assured of no light, no dawn or sunset to alleviate the cold, grim hours of black night at sea.

Dressing for bad weather is quite a job and I’m not looking forward to it again. Especially on a night watch. I may have grabbed an iota of sleep, jerking and tossing in the bunk but wake easily at the watch’s call—generally Russ. The light flicks on in the darkness, a friendly, dim glow and the whirring fan becomes more evident again among the swaying clothes and kitbags. Below, it’s dry and warm and quiet save for the engine and the only sign that the weather might be bad is from the movement.

Rolling out of the bunk like a circus tumbler, I take a firm grasp of something and try to keep steady on top of the beer cartons while I pull my trousers on. This is time-consuming with all the rolling and pitching and by the time I stagger into the forepeak, clipping my head on the iron, muscles are starting to ache again from the unaccustomed effort of trying to maintain balance. Then come the seaboots, easy over woollen socks, and the foul-weather suit, wet and sticky from the previous watch. For the trousers I lean back on the warps and yank them over the boots, then stand with head and shoulders into the cowling to pull on the parka. Now almost ready.

But make sure that all the lacings are done up well and, if there’s any doubt, clip on the safety belt with its rope and karabiner though the latter is hardly big enough to clip on anything larger than a thin line. Cigarettes, lighter, knife, handkerchief and we’re right.

Climbing up the ladder is easy enough but then one must firmly unlatch and swing open the hatch. Then the night is apparent. The spray and seas dash across the deck, the wind tugs at the foresail and all that one can see is the white of breaking waves, a dim rigmarole of rigging and the grotto-like

red and green of navigation lights. Hauling oneself into the opening, an arm should be snaked out to find a grip, then a knee brought up to the step. When the roll is right the other leg can be swung cleanly through and a foot placed on the deck. A lift, a twist and one is standing upright, knees bent, hanging on to the hatch as the weather beats into one's face. Close the hatch, turn and stagger down towards the wheel, moving carefully from stay to halyard to rope to winch to drum, singeing one's fingers on the engine exhaust or rubbing grease from the wires. —*From my diary.*

By the afternoon of 10 November we had covered 460 miles, negotiated the bad corner of Australia at Gabo Island and reached the narrows of Bass Strait at Wilson Promontory. We pulled into Sealer's Cove on its eastern shore and spent our only night at anchor before Kerguelen, seven weeks later. There were spare drums of diesel on deck. Albert pumped this into the tanks and we could motor through to Albany without any more refuelling. A few repairs were made in the rigging and we had a welcome night's rest after the first tiring days of a strange voyage. The waters of the cove were calm and the shores rocky; worn slabs and huge boulders of granite with the inevitable gum trees, dead stumps sticking out like white telegraph poles from the dark bush. The beach at the base of the cove was a lovely sweep of deserted sand but we had neither the time nor the energy to go ashore.

We left early the next morning and two days later were well off the South Australian coast at the beginning of the long stretch across the Great Australian Bight. The weather became settled and warm and we shifted into a regular routine. People began to wash, beginning with Warwick and he had his bath in style. Jamming his tall, 14-stone bulk into a plastic baby's bath, he suspended a canvas shower bucket from a stay. But most of us made do with a rough wash and a final dowsing from a galvanised bucket which served the all-purpose job of washing us, clothes, dishes, vegetables (when we had them) and defrosting bloody bags of meat from the freezer. There were no toilet facilities of any kind on board so that we soon learned to brace ourselves securely against the stout iron rail that ran round the bulwarks.

From Sydney to Albany we had three watches made up of Antony and Russ, Jim and Alex, while the Skipper stood with the two most inexperienced sailors, John and me. We stood the regular watch times: first watch from 2000–2400, middle from

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0000–0400, morning watch until 0800, forenoon until 1200, afternoon watch until 1600 and then first and last dog watches from 1600–1800 and until 2000.

