



REFLECTIONS 150 YEARS

Bill Hogan

Bill Hogan: I started with dinghies on the River Thames. A friend of mine lent me a 20-foot Vivacity a couple of times, sailing in the Solent. I can remember one time running aground in the Solent. We were miles from shore, and I saw a bloke lying in his tinny having a snooze. I said to him, "Where's the deep water, mate?" He said, "Well, back where you came from". I said, "Oh, thanks!" So that was one of my first sailing trips with my wife.

Ian Macintosh: But sailing in England, there's currents and tides and weather. It's always very challenging, isn't it?

BH: Well, look, I was that dumb and stupid in those days. I had a road map. I knew when the tide came in because you couldn't get out if it was gone out. And we went out one day and said, "Oh, there's the Isle of Wight over there, but it's a bit foggy. You can't really see it very well". About 10 minutes later, the Isle of Wight tooted at me! It was the *Queen Mary* coming out. And I thought, "Oh, I'm fine, I'm across its bows". Little realising that the Solent bent. And he tooted and we were on a collision course. I did turn back about 50 metres off his bow. I thought, this isn't a good place to be.

IM: So a 43-year career at the Sydney Amateurs almost came unstuck before you got here?

BH: Before I even started, yes, that's right.

IM: When did you come to Australia?

BH: 1975, very early January...we had to come in through Perth Airport because Darwin was closed because of (Cyclone) Tracy. Got to Sydney. First day, I walked across the Harbour Bridge. I thought this place looks all right. Wasn't too long after that I bought a very old, beaten-up 16-foot dinghy, an old timber one called *Maybe*. It was apparently quite good in its day. But somebody had put a mast off a 12-footer on it, which was probably good for me. But we only, my mate and myself, used to only go out when it was blowing about 30 knots. And off we'd go up and down the Parramatta River.

IM: But you'd arrived in Sydney, obviously, with the sailing bug?

BH: Oh, probably. And when I saw the water here, it certainly had it.

IM: So within four or five years of arriving here, you joined the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club.

BH: Yeah, four years.

IM: And what brought you to the amateurs in particular?

BH: Somebody told me they were one of the cheapest clubs on the Harbour. I don't know about that, but I believed him. So in those days...well, still the same, I guess...you were supposed to be proposed and seconded. And I didn't know anybody in the club. So I rang up and made enquiries. And Vic Dibben was in charge at the time, and he said, "Oh, we do have a category called a provisional member." I said, "Oh, well, can I apply for that?" And he said, "Yep. And after a year, you'll either be accepted as a full member or you won't."

IM: Did they ever reject anybody, do you know?

BH: Not to my knowledge, no.

IM: It'd be very hard to be rejected by Sydney Amateurs.

BH: Look, in the rules, last time I looked, I couldn't even find the word 'provisional' member anyway. But it may be in there somewhere.

IM: It's uncanny how often in our *Reflections* interviews, Vic Dibben gets a mention. Invariably because he's tapped somebody on the shoulder to be a flag officer or a starter or something like that.

BH: Probably.

IM: Vic would have been one of the prominent members of those days. Who else do you remember from those early days?

BH: Well, look, you see, I was really a very bad club member in those early days because I didn't go back to the clubhouse very often.

IM: Your boat was up the river, wasn't it?

BH: My boat was up the river. I started up the river, came down, did the race and sailed back home again. And in a little 22-footer, that was a full day's work anyway. So I really didn't know many (members). I knew Bob Lawler by sight and a couple of people like that. And then as things went on, and different commodores came, you sort of met the commodores. It wasn't until quite a bit later that I, if you like, became a more functional club member.

IM: Well, that antisocial nature of the time worked very well because your sailing record is one of the most illustrious of Sydney Amateurs history. At least 14 gold medals, two Kelly Cups and a number of other accolades, including Australian and state titles in the S80. I want to just talk to you a bit about racing first because victories, that many victories, that

consistently, don't just happen. You've got to have a good crew, you've got to have a good boat, good sails. Tell me how you went about setting your boats up.

BH: Each boat's different. I basically owned three. The first one was a little Van de Stadt, and that was when we had five divisions and it was in Division 5 with 20-footers, and things of a similar size, and the numbers were shrinking.

IM: This was *Rama*?

