

September 2022



SisterShip

women on the water

Ali Schulte:

Bumfuzzle blog set to
circumnavigate again!

Yoga poses

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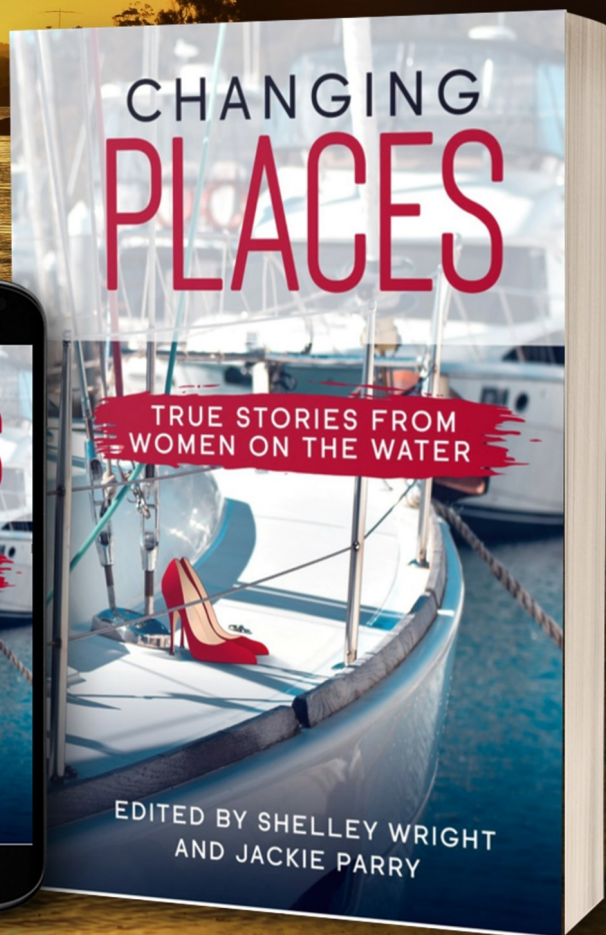
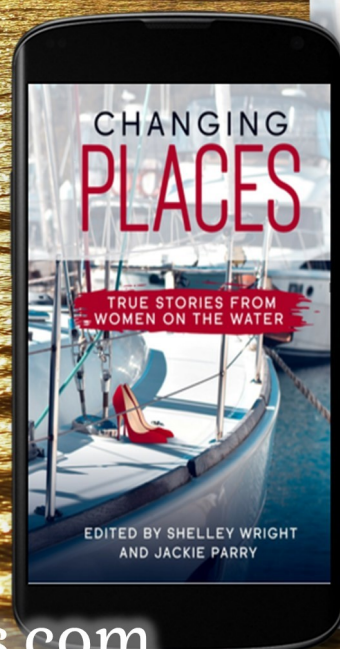
An interview with Irenka Wood

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The bowsprit

From the editor



Passion and loss...

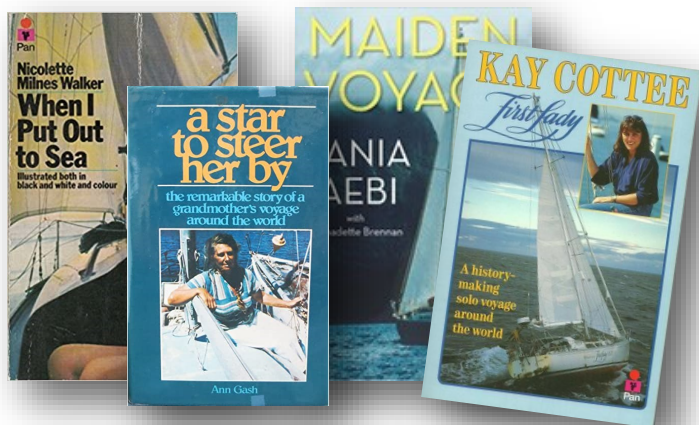
I admit I'm obsessed with the ocean. I'm also an avid reader. The collision of these passions naturally results in shelves piled with books about watery pursuits. It'll come as no surprise to *SisterShip Magazine* readers that the majority of these books are written by women. I love reading what women write; I love supporting women authors.

So a natural progression is our 'Books on the Water By Women' segment. We want the world to know about women who write while on boats, women who write about boats, women who write about the ocean – you get the picture! Within this section we promote women authors and share book reviews. This month we also introduce 'On the Shelf', a segment where I'll be sharing some of the treasures from my bookshelves. Some are

decades old and out of print, although you might find a copy in a library or a pre-loved version for sale somewhere. I hope you'll discover some gems to add to your collections.

Earlier this year I wrote on the *SisterShip Magazine* Facebook page for International Women's Day about courageous women on the water. Over the last few years I've had the privilege of meeting Jessica Watson, Jeanne Socrates, Lin Pardey, and of course Lisa Blair. All incredibly brave, awe-inspiring sailing women. However on this occasion I wrote of another sailing woman, not as well-known certainly, but who embodied not only enormous courage but also great humour - Jo Birch from the YouTube channel [Sailing Double Trouble](#).

Last month Jo passed over the rainbow



bridge after a two-year battle with cancer.

Jo was a fierce campaigner for our marine environment. I first met her online when we were both lobbying a resort on the Great Barrier Reef coast to ditch the use of plastic straws in their bar.

Jo's love of the marine environment is evident in the videos she and husband Rob filmed while sailing their catamaran, *Double Trouble*, around parts of the South Pacific, and if you haven't watched their YouTube channel yet I encourage you to do so, you are in for a treat!

Jo was also an incredibly kind person, as I'm sure anyone who knew her will be quick to agree. When I faced a serious health issue earlier this year, Jo was one of the first to reach out and offer her support, checking on me regularly throughout my recovery. Her words of wisdom will remain with me always.

Rob said that Jo's last wish was for everyone to celebrate the life of a loyal friend, passionate eco warrior, and inquisitive traveller of the world and its experiences.

The world is a better place for Jo having been in it, and that's a pretty good legacy. She will be greatly missed. We dedicate this issue to Jo.

Wherever you are on this blue planet, stay safe and, as always, look for the dolphin...

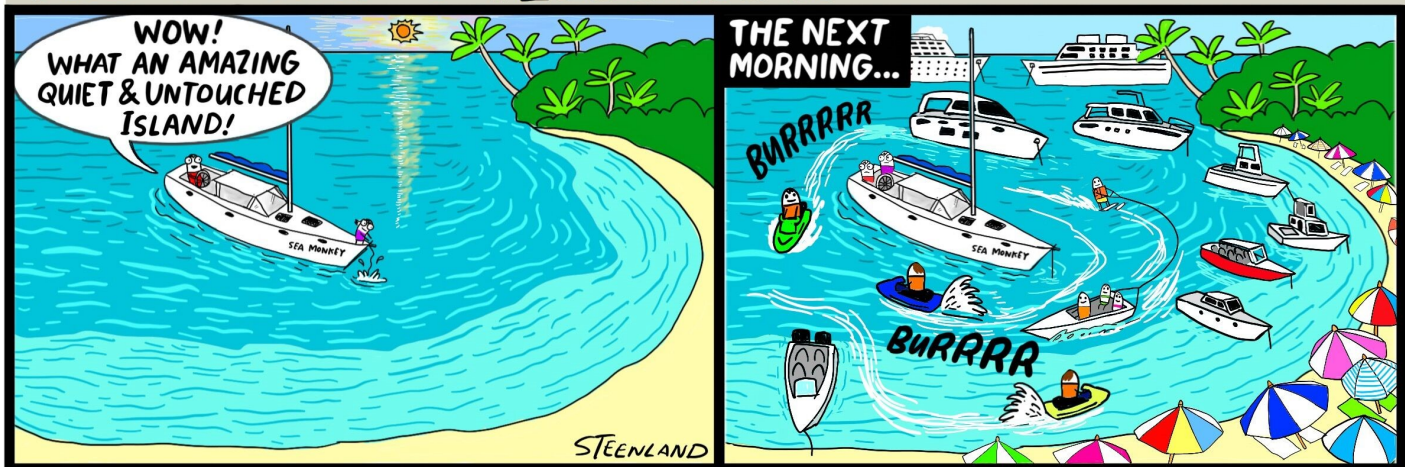


Shelley Wright

**BELOW: Jo Birch aboard *Double Trouble*
(Photo courtesy of Rob Birch).**



THE COCONUT TELEGRAPH



SisterShip Magazine cruises along with an international flavour.

Our contributors hail from all around the globe. We encourage writers to maintain their voice and therefore their local spelling.

Measurements and navigation aids (IALA A and IALA B)* are different too. We want to keep you on board with our ethos of a less regimented style, and a more international spirit!

*The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA, previously known as International Association of Lighthouses) is an Inter Governmental Organisation founded in 1957 to collect and provide nautical expertise and advice.

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Ali Schulte:

Bumfuzzle blog set to circumnavigate again

By Erin Carey

Many of you may recognize the name [Bumfuzzle](#), after all, it's the name of the longest running sailing blog of all time – 18 years non-stop. The blog is a well-documented account of the Schulte family's adventures. Ali and her husband complement each other perfectly on every one of their crazy adventures, from deciding, almost on a whim, to sail around the world on a 35-foot catamaran, to living and traveling in a 1958 VW bus for two years, where Ali ultimately fell pregnant and drove to Mexico to have

their first baby. From there, the new family purchased a 43-foot pilothouse monohull to raise their toddler and newborn baby for the next four years, sailing the Sea of Cortez and Pacific mainland Mexico. Over the past five years, the family has lived aboard a 42-foot trawler cruising throughout the Caribbean.

Ali and her husband, Patrick, embarked on their first circumnavigation in 2003. They had zero sailing experience and even less world travel savvy. Yet four years later they crossed the finish line returning to the same mooring they left from in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. They have been digital nomads ever since,

living in a variety of boats, buses, and vintage motorhomes in different parts of the world. They have sailed 43,000 nautical miles, and just recently decided to circumnavigate the globe again.

What made you and Patrick decide to sail around the world for the first time back in 2003?

I was an administrative assistant to the CFO of a law firm at the Willis Tower in downtown Chicago. Pat and I were both able to walk ten minutes to our jobs. It was both exciting and stressful when we said we were going to actually do this “Sail Around the World” thing. I began selling stuff on Craigslist and eBay to start downsizing. I was running home during my lunch hour to take photos, or meet with someone, or go to the post office to mail stuff off. We sold everything – wedding gifts from just a few years earlier, work clothes, books... I actually quit my job four months early just to unload our belongings and get our condo on the market. Seems silly in retrospect, as we would

have made more money just donating everything and continuing to work four more months.

Back in 2003, there weren't all the sailing blogs and YouTube channels showing what we were in for. All we had were a few books about ocean crossings, and provisioning the boat, but nothing that could really prepare you for what was to come. In all honesty, I didn't really have any worries about moving onto a catamaran and sailing off. I think in today's world, specifically because of all the information available, I would over-research and be extremely anxious planning such a mammoth undertaking for the first time.

You've owned three more boats since your circumnavigation. Can you tell me about each boat and what led you to live on three quite different boats?

In November 2002, at the age of 28, we decided we were going to sail around the world. In April 2003, we had a trip planned for Easter weekend to visit our families in Minnesota, and after months of doing



research, planned a dinner out with everyone to make our announcement – which I’m sure they thought would be a baby announcement as we had now been married six years.

Their reaction was somewhat excited, but they worried they would lose all contact with us. That is why we started our blog, so that they could read about our stories sailing around the world.

In July we met with a broker in Fort Lauderdale to look at boats. As I had never been on a sailboat of any kind, I wore a little below knee length jean skirt. Perfect for climbing over lifelines! Ugh, I looked ridiculous, and I’m sure the boat broker was thinking he wouldn’t be selling a boat that day. We sweatily walked through 12 boats in one day, had lunch to talk things over by ourselves, then made an offer on the newest, cleanest, boat we saw that day. It was a 2002 35-foot Wildcat catamaran that had just arrived from sailing across the Atlantic from South Africa where it was built. We went from a downtown Chicago condo to a

floating condo in a few months’ time.

Our second boat was a 1982 43-foot Spindrift Pilothouse monohull with two cabins and two heads for our growing family. We purchased this boat sight-unseen from Craigslist six months after we had our first baby. It was the perfect family boat with a good reputation, lovely interior woodwork, a beat-up top deck (large enough to let our children ride their Little Tikes Cozy Coupe), and a spiral staircase—instead of the normal companionway ladder—which is what had us looking at this boat for our newborn/toddlers. It was a seaworthy, yet inexpensive, boat – perfect for cruising Mexico.

The next boat was a 1986 42-foot Grand Banks trawler. The stern cabin was perfect for our then 7- and 6-year-old kids, with a full bed on one side, and a twin on the other. Solar, watermaker, oven, large dinghy and motor, made it a great home for touring the Bahamas and the Caribbean. We knew before we bought it that our plans were just the Caribbean, and that in that small area we



really had no need for sails.

Now our newest boat, a 2015 Nautitech 40 Open, with four cabins and two heads is what is needed for our plans to circumnavigate next year with our 13- and 11-year-old. This boat swap, from a trawler to a catamaran, happened almost overnight, as my husband and I realized our children are growing up quick, and that we are getting older just as quickly. We chose the catamaran because we really feel it's the best platform for crossing the big oceans.

Looking back, what are some challenges that you would advise others about in terms of boat life? Any tips for them?

I would tell them to go all in and have fun. This goes for boats, motorhomes, a move to a new country. It seems a lot of people do a ton of preparation for the trip, researching the best this, and the best that. But after setting off, they feel lost, or disappointed that it wasn't what they expected. Most try to recreate what they had just left behind in their

home life, but this lifestyle is very different, and you shouldn't expect it to be the same.

When we first arrived in Florida to our awaiting boat, I was out of my comfort zone. Sure, I cleaned out the cabinets, and organized every locker. But I didn't have my old routine of coffee and the news in the morning, walking to work every day, coming home, making dinner, and watching Survivor on Wednesday night. That first week in Florida on our new-to-us boat, we bought a small portable television. I needed to be weaned from my old life. Since then, on every boat that we've purchased, the televisions are the first thing to go in the trash bin. Our trawler somehow had three televisions on it. Three! It takes a little while to realize that this new life (and the views) is better than that old hamster wheel routine and television escapism. Give yourself that time.

Can you describe one of your favorite memories and one of your least favorite memories of your liveaboard journey?



