

## **55<sup>th</sup> AUSTRALIAN ARROW & ARAFURA CADET CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Report Warwick Graham

How good is NSW skipper Frank O'Rourke? At 69 years of age he beat skippers 30 years younger to win his 19<sup>th</sup> Australian Championship at Meningie on Lake Albert in South Australia. Those of similar age will attest that at that age, most bodies are well past their best. Joints are worn and strength has been lost, flexibility has reduced, reactions are slower and the competitive instinct and bravado have waned.

Not so with Frank. Not only did he match his younger rivals in boat speed and agility around the boat, but he also sailed a near flawless series tactically. After a slightly shaky 6<sup>th</sup> in the first race, he recorded 3 wins and two second placings to set himself up for victory. An uncharacteristic 7<sup>th</sup> in the 7<sup>th</sup> race opened the window slightly for his closest rival, but in typical fashion he covered effectively in the final heat to take out the series.

Second place-getter Adrian Fawcett was only two points behind O'Rourke, winning two heats and being second in two, but it wasn't quite good enough.



*Above: Meningie Sailing Club and a very full Lake Albert*

Eleven times winner Steve Short was third, four points behind Fawcett. He had one 1<sup>st</sup> and one 2<sup>nd</sup> placing. Short admitted that he could no longer come to a National series with no practice and expect to win as he has in the past.

Newcomer to Nationals Gary Smith sailed tenaciously to take 4<sup>th</sup> place and may have finished a place higher if he hadn't broken a centreboard in heat 7. Then followed South Australian Brett Pearsons, veteran Daryl Skinner (who has racked up more than forty National Championship attendances), Andy Duffield from Queensland (returning to the Class after a long absence), Craig Pearsons (SA), followed by another Queenslander Jono Bateman. Jess Dobie (Qld), one of two female competitors, rounded out the top ten with a fine performance in the consistently windy conditions considering her smaller frame.

The talent of the top six or so skippers was clearly evident throughout the windy series, where fast tacking and the ability to de-power whilst achieving maximum speed were crucial. Almost all skippers in the series were experienced and their boats well fitted out and with good sails and yet a sizeable gap between the top group quickly developed and increased throughout the races. Mid-fleet, the boats were closely bunched.

In the four-boat Arafura Cadet fleet consisting of two adults and two juniors, Charlie Coombs took out the series from Jodie Martin. Charlie scored 4 wins, whilst paradoxically, second place-getter Jodie Martin failed to secure a win. The diminutive Grace Rogers was third and won two heats, whilst newcomer Lucas Byrnes also had a heat win.

The registration of 32 Arrow and 4 Arafura Cadets for the Championships was well above what was expected even a month before the event, It is the equal biggest Arrow fleet (with Townsville in 2018/19) since Victor Harbor in 2002/03 when 39 Arrows and 9 Arafura Cadets competed.

As we have come to expect, the event was well run by the South Australian Association with Therese again doing a lion-size share of the work. At registration, competitors were given attractive polo shirts, a comprehensive program and free tickets to the welcoming barbecue. A small group of volunteers put on an excellent home made "Curry Night" the following evening and the Presentation Dinner was held in a spacious local café/restaurant which put on a well-priced a la carte meal for the 70 guests.

The Club's small band of volunteers did a good job of course setting and manning the bar. There were occasional problems with the taking of results, as in several races a group of boats finished almost simultaneously, but in typical Arrow Class tradition, skippers sorted out the finishing order by clubhouse discussions. Special thanks must go to Geoff Carter who spent many hours writing a scoring program when the Club's program "crashed".

### **ARROW TROPHY WINNERS**

Outright: *Turbo* (1749) - Frank O'Rourke (NSW)

2<sup>nd</sup>: *Snow White* (1733) - Adrian Fawcett (Qld)

3<sup>rd</sup>: *Sling Shot* (1648) - Steve Short (Vic)

4<sup>th</sup>: *Infusion* (1729) - Gary Smith (Qld)

5<sup>th</sup>: *Sonic* (1708) - Brett Pearsons (SA)

Handicap: *Douglas* (1757) - Aaron Petersen (Qld)

Veteran: *Air Power II* (1620) - Daryl Skinner (Qld)

## **ARAFURA CADET TROPHY WINNERS**

Outright: *Girt* (1140) - Charlie Coombs (SA)

2<sup>nd</sup>: *Violet Crumble* (1143) - Jody Martin (SA)

Handicap: *AC/DC* (1104) - Lucas Burns (SA)

Junior: *Just Mist* (0) - Grace Rogers (SA)



Meal time in the comfortable clubrooms