Thus we usually had four hours on and eight off but every third ‘bad’ day we had to stand twelve out of twenty-four hours: the middle, afternoon and first watches. Warwick had his time fully occupied as cook and served up meals dead on time: breakfast at 0730, lunch at 1230 and dinner at 1930. We also had morning and afternoon tea and one of the Skipper’s chief impressions of the expedition was that he had never been on any small ship with such an inordinate amount of food. In the freezer we had a whole Aberdeen Angus which was donated to us after we had already bought a huge packet of meat nicknamed Granny. Most of the contents of one rum barrel spilled throughout the freezer. It did not destroy the flavour of our meals but we wondered if we would eventually tire of rum(p) steak.

Albert did not stand watch because of his responsibilities with the engine and neither did Ed as radio operator. The engine room door had *Sauna* written on it and this succinctly described its steam-heat qualities. No-one save Albert went anywhere near its cacophony of noise and 100-degree heat unless it was absolutely necessary. But Ed had his radio there and though he was not seasick at the start of the voyage, the engine room finally turned him up. This plus some indefinable virus complaint kept him out of sorts on and off throughout the whole voyage, and he won the booby prize for most time spent bashing the bunk.

But above all of us Ed took the prize for good humour, kept the party in stitches and was a sure cure for bad temper. His experience in the Royal Australian Navy clung to him with outrageous nautical tales, bell-bottomed overalls and a magnificent beard which unkind members said was grown in an effort to make up for his receding hairline. We all learned to take leg pulls and derision but none better than Ed. When Antony lambasted him with: ‘Go on Reid. Admit it. You’re just a b— hypochondriac. What’s wrong with you today?’ Ed with deadpan heroics replied: ‘Nothing really. My leg’s broken but it only hurts when I laugh.’

The engine pounded away, the sails remained furled for almost the remainder of the trip to Albany and we endured ‘halcyon days’ as Warwick described them. Lunch on deck became an established practice, under a fierce sun that melted the tarry compound and burnt our feet. On the engine room hatch Warwick laid out bowls of cold baked beans, potato salad, ham, paté de fois gras, Gentleman’s Relish, biscuits, butter

and cheese, marmite, jam, bread and cake, so that it began to look like a pleasure cruise and we could afford to be fastidious in our tastes and appetites. Warwick was always careful, however, that no food was wasted and rations were conserved against the rainy day we might encounter 'down south'. This led to increasingly thick soup. Any leftovers, whether porridge, unchewed bones or curry, were tossed in the soup pot as stock. The Skipper's favourite dish was curry and he must have been pleased with the hot, turgid mixture which the soup finally became. Ed capitalised on this when it was his turn to cook on Warwick's regular Sunday off. He served us soup, entrée and main course but we did not realise it was all the same stew until we asked for pudding.

How well off we were for food and equipment! I took a book with me by a Spaniard who had been with Cortés called *The Conquest of New Spain*. It told graphically of the first discovery of Mexico in the early 16th century, how they made their way in leaking barks, sometimes smaller than *Patanela*, and subsisted on an unappetising diet of salt pork and cassava bread. When their ships were wrecked they built new ones and a small band went into savage, unknown country with muskets and horses as their only source of strength when fighting the Aztecs. When I thought of our fancy canned food, engine and radio we seemed to have descended a long way in self-sufficiency.

On 14 November we ran a sweepstake, with Albany beer money as the prize, to see who could make the closest guess of the time we would pass the first 1000-mile mark. As 'entertainments officer' I ran this with great gusto and had to bear the brunt of acrimonious remarks for weeks afterward when I won it myself. At that stage we were about 130 miles south of Investigator Strait and the approaches to Adelaide. On that day, and the days either side, we covered 175 miles and with such good going we expected to reach Albany within a week. The Skipper took the smallest opportunity to raise sail. The slightest favourable wind change and he would have us up on deck, even if it meant that the sails would be up only for an hour or two.