Favorite: Nearly seven months pregnant going under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco California, with my husband and 17-month-old toddler. We were headed to Mexico to have baby #2 in Puerto Vallarta on our own sailboat. Such an exciting time for us. It makes me smile to think about it.

Least: Maybe not least favorite, but more like most *challenging time*, that goes with my favorite from above. We grasped I was too late in my pregnancy, and with hurricane season starting up, we wouldn't be able to finish the trip as a family all the way to Mexico. Pat and I made the decision that Owest (now 18-months) and I (over seven months pregnant) would have to fly to Puerto Vallarta from San Diego, while Pat would single-hand the boat down Baja and across to mainland Mexico.

I moved into our sight-unseen condo in Puerto Vallarta, very pregnant, and with an active toddler, during Mexico's hot and humid summer. Pat made it down with a few bumps along the way – torn mainsail, and the prop



shaft no longer connected to the engine. This at least made us realize that we had made the right decision for our Plan B. Eleven days, and we were back together, and our baby boy arrived six weeks later.

What does community look like to you and how has that changed in the past two decades?

When we lived in Chicago, it was mainly work, rest, repeat – or at least it felt like that. We had a few friends we hung out with, but they were also work friends. We traveled back to our families and friends in Minnesota frequently for the three-day holiday weekends, weddings, and baby arrivals.

Today, we still do that, but have a much larger community of friends living the same freedom-filled lifestyle as us. We can talk for hours about which islands we are headed to next, how to fix a broken watermaker, or where to get the best price for fruit. Our attitudes and interests are the same, whereas our old community wouldn't be able to

participate in those conversations. Our goals and interests are too far removed from theirs.

Now and then I like the mix of both communities, though. When I go back home and visit my family, I slide right back into being a land-based Minnesotan. I'll even whip up a hotdish!

How has community played a role in your travels?

We've shared our stories of our travels since we took off in 2003 on our blog. This is my favorite community. The support they give us, the encouragement, the praise over a photo, the excitement of our children's births, birthdays, achievements, and challenges is truly overwhelming at times. This diverse community of people with various cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, experiences, and interests, is a community of people who are different, yet all gathered in the same place.

One time we were traveling across the US in our motorhome. We told our kids that a



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friend was going to meet us at the campground that day with their kids. Our daughter, who was maybe five at the time looked at us and asked, “How do we have friends everywhere we go?” That sort of sums up the traveling community.

Patrick recently announced that your family has decided to circumnavigate again. What led you to that decision?

We had always talked with each other about wanting to give the kids this epic adventure. It seems we all set timelines in our minds, and we had been discussing doing it at our 10-year take-off anniversary, but the timing wasn't right (kids would have been three and two). Now, just weeks ago, we realized that our 20-year take-off anniversary was next year! Within days we found ourselves selling the Grand Banks trawler that has been our home for the past five years, and making an offer on a catamaran. You have to be careful, or life passes you by.

Will you take a different route on this lap around the globe? Do you think you will

do it in a similar amount of time as last time?

There are so many places to see in the world that we'd like to try not to follow the same path. Of course, there will certainly be overlap, as there will always be favorites that we can't wait to show the kids. In addition to our own favorites, our hope is that our kids have their own input about what they'd like to see and do. Overall, I suspect it will be quite a bit different this time around.

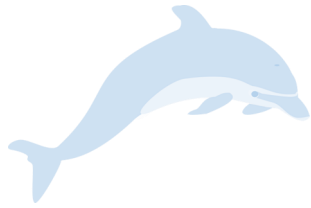
How do you guys support yourselves to be able to continue to live this incredible lifestyle?

My husband has always made a living as a stock and commodities trader. A few years ago, in addition to his trading, we started a business, [Wanderer Financial](#). He teaches others how to trade and invest and gears it towards others searching for a freedom to their lives similar to what we enjoy. While he and his business partner handle the markets, I handle all of the behind the scenes, back-office things that need doing.



Do you see yourselves ever living a 'conventional' lifestyle?

Conventional... nah, but I do see slowing down... maybe. I don't see myself in a traditional suburban family neighborhood like I had when I was growing up. My dream lifestyle, eventually, would be an old, fixer-upper hacienda in Mexico. A few different small homes on the property for our kids to come back to and call their own. A place where fellow travelers/cruisers/overlanders could come visit. And a dog or two.



Erin Carey lives aboard her Moody 47 with her husband and three sons. After two glorious years in the Caribbean, the family crossed the Atlantic Ocean and are currently sailing the Mediterranean. Erin is the founder of Roam Generation, a PR agency for travel, leisure and luxury brands. *Roam Generation* is the only PR agency in the world run from a yacht!

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Carter McDowell is a broken man. Guilt and grief haunt him as he struggles to keep the only thing he has left, his sailboat *Wind Chaser*.

Kat Deano, a feisty investigative reporter, is in the Bahamas to probe the mysterious disappearance of her twin brother.

Thrown together when Carter fishes Kat from the sea at night far from land, their lives become increasingly entangled as they face the forces of nature and threats from unexpected sources. Their uncharted voyage propels them from the office of the Bahamian Prime Minister to the remote island of Andros as they stumble onto a horrific plot that threatens both the U.S. and the Bahamas.

Uncharted sets a turbulent period in the Bahamas' history as the backdrop for a present-day catastrophe. Drawn on the author's extensive experience cruising this region, this riveting suspense will captivate both seasoned and armchair sailors.



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“The bad news? I wasn’t able to make it to the Bahamas last weekend. The good news? I downloaded *Uncharted* instead!”

Amazon reader review September 2021

“Fast paced action set in the exotic Bahamas with memorable characters and intrigue. *Uncharted* is a must read for sailors and lovers of suspense alike”

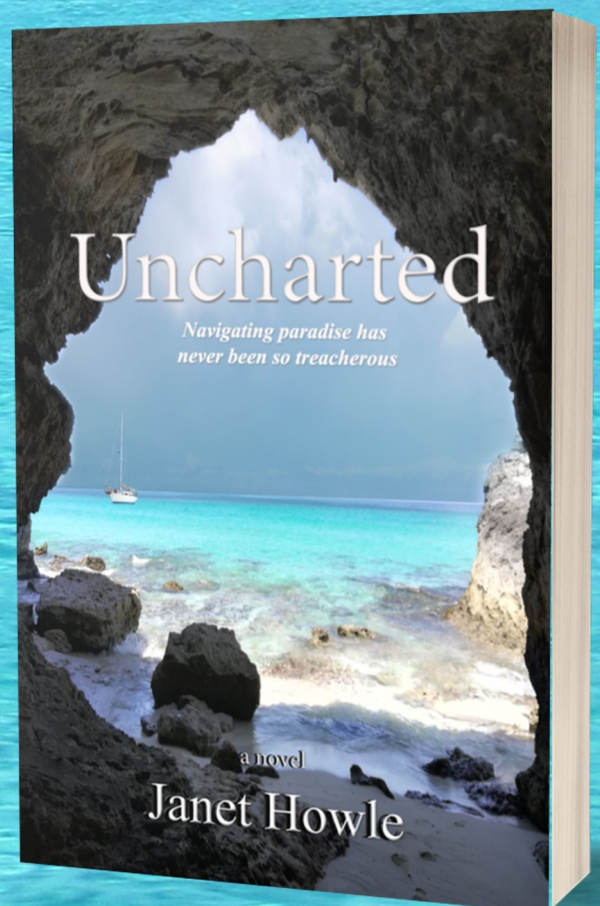
Helene Young, award-winning Australian author 2020

“Absolutely incredible!”

Amazon Reader Review, June 2022

“The settings are exotic, the characters fascinating and the boating idyllic, but like the crystal blue waters, sharks are circling. A wonderful read that I highly recommend.”

Goodreads Review, May 2022



SisterShip Watches ...



By Amy Alton

Mothership Adrift

With three kids on board, a house rented out back home in England, and a YouTube channel, Irenka Wood has a lot to balance. Living aboard their 53-foot Amel Super Maramu, *Mothership*, the Wood family has sailed the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic to the southern Caribbean.

Irenka joined me to talk about homeschooling, the effects of COVID 19 on cruising plans, and their videos.

Amy: Your family picked up your boat in the Mediterranean and spent almost two years sailing there. The pandemic kept you in Spain for a while, but since then you've crossed the Atlantic and made it to the Leeward Antilles. What's next for you?

Irenka: We are trying to complete a circumnavigation which has been my dream since I was 10 years old. We hope to transit the Panama Canal in early 2022 and then continue to New Zealand and further. The

Pacific is still fairly closed with COVID so we are not sure if it will be possible but if it opens, we will do it.

Amy: How do you divide video production between you and Woody?

Irenka: We both film whatever we do, and Woody used to do all the editing, but I wanted to be more involved in the creative process. Additionally, we didn't want Woody in front of the screen all the time with no time for family and maintenance tasks. I started to edit the episodes and he concentrated on the maintenance videos. He also does all the thumbnails.

Amy: How has creating videos enhanced your sailing experience?

Irenka: It means we are more engaged with what is going on, we make more effort to explore and have plenty of material for the story. We have also connected to a lot of people who want to follow the same dream and tell us how inspiring we are. This really motivates me to keep sharing our story. We get to document everything we do so we never forget it... this is perhaps the most important reason.

Amy: How have your kids been involved in the YouTube channel?

Irenka: They like telling our story and often describing where we are and what we are doing. Their confidence has grown, and they like to make mini movies about various subjects. Sometimes they don't want to be filmed so we don't force them. It turns out that they are often more popular than us to various people all over the globe!

Amy: You have a background as a skipper, RYA trainer, and with rescue services. How has that changed your sailing experience? What strengths or weaknesses does that bring to your sailing life?

Irenka: Because of my experience, I have the confidence to set sail and get fully involved with the sailing. I am captain of our boat together with my husband, although he is much better at repairing technical problems and I am better at organising things. We both have different strengths and weaknesses. I am quite good at staying calm and acting, rather than reacting, when things are not going smoothly. I also think that the more you

know the more anxious you get which can be a problem, but we manage to risk assess most things and work it out.

Amy: What's your biggest struggle with your videos?

Irenka: Finding the time to edit them. With three children, home schooling takes up most of the day, so we have to edit late into the evenings and a full day about every two weeks. It is always a case of juggling family time, schooling, and taking turns to work on the videos.

Amy: You've got three kids on board, ages 14, 11, and 8. Tell us about homeschooling. What's been the hardest subject? How do your kids benefit from homeschooling?

Irenka: The hardest subject I would say is GCSE maths as it is all different from when I was doing it and I have forgotten most of it. After this I would say physics and chemistry. The benefit of homeschooling while we travel is that we visit a lot more places, so the kids learn about things firsthand rather than only from a book. They see how things are relevant in their everyday life. They also learn



about subjects that are not in anyone's curriculum such as how to drop an anchor, service a winch, and navigate.

Amy: You've been renting out your home back in the UK. How is that going? Do you recommend renting or selling now?

Irenka: This has been going really well, I have a couple of good friends who look after it for me and lots of contacts of reliable people to call when we need a plumber, electrician, and so on. It pays our mortgage, and we have a small income from it. I would always recommend keeping your house if you can. For us it provides a feeling of security knowing that if we ever lose the boat, we always have a home to go to.

Amy: What are some of your favorite places you've cruised to so far?

Irenka: My favourite places have been the Aeolian Islands above Sicily for the volcanoes, Dodecanese Islands for the remoteness, Spain for the tapas, Ibiza for the vibe, and Suriname for the intrepid travel experience.

Amy: What's one piece of gear you wish you had onboard *Mothership*?

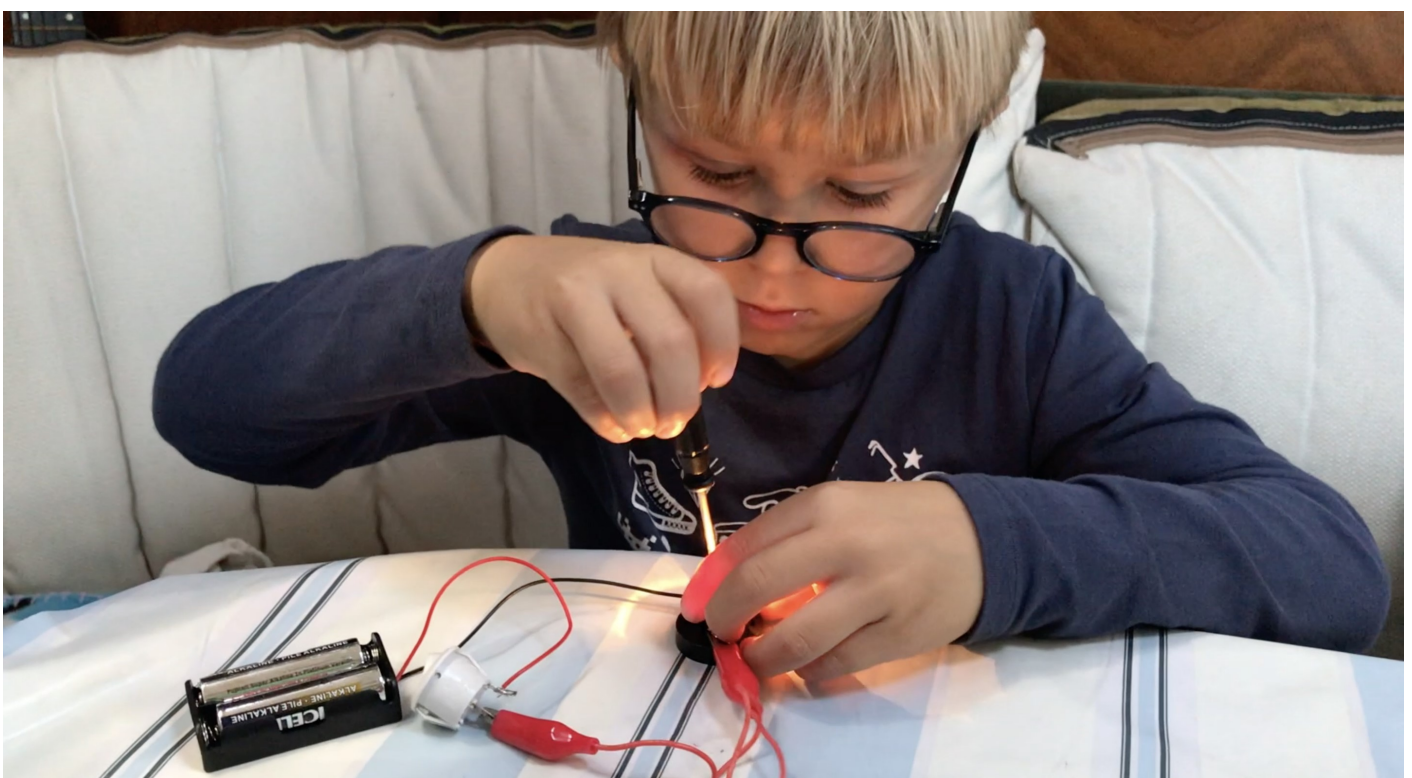
Irenka: A kite surfboard and kite and being able to ride it.

