

Sailing ahead in Paphos

IT WAS all Selwyn Hird's fault. Wyn, a sailor since Noah took his pets on a short voyage, and his dynamic wife Nancy, bought a 9-metre, 7 berth Catalac catamaran in 1993. This monster (the catamaran, not Wyn) was to give an enormous amount of pleasure - and heartache - to the proud owners, although their bank manager started biting his nails every time they appeared at his door dripping wet. The monster's name for some strange reason, is 'Mr Teng'.

Around this time Wyn's nails were turning black from misdirected hammer blows and there was a marked increase of the use of choice Anglo-Saxon words as Wyn struggled to rewire Mr Teng and rebuild 'his' engines. It was obvious that he needed some expert help. 'It dawned on me that there might be other sailors in the same boat,' he grinned at the pun, 'so why not get people interested in sailing and power boating together to form a club.'

So in May 1999 a small notice appeared in the *Paphos Grapevine* inviting anyone interested in sailing to contact Wyn. 'I was astonished at the response: the phone never stopped ringing, so we arranged a meeting at the

Pandora Restaurant in Paphos. Over 30 people turned up - it was great. There were experienced sailors, both professional and amateur, who'd sailed in many parts of the world, and powerboat enthusiasts too. Other people at the meeting had no experience at all, but were very interested in learning to sail. A few would-be members were professional navigators, while others were experienced mechanics, who declared their willingness to run training courses. It was very encouraging indeed.'

But there were many decisions to be made, not least what type of club was wanted and then a name for it. It was agreed that an informal club should be established, open to anyone interested in boats, whether powered or under sail. The grand title Paphos International Sailing Club was decided upon and subsequently Anne McKay designed a logo that is used today. John Burlinson, the original Treasurer and Membership Secretary worked tirelessly to institute a membership system and to prepare a constitution so the new club could be formally registered with the Cyprus authorities. Wyn Hird was elected Chairman, refusing to be adopted the more grandiose (but correct) title of Commodore.

Further problems were the



SEA CAT: Wyn Hird's 9-metre catamaran Mr Teng, moored in Latchi harbour.

lack of boats, finding suitable premises and above all there was a distinct shortage of cash. The new committee realised that to survive on more than simple enthusiasm, money had to be raised and so it was decided to hold social

events under the energetic command of Nancy Hird. These fund-raising barbecues, dinner dances and taverna nights proved so popular with the (then) 60 members that some dihardts were heard muttering that the club should be renamed the BBQ Club (Barbecue Boat Club) since there was so little sailing going on. What was needed was a place to meet.

At sea

PISC members then owned about 50 boats, some of which were at sea while others were undergoing refitting at Vangelis' Boat Yard, near Aphrodite Water Park. To solve the venue problem, Vangelis Stephanou agreed to allow the club to use part of his yard to build a clubhouse. Throughout the hot summer of 2000 while the lady members raised more money, the sailormen built a wooden clubhouse Bill and Ben would have been proud of. Wyn said with a sardonic smile 'How they survived the experience of hot weather, battered egos, bloody hard work and domestic pressure, remains a complete mystery'.

Having a new clubhouse proved a great asset. Since then it has been extended and become the social and business heart of the club. Members meet to discuss technical matters and to help each other work on their boats. Training courses are held regularly (the latest one on diesel engine repairs and maintenance was attended by 10 members). There sailing and fishing trips are planned. Social events are held frequently, including the regular Friday morning get-togethers when all things nautical are discussed.

The monthly newsletter, created and edited by the Chairman, is always a pleasure to read with notices, advice, comment and stories about the club, all with Wyn's own brand of wicked humour pervading it.

Dutch

Wyn explained that 'the club is functioning more and more as we hoped it would, with members actively participating in all the club's activities. Special discounts have been arranged with local suppliers and good relations established with official bodies such as the Customs, Marine Police, the Fishing and Harbour Authorities. We hope to develop still further. The main stumbling blocks are the ongoing lack of funds and the shortage of safe moorings in the Paphos area.'

'Many of our members who've been boat owners in the past, are reluctant to buy new boats until they have somewhere safe to moor them. We will improve our financial situation through our own efforts and by obtaining sponsorship.'

'However, only the government can improve the mooring problem. We can only hope that the new marina near Coral Bay will be built quickly and that fees will be fair and affordable.'

PISC now boasts a membership of over 100, whose nationalities include Cypriot, British, Irish, Dutch, Austrian, Swiss, American and Australian. Their boats range from canoes and dinghies to 20m super yachts. Those without boats are encouraged to crew for others and to learn how to sail using the five club dinghies.

The club has some intrepid sailors, including founder member Ron Cleverly, who has bought - at the age of 82 - a sailing catamaran which he sailed to Malta and then on to Bulgaria. Alan Walker sails the Arctic waters, while Ian and Isabel Blair (who sailed their concrete-hulled yacht from Hong Kong to South Africa) are currently in Knysna near Durban, preparing to sail it round the Cape and across the South Atlantic to the Caribbean. Other members sail regularly around the Greek Islands and along the Turkish coast. More plans are afoot for voyages from Cyprus to England and others plan to sail to the USA.

Paphos International Sailing Club owes a great deal to Wyn and Nancy Hird who have worked tirelessly since its foundation. At the AGM on Friday 22nd February, after 3 years at the helm, Wyn stepped down as Chairman, making way for Ranjit Bhagat to take command.

Clive Weal took over the treasury, while Bryan Wilcock (who commands the Dinghy Section) will be responsible for Membership.

When Wyn wished Ranjit the best of luck he said: 'May he have the wisdom of Solomon and the discipline of Capt. Bligh, to get the best from a very lively committee. I genuinely look forward to the next 12 months and I'm sure there will be some very positive developments.'

Anyone interested in learning more about Paphos International Sailing Club should contact Bryan Wilcock on 26 273012 (phone and fax) or by e-mail at bryanpat@logosnet.cy.net



PLAIN SAILING: Outgoing PISC chairman Wyn Hird, at the helm of Mr Teng.