BH: Yep, this was *Rama*. So, the first two years were Division 5 and even the first race, you know, I knew nothing about racing and at that time there was a postal strike, so they hadn't been able to send out the racing books. And I said, that's all right, I'll pick it up the morning of the race, I'll come down a bit early. So I picked up the book. Well, I thought I was going to pick up a bit of paper that told me where I was going, but in fact they gave me a whole book and I'm supposed to read this in the next 15 minutes before the start. "Now, where's the start line", says I? I didn't have a clue. So I said, "Oh, probably over at Clark Island, it's a Nor'easter". So I said, "Get that new spinnaker pole out, we're late. We'd better get the kite up to get over there", which we did. We found the start line, with the spinnaker up, going through it the wrong way. Which was fine, because luckily nobody else was starting at that minute. But by the time we got it all down and turned around...I'd been lucky enough to get a list of people that I was racing against, and I saw them disappearing, so I tried to follow them, but that doesn't work very well, trying to follow yachts that are tacking all over the place. Anyway, we worked out Lady Bay was the first mark, and they all came back together up there. So that particular boat, the first two years, I was really just hanging on, learning. After that, I actually brought the boat home and extended the keel (by) a foot because I reckoned it wasn't pointing high enough. And I brought the chain plates in about nine inches on either side. And I did that in the front yard out here. That stupid big tree wasn't there then. And the Division 4 rep came around, John Tyler. He said, "Oh, look, your Division 5's joining Division 4. I wanted to have a look at your boat and see how you're going, to try and work out a handicap for you". I said, "Well, here it is". He said, "Oh, it hasn't got a keel or a mast". I said, "No...but". He said, "But we start in three weeks' time". I said, "Yeah, we'll have to get a move on". So we did. He didn't think we'd ever make it, but we did. The boat was at least half an hour faster round the track. So then I invested in an old Etchells kite. Now, on a little 22-foot boat, an Etchells kite actually goes from the mast head down to the water in front of the bow. So really, it would just get more and more sail up.

IM: So even at that early stage of your racing career, you were upgrading and innovating and experimenting.

BH: All the time, all the time, never stopped.

IM: And so...you made all that sound a bit slapstick, but the reality is within a couple of years, you'd won a Division 5 gold medal, a Division 4 gold medal, and the Kelly Cup, all in a little 22-footer.

BH: Yeah.

IM: So you must have been doing something right?

BH: Well, I think the club actually did something right. The year of the Kelly Cup, they decided to use computers to predict a handicap for all the fleet, which it's very, very difficult to do a Kelly Cup handicap. And on that particular day, the wind died in the middle of the race, but the tide was screaming in, and we were all heading towards Lady Bay. Well, the people that knew, (and) I myself, knew the middle of the harbour was the slackest tide. So we basically got becalmed in the slack tide and the other guys were sailing their hearts out, going backwards on either side.

IM: It was like sailing in England.

BH: Yeah, probably. And if you knew what...the tides in Sydney Harbour are a big advantage if you know where you're going.

IM: That was Bill Gale's credo.

BH: Yeah.

IM: You had to understand the tides.

BH: Yep, exactly. And so I actually credit that Kelly Cup with being becalmed in the right place, probably for half an hour.

IM: So after *Rama* came *Hotspur*...an S80. You told me earlier it was less than a year old when you got it.

BH: Yep.

IM: Did you simply go out and sail it as it was, or did you already start upgrading it before you began the racing?

BH: Oh, no. All the gear was pretty new. I co-owned it - I couldn't have afforded it on my own - with another guy, Noel Plumb. And basically, we used what was there and tried to learn how to sail it, because it was completely different. But you really have to sail an S80 like a big dinghy.

IM: Did you have four or five crew?

BH: Normally five. In most of the state titles, it was stipulated as a crew of five. You used to have to make them work. And in fact, most common call going upwind, you could see a darkie coming and I'd say to the crew, "It's up to you guys, you lean or we broach". And if we didn't broach at least once in a race, you hadn't been trying. So that was the way we used to go out, to try.

IM: Was it pretty much the same crew all the way through?

BH: The crew stabilised after about three years. Had a mad Irish girl on the bow; her Swiss partner; next door neighbour Adrian, was the four basic crew. The other owner used to come sometimes and not others. He did a lot early on, of course, but then he was busy doing other things. So he said, I'll just come for state titles.

IM: But you raced that week in, week out for what? 10 years?

BH: 25 years.

IM: 25 years?