Amy: What's your favorite modification you have made to *Mothership*?

Irenka: Our cockpit canopy which shades us from the sun, but I also love our interior cushions made out of recycled sail material.

Amy: What's been your hardest or scariest moment on *Mothership*?

Irenka: Difficult question as there have been





a few. The hardest moment was when I broke my finger because it was so painful, and we were a few days away from land on our passage from Suriname to Martinique. The scariest was when we got caught in a storm near Sicily and I didn't know how bad it was going to be. But since then, we had another passage from Martinique to Curaçao and had a problem with our head sail; we couldn't furl it away or reef it. We had to sail for three

days and nights with full sails. It felt like driving on a motorway at 90 mph with no brakes.

Amy: What's one quality Woody has that makes him a great sailing partner? What strength do you have that you think makes you a good sailing partner?

Irenka: Woody can fix pretty much anything and when he doesn't know how to do it, he



will work it out. He does not really panic, and he never gets seasick. I have a lot of stamina and I rarely give up. I am very firm about boundaries and what we must do to keep us safe. We are both very adventurous and love to explore.

Amy: Is there anything else you want to share with the readers of *SisterShip Magazine*?

Irenka: The ups and downs in life can be extreme but even more so when you live a nomadic life like us at sea travelling around the world. I really have learnt that you cannot change a lot of those challenges we face in life, but you can definitely learn to navigate

Amy Alton, in partnership with her husband, shares their journey on their YouTube channel, [Out Chasing Stars](https://www.youtube.com/c/mothershipadrift). You can also enjoy her writing and photography on their blog, [OutChasingStars.com](https://www.mothershipadrift.com/).

them and live a life of excitement and contentment.

Links:

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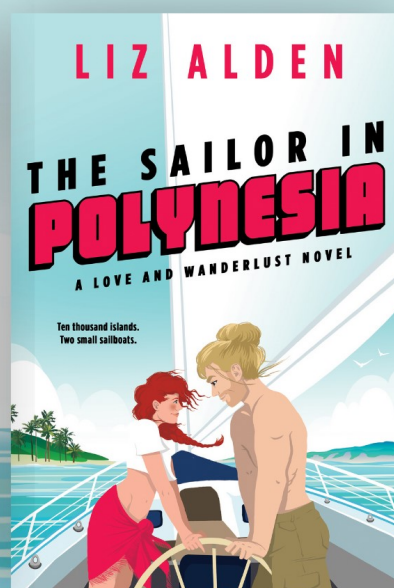
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YOGA POSES

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Malasana

Garland Pose or Yoga Squat

Your spine is of key importance for your health and living a pain free life, so too are your ankles, groin, feet, and hips.

Yoga classes target all parts of your body to create space, length, and flexibility. Don't get hung up on the word flexibility, this is what comes with regular practice, no two body shapes are the same. To be honest, I close my eyes in most classes I attend and listen to the teacher and move at my own pace, rest when I need to, and join the class when my body is ready to allow further opening. If you spend your whole class resting in child's pose after 10 minutes into the practice, that is known in Yoga as "Honouring your Body." Yoga is to be enjoyed, not just for the body, more

importantly the mind. Yoga teaches us to listen to ourselves and enjoy life fully off the mat.

Let's explore Garland Pose or Yoga Squat, Sanskrit name *Malasana*, starting from beginners sitting comfortably on the edge of a chair. Remember, in any stage of the pose don't worry about your heels not being on the ground just rest them on a rolled-up blanket. Repeat pose three times by resting in -between with legs extended by standing in Mountain pose or lengthening legs out along the mat in Savasana/Corpse pose.

Move to a stable chair/footstool, sit comfortably on the edge resting the sit bones (bony points on back of your pelvis/buttocks) take your knees wide and point toes out. Heels can be raised with blanket under them for support of just lifted. Place



your hands together in prayer lean forward and rest elbows to inside of legs, find something to focus on and breathe three to four long deep inhalations and exhalations.

If you are comfortable moving to the floor, lie down onto your back, bring knees wide and into your chest, either hold onto knees and stay here or bring hands together in prayer and resting elbows to inside of knees, or if that is not possible just place hands to the heart space and rest toes pointing out and knees wide placing feet against a solid wall.

Transitioning to standing and squatting, take your legs nearly as wide as your mat, toes pointing out. Hands together in prayer at heart space, squat down, don't worry if you are up high, in time the hips will open more,

and your pelvis will slowly move lower to the earth. Lean forward if you can or remain vertical. Breathe three to four breaths.

If your body opening allows you to squat with buttocks/pelvis closer to earth or ocean below and heels are down, toes pointing out, leaning forward, hands to the heart, enjoy the space you're in with slow fluid breaths.

Benefits of Garland Pose, *Malasana*

Happy pelvis, hip and groin

Stretches your ankles and back

Helps your digestion and tones abdominals

What part of body it helps

Supports many parts of the body



What not to do - Important

Avoid pose if you have lower back and knee injuries

Garland Pose Tips

Use a wall to slide rest against if needed. Roll a blanket and place under your heels for support. Never rush the natural progression of your body opening, it will happen in time, and please make sure if you're on the boat trying this pose, the waters are calm, and you have a solid sheet or stay to grab hold of in case of ocean swells.



I am sailor, yoga lover, yoga teacher trainer and retreat organiser.

I have had the pleasure of introducing yoga into the sailing community for over a decade from Fiji, New Caledonia, and Australia.

E-RYT 200 500 RYT - Yoga Alliance Registered 122921

I am the founder/creator of Yoga4Yachties, Yoga, Health and Sail Wellness T/A Namaste Ocean Yoga™

2021 I commenced 200hr Yoga Teacher Training School "Namaste Ocean Yoga School" - private tuition online and in-person training. Read about the years of sailing parts of the world on our Sail Blog links below

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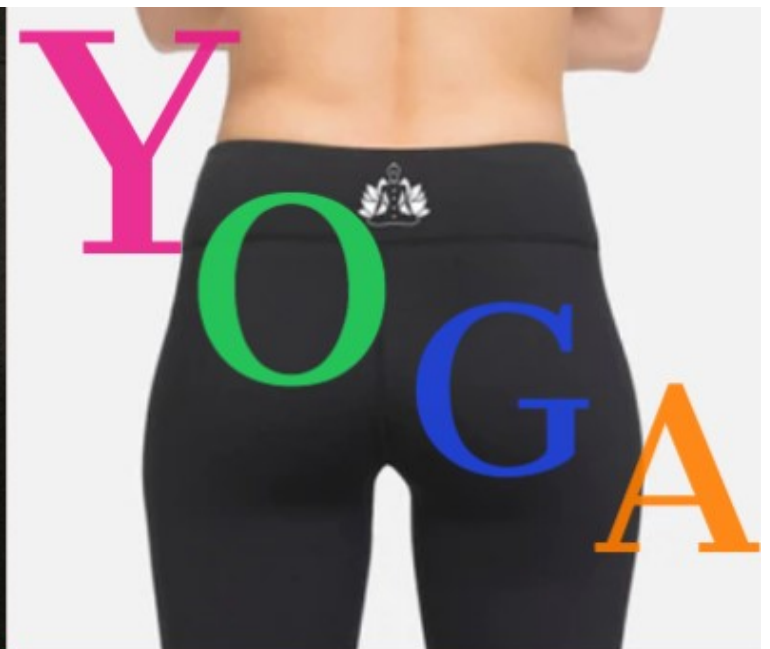
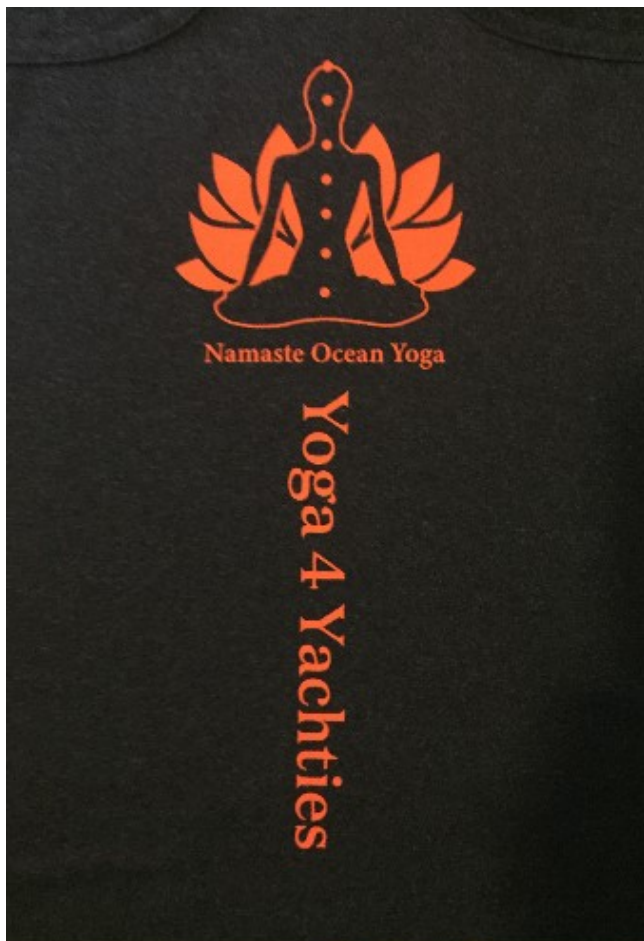
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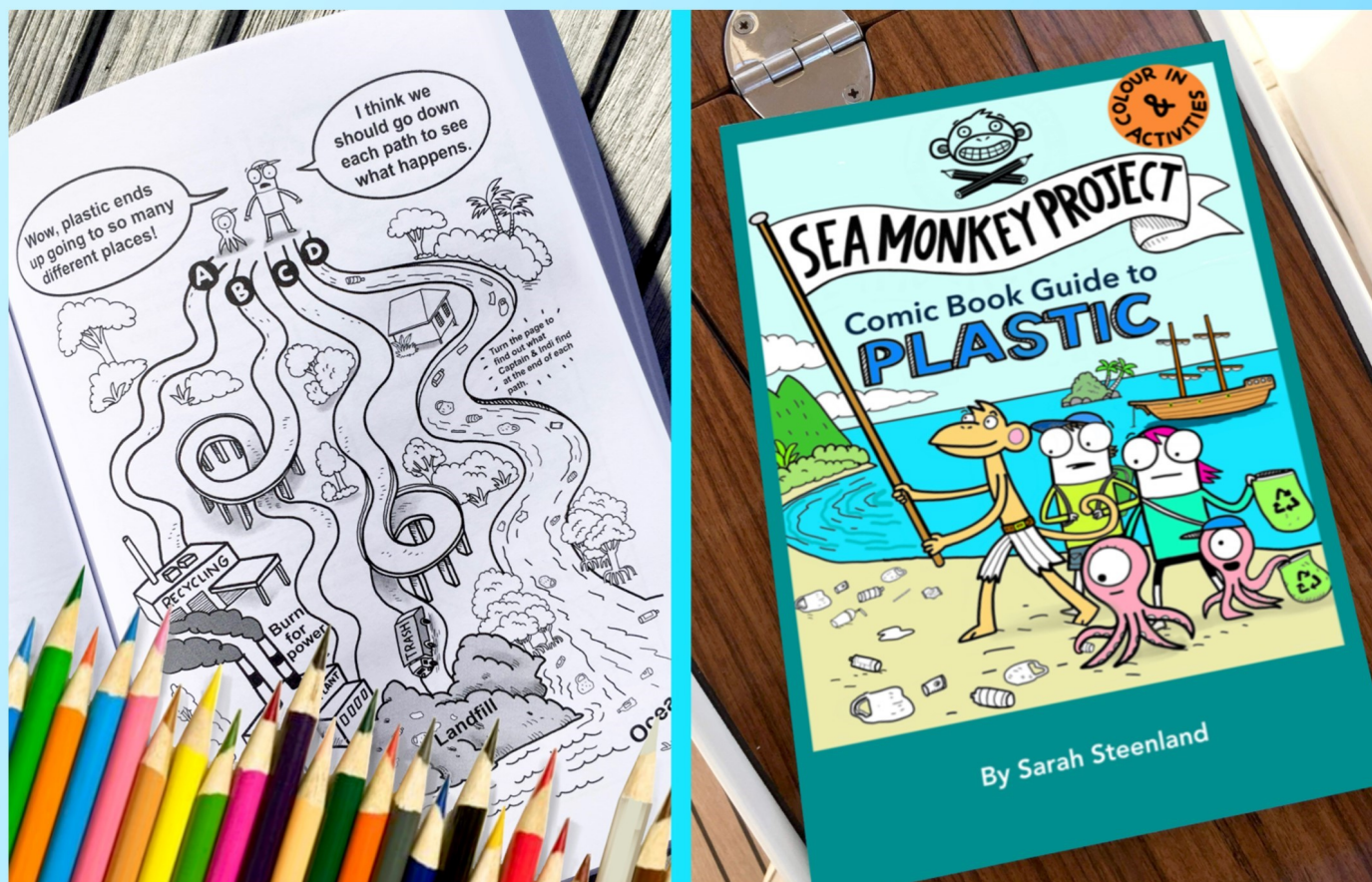
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Seven techniques to strengthen your marriage while learning to sail

By Taryn Pickard

I can't count the number of times I've read or heard comments about how living onboard and travelling with one's spouse is a recipe for disaster, and honestly, I'm sure that is often the case. Living with someone in a small space is far from easy. Most of us know that marriage is a compromise, but most married couples have lives that are separate for at least half of every day; each partner has defined roles within the relationship and partners can make space between one another when needed. These things help to minimize the need to adapt and compromise with one another. When you're living on a boat, however, conflict can quickly arise, and fights can happen with very little room to

move — emotionally and physically. Add to that the high-risk environment and stress of boat life, and not being able to leave the boat when things get tough, and it can be a recipe for disaster.

