

NEWS FROM THE PACIFIC POWER CATS SHED



| story **PETER BRADY**

It's been an 'interesting' time at Pacific Power Cats since my last article. We've launched a new boat, shifted sheds, had illness as well as an accident and all of this while maintaining progress on our other new build the Pilothouse 52 with the prospect of a very interesting and unique project for 2019.

The illness part was me when after months of being off colour, I found out that I had been passing small kidney stones for most of this time when I passed what must have been a larger stone one afternoon at work. Lorma took me to the local medical centre where I was then put into an ambulance and taken to the emergency department at the PA hospital. The accident was Lorma who after putting me into the ambulance, went back to the workshop to make sure everything had been shut down properly and while checking over the boats, fell down a floor hatch in the dark and ruptured her Archilles tendon. By herself and not exactly sure what she had done other than not being able to put any weight on her foot, she crawled off the boat, down the stairs and into the office. Luckily

our daughter Chloe rang while she was sitting in the office working out what to do next and came straight over to pick her up and take her to the same emergency department as me. So there we were for the next six hours as they worked out whether to keep us in or send us home and it was as we headed home in a cab at close to midnight that the ramifications began to set in of losing Lorma from the workforce only three weeks out from launching the 41 Sedan. As anyone who has worked with us knows this is the time she really comes into her own putting together the final interior finishes and being involved in the detailing. Luckily we had a handy replacement in Chloe who has spent her whole life around us and boats and has been helping Lorma at launch time for the last 10 years in between running

the office and raising her three children. It was also fortuitous that it was Lorma's left leg that was in a cast because both our cars and Chloe's are automatics and she was able to keep driving, so she swapped roles with Chloe to look after our youngest grandchild. The silver lining in this cloud was for Luca who thought all his Christmases had come at once, having Granny all to himself every day. I still had a few small stones to pass, but I finally knew what had been making me so unwell and that there was an end in sight which was a relief.

We launched the Pathfinder Sedan 41 in late November named *Cee-eem* after the owner's names Colin and Michele. She spent a week in Moreton Bay undergoing sea trials and final detailing before heading south to her home in the Gippsland Lakes area in Victoria via the inside passage from Brisbane down to the Gold Coast. Our mechanical fitter, Rod, and I went on the first leg of the trip to keep an eye on the running gear and boat systems and also to guide them through a passage that although it is not a great distance, can be quite tricky for those who have not done it before, especially with the added stress of driving a brand new boat. They had to wait a couple of days in Southport for the wind and seas to settle, but after friends Allan and Rosemary joined them, they headed out across the Southport Bar on December 1 on their way south with a perfect 15-

Cee-eem's clean contemporary lines.

20kts of breeze behind them on way to Coffs Harbour. After an overnight stay in Coffs, the next day they were on the way to Port Stephens with 20-25kts behind them and the boat cruising at 15-16kts (2500-2600rpm) When the breeze swung to 20kts on the bow, they were still able to comfortably maintain the same speed, using only 40L per hour total of fuel through all conditions and from this Colin and Michele were confident that they had a very capable long-range offshore cruiser.

The fuel economy was exactly what we had predicted, providing them with an 850nm range at this speed with a 10% reserve and confirming the results of the sea trials where we had easily met the revs required by Yanmar to sign off on the engines. These results also confirmed we could go a little wider in the hulls, yet still achieve the same type of figures we had with the early narrower hulls if we kept the boat simpler, lighter and with less windage.

The next day they left Port Stephens for Broken Bay in a 10-15 south easterly and a 3m swell for another pleasant offshore run and once there, spent a couple of days cruising and enjoying Broken Bay and the Hawkesbury River area before unforeseen circumstances forced them to leave the boat in Sydney and fly home to Victoria. As soon as he was able, Colin flew back to Sydney with friends Allan and Geoff, who had more boating experience he knew he could rely on during the potentially more difficult final legs. On December 15 they headed off to Bermagui with a 10-15kt northerly and a 3m swell and Colin reported that it was a long but comfortable day until as is common in this area they could see and feel a southerly front coming in between Montague Island and Bermagui. By the time they arrived at the entrance to Bermagui Harbour, it was blowing 30kts from the south with heavy rain and visibility down to around a 100m, so rather than wait out the front at sea, one of the crew

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was volunteered to stand out on the bow to guide them in and in typical fashion, 10 minutes after they tied up, the rain stopped and the sun came out. The next day *Cee-eem* was headed for Gabo Island in 10-15kt from the north and after this short run, anchored on the south side of the island, put the tender in the water

and went ashore to have a look around the beautiful but rugged and windswept island. The final leg was to Lakes Entrance and home where they found perfect conditions to cross the bar having expected and been readying themselves for a crossing that can be very testing and has claimed many lives in the past.

After completing such a long delivery trip so effortlessly, the Pathfinder 41 Sedan's long-range coastal cruising credentials have now been proven and with it confirmed both ours and their expectations. With her two bedrooms and bathrooms down stairs and minimal fit out, *Cee-eem* boasts the best visibility from the helm we have ever achieved, making this a very easy boat to drive. Her open plan minimal yet stylish layout works extremely well and creates a very relaxed atmosphere in combination with three sliding doors which when all open, make a seamless flow between the aft deck and the galley-saloon. Back home again, Colin and Michele are now enjoying cruising the Gippsland Lakes before planning their next adventure.

