

'Don't give up the ship. The life death and resurrection of the cutter *Claralan*'

A presentation by Bruce Stannard AM, 24 August 2022

Report by Stephen Thomas



Bruce Stannard AM flanked by Genevieve Slattery and Glen Madsen

Bruce is a well known maritime historian, author and regular contributor to the *Afloat* magazine, his articles are varied, well researched and interesting. His presentation on the wreck and restoration of the *Claralan* was no exception. 21 people attended the presentation in the Carabella room and most followed with dinner in the CCA.

The presentation spoke more about the skill, resourcefulness and determination of the designer and builder of this immaculate wooden vessel, Andrew Haldane, rather than the wreck and restoration of the *Claralan*.

Andrew's grandfather Hugh Haldane was a shipwright on the river Clyde in Glasgow before transferring to Port Fairy where his three sons were life long fishermen and shipwrights who built



the M/V *Tacoma*. Andy worked with his grandfather from a very young age absorbing the shipwright skills of his grandfather and later from his father and two uncles, Alan, Bill and Hughie.

Andy built his first boat, a snub nosed dinghy, at the age of 12 in his bedroom. The second, at age 14, a 10 foot 6 inch plywood tender which is still in use today on the *Tacoma*. His third, at the age of 15, a deep V speed boat.

Andy then went fishing for many years on the *Tacoma* and it was during this time he dreamed of building the 44 foot cutter, *Claralan*, it was to be cold moulded with a swing keel and twin rudders. He started construction in 1983 and worked singlehandedly for 11½ years to complete the project. From the photos shown at the presentation, it was truly a work of art. Andy used the boat to cruise the protected islands of the Spencer Gulf, and it was during one of these cruises in February 2014 that the *Claralan* was wrecked on Thistle Island (Located on the south western corner of the Spencer Gulf.) He tied the dinghy to the mooring and used *Claralan* to retrieve some lobster pots near Thistle Island. Unfortunately the line to the lobster pots became entangled around the propeller, leaving *Claralan* engineless and on the lee shore of Thistle Island. *Claralan* became wedged on the rocky shore and the four foot swell proceeded to smash all of the starboard side to matchwood.

Andy had to climb a 60 foot cliff and walk to Whalers Bay for assistance. He returned to the site of the wreck with the 60 foot steel fishing boat *Atlas* which was able to tow the boat to deeper water and lift the remains on to the stern of the *Atlas*. Divers retrieved everything salvageable from the wreck site and it was all taken to Port Lincoln and then transferred to Andy's shed. To respect his parents, after whom the boat was named, (Clare and Alan), he contemplated restoration, which involved rebuilding from scratch all of the starboard side of the boat. this reconstruction took seven years, and the boat was finally returned to the water when Andy reached 71 years of age.

Bruce showed several pictures of the reconstructed boat and it is immaculate, with the interiors finished in silver ash and Honduras mahogany to an exceptional standard.