Sailing with your partner can challenge you in ways you never considered, and even more in the ways that you had considered. It isn't difficult to see how these factors may escalate if you and your partner aren't on the same pages. But this lifestyle can also be incredibly rewarding, bringing you and your partner closer together, and enabling wonderful experiences. After living on board and cruising together for three years, I can honestly say that my husband and I have made it into that second category. Some days are still hard. Sometimes no amount of ocean

between us could ever be enough, but most of the time we work well together, and we are incredibly grateful to be out on the water, just the two of us.

When my husband and I decided to move onto a sailboat and learn to sail, I knew it would be make-it or break-it for us. That probably sounds dramatic, but it's the truth. Logan and I had been together for eight years and married for three. We had spent years already working on building an alternative lifestyle together and knew we were on the same page with how we wanted to live our lives. But when it came to working together on stressful projects, we admittedly struggled. Sailing meant that we needed to be able to work smoothly as a team, be able to keep our cool, and understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. Without this we might end up not only with a broken marriage, but one of us may end up injured or dead. It was a risk we were both willing to take, but it was something I knew was going to take a lot of work – physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

Here are a few of the things we learned while out on the water that have made us not only stronger as a team, but better as individuals as well.

1) Everyone learns differently

This might be the most important thing to keep in mind, as well as one of the most frustrating things to deal with. Figuring out what your learning style is and what your partner's learning style is can make a huge difference in how well you grow as a team. When you have two people trying to learn a whole new skillset, both with different learning styles but a lack of understanding of this, often one partner may feel pushed around while the other may feel as if they are being ignored.

For instance, Logan is the kind of person who must do things repetitively and out loud

to learn them. I, on the other hand, need to hear and observe something, have some quiet time to let the knowledge sink in and then jump in, usually without intervention from someone else. This has meant that often I will be trying to do something and feel as though I'm being overwhelmed and disrespected because Logan is behind me or in front of me talking or trying to get me to do something. And vice-versa. He feels as though I'm not engaging or paying attention when the reality is the opposite.

Once we sat down and had a conversation about what was going on in our heads and how we were processing the situation, it made working together a lot easier as we were able to give each other more of the space and understanding we needed to get things done.

2) Everything is a compromise

One of our friends always says that living on a boat is a compromise. No boat has everything you want, or does everything the way you want, and that is just the reality. Relationships with people are the same. To make things work, both sides need to be willing to put their egos aside to work together.

At some point each person will also have to give something up and this looks different for each couple. If one partner is doing all the compromising and the other isn't doing any, chances are things aren't going to work very well. This is true in most relationships, but even more intensely on a boat because stakes can be so much higher. Both sides need to be aware of the compromises they need to make for things onboard to move smoothly, which leads to our next point...

3) Introspection and choosing to grow as a person is a huge advantage

Introspection is key. Being able to look at your own behaviours and adjust the ones that

are hurting your partner, or making your working relationship more difficult, is something that is going to ensure your relationship holds together alongside the workings of your boat.

Everyone has habits or patterns that aren't productive in certain situations. If you can acknowledge where your weaknesses are and commit to changing them (or at least working at changing them) for the betterment of your relationship and your life onboard, you have a much higher chance of success. The other great thing about this skill is that it won't only help you in your marriage, but in every relationship in your life!

4) Know each other and know yourself

Learn your strengths and weaknesses, know your partner's strengths and weaknesses, and be aware of them when you are making decisions. Work with those strengths and weaknesses to make things go smoothly in dangerous situations, or even in everyday life.

Knowing how you or your partner react in certain situations can make a huge difference in how you choose to plan and execute life aboard. It will certainly mean you avoid many arguments and misunderstandings.

5) Figure out what works and stick with it

Expanding on point 4, figure out what works best and make it part of your routine. Out on the water, it's natural to build routines where each person's skills are utilized. Figure out how that is going to work for you and stick with it. For instance, Logan is better at boat projects than I am and has more interest in them, while I would rather cook and deal with more of the cleaning, as well as working on making us some money while we are cruising. This allows us to balance the workload and have systems set up to make sure things are done smoothly. If there are fewer projects, Logan helps more with the daily chores and if there are bigger projects, I also help with them.



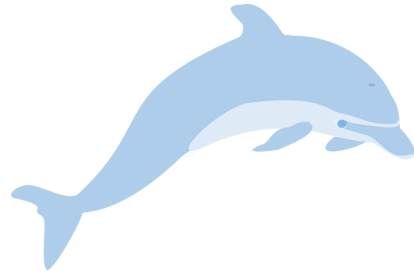
6) Figure out what doesn't work and fix it or figure out how to work around it

When things aren't working smoothly between you and your partner, learn how to sit down and talk about it without being accusatory, making sure that both partners are heard. Some things may not be able to be changed but working to change behaviors that bother your partner, or maybe make life onboard more dangerous, is key. Just make sure you approach these conversations with kindness and a willingness to listen and problem solve.

7) Accept the fact that at times you're going to be wrong, and don't be afraid to admit it

But by the same token, don't bully your partner when they are wrong and admit it either. Your number one goal should be to create a safe place for both you and your partner, and you can't achieve that if you're rubbing it in each other's faces when one person is wrong. It's not about winning. It's about team building.

Are there other things you have found help you to work well with your partner onboard? You can join us over on our YouTube channel Wayward Life Sailing to follow our adventures and let us know any tips you may have for making life onboard run more smoothly with a partner!



Taryn Pickard is a photographer, videographer, and writer living on her sailboat with her husband and dog in the Pacific Northwest. Passionate about connecting deeply to nature and helping others to live a more connected and peaceful life, Taryn loves to make short films and content about her adventures on the water and how choosing this lifestyle of sailing and living closer to nature brings her peace and freedom and how it can do the same for others. You can see more of her and her experience with this lifestyle through her YouTube channel Wayward Life Sailing.

[Wayward Life Sailing - YouTube](#)





By Lyn Battle

TRIM TALES

THE MAIDEN VOYAGE

My DH* and I used to love walking up and down the marina fingers, checking out the boats, all shapes and sizes, admiring this one's bow, that one's stern, commenting on the layout, the fittings, the colours, the names... assembling an image of our perfect vessel.

I'm sure we've all been there and done that. The magic happens when we take it one step further and eventually, after strolling along the marina with our commentary, we say to each other with a grin, "This one will do us..." and we step on board. Yes, this one is all OURS and it is PERFECT!

It took a long time, but eventually after years of dreaming and window-shopping, and crawling over friends' boats examining every little storage hidey hole, we committed to building our own boat. I was terrified. Could we afford it, would we sink it first time out, would we enjoy it, or argue over every little manoeuvre...

Due to our lifestyle business, we could only take limited holidays during the north Australian 'Wet Season' so we opted for an

aluminium motor cruiser that could quickly take us from point A to B and maximise our time on the water. If we lived on the east coast mainland, there is no doubt we would have chosen a different style of vessel (motor sailor!) but this was the most practical way to achieve our dream at the time. We commissioned our resort boat builder Paul Borger, of Borger Alloy Ingham, to design one of his NQ Cats for us. Our house builder friends in Townsville worked with us on the interior layout. The 'plans' started out on our home verandah with a piece of chalk... we marked out the size—goodness, it seemed HUGE—then chalked in the navigation and helm area, the toilet and shower, a bunk, seating, rear compartments for batteries and outboards. It quickly shrank! On paper, it began to come together as we calculated weights and balance, why the freezer had to go on this side, why the toilet had to go just there, and 'oh look' there is actually enough space up front for a couple of spare bunks for friends!

We had given up the option of a 'cabin' for ourselves to sleep in; with summer cruising and eight hours sleep each night, we figured it was a waste of space, so we opted for a futon bed mid-cabin that could double as day-time

seating and we would make up into a bed each night—cooler for summer sleeping than a pokey cabin—and leave the front compartments for storage or visiting crew. After more than 20 years of having to ‘make the bed’ before collapsing onto it, we still do not regret that decision, and the specially made hinged high-density foam mattress has served us well.

Similarly, we decided against a galley stove. The petrol outboard engines were one deterrent, but also, we figured we would not need a hot lunch, summer salads would be ‘the go’, and as long as we could cook a hot dinner, we’d be ‘right’... another decision that served us well over the years as we managed perfectly well with our 3kVA generator, electric frypan, and ‘turbo-oven’.

An essential was a saltwater tap at the sink – we’d seen this on our yachtie friend Don’s boat, which we’d spent weeks at a time cruising in remote locations where fresh water was precious. It saved so much water being able to pump up sea water to rinse sunscreen off hands, or even wash the dishes, giving metal objects a freshwater rinse before packing them away. Another essential for my



DH was a regular sized ‘dunny’ – we opted for an electric push-button type, in a step-down compartment with a drop-down lid so one could be completely closed off from the cabin, though we often just leave the lid up and practice the ‘averted eyes’ principle when moving around the boat; the person showering or using the toilet is completely private so long as nobody peers down over the door and as long as a passing vessel does not cause the boat to roll, causing the person showering to lean against the door and roll out into the cabin, clutching a towel! Oh yes, it has happened once or twice!

Most of the design features were carefully



considered beforehand and would not be changed. The drop-down door at the stern makes ocean and dinghy access easy for all passengers. The battery and generator compartments double up as rear seating. The swivel table is ideal as a table for two when seated on the rear seating or can swivel round to serve nibblies when a cabin party is in progress. The 20-litre hot water storage tank ensures the luxury of a hot shower at the end of the day and the excellent Australian-made 'Explorer' fridge/freezer unit similarly provides another little luxury: ice cubes in that well-earned rum and coke or GnT at the end of a day's cruising. The carpeted walls provide an easy-grip platform for Velcro-based clock, EPIRB, and lifejackets.

A couple of things did have to be changed. We had opted for two 200L fuel tanks plus two 200L water tanks, but we soon discovered that the two-stroke Yamaha outboards were thirstier than us, and we

could not get from Townsville to Cairns without refuelling. So, we converted one of the water tanks over to fuel and later upgraded from two-stroke to four-stroke outboard. This hugely decreased fuel consumption and increased our range. We also changed the shower tap system to a trigger spray shower hose. This made a difference to the amount of fresh water used in the shower compartment.

Some changes just evolved. There was the day we went to Paul's yard to inspect the hull. DH looked puzzled then pulled out a tape measure. "Paul! You've made it three metres wide! It's nearly too wide to tow!" Paul just grinned, "Well, I made a bit longer so I had to make it a bit wider, you'll thank me for it one day!" The new dimensions actually worked out perfectly.

Maiden voyages are often memorable for all the wrong reasons, and we had some little hiccups of our own. We'd always been



frustrated during our Pacific Island cruising when a short overnight stop didn't allow for forays ashore in the dinghy because it was too much hassle to get the dinghy down. So, we were determined we'd have a simple system that would enable the briefest of forays ashore. Paul rigged up a simple derrick system on the roof that lay flat during travel and was easily propped up to lower the inflatable, which was lashed into a cradle while underway. However, the lightweight aluminium tubing failed spectacularly during our maiden voyage to the Whitsundays. We anchored offshore our friend's beach house at Cape Upstart, waving enthusiastically while we demonstrated how quickly we could get into the tender and putt ashore. The derrick buckled and the inflatable hit the water with a splash worthy of the Titanic's lifeboats... fortunately the rest of the system worked well and the line attaching it to the boat held fast as we guided it to the back steps and climbed aboard. Back to the workshop for a more solid boom and we were soon back in business.

During the early stage of the project, we'd picked up lots of goodies at boat shows, including one of those anchors with a 'roll bar' round the top. Initially this seemed to work well, but another spectacular failure occurred on our first voyage north, anchored off Flinders Island in remote Princess Charlotte Bay, halfway up the Cape York Peninsula. We went ashore to explore the magnificent Aboriginal rock paintings, leaving *MV Trim* anchored a short distance offshore. This area is where the prawn trawler fleet often anchor and their deeper draught saw several of them spread out well beyond *Trim*, stabilisers akimbo as their nets hung drying and crew caught up on sleep.

We were beachcombing along the shore with our friends when someone said, "Is *Trim* dragging?" Heads shot up and sure enough, she was definitely further out than last time we had looked. We ran to the dinghy. Like a naughty pony who's nudged the gate latch

open, *Trim* was gathering speed and making for the open sea. We watched in horror as she drifted towards one of the trawlers, then sidestepped it, heading for the next one. The tangle of stabiliser booms and nets was too much to think about as Tex pull-started the inflatable into action.

"You go, we'll wait here! You'll be faster without us!" Our friends waved us off as we raced towards the weaving vessel. The little two-horsepower outboard screamed at *Trim* to slow down as we chased her. We saw one of the trawler deckies was sitting out on the bow lazily watching us; he must have grinned while we beachcombed and wondered when we would notice the boat was dragging...

Fortunately, we caught up before any harm was done, and returned to collect our crew. Needless to say, we were soon on the Sat phone to the chandlery in Cooktown and ordered a sturdy CQR which we picked up on the way back. In the croc-free waters of Lizard Island we duck-dived and watched the recalcitrant anchor laying on its back and serenely sliding along the bottom on the rollbar...

Learning all the time!

One of our biggest fears as newbie cruisers was the whole docking and undocking process. We'd heard how the local mainland boat ramp is a source of much amusement when husband-and-wife teams try to back boats onto trailers. We were determined not to become one of those couples screaming from the bowsprit. That was easily solved (most of the time!) by a role reversal and a set of simple hand signals. Instead of DH doing the 'manly thing' driving the boat while scrawny me wrestled with a heavy anchor and chain – he put me at the helm while he directed me with two fingers for both engines forward or pointing backwards for reverse, using the toe-button electric winch with a bit of careful muscle when required. I only get in trouble if I glance away to speak to a

passenger, alerted by a furious knocking on the window and stabbing signal finger! Usually though, all ends well, and the final signal is the hand across the throat and “FEW” (‘Finished With Engine’ – carry-over from my sail training days on Ireland’s *Asgard II*).

One of my favourite things as newbie cruisers is the slap-slap of the sea up the tunnel of the boat at night lulling us to sleep. I never mind that sound, it tells me that we are asleep on the ocean, living the dream, and the new day will dawn with fresh adventures. So many wonderful experiences waiting just over that horizon – snorkelling with turtles, sundowners with fellow-boaties, new skills and confidence.