BH: I had that boat for 25 years, yep.

IM: And won numerous gold medals, another Kelly Cup, Australian title, state titles...

BH: And one national.

IM: Tell me about your preparation of that boat. Let's start with sails. You normally think of a champion sailor as having all the latest go-fast sails. Nowadays, those very slick black sails. But that's not the way you approach it, is it?

BH: Couldn't afford all that stuff. So I bought virtually new, but second-hand, set of sails. When I say a set, a number one and a main were the most important sails on those boats. I bought a set that had just done one championship. And then wrapped them around four-inch plastic piping and kept them either in the garage, or sometimes on the boat, but only used it for Kelly Cups and state titles. And so a set of sails would be good for about five years...allowing for the fact that you're only doing about six, maybe six days sailing a year, with your best sails up.

IM: You only brought them out for the big races?

BH: Only the big ones, yeah. So then I did actually have to buy a new set after about five years. And we used them then in the same fashion, only the big races. So the ordinary club sails, they were getting pretty tatty, but patched them up, stitched them up, whatever. Kept them going as best we could.

IM: How much tweaking could you do to an S80 under the class rules?

BH: Very little. And as a measurer, I can remember being, or upsetting a number of sailmakers. Because, for example, they had black bands top and bottom of the mast and the boom. And one particular sailmaker made sails that were longer than the gap. And I said, "No, I won't pass it". He said, "Well, the sail's all right. You've got your lines back and forth". I said, as a competitor, I couldn't see the top of his mast three feet away from me to see whether he's pulling it up to the black band or not. (So) I said, "You get the sail so it can't go above the black band, and I'll pass it". We used to have some arguments.

IM: The racing was hard?

BH: It was close. And that's why. Because they were essentially the same (boats). There was an issue with the class. The early boats were all made in WA with cast iron keels.

IM: Swarbricks?

BH: Yep. The moulds were brought over to New South Wales by a group. And they started experimenting putting lead keels on them. And that really broke the class, to be honest, because it meant they were different.

IM: Two very different types of boat?

BH: Yeah. And one of the class rules said that the keel had to be uniform density throughout. So the first ones they made were solid lead keels. And unless the wind was blowing 30 knots, they were as slow as buggery. But when it was blowing 30 knots, they still had a number one up and we were down to a number four.

IM: Well, you still raced in 30 knots in those days, didn't you?

BH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

IM: Not so much now?

BH: I've been out in 40 knots.

IM: But races now won't start over...

BH: Not now. No, no. But we used to in those days. Even the club races.

IM: Now, we've talked about the sails. What about preparation of the boat? It was winter. Did you do a lot of work on a boat in winter?

BH: No, no. We sailed. Kept it in a bag, rubbed it down. When I didn't have a bag, or even when I did, we still rubbed the boat pretty regularly to keep it clean...and the idea was that by the time you got to a state title, there was virtually no anti-foul left on the boat. It was smooth as...but you had to keep polishing it.

IM: You used a mooring bag for many, many years?

BH: Oh, yeah, on and off. I had them. As I had the boat for 25 years. Probably had a couple of boat bags that might have covered 15 years.

IM: So you'd put a bit of chlorine in the water?

BH: Yeah.

IM: How long did you go between antifoulings?

BH: Ah...minimum two years in those days. Later on, up to five years between anti-fouls.

IM: But you still rubbed the hull down regularly?

BH: No, maybe twice a year. That was enough. And I'll tell you how effective the bags were. I could leave the little speedo impeller in the boat and take it out and clean it once a year.

IM: Good heavens! That's remarkable.

BH: That's still what I do even with this (his current boat).

IM: Well, so successful was *Hotspur*, the S80, that at one stage, I think it has to be a club record, you'd notched up 45 consecutive scratch victories. And as Guy Irwin wrote in the club news in 2002, and I quote, "Bill Hogan's amazing run of 45 scratch wins in Division 2 and his S80 *Hotspur* finally came to an end when he was beaten by only 15 seconds by *Lap of the Gods* in the last race of the season. Bill actually seemed quite relieved to be finally beaten. So relieved, in fact, he bought free drinks for all at the bar. Bill has always been a generous person, often buying shouts, but on this day, everybody thought he was high on something. He kept the bar open all afternoon." Do you remember that?

