

Martin Southwood served his deck apprenticeship on the *Chantala*. For their first 2 years, cadets were required to keep a journal, but some, like Martin, continued to record interesting events in their journals for the duration of their apprenticeship. Here is the record of one such event.

**TRANSCRIPT OF WHALER CHALLENGE RACE, PORT PIRIE
BY
MARTIN SOUTHWOOD**

The following is a direct transcription from my Cadet's Journal, which, now being two years on board, I was not obliged to keep daily, but like quite a few chaps, had decided to keep up for interest sake. (One can tell that these were not officially inspected!). All these years later, I'm very glad I did, and that I still have my Journals.

We had arrived in Port Pirie, South Australia on Saturday 24th May 1958.

Sunday 25th May 1958

Tony Grover came over this evening as the *Rakaia* got in about midday. He's 6ft. 5in. now; bloody massive. It's his second trip and he's got about a year in. There is a hell of a lot more bull on there. Only to be expected as they fly a Blue Ensign. A chance remark of his told me that we had a date with their whaler tomorrow and I've just been up to see Schoolie. It's quite right; lets hope we win.

Monday 26th May

Ted (Traicher) and I went over to see their sailing captain, Peter Coles, about a course. We were in fairly clean dungas but when we got to their gangway, they were about to come to us in No. 1's. We went up to their chartroom and worked out a short course. It's only five miles and two straight lines out and back as the depth of water doesn't allow much more.

We had the rest of the morning to get ready in. Tony (Marston), Nev (Dent), Ted (Traicher) and myself gave her a quick sudgee. Just as we were finished, Hank (Tellam), who was out in the dinghy, capsized it. We got away very smartly (in the whaler) considering the after davit guy had to be cut away as it had jammed. We only had two oars in it but we chucked two more in on the way but we couldn't get the rudder and the tiller in in time. So with me coxing four oars with no rudder, we made an erratic course over to Hank who was now high and dry on the bank. We were accompanied by cheers and bugles from the *Rakaia*; Bastards! Hank didn't need any help so we went back again.

Having heaved her up again, we rigged her and then put her half way down. After an early lunch we put her down and rowed down to the *Rakaia*. She was providing a motor boat and would tow both whalers. We had quite a good, if slow, tow out to No. 6 beacon of the buoyed channel. This was the

starting line. We were met here by Hank who had bailed out and beat us out here. We had a sailing start but as we were about two seconds early, we luffed up and got caught behind theirs which was in stays. Therefore we came across the line a length behind them.

We had the yard on the wrong side and it was making a difference so we dipped it, losing a little ground but soon picking it up again. We bore away a little so she kept the windward gage although she lost it later on.

We came abeam of the turning point, No. 1 beacon and stood on to make an offing. We were anxiously waiting for them to go about. When we did go about, we didn't seem to be making any way but, eventually, we were getting nearer and nearer and theirs was till standing on. We were quite anxious but our doubts were erased when Schoolie and Henry (Cox) gave us a thumbs up from the motor boat. We had to make a quick tack out to clear the beacon but we rounded it with a beautiful sweep at about 1510. There was a slight sea coming in on the starboard quarter. We were goose winged with the trysail up and I had quite a job to keep her from broaching to and gybing. Added to that, with the mass of sail up, I could hardly see where to steer. At one time, I sat on the cockpit deck with the tiller above me. Needed quite some leverage.

We sailed on merrily and by the time we had passed No. 2 beacon, the others had turned about. We reached the line, No. 6 beacon, at about 1545 and as everyone else was miles away, literally, we sailed on home. Instead of following the channel, we took several short cuts, stirring up the mud to quite a degree. The *Rakaia's* couldn't be bothered to complete the course and the motor boat took her in tow. We got as far as the *Rakaia's* bows before the motor boat caught us. We swung across the stream to the falls and hoisted her up at about 1730.

We got rigged out in No.1's and at 1830 went up to the lounge. The *Rakaia's* Chief, Doctor and C.I.O. had come along and soon afterwards their cadets (whaler) arrived. There followed one free booze-up and we made the most of it. Their cadets were a bloody good crowd. Pete Coles, the captain, looked a bit like Dick Reed and their Port watch captain, I'm sure I have seen somewhere before.

Tuesday 27th

We left Port Pirie today at 1400. Mutual bugle calls and V-signs were exchanged with broad grins as we passed the *Rakaia*. I wonder what the *Otaio* will be like.

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