After that first maiden voyage, as we looked at her sitting back on the trailer, dripping sea water and proudly wearing her first shaggy algae coat, I grinned at Tex. “You know, even if we never got to go out on her again, it was all worth it! Even just that one trip!”

But we did go again, many times – the *Trim Tales* were only beginning....

* Dear Husband



Lyn has always loved the sea. She grew up in Ireland, moved to Australia aged 23 where she met and married Tex. Together with friends, they built a small fishing lodge on remote Sweers Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, where they’ve been welcoming guests for over 30 years. Lyn dabbles in everything: a bit of sailing, a bit of yoga, a bit of kayaking, a bit of writing. In 2018 she succeeded in becoming the first person to paddle a kayak nonstop around the island. In 2019 she finally mastered the Eskimo Roll.

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SUSTAINABLE SAILING

Heather Francis

Staying Afloat

Regular readers may have noticed that my *Sustainable Sailing* column was missing from the April/May issue. My absenteeism wasn't exactly intentional. I said to our *SisterShip* editor, Shelley, that I would meet deadline and even started my article but every time I sat down at my laptop I went numb. Words accumulated on the screen but I wasn't invested in them. I felt like I had lost my groove. Even worse, I had no desire to try and get it back.

I needed a break.

During the pandemic I had been living onboard our boat while on the hard in the Philippines, separated from my partner, Steve, due to COVID travel restrictions. Like so many, I made the best of my situation and managed to keep my head above water for two years and two days. Amongst the everyday problems of living alone in a

foreign country, I had also endured long lockdowns, severe isolation, food shortages, liquor bans, vaccine scarcity, a nearby volcanic eruption, earthquakes, and four typhoons.

In February 2022 I was finally able to fly to Australia where Steve and I were reunited. Although the global outlook was finally improving and my everyday circumstances had drastically changed, I started feeling increasingly disconnected and frustrated. It had taken all my energy to stay afloat for so long and now I was starting to slip below the surface.

I have been writing professionally for a decade and have never missed a deadline, so it was with much hesitation I emailed Shelley and told her that I wouldn't be contributing to the magazine after all. She was, as always, understanding and supportive. I was disappointed that I had let the magazine and my readers down however, I realized that my efforts to live and sail sustainably had to begin with taking care of myself. Like they always say in the safety videos, I needed to

put on my own lifejacket before trying to help others.

It's OK to Say "No"

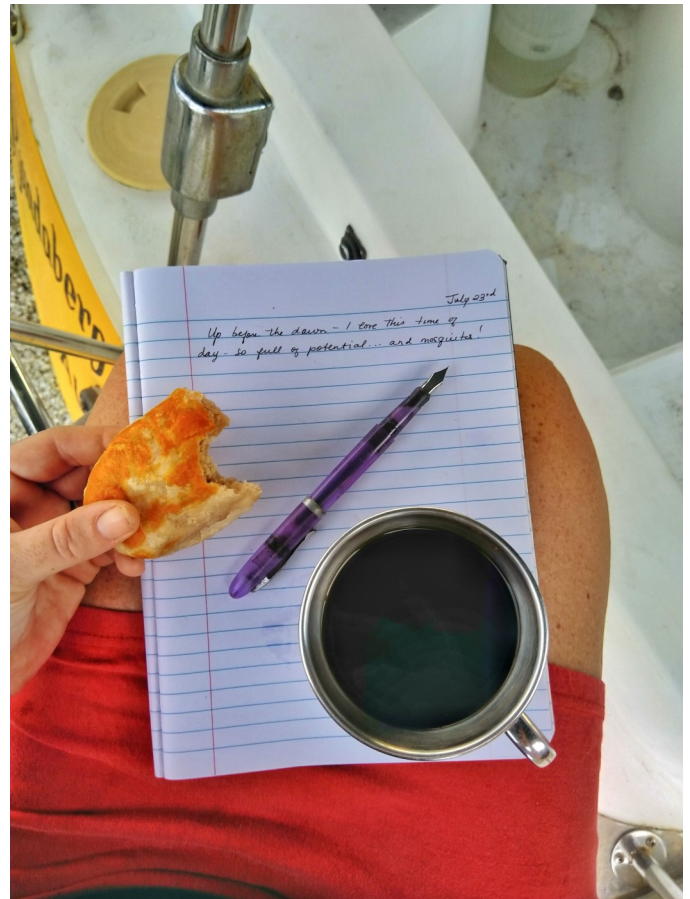
I wouldn't describe myself as a people pleaser, nor do I have a problem with over extending myself, but learning to know when to say no to opportunities big or small, is one of the hardest lessons I've learned over the past two years.

Constantly putting the needs and wants of others ahead of your own will lead to mental and physical exhaustion. Saying "No" is less about turning other people down and more about knowing your limits and safe guarding yourself. This should be done in a kind and respectful way and without guilt. Not always easy to do, but important to keep in mind. Whether it be work or social commitments, it is important to remember that it's ok to say no to someone if you're feeling overwhelmed or rundown.

Move Your Body

I have never been particularly sporty, but I have always been active. During difficult times I find it tempting to be very still, as if sitting or lying quietly will make the chaos around me somehow dissipate. And sometimes it does. I deeply value stillness, but I also know that moving my body helps me move through some of the discomfort and anxiety that these difficult times bring.

I have returned to yoga time and again since I was a teenager. It helps me move anxious energy. (Check out our monthly Yoga For Yachties Pose by Leanne Hembrow for some tips on where to start.) Walking, something we all know how to do, is also an activity that I find helps me work through difficult feelings. Getting out on my stand-up paddleboard or going for a swim are also great ways to inhabit my body and shift focus. I don't need to exhaust myself with physical activity, although that can feel



ABOVE: morning rituals with a cup of decaf.

amazing too. Most days, simply moving and being engaged with my body allows me to achieve this sense of calm.

July/August of 2021 were a particularly difficult couple of months for me. I had already been on own for 18-months and was due to celebrate another birthday solo. An unseasonable run of extended bad weather kept me cooped up inside all day and sleeping fitfully on the sofa at night. Exhaustion stole my enthusiasm for cooking, something that I love, not to mention my willpower to turn off social media. After weeks of not sleeping or eating properly, and virtually bingeing on all the things I couldn't do or have, every obstacle felt more difficult to surpass and every problem larger than it really was. When I found myself sobbing and screaming at someone over a crackly phoneline, I knew I had to make some changes.

Limit Caffeine and Alcohol Intake

Like many women, I was bookending my days with caffeine and alcohol. Coffee in the

morning, and wine or a couple of beers at the end of the day. I didn't think either of my habits were out of control. I only drink coffee before lunch, rarely having more than three small cups, and I have taken extended alcohol breaks in the past without any angst. However, I knew both substances affect mood and sleep patterns.

Caffeine is a stimulant with a half life of 12 hours. Which means if you stop drinking coffee at 10am you'll still have 50% of that caffeine in your system at 10pm when you're climbing into bed. Alcohol, despite all those apparent 'good times', is a depressant. Not only does it blunt your senses, it also interrupts healthy sleep patterns. I decided to ditch them both, cold turkey.

After about a week I noticed that I was falling asleep easier and staying asleep for longer. I didn't have to wake to pee in the middle of the night and didn't feel especially groggy in the morning even though I wasn't indulging in caffeine. As my sleep improved so did my mood, diet, and decision making. Within a few weeks my eyes looked a little brighter and I felt less bloated.

My goal was to see how alcohol and caffeine affected me, not to give it up forever. So, on a hot and hard afternoon over a month after putting them both down I bought myself a beer. I drank it and enjoyed immensely. I also had a broken sleep for the first time in weeks. As for coffee, I am still drinking decaf.

Use Your Hands/Make Something

I am not someone who meditates in the traditional "sit still on a mat" sense, but rather I use manual creative activities to calm my mind. Some days this is cooking, knitting, sewing, or doodling. Other days it's getting my hands dirty resurfacing the decks, fixing a plumbing problem, or refreshing some varnish. For you it might be playing guitar or folding origami or digging in the garden. Whatever it is, I look for an activity that



ABOVE: My COVID container garden while on the hard, Philippines.

demands I use my hands, so I can get out of my head.

I find comfort and clarity in methodical and rhythmic actions like chopping veggies or sanding a piece of wood. These activities demand I pay attention to the task at hand, lest I cut my finger or damage to the boat. I am forced to focus my mind, not on whatever problems are upsetting me, but on the here and now. I must be present.

I am not looking for the end product, for a finished masterpiece. Maybe all I can muster is a half hour of simple sanding or a few nonsense doodles. The goal is to use my hands to shift my focus. To get some relief from the part of my mind that is worried about headlines and deadlines and catastrophe. By using my hands and focusing on the task in front of me my mind quiets. To me this is another form of meditation.

Stop and Take a Deep Breath

The most important thing I learned through all of this, and I must admit that it was a lesson that I had to repeat several times before it sunk in, is that I have control over only one thing. Myself. I can't control the war in the Ukraine, or a pandemic, or the price of petrol, or the rain. But I can control how I react to all these things.

When I need a reminder about this I find it helpful to stop and take a deep breath or three. Nothing special, just stop and breath and pay attention to the rise and fall of my chest, the sound of air flowing in and out of my nose or mouth. Sometimes I fill my lungs and hold my breath for a count of three, sometimes I let it all come rushing out with a hiss or a sigh. There is no one, right way.

You can have empathy for suffering without feeling responsible for it. You can educate yourself about things rather than be fearful of them. You can limit in the information that you consume. Breathe and remember you can control the most important thing in the world, your own actions, and reactions. You can choose gratitude and calm by just breathing.

Turn Off Your Phone

No one is immune to the modern world and all the trappings of technology. It increasingly seems like we can't go anywhere, or do anything, without it involving our phones. Contactless interactions, video calls, online shopping, streaming our entertainment, all spurred on by the pandemic, are everyday events for most people. However, time in front of our phones also includes 24/7 newsfeeds, propaganda on social media

platforms, and mindless scrolling. This means that our convenience often comes with a side of stress and anxiety.

It is important to build in digital breaks to your every day. I try and make it a habit to eat meals without the phone next to me, to shut it off when I am sleeping and to turn notifications off when I am working. When particularly stressed I take a break from the news and log off social media platforms. Funny thing is, when I am feeling more grounded and log back on I realized that I didn't miss anything but the stress.

In the midst of a crisis it doesn't feel like it, but we humans are incredibly resilient. I am not prescribing that these actions will be able to solve everyone's problems, or that they will work instantly. Often outside, or professional, help is needed. However, I do know that just by making a few changes in our lives and habits we can help ourselves cope with, and heal from, many of the difficult situations life throws at us. I feel like the tides have turned for me and I wanted to throw out a lifeline, in case anyone else needs help staying afloat.



Heather Francis is from Nova Scotia, Canada and has lived and worked on boats throughout the world. Since 2008 she has been living and sailing onboard *Kate*, a Newport 41 sloop, with her Aussie partner, Steve. She is a writer, photographer and cook who tries to live mindfully. Follow at www.yachtkate.com or [@sustainablesailing41](https://www.instagram.com/sustainablesailing41)



Flat-bottomed girl

Views from the canal

VALERIE POORE takes the helm of our regular barge boat column.

Mooring ties

Six months ago, we left Rotterdam's Oude Haven accompanied by a haunting farewell from our neighbours I will never forget. I could hardly believe we'd left the safe confines of the place I first made my home twenty long years ago. What I now find even harder to believe is the fact I haven't been back, not even once.

Do I miss the people? Yes, of course. Our neighbours there were the best you could find and I had, and still have, a deep affection for them, which begs the question why, when this is such a small country, I haven't returned to the city to visit them. I've wondered this myself, and can only come up with a few excuses – a word I use deliberately, because that's what they are.

Firstly, I am very comfortable and at ease at the new mooring on the river Mark in Oudenbosch. It is—almost—everything I hoped it would be: convenient, easy to access, and trouble free. I can leave my beloved old barge every week knowing nothing will change until I come back. No one will move



it, damage it, or interfere with my ropes, which was always a risk when barges were constantly coming and going in Rotterdam. In fact, only a couple of things have disqualified it from being the perfect place, one of which I'll admit was quite dire. But I'll come to those later.

Secondly, it's blissfully quiet. After living for twenty years in the social heart of the Netherlands' second largest city, the joy of being able to sleep uninterrupted for seven hours straight is immeasurable. No testosterone-fuelled cars revving up on the quay outside; no drunken louts hurling chairs, tables, and bicycles into the water; no screaming, shouting, partying students. Bliss! These days, I revel in the whispered silence of the summer evenings on deck, as well as the magical hush of early mornings. I know. I'm giving my age away now, but the difference is heavenly.

Thirdly, my *Vereeniging* is so much easier to maintain in its present position along the side of the dyke. I can wash it, polish it, oil it, and paint it with much more ease now than I

could in my ‘parking bay’ mooring in the Oude Haven. What’s not to like about that?

These three benefits alone compensate substantially for the loss of the company and friends I’ve enjoyed for so long, so much so that I have no real desire to make the great trek into the city. They aren’t, of course, valid reasons for not visiting my old neighbours, a failing which gives me pangs of guilt for not making more effort. I know I want to, and that I should, but it’s so easy to think, “I’ll go next week”, which has become something of a mantra.

Even so, I haven’t forgotten the downsides of my new home; those points that prevent it from being tediously perfect, so perhaps by recording them here, I’ll give myself a mental shove in the Rotterdam direction.

The first disadvantage is the weeping willow below which *Vereeniging* lies. It is a glorious, towering tree, and one of a series along the bank. I loved it when we arrived. I took photos of my barge from all sorts of angles to include its graceful, trailing tendrils that wafted so elegantly in the breeze.