BH: I remember it. Guy was slightly wrong. It wasn't the last race of one season. It was the first race of a new season. And we had done two complete seasons in every race we started. We may have missed one or two for state titles and things when you were given exemptions in those days, but it was the first race coming back of a new season, and I thought, "How the hell are we going to keep this record up?" Obviously, on the handicap, we never did any good in those two years. But the first race we got beaten, and I thought, "Thank Christ, the monkey's off my back. Let's have a beer, boys. I'm shouting". And I was lucky, really. It was the first race of the season. In those days, it wasn't the Opening Regatta. So really, I was very lucky. The bar wasn't overly full, but it cost me about 250 bucks!

IM: Did you get a slightly better handicap as a result?

BH: Didn't help at all (laughs).

IM: They were wise to you by then?

BH: Yeah, I'd blown it. And they did it all by computer anyway.

IM: So in the history of the club, there's been a constant ability to adjust the fleets and the classes to the times. If you go back over 150 years, and it's been the same in our lifetime. I guess the most recent significant change was the introduction of the Super 30s, the sports boats. You became one of those that went into that new class with *Hotspur 2*. Tell me about *Hotspur 2*.

BH: *Hotspur 2* is a MASRM 920. One of the reasons that I went for something...well, you always go a bit bigger, of course...but my poor old back was complaining about the

outboard on the back of the S80, I think. It was quite heavy. So I thought an inboard diesel would be absolute luxury. And it still is. I love it. But it was 30 foot, and supposedly quite quick, and by that stage, the Super 30s had been established and running at the Club for quite a few years. So I thought that was a natural upgrade. And so we did that for quite some years. And we were fairly competitive.

IM: Did it occur to you that you were one of the oldest skippers in that fleet?

BH: I never look in a mirror. It doesn't help. I think that would be true. But that fleet actually changed quite considerably over its first 15 years or so. And in fact, they got faster and faster. And the boats changed. So whilst there used to be quite a few cruiser-racer type boats, it became more and more flat-out racers. So by the end, I was getting left so far behind that I ended up going to the Cruiser racing.

IM: Going to the dark side?

BH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So we let them go. And their courses were getting longer, and they were getting faster. And I was getting further back.

IM: But that's been one of the very successful innovations in our time at the club, hasn't it?

BH: Oh, yeah. It's the biggest fleet we've got on the water. And it brings a lot of other club members in. In some ways, there's been criticism that it didn't bring a lot of Amateurs members in. But it has, in effect...over time, there's a lot of Super 30 competitors now that are Amateurs members. Early on, there was very few.

IM: Amongst your many sterling qualities as a skipper, not the least of which was a winning skipper, was that you had an uncanny ability in very light weather to pick wind shifts and variations. Tell me which telltales you used for that?

BH: Well, telltales don't work in light weather, when it gets super light. So in the good old days, a cigarette used to tell me where the wind was. And I knew where the currents were. So (it was) the combination of current and wind. I can't use a cigarette anymore. I haven't smoked for 25 more years.

IM: In your racing career, you were surely involved in some protests. Any memorable stories out of the protest room?

BH: Very early on in the piece, I actually got the courage to put in a protest. And Geoff McCorquodale was the man who looked after it in those days. Geoff McCorquodale was also the chairman of the place where I worked. So my boss, the general manager there, was quite intrigued as to a couple of faxes that went between Geoff and myself. I think the bugger used to look at every fax that went through the machine. He couldn't work out what was happening because he didn't know that the chairman was a sailor or I was a sailor...I was fairly new. So anyway, Geoff encouraged me to put in protests. And two weeks later, when I put in a second one, he was not at all pleased. He said, "You've won. It's

a straight port and starboard, a very simple protest. But I think you'd better keep out of trouble more in the future". So I didn't put any more in for many years.

IM: Well, it sounds like you were so far in front you didn't need to.

BH: I was only learning then. That was very early on in the piece. I put in protests at Middle Harbour. That was a complete waste of time. You never want to protest against Middle Harbour in Middle Harbour. Then after some time, I was asked by the Amateurs to go on the protest committees and start learning about how to do it under a few people. For a few years, when Peter McCorquodale wasn't too well, I chaired the Protest Committee for a number of years. But on one notable occasion, the first winter race one year, Rob Evans was screaming down the harbour with a kite up and there's a splash off the back. He lost a bloke overboard. Now it's winter, bloody water's cold, Rob's shorthanded with a kite going the wrong way. So Peter McCorquodale and I were actually working to windward in a different race... obviously, (in) different boats. We both tacked straight over. Peter started dropping sails and I just sailed straight over in the little S80, picked this guy up, plonked him on the boat, said, "You sit in the companionway there and don't move". Peter got his sails up and off we went racing again. But we'd lost a lot of time, so we put in a request for redress.