At the same time as *Cee-eem* was heading south, we began the dreaded job of packing up our workshop, getting rid of nine years of offcuts and bits that we thought were 'too good to throw out' but had never found a use for and the worst part of all, cleaning up. The shift was brought on as part of The Yard Brisbane's re-organisation of their facility with the gradual move of marine industry tenants in to the larger 300-600 tonne travel lift area. Setting up a boatbuilding shed that is smaller than the one you have had for the last few years is not a task for the faint hearted because everyone has to have their own bench space, there is a joinery workshop to set up as well as vacuum tables, moulds, offices and the all-important smoko room. Along



FROM TOP: The open plan layout and flow from saloon to aft deck – a perfect place to relax.

Superb visibility from the helm makes for a very easy boat to drive.

The owner's cabin is a perfect illustration of the interior's minimal but classy style.



No aft deck roof supports provide an even greater feeling of space.

with setting up all this gear there is also work flow and efficiency to consider as well as a 52 x 22ft power catamaran to fit in with sufficient room to work around. When we rolled off the extra hours put in to finish and launch the boat, we moved straight into shifting and cleaning which unfortunately coincided with the extreme heat we have had this summer, so by the time we knocked off for the Christmas break, everyone was utterly exhausted. Still we were all determined to have it done by the break because it is so much better to come back fresh to work on the boat rather than having to shift and clean.

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The new year not only brought everyone back refreshed, but has also had us back planning for a project that we had spent a lot of time on during the latter half of last year. This project was in the form of a Wharram Pahi 63 for Sea Mercy, a charity that is dedicated to helping the Pacific Islands not only in times of natural disasters but also by using the boats as floating health clinics and taking medical staff out to the islands to undertake essential health services. To date they have been using private boats on loan, however their long term plan led in Australia by Patrick

Whetter is to build a fleet of vessels including a 150ft mothership designed by the internationally renowned Gerard Dykstra and hopefully up to six modified Pahi 63's. Patrick and Sea Mercy chose the Pahi 63 because it reflected the Pacific Island's indigenous style and provided a value for money solution by using size rather than complexity to create its offshore capability. I was first introduced to Patrick and Sea Mercy mid-way through last year by Mark Phelps who had known him through the superyacht world and who also had a personal interest in Sea Mercy. As soon as we began



TOP: Leaving the Gold Coast – the low wash indicates how fuel efficient these hulls are.

ABOVE: Gabo Island provides a rugged backdrop.

discussing the project, a couple of things became obvious: the first was the plywood construction which was specified in the plans they had purchased from James Wharram. This would be a bit of a liability in the tropics in regards to maintenance and complexity and whilst the materials were cheaper, this type of construction is very labour intensive and so is expensive to have professionally built in a developed country. The second issue was that the communal style internal layout would not be suitable to accommodate doctors, nurses, plus skipper and crew with any comfort or privacy. This of course meant a fairly comprehensive re-design as Sea Mercy also

wanted diesel engines and a number of other modern conveniences and safety features that would make the boat more suitable to its task. In our many discussions over the following months the greatest challenge was to find a way to keep the feel and philosophy of the Wharram type, yet make it low maintenance and more practical. The original design was conceived in a different time for amateur builders so what Sea Mercy needed was a 21st Century version and from this was born what we called *The Spirit of Wharram*. Lorma briefly met James Wharram in 1994 when he and his

Pahi 63 were on the hardstand in Brisbane alongside a 47ft motorsailing catamaran we had designed. We had just fitted a new rig that we had designed and built to *Kia Orana* that we believe was the first carbon-fibre mast with integrated in mast-furling in the world. James Wharram came over for a look and asked Lorma what the rig was and when she explained its background, his comment was “that’s an elegant piece of engineering” so we are fairly sure he would approve of us applying the same principles to modernising his Pahi design, just as we are sure that he would be pleased with the boat’s intended use.

As the discussions with Patrick moved along and while going through the plans, I noticed that the hulls were effectively asymmetric around their fore and aft centreline, therefore they could be moulded in composites on the modular principle using simple MDF moulds similar to what we had been working with as part of my DECKIT system. In fact I have been able to adapt the design to use most of the DECKIT developments like bonded flanges and have even gone further with some new details and ideas.

As part of our DECKIT System we have also been working more and more with foam cores made from recycled PET plastic and this project seemed the ideal

fit to take this further. Much has been made in recent years of the quantity of plastic that has ended up in the Pacific Ocean in the form of pollution and this seemed the perfect opportunity to take plastics into the Pacific area in a positive way that will help the islands, rather than clogging up their waterways and killing marine life. The opportunity to use the recycled material in a positive way added that little bit of extra incentive for us to be involved in the the project, as both Lorma and I have tried a number of times to use our skills and enthusiasm in projects like this starting way back in 1977 when we both tried to join Volunteer Service Abroad. At time of print, we are working through the final details with Patrick from Sea Mercy and Mark Phelps who is now working for The Yard Brisbane as their International Development Manager. The Yard Brisbane have put their weight behind the project with Mark being the perfect liaison officer between ourselves and Sea Mercy as he will literally be a minute away from dropping in to discuss progress or any other details.

So it looks like another busy year as usual with the Pilothouse 52 to finish and the strong possibility we will show it at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show, then all going well we will commence the *Spirit of Wharram* along with some other interesting projects on the table.



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