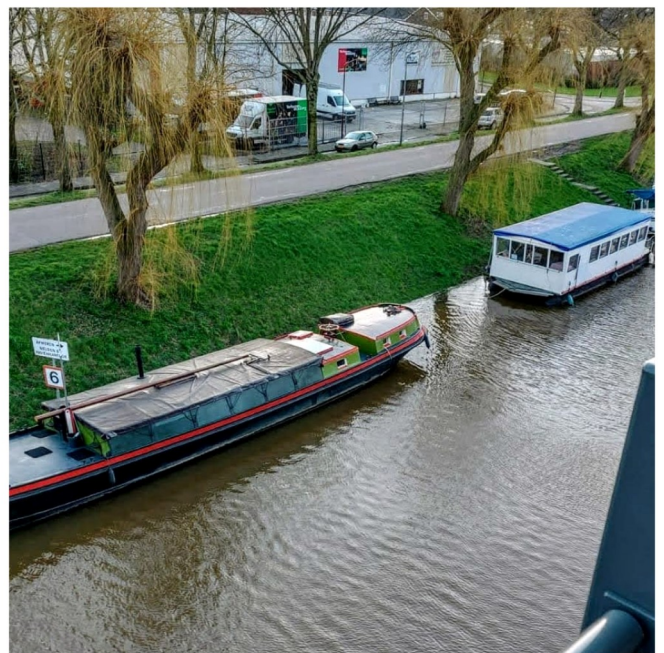
Indeed, all was well and wonderful with the willow (apologies for the alliteration) until November, which was when the leaves started to fall ... and fall ... and fall, only eventually finishing their seasonal purge late in December – after which we had barely a



month of blessed grace before it all started again. February brought visits from storms Dudley, Eunice, and Franklin, all of whom decided the tree hadn’t been properly stripped in the autumn and did their best, not only to denude it still further, but to shred every last leaf and branch they removed all over my barge.

Then, and this was something I didn’t know until I moved, the new leaves started coming through again in March, a bare two months after the last of last year’s crop had fallen! But, and this was another thing I didn’t know, the willow tree produces seeds as well, so it wasn’t long before I was again spending at least a morning every week cleaning the tree’s







fallout from the barge, and I'm still doing it ... in June.

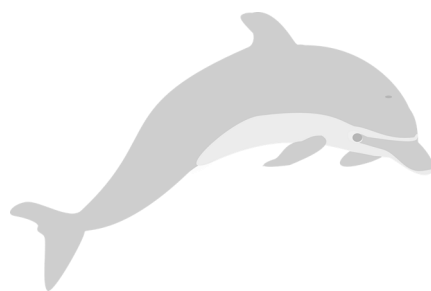
And to accompany the leaves, there are the birds that nest in said willow tree. When they were excitedly procreating in March and April, they cheerfully pooped all over my tarpaulin and panels. Thank goodness that's over now. The results of their procreation, the fledglings, have obviously grown up and left home, for which I'm immensely grateful. There's much to be said for nature's habit of booting out the youngsters once they can fend for themselves. At least their young don't come back or keep needing support.

But I digress. The other thing that came as a brief but unpleasant surprise was the rising of the river water during the abovementioned storms. In Rotterdam, we never had a problem with the river overflowing the harbour walls because we had flood gates that were closed when the water was exceptionally high. In Oudenbosch, we don't have that protection. Mostly, it isn't an issue; we aren't on tidal waters and there is a lock at each end of the system that separates us from the tidal reaches. However, we are still on a river with its own current and it is, as we've discovered, affected by both torrential rain and high winds.

On the day storm Franklin hit, we'd already endured Dudley and Eunice. Thinking we'd had the worst of the battering, we left *Vereeniging* to drive to Zeeland and check on our other boat, *Hennie H*. Well, we'd no sooner arrived than we received a phone call from a neighbour who told us the water in the Mark River had risen high over the bank and that *Vereeniging* was listing, pulled over by her ropes, which were now much too taut.

Hightailing it back again, we had to paddle in knee-high water to the boat we'd only left that morning when everything was relatively normal. Correcting the ropes was easy, but it took two days for the electricity to be restored, and it taught me never to take our benign looking waterway for granted.

So yes, I'm very happy to be on the Mark at Oudenbosch, and I've become lazy about travelling back in both time and distance. Hopefully, the next time I write, we'll have done a couple of trips out on the water to prove we aren't completely tied (sorry again) to our mooring, but for now, I must make a plan to take a train, rather than the boat, north. It's time to come out of hiding and put paid to my increasingly misanthropic tendencies.



VALERIE POORE was born in London, England, and grew up in both north London and the west of Dorset. She moved to South Africa in 1981 but returned to Europe in 2001, which is when she began her love affair with the lovely Dutch flat-bottomed barges (hence the page title). She has lived on a barge in Rotterdam's Oude Haven since then, but summers see her and her partner on the Belgian and French canals. Val teaches writing skills at the local uni for a living, but has written several memoirs about her waterways life. Writing is a lifelong love as well as being her work.

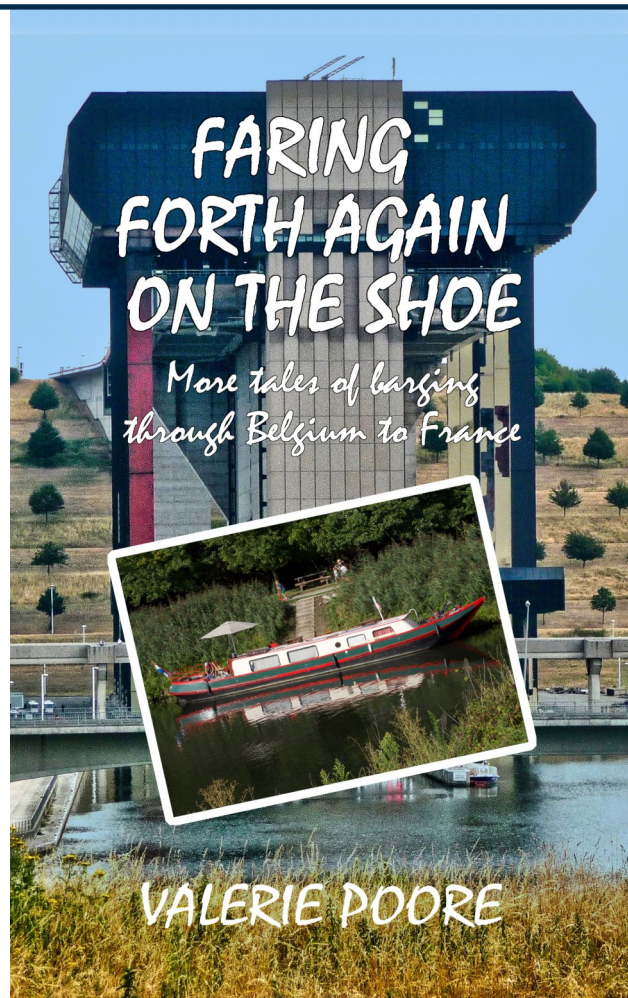
New from Valerie Poore

This travelogue is a sequel to *Faring to France on a Shoe* and is an account of Val Poore's further cruising adventures with her partner, Koos, on their Dutch Barge, *Hennie Ha*, aka the Shoe.

Once again, Val and Koos set off for a summer of 'faring', the word they use to describe travelling by barge as distinguished from cruising and sailing. It is, after all, a very different experience to meander along the canals at a snail's pace and enjoy the waterside scenery, towns and encounters with local people. These are adventures of a gentle kind that take them along the lovely waterways of Belgium, through numerous locks of various shapes and sizes, and into France through a very beautiful back door.

Available via Amazon:

www.amazon.com/Faring-Forth-Again-Shoe-Barging/dp/B093LRK88M



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Food Afloat



Fish Burgers and Chips

By Madison Towson

I'm 12 years old and I live on board my catamaran *Pelican V* with my older sister Bridie, and my two older brothers Finn and Oli, as well as my mum and dad. We have lived on our boat for almost five years. We decided to sell everything we owned in Australia and leave our friends and family behind to live our life on the ocean. Right now, we are in the Mentawai Islands of West

Sumatra, Indonesia.

I love to surf, swim, snorkel, skurf, hydrofoil, play beach volleyball, hangout with friends, and cook.



CRUMBED FISH:

INGREDIENTS

2-4 eggs
Corn flour
Breadcrumbs
Any fillet of fish you like

METHOD

Cut fillets into the best shape for your bun size and pat dry with paper towel.

Prepare bowls of cornflour, beaten eggs, and crumbs.

Start by coating in cornflour, then in egg, and then breadcrumbs.

Fry fillets in oil on high heat for 2-5 minutes until golden brown.

BUNS:

INGREDIENTS

4 cups lukewarm water
3 tbsp. yeast
1 tbsp. oil
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
8 cups flour

METHOD

Mix water, oil, yeast, salt, and sugar in a large bowl.

Allow mix to rest 5-10 mins till yeast has dissolved and is slightly foamy.

Mix in flour and knead with hands till a dough is formed.

Form a ball and allow to rise up to half hour.

Shape dough into whatever bun shape you like then cook in an oven (we use our Webber BBQ) on low for 20-25 minutes.

CHIPS:

INGREDIENTS

2-4 large potatoes
Cornflour

METHOD

Peel potatoes and slice into thickness and length of chips you like.

Lightly coat chips in cornflour.

Fry chips in hot oil until golden and crispy.

COLESLAW:

INGREDIENTS

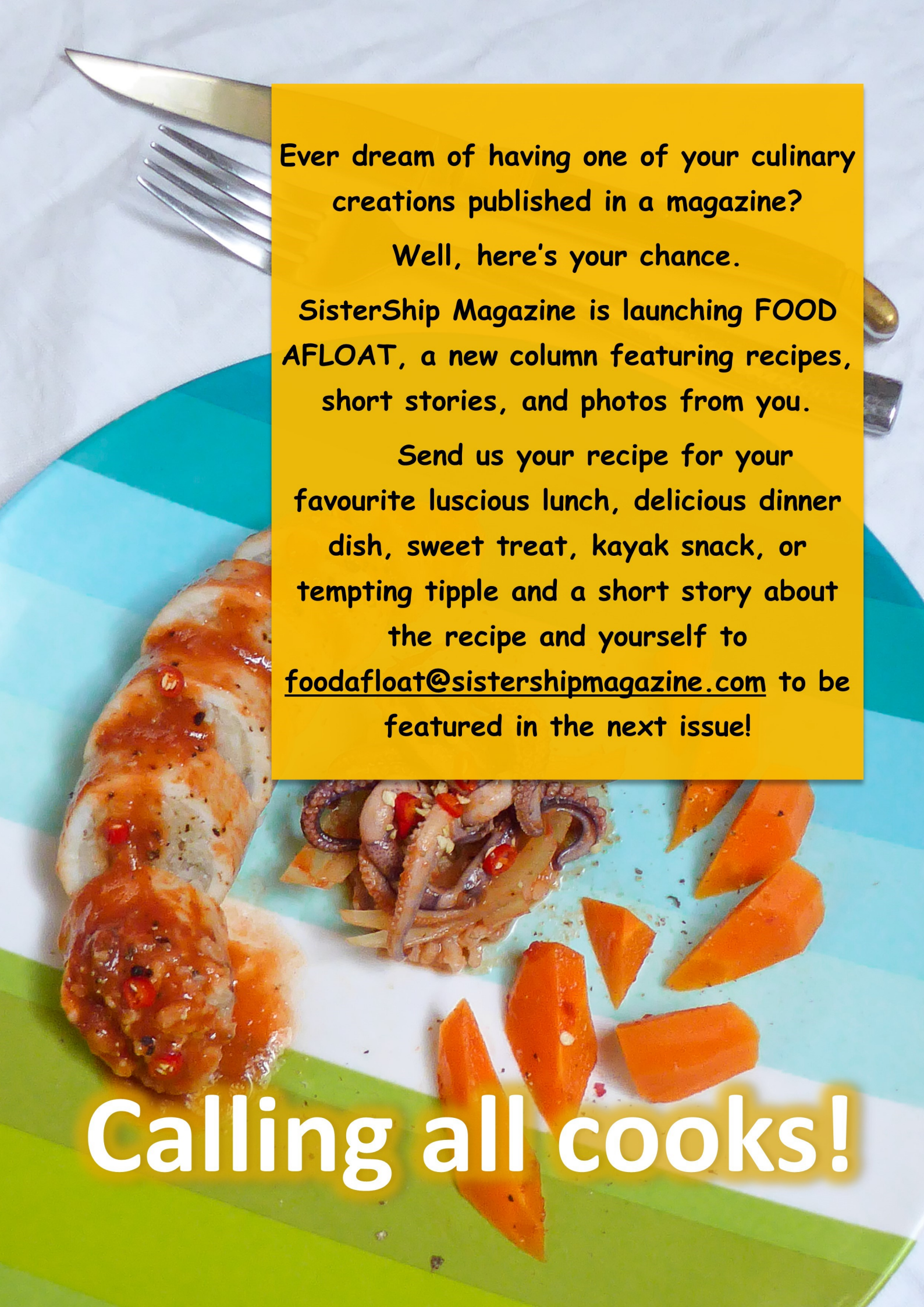
1/2 cabbage, thinly sliced
2 carrots, grated
1/2 beetroot, grated
1 small red onion or 1 large green onion
Mayonnaise
Salt/pepper

METHOD

In a big bowl mix together the thinly sliced cabbage, grated carrot, grated beetroot and chopped onion.

Just before ready to serve add mayonnaise and salt and pepper.

Enjoy!



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On the shelf

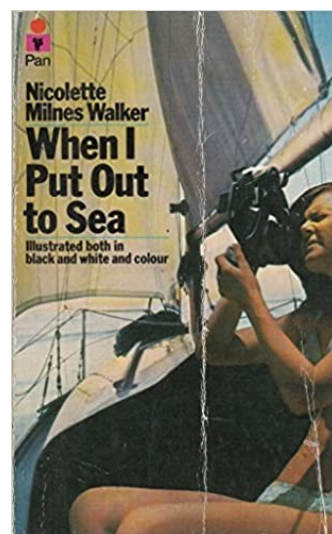
By Shelley Wright

I'm captivated by stories of women crossing oceans, especially those who undertook voyages decades before all the wonderful technology we have at our fingertips today. How many of us would head off without that technology I wonder? The following are some of the books on my shelf written by trail blazing, solo sailing women from the 1970s and onwards...

Nicolette Milnes-Walker (1973) *When I Put Out To Sea*

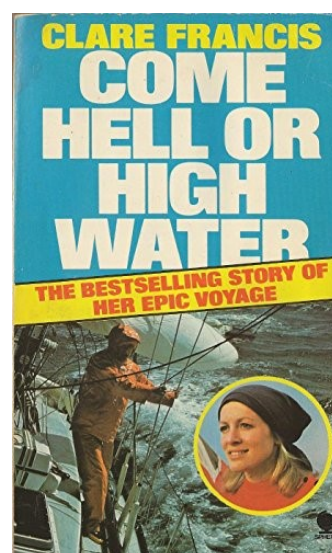
There are some treasured paperbacks in my collection, their pages yellowed by age, *When I Put Out to Sea* is one of them. Nicolette Milnes-Walker sailed non-stop single-handed across the Atlantic at the age of 28. She was the first woman to do so, setting sail on 12 June 1971 from the UK and arriving in Newport, USA, forty-five days later. Nicolette made her crossing in a 30-foot yacht *Aziz*, a 'Pioneer' designed by Van Der Stadt and constructed in Dorset in 1963.