Although some of us felt that this was unreasonable perversity, and a nuisance to be dragged away from a book or pulled from one's bunk, it had the effect of making us work together and gave us practice in time for the rougher days ahead. Though ten of us lived on a small schooner it was not often that we were all together. I wrote in my diary after ten days that we had not shaken down into a very convivial crew and that the discussions we expected to be such a feature of the trip had not materialised. But it had taken time to adjust to a new way of life and the steady strain of keeping watch

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and catching up on sleep did not contribute towards the formation of a club. 'In some ways this is good since it's going to be longer before we're all sick of each other.' Late one morning, Jim ran down the deck shouting 'All hands and the cook on deck!' as if the ship were on fire and within a couple of minutes there were a number of startled, bleary-eyed men with bare feet and flapping shirts fumbling at ropes as the Skipper gave the order to raise sail. With a mischievous glint in his eye and a slight smile he took the wheel and muttered inaudible imprecations as the main peak was hoisted too soon and a headsail sheet ran out with a rush. But eventually we had the sails up and set, the Skipper brought *Patanela* back on course, and we went back to our sleepy hollows all the better for the exercise and work as a team. An hour or so later the sails were furled again.

This jack-in-a-box technique of raising sail gave Warwick plenty of opportunity for filming. One of the main financial responsibilities of the expedition was to provide a colour movie and we had 10,000 feet of film to dispose of during four months. Since filming was largely restricted to our ship and a small, glaciated island it was necessary to film everything that happened, not only to make a complete story, but to use up all the film. So we could not eat, drink, sleep or even relieve ourselves without the danger of finding a whirring camera pointed at us. Since Warwick was a sun worshipper, the situation was even more alarming. I wondered what people's reaction would be, when watching the finished product, if they could also see the stark-naked cameraman.

It could not be denied that the sturdy Rolls-Royce pushed us steadily and inexorably towards Albany whereas we would have been a month of Sundays if we had tried to sail against the prevailing westerlies. But it was an uncomfortable, noisy ride. Sailing on a fixed tack, one could anticipate accurately the movement of the ship and adjust one's sitting or standing position accordingly. The engine took us in a straight line, regardless of wind and waves, and the unpredictable roll, pitch or wallow was exasperating in the extreme. I almost screamed aloud in fury during my attempts to sleep and the Skipper slid off the bench in the galley so often that Albert placed a piece of sandpaper beneath him.

John took the ship's wild movements as a challenge and on night watches he disappeared towards the bows to keep his lookout. Vaguely in the darkness I saw him swaying backwards and forwards, from side to side, as he endeavoured to keep his balance without hanging on to supports. John was dark, thickset with heavy, sudden

*Malcolm (left) and
Russ on bunks in
the cray tank*



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movements and 'quite a sight when he's all dressed up in a black shearer's singlet belted into his grey worsted climbing trousers and an Australian slouch hat turned down like a bell'. He seemed to come from a long way past the black stump. He heightened this impression with an astonishing repertoire of bush ballads sung in a mellifluous baritone, and later instituted a reading of the play *Ned Kelly* to resound in the leading role.

John was also the baby of the expedition at twenty-two and, much to his chagrin, had been labelled an 'apprentice expeditioner'. With Antony he enjoyed the vivid, once-in-a-lifetime experience of a first expedition. To the rest of us, reaching its ultimate pitch in the Skipper, the basic impressions and joys of embarking on an arduous, unusual enterprise had been dulled by familiarity. But John could indulge his senses to the full in a new, exciting situation apart from the round of codes and norms of everyday life. One of the cardinal points of an expedition is that sooner or later one is reduced to the position where only basic values remain. Under conditions of stress and difficulty a man's weaknesses are pitched against his resourcefulness and the interaction of the expedition members brings out and, if successful, strengthens in each one the fundamental tenets of a strong social group; among them tolerance, service to and sympathetic reliance on others. On a first expedition the experiences which show this are never more vivid, painful and memorable.

Though we had been at sea only a fortnight we were all looking forward to a break at Albany. So it was a happy moment at lunchtime on 19 November when Jim swarmed up the foreward ratlines and shouted 'Land ho!'. For a while only he could see it but then we dimly made out a distant headland, sometimes lost to the eye in the horizon haze or when we dipped in the swell. This solidified into Mount Manypeaks, a few miles east of King George Sound, and slowly other blobs rose out of the sea. Shipping increased and by late afternoon we had a view of uninterrupted coastline. Warwick had sent off a cable earlier informing Colin and Grahame in Sydney and Mal in Perth that our ETA was the 19th and they should come and join us. We were determined to meet our deadline but for a while it seemed doubtful that we would find our way into Albany by nightfall.

