

Gentle Sailing

Robin and Lyndell Ford

We enjoyed our racing for years, right up to the day when we looked at each other and said “Do you want to keep doing this every Sunday” and each replied “Not really, let’s go cruising instead.” So we did. It was the start of our Gentle Sailing.

For us, a TS16 under all plain sail was a handful in anything over about 15 knots. It was all part of the game when racing, and there was help at hand if anything untoward happened. But cruising was different. We wanted to take in the surroundings, and besides sometimes we were on our own. What’s more, we still wanted to go cruising if the forecast was 15-20 knots. We needed a way to calm things down so we could cruise in safety and comfort. The answer? The reefed main.

Dorothy goes well under just the reefed main. She’s more sprightly with the jib as well, at least off the wind, but on the wind she’s a bit unbalanced with the standard jib, so we’re looking for a smaller one. With the reefed main there’s no fuss. There’s time to take in the view and soak up the occasion.



Gentle sailing is more than cutting sail area; it’s the whole experience from launch to retrieval. Take Thursday 15th March, for example. We were practising for retirement and went sailing midweek, which made it special. And we were trying out the ramp at Rose Bay for the first time, so *Dorothy* had the excitement of going to the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. We had scouted out the ramp on a previous visit. It is fully engineered, with walls and hard edges everywhere, so with *Dorothy*’s fragile ply construction we thought midweek was the go, when we could take things steadily and not clog up the system.

It turned out that our reconnaissance had been only partly complete. Firstly, we remembered lots of parking. This was true, but our reconnaissance had been at a weekend when most of it was reserved for boat trailers. We found out that much of it was open for all-comers at other times – such as Thursday mornings. Happily there was just one slot left for us. Secondly we hadn’t checked overhead. There were trees. With the mast up we could get from the ramp to the parking area, but not from the parking area to the ramp. Conveniently there was a “Trailer queuing area” that we used for rigging. Standing there didn’t seem to

be a problem midweek, but probably would be at a busy weekend.

Shortly after 10.00 we were afloat and on our way to Vaucluse Bay, under motor at first, in a light Northerly with unfamiliar views of the harbour around us and a cloudless sky above. Because we had to be back at the ramp by 1300 for another engagement, it would be a short cruise, but we were in no hurry so it was the reefed main that we hoisted. Stronger breezes were predicted for later, so it seemed pointless to shake the reef out and besides, there was so much to take in as we worked our way around to our destination. We didn’t hoist the jib either, preferring the uncluttered view ahead.

In a guide book†, Phillip Mathews describes Vaucluse Bay as “...the most charming suburban waterfront on the harbour.” He also says “...anchoring here is impracticable due to the density of moorings.” We thought there would be room for *Dorothy* if she picked up her centreplate and rudder, so we lowered the main and slowly motored past the moored boats to the head of the bay where we anchored off a sandy beach in 60cm of water on the last of the falling tide.

Phillip Mathews was right about the view, and we had an early lunch, with a perfect 360 degrees vista.



Just before 12.00 we weighed anchor and motored out between the tightly packed moored boats, hoisted our reefed main and with a moderate Nor-Easter behind us (12 knots from records at Fort Denison) scooted back round to Rose Bay and the boat ramp.

Retrieving *Dorothy* was easy, although there was more action at the ramp than we expected. The overhead trees were not a problem at this stage. We calmly squared everything away, lending a winch handle to a boatie who had come without his, and then it was time to leave the Eastern Suburbs and head back to the familiar territory of the North Shore.

It was a perfect morning of gentle sailing.

† Phillip Mathews, *The Waterways of Sydney Harbour*, 1997

Date/Time EDT	Wind				
	Dir	Speed km/h	Gust km/h	Speed knots	Gust knots
15/03:30pm	ENE	20	33	11	18
15/03:00pm	ENE	22	35	12	19
15/02:30pm	ENE	26	35	14	19
15/02:00pm	ENE	20	32	11	17
15/01:30pm	ENE	20	32	11	17
15/01:00pm	E	22	28	12	15
15/12:30pm	ENE	19	28	10	15
15/12:00pm	ENE	22	28	12	15
15/11:30am	E	17	20	9	11
15/11:00am	ENE	9	15	5	8
15/10:30am	N	15	22	8	12
15/10:00am	W	7	11	4	6