Before deciding to embark on this journey, Nicolette had never sailed a yacht single-handed; her longest solo passage was eight miles in a dinghy! *When I Put Out to Sea* describes the journey from its inception at the International Boat Show in London 1971 (six months before her voyage), the preparations, inevitable foul weather and loneliness once under way, the sense of pride and achievement on arrival in the US, and her journey back in England by ship.



Claire Francis (1977) *Come Hell or High Water*

In June, 1976, Claire Francis set out from Plymouth in her 38-foot Ohlson *Robertson's Golly*, in one of the most gruelling singlehanded boat races, the Observer Royal Western Transatlantic Race (OSTAR). Twenty-nine days later she reached Newport, Rhode Island, in 13th place overall, the first woman to finish the race, and beating the current women's record by three days. Of 125 boats that started the race, only 73 officially finished.



Naomi James (1979) *At One with the Sea*

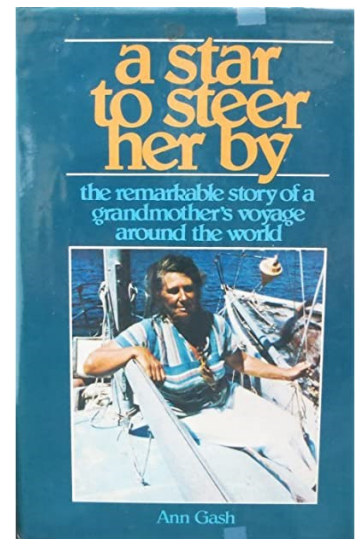
With only two years of sailing experience, New Zealander Naomi James left Dartmouth in September 1977 aboard the 53-foot yacht *Express Crusader*, alone except for a small kitten called Boris. After 30,000 miles and 272 days Naomi became the first woman to sail single-handed, non-stop, around the globe via Cape Horn. Naomi's sequel *At Sea on Land* (1981) shares the shelf with *At One with the Sea*.



Ann Gash (1980) *A Star to Steer Her By*

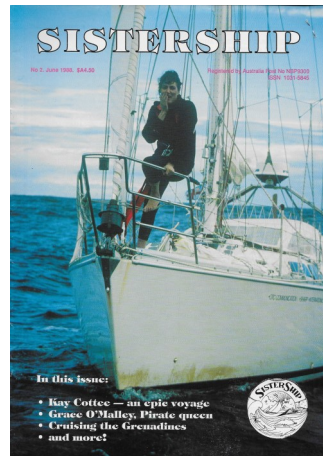
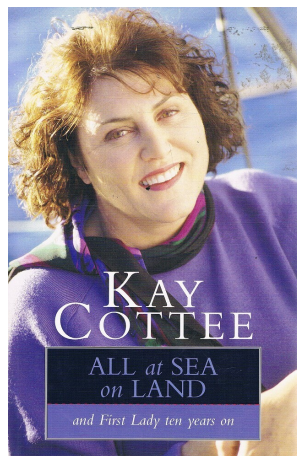
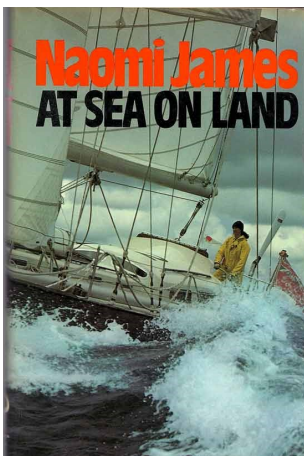
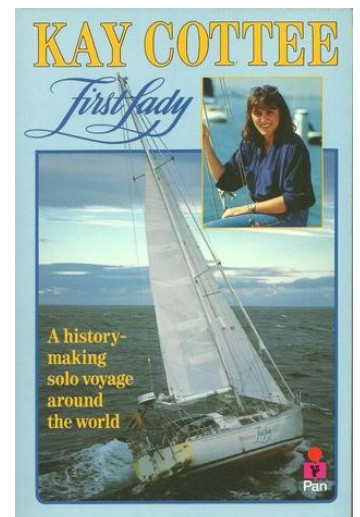
This book is out of print and I paid far more than I care to admit for my copy! I confess I didn't know of Australian Ann Gash and her voyage until a few years ago when *SisterShip Magazine* founder Ruth Boydell mentioned having met her in a marina in South Africa in the 1970s. That then set me on a mission to find a copy of Ann's book.

Ann took up sailing in her 40s after buying a little boat for her children to sail on Pittwater. She taught herself celestial navigation and took classes at night school on coastal navigation. Ann then set sail around the world in 1975 in a 26-foot wooden Folkboat called *Ilimo*, leaving without telling her children where she was going! Ann was not attempting to break any records; she simply went because she wanted to.



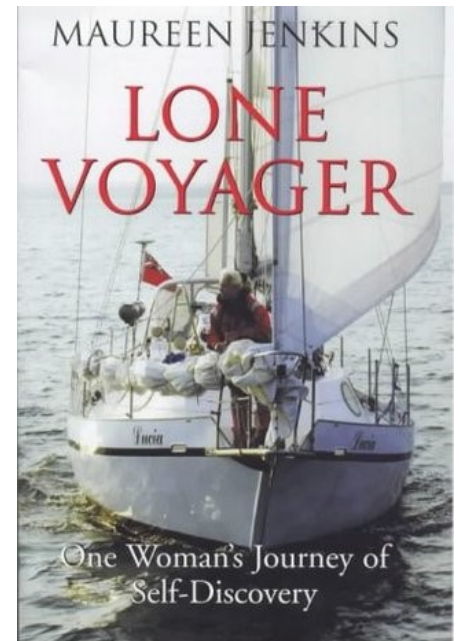
Kay Cottee (1989) *First Lady*

On 29 November 1987, Kay Cottee set off from Sydney Harbour aboard her Cavalier 37 *Blackmore's First Lady*. 189 days later, in June 1988, she sailed back into Sydney, the first woman to have sailed solo, nonstop, and unassisted around the world! Kay is of course is a household name here in Australia (and hopefully around the world!) and a *SisterShip Magazine* favourite. Kay's story appeared in the second issue of the magazine back in 1988 (you can read that article here [SisterShip issue 2](#)) and she wrote a well-wishes letter to us in April 2018 for the relaunch of the new *SisterShip Magazine*. Kay's follow up story, *All at Sea on Land* (1998), sits alongside *First Lady* on my shelf.



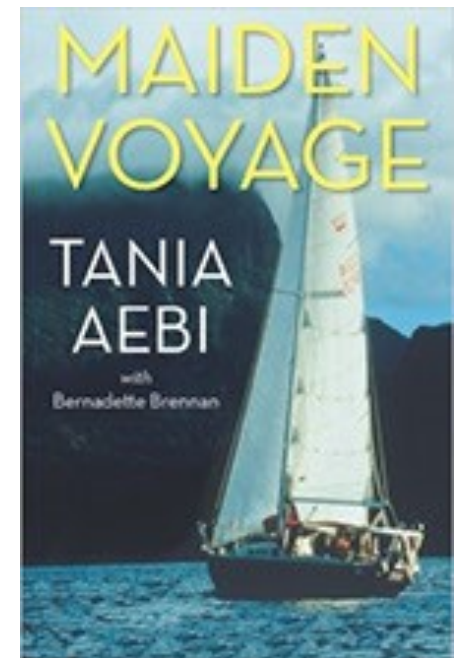
Maureen Jenkins (2000) *Lone Voyager*

After reluctantly agreeing on a sailing lesson in a dinghy while on holiday in Cornwall in 1989, 44-year old Maureen Jenkins was enthralled with sailing and determined to buy a small yacht of her own. The end of an unhappy marriage saw Maureen juggling divorce with the build of her dream boat, a replica of Joshua Slocum's *Spray*. Maureen completed the build and sailed *Lucia* solo across the Atlantic, the only competitor in a rally to commemorate Joshua Slocum's voyage in 1895 to compete the crossing.



Tania Aebi (1990) *Maiden Voyage*

Tania Aebi's father issued her an ultimatum – go to college or sail around the world alone. In 1985, at the age of 18, she set sail from the docks of South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan aboard her Contessa 26, *Varuna*, with little knowledge and only a cat for company. Tania crossed the Caribbean, the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and the North Atlantic. Her journey took her to 23 countries and covered 27,000 miles, during which time she faced loneliness, homesickness, foul weather, and a collision with a tanker. Tania returned to New York City in November 1987, aged 21.

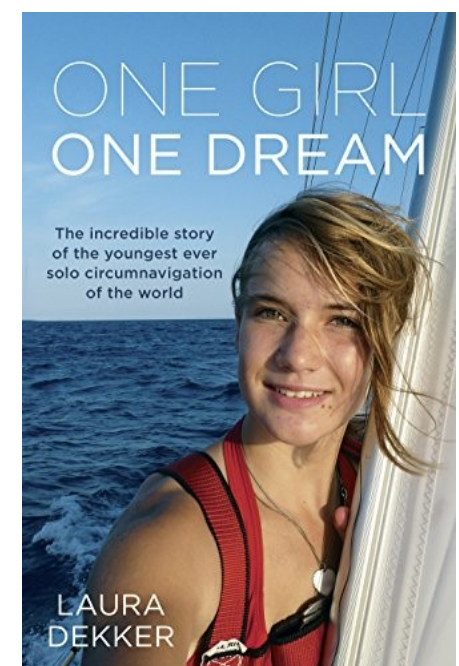


Laura Dekker (2013) *One Girl One Dream*

With a foreword by Tania Aebi.

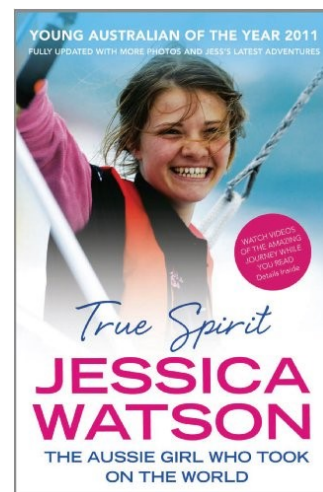
Sailing was in Laura Dekker's DNA. Born to a sailing family who were in New Zealand at the time of her birth, later sailing back to the Netherlands, Laura remained with her father after her parents separated. Her first boat was optimist dinghy bought for her 6th birthday. When she was 13 she sailed a Hurley 700 single-handed to England.

At the age of 14 she was determined to sail around the globe. Laura Dekker's plans were not without controversy, with numerous court cases and even the Dutch Prime Minister weighing in. At one stage she lied about her age and flew to the Caribbean to attempt to buy a boat suitable for a circumnavigation. Eventually with financial help from family she bought a cheap and neglected 33-year-old Jeanneau Gin Fizz she renamed *Guppy*, and together they made history. Laura did set out at the age of 14, completing her journey aged 16.



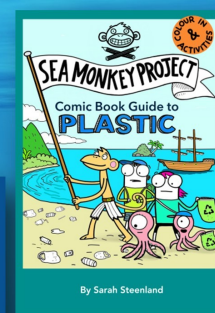
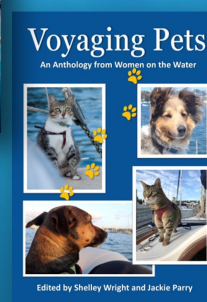
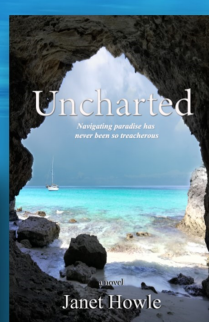
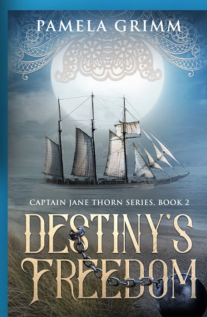
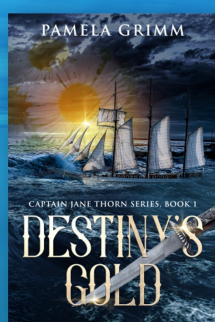
Jessica Watson (2010) *True Spirit*

From the age of 12 Jessica Watson was determined she wanted to sail around the world. Inspired after reading Jessie Martin's book *Lionheart*, Jessica's own voyage nearly didn't happen as she collided with a bulk carrier on a test sail from Brisbane to Sydney prior to her circumnavigation. The incident sparked much debate over whether Jessica was too young and inexperienced to attempt such a journey. Her boat, a S&S 34 named *Ella's Pink Lady*, was repaired and Jessica set off from Sydney Harbour on 18th October 2009 at the age of 16, completing her circumnavigation on 15th May 2010.



Lisa Blair (2020) *Facing Fear*

And of course, no bookshelf would be complete without Lisa Blair's new book *Facing Fear*, the story of her first record breaking circumnavigation of Antarctica in 2017 and dismasting 900 nautical miles south of Cape Town. A remarkable story from a remarkable woman. With a second circumnavigation of Antarctica (having smashed the speed record by ten days!) now under her belt, hopefully another book is in the pipeline!