It was a confusing coastline with hills, bays, peaks and islands merging into one so that we could not define the entrance to King George Sound, which led down to Princess Royal Harbour. Everyone proffered advice to the Skipper as to where we

were. But he stood patiently by the after wheel surveying the sea with sharp eyes beneath bushy, jutting brows, opening and stretching his mouth or forming a ring with his lips which was his habit when musing on a problem. Finally the entrance was positively identified and, as we motored in at a record nine knots, Albert and I leaned on the deckhouse and joined each other in a couple of convivial beers. At the fifty-fathom mark off the coast we caught tuna from our trolling line and there was fresh fried fish for tea.

We came up to Breaksea Island where the lighthouse did not respond to our signals, and hauled in the logline which read 1835 nautical miles. So the first lap was over. In my mind I had divided the voyage into distinct sections: Sydney–Albany, Albany–Kerguelen, Kerguelen–Heard, Heard–Albany and then back to Sydney. Now the first was over and we had proved not only to ourselves, but to the many doubters back in Sydney, that we had a sound ship beneath us and, under the direction of our Skipper, could point it and take it in the right direction. Even so, the trip across the Bight was only a working-up and there were still a few kinks in the ship, and many more in the crew, to be ironed out before we could be entirely confident in ourselves. We had not been tested under hard sailing conditions or under difficulties in isolation. Until Albany we had been either within sight of land or near a regular shipping lane should anything go wrong. As Colin later remarked, it was only on the round Australia run that our Beaufort rubber life raft was of much use to us. The real test was to come when we ventured deep into the Indian Ocean, far from ships and land, when the success and safety of the expedition depended entirely on the performance and our handling of *Patanela*. Slowly it became clear how much we relied on and put our faith in the Skipper.

In the sound the ocean swell was left behind and we cruised effortlessly towards the town. At first we could see nothing, then a square-looking block resolved itself into a grain silo above the harbour. To port the whaling station belched smoke, while queer patches of limestone and white beach gashed the dowdy and dusty hills. The sound provided a glorious anchorage, with attractive islands and inlets, and one could well believe Captain Vancouver's statement when he said in 1791 that all the navies of the world could safely ride there at anchor. There were no other ships about, no cars on the distant road, but we had a fine escort in a school of porpoises cavorting round the hull. Blue-black above and pale green on the belly these graceful creatures always

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impressed us with their speed, grace and sheer enjoyment of swimming and jumping. They must have thought *Patanela* a jaundiced, unresponsive boor with her yellow hull and undeviating course. But they kept us company for a while and we leaned over the bowsprit to watch them. Until Warwick appeared with the movie camera, when they promptly disappeared.

We now had to make our first berthing. Princess Royal Harbour has an entrance channel dredged to thirty-three feet and we curved down this guided by buoys adorned with shags drying their wings. There was no indication where we should berth so, for ease of manoeuvre, we chose the vast and empty overseas wharf. We swung round and tied up with little difficulty but felt lost with our masts topping the empty roadway by only ten feet or so. After we stretched our legs the harbourmaster arrived and told us we had a berth at the Town Wharf.

We cast off and moved across in a northerly wind that persistently pushed our bows away from the new berth. There was half an hour of jockeying, cursing and unhelpful suggestions from the crew and bystanders before the Skipper put her alongside. Colin stood on the wharf, incongruous in heavy mountain boots and shirt which he had worn to save excess baggage costs on the 'plane from Sydney; Grahame looked worried and Mal in a shiny grey suit greeted us exuberantly and finally jumped on board to vigorously shake the Skipper's hand.

The expedition complement was together at last. Alex was glad to leave the seasickness behind for his farm in New South Wales; Albert's annual holiday was at an end and Jim was already casting covetous eyes on the whale chasers moored at the end of the wharf.

Soon we would cast off for the wide blue yonder. In the meantime there was work to do.