And because it was a winter race, and too many competitors (were) involved, the club decided to get a YA bloke to hear it. So he did, and he said redress was granted. The club wasn't going to like him for it, but they would have to award three first places...the one that won, Peter and myself. So that was my introduction to some of the racing rules and, ever since, I've been called upon to adjudicate in protests, and I've never been afraid to put the odd one in myself.

IM: Speaking of protests, there's an awful lot of protesting that goes on at the club bar from time to time about handicaps. The handicapper in days of yore was often described as having a black heart. The handicapping seems to work pretty well at the Amateurs, doesn't it?

BH: The only really difficult handicaps are something like the Kelly Cup where boats, strangers come together just once. The ordinary club racing handicap, there's Top Yacht formulaic stuff and once the people give it a go, and keep competing, the handicap will actually work.

IM: And you have a very long database?

BH: But once the people keep competing, even if now and again they get a gun man on board, it'll ignore that result. It'll say, oh, you got lucky that day, or you guys are getting better and better and better. The time you can really beat the handicap system at the moment, because it is formulaic, is if when you get a new boat and you start learning faster than it can catch up with you. That's about the only way you can beat it.

IM: Do you think some people would see Bill Hogan's rise through the S80 ranks back in the day as an example of that?

BH: Of course. The longer you knew and the more you learned, the better you got. That's exactly right until I got old and crabby and not so fit (laughs). And some of the crew moved up to Lake Macquarie, and things, so we did it slightly more relaxed.

IM: That's the essence of what makes racing in the Amateurs what it is?

BH: Yeah.

IM: Everybody has a fair chance.

BH: It's PHS and it goes around. There were a few characters who used to sledge a bit at the start of the season, no question. And I have been known, in the past, to not start at neck-break speed.

IM: What does that mean?

BH: You can't do your first race the same as you did the last race last season because your crew, they're dumb. They forget how to do things (laughs), and you've got to knock them into shape again. And you've got to knock yourself into shape!

IM: And they knock you into shape, yeah?

BH: Exactly. Whilst some people were better at sledging, I think the start of the season it always looks a little bit wobbly. But once it settles down, the computerised system, it's the only way to go.

IM: Coming back to the Kelly Cup for a second...in the ideal world, how could or would you change that to make it (fairer)?

BH: I don't believe you can. I think they do as good a job as possible.

IM: It's really an all-comers race, isn't it?

BH: It is. It's terrible. Last year's Kelly Cup (2022), I beat the gentleman by, it was an hour and six minutes. Now, I didn't see him. I never saw him from start to finish. I was back in the bar, probably in a third beer, before he hit the finish line.

IM: And there were light winds?

BH: Fairly light, but that would normally suit me moderately well. And I knew I'd beaten all the guys in close contention because I was close enough for those that had better handicaps and far enough...so all the nearby guys, I knew I'd got them covered. But a bloke coming up one to two hours behind me, I can't cover him.

IM: You'll just have to go back and do another Kelly Cup because you've got to get that third one.

BH: Well, the thing is, you've got to qualify first. And sometimes first, second and third, depending on the size of the fleet, isn't so easy. So smaller fleets make it easier to get into the Kelly Cup.

IM: But it's fair to say that's your ambition, to get a third one?

BH: It's been my ambition to get another one for a long time (laughs). It's been a long time since I got one. But, yeah, we still try. We still try.

IM: Talking about going to the dark side, at some point you were tapped on the shoulder to get into the administration of the club, come in as a flag officer. And you did the traditional route through Rear Commodore, Vice Commodore, Commodore, Immediate Past Commodore. Were you tapped on the shoulder, and who by?

BH: Rob Evans tapped me on the shoulder to go on the board, just as a normal director, which I did. And Rob said, "Bill, I've got a problem". I said, "Oh, yeah, what was that, Rob?". He said, "The club insurance has come in. It's \$75,000 for the year, for the insurance". He said, "See what you can do about it".

IM: So we're talking around about 2004, 2005, somewhere around there?