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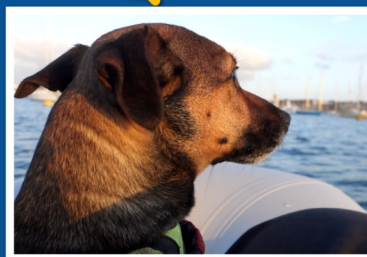
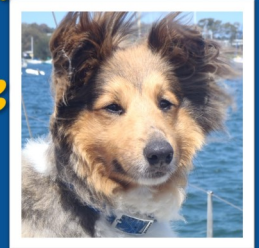
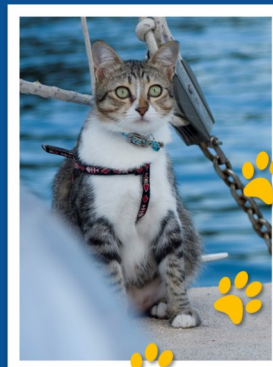
By Deb Akey

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"If you live on the water, or want to imagine what such a life would feel like, you will love this book.... like unwrapping a chocolate to savor...one at a time."
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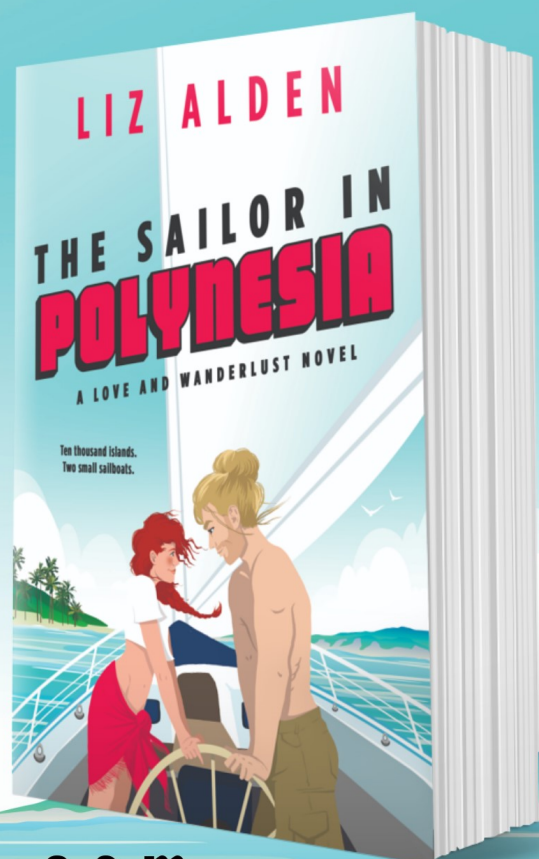
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Book Reviews

Tacking Through Life

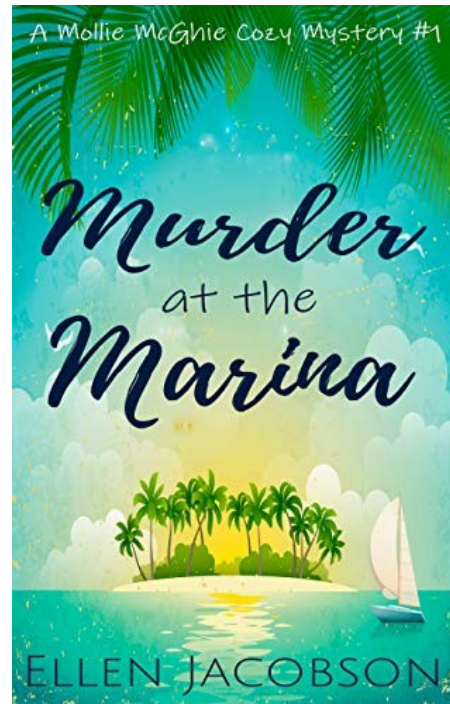
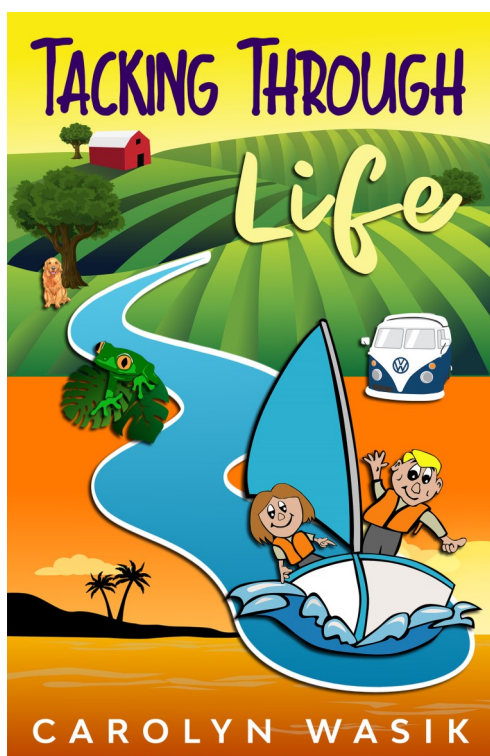
by Carolyn Wasik

Published by *SisterShip Press* 2020.
Available from Amazon and all good book stores.

170 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0648783305

Review © Valerie Poore 2022.

I enjoyed this memoir very much. The author writes in a cheerful, honest and down-to-earth way about the highs and lows of life on the ocean waves. She and her indomitable Danish husband Gert have some great adventures, both on land and sea, although it is clear quite early on that Carolyn prefers the land travelling to rocking about on a sailboat. All the same, she's spunky enough to adapt to sailing life, which is certainly more than I would be. As a canal boat owner, the book confirms my preference for inland cruising. It's a lovely travelogue, though, and great fun to read. Highly recommended!



Murder at the Marina

by Ellen Jacobson

Published by Ellen Jacobson 2018.
Available from Amazon

245 pages, ISBN-13: 978-1732160217

Review © Valerie Poore 2022.

Being a boating person myself, I bought this book on the recommendation of our own *SisterShip* magazine and read it during a recent holiday. It's a fun, fast plot and the characters are cheerful and very likeable. I was just slightly puzzled by the heroine's job as a seeker of alien abduction stories, which didn't seem to come into the story much. The real mystery in *Murder at the Marina* was about who killed the boat broker in the harbour where the heroine and her husband have bought a run down sailboat. However, maybe there will be a sequel where alien abductions play a more important role. In any event, it was a good page-turner and a perfect holiday read. I'd recommend it to anyone longing for the smell of the sea and the delights of marina life.



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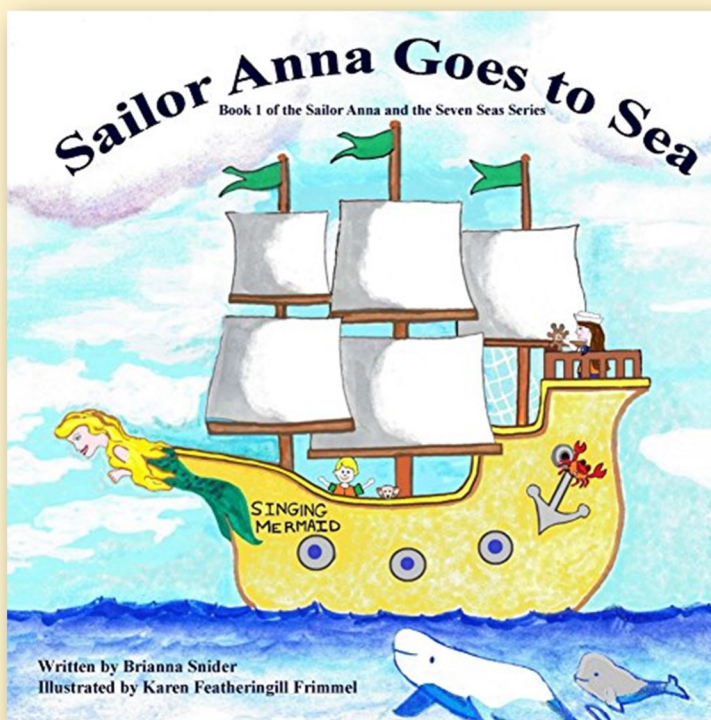
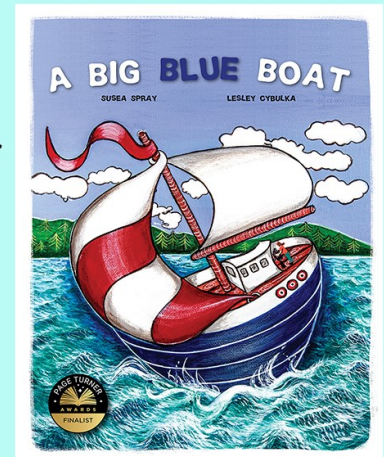
'I loved your story...

I can just imagine a small child sitting on the knee of a parent or grandparent, having the book read to them and enjoying it immensely... From a teacher's perspective, and thinking about literacy skills, the repetition is great, as it helps children access reading of some key words along with the adult reader.'

(Dr Kathryn Macfarlane (teacher and children's author))

Available on Amazon

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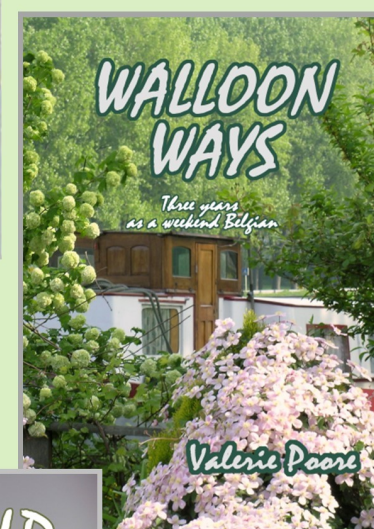
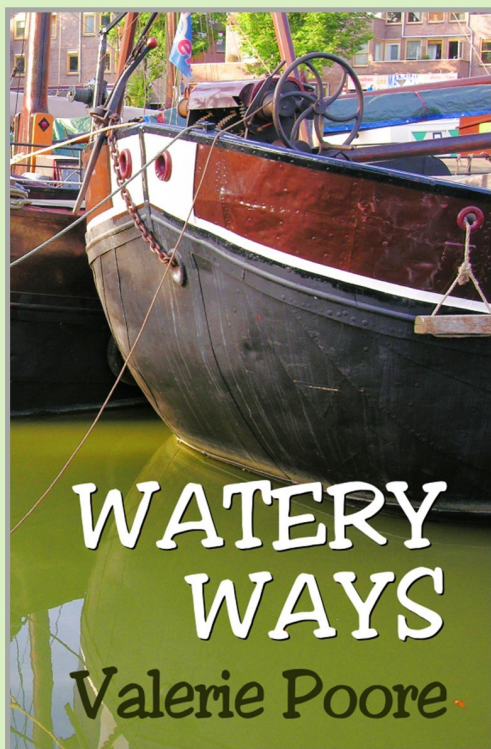
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Sailor Anna loves sailing the seven seas.

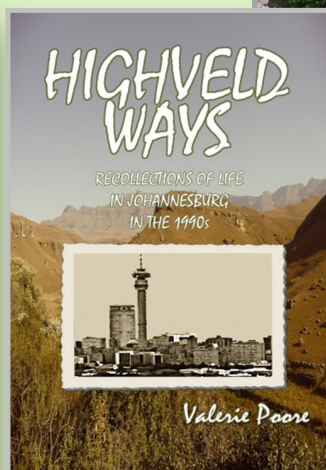
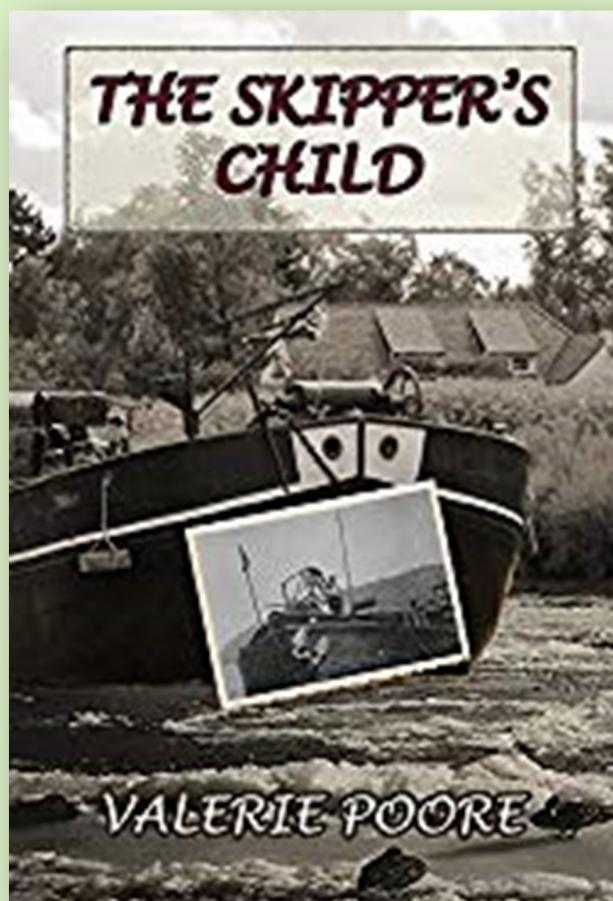
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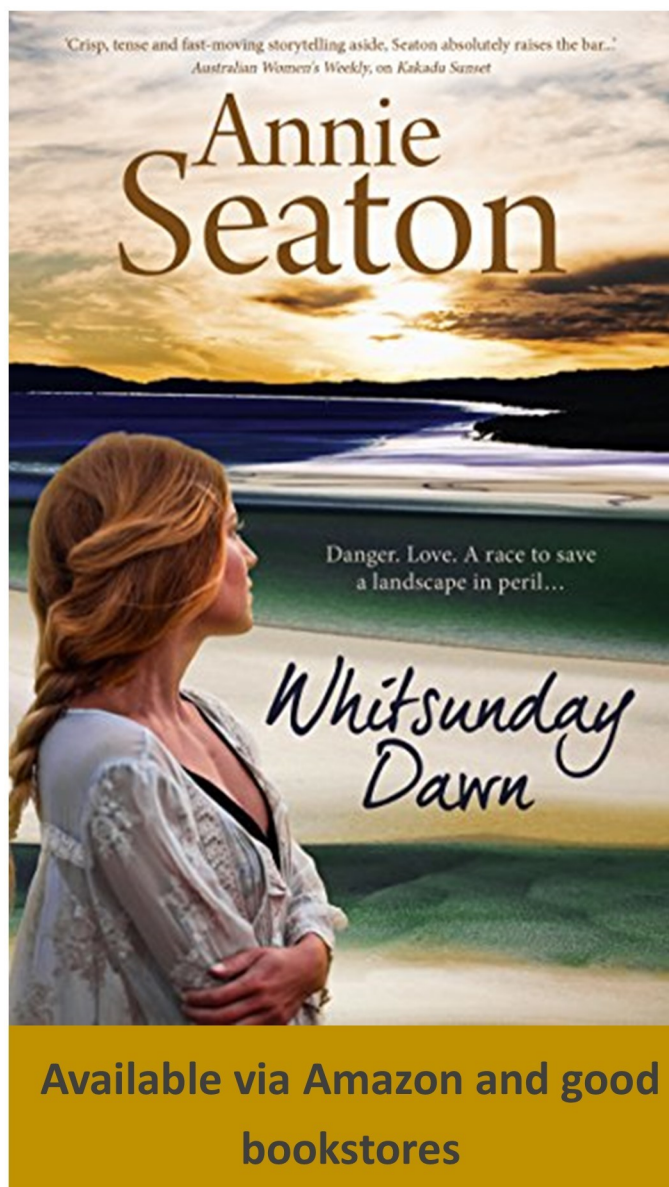
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