BH: Yeah, when I first went on the board. Now, it was very, very hard at that time to get an insurance company to quote on anything. But one of the boys off *Thea*, which was another S80, had some insurance contacts and he managed to get me in touch with a particular mob. They came in with a quote of \$40,000 and was I interested? Was I interested? Instead of \$75,000? Of course I was! So Rob was very pleased with that result, of course, and so was the club. Then I was fortunate (or) unfortunate. Peter McCorquodale was the rear flag officer, and he had a few problems. So he stood down off the Board, and Rob asked me if I'd take over Peter's position. So I was probably only Rear (Commodore) for two years, if that.

IM: And in those days, what were the responsibilities of the Rear Commodore? Because they do change, or they have changed over time.

BH: In those days, he looked after the house, the bar, social, all that side of it. And I think it's still basically the same.

IM: Now, obviously, you had to work with the office staff.

BH: Most of my time on the board was with Megan (Keogh). Very early on, it was Faye Buckley, but then I was just a director, and she left. And there was a gentleman, Patrick...

IM: Patrick Munn.

BH: Easy to work with them. Mostly Megan and then Judy (Wogowitsch) later on. They were fabulous. They actually made it possible to be a Board member or a flag officer because they did the hack work.

IM: They really are the heart and soul of that place, aren't they?

BH: They make it run. They do the business. The flag officers, make strategic decisions, I guess, with the Board members. And the hardest thing I had to do in that job was to put the bar prices up. That caused a ruckus.

IM: But then you went up to Vice-Commodore.

BH: Yep.

IM: You had to start thinking about things like slipways and boat shed bills and so on and so forth?

BH: Yep.

IM: Rod Phillips by then had been in the club a pretty long time. So how did you find all that?

BH: Look, I found it very interesting. Rod's pretty good with the club members. That's probably his biggest strength. He is an excellent shipwright, especially of the timber and paint and stuff like that, he's very good.

IM: But this coincided with a period of epic work on planning for and rebuilding the slipway, something that would have cost another club many hundreds of thousands of dollars. That's a pretty remarkable performance by a bunch of volunteers, isn't it?

BH: It was a long evolution. Rob Evans had started the work, and we had approved DAs and all sorts to build a big hard stand. In all honesty, that was outside the possible scope. The hard stand would have required a lot of concrete and heavy work and that was outside the members' scope.

At one stage, the North Sydney inspector came down. By then, I think I was Commodore, yes. And he said, "Look, I want you to tell me how this slipway works". He said, "I can see the drains where you catch all the rubbish". He said, "Where does that go?"

Now, I'd been wised up that he was coming down and wanted to ask me these questions. So I said, "Oh, well, see these three barrels?" "Yes". I said, "It goes through there". And I had, in fact, taken a pipe and diverted it down into the sewer pit. I said, "Then it goes down there". He said, "Well, what's down there?" I said, "Oh, this huge, big tank. It used to be the old septic tank, I think." "It pumps down there, pumps it into the sewer." "Oh", he said, "You've got a sewerage set up with Sydney Water". I said, "No, we haven't actually". I said, "I suppose we should have. But at the moment, we're just saving it in this huge, big tank. We don't know what to do with it." I hadn't told him that for the last 20 years it had been running straight back into the harbour. It had gone through the three barrels, but we'd never ever emptied the barrels.

He was actually very helpful. He said, "If you go over to Clontarf Marine and have a chat with them over there. They've done some modifications that look like it would be similar to

what you need to do here". (We) went over, they had a plumber do a set up for them. They got the man to come over and do the same for us. So we then had a licence with Sydney Water to pump our treated waste into the sewerage system. And it gets monitored. Even now, it's monitored four times a year or whatever it is now. But at least the slipway is legal. It stood a very good chance of getting closed altogether.

IM: And today, you can go to the club and find two boats on two separate slips being worked on.

BH: There used to be two cradles on the big slip, so there's only one, a very posh one at Coshy sorted it out and we put in. The little cradle really shouldn't have dirty work carried out on it. But it's good for painting and stuff like that.

IM: But the slipway at the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club in its 150th year is a good example of that long tradition of volunteer work. You're replacing decks, basically saving the Green Shed...all of these working bees. It's sometimes said we should be called the Sydney Amateur Working Bee Club! Can you reflect on the working bees in your time because you often referred to them in your Commodore's notes?

BH: Most of the time I've met you has been at working bees.

IM: That's correct. And in fact, that's how many club members get to know each other.

BH: Yeah, that's right.

But on the working bees, actually at that stage, just as Commodore, the big working bee down at the green shed when we did all that decking, some good work between Bruce (Dover) and Sean Kelly managed to get over \$10,000 out of the State Government towards that job. And in fact, the water treatment plant, via (local MP) Gillian Skinner (who) came to a flag officer's dinner one day and was very impressed with what we were doing, and the State Government gave us \$21,000 towards the water treatment plant because that was good for the environment.

IM: So the club's also a good citizen?

BH: Yeah...well, we did get fined once for spraying a bit of antifoul in the water. It wasn't good.

IM: After your time as Commodore and then Immediately Past Commodore, you got back to sailing. You're still doing it. I'm interested in what the club has meant for you over your long membership and particularly during your years of service?

BH: As a member, it has enabled me to sail economically. If I had to sail the way a lot of these other guys around, I couldn't afford it. You know, I was working as a baker. So Sydney Amateurs, because of the facilities, it allowed me to actually sail economically.

IM: It allowed you to work in working bees and pull together very good crews.

BH: Exactly.

IM: And have a lot of victories.

BH: In a price bracket that I could afford.

IM: That's the ethos of the place, isn't it? Corinthian, self-help, compete, have fun.

BH: But it's the knowledge of the other members that gives you that big start. I even had a recent issue where I had a couple of bumps on the keel. The keel was bugged, and Coshy made up four stainless steel plates, Rod fibreglassed them into the keel, and I think the boat will break in half before the keel cracks again (laughs).

IM: But that's the challenge for the club, isn't it? You've got to keep replacing that expertise, whether it's Trevor Cosh's engineering genius, Bruce Dover's organisational skills, all those before them like Bob Lawler and so on. You've got to keep replacing that.

BH: Yeah, keep replacing it, but the thing is the new guys coming are learning off the likes of Coshy, so hopefully it just keeps going.

IM: Well, you're voting with your boat because you're still sailing, you're still racing, you're still enjoying it. What do you see as its future?

BH: I'd probably be shouted down, but I personally would like to see a marina out the front, or at least a big pond type set-up, where you could get more people back to the club to enjoy the facilities. It's still pretty limited for actual parking of boats.

IM: We'd better sign up all the neighbours as members then.

BH: Look, I did at one stage take a proposal unofficially to the board to build a 30-boat marina. We would have lost something like nine moorings but wouldn't have gone any further. This guy wanted to do it at no cost to the club once he could run it for 10 years. Didn't even get a look in.

IM: Revenue share?

BH: No, he'd build it and run it for 10 years and then the club would own it completely.

IM: Your sense was that it wouldn't get up?

BH: They told me it wouldn't get up.

IM: Is this for environmental reasons? Is it for reasons of neighbourliness?

BH: I just think we need to get more people in the place.

IM: That leads me to ask you the question, how do you keep refreshing the membership? The membership stayed pretty stable over the years, but in recent years there have been changes made to ensure that the membership numbers don't drop. Are we going to have to go on doing that to ensure we keep that critical mass?

BH: Look, I think the board made an interesting decision by making this crew membership category. And I know quite a few of my crew actually joined as crew members, which is good. Whereas I had a couple of other crew (who were) full members. But I hope we don't lose full members to just crew members. Because there is a big difference. Crew members are about \$250 a year compared to \$650 a year to be a full member. Now, it's always been good value for a boat owner to be a full member. It could be difficult to see good value for a crew member to be a full member.

IM: You need to create incentives for them to upgrade, don't you, from crew to full?

BH: Well, they do try. With three years of a crew member, you don't have to pay the entry fee. So that's an incentive, but I still think it's quite a big step from \$250 to \$650 a year fees. However, if they are a crew member for three years, I think they can stay a crew member permanently. That's the only negative, I think, to that particular plan. But at least it is getting people in. You're getting \$250-plus now a year out of those members, which is more than we were getting before. So once the full membership numbers don't decline and the other membership numbers increase, which they have done to start with, at least that's getting people in. You're getting income, once we can keep the full membership numbers the same.

IM: Thank you for your time, for your reflections, but particularly for the amazing contributions you made to the club, both as an almost unbeatable skipper but also as a flag officer who got stuff done. The club is very lucky to have had your services and your support, and I thank you.

BH: Thank you, Macca, for those kind words.