

THIRTY SQUARE METRE SKERRY CRUISERS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

"I wonder if you can possibly conceive the grandeur of a 30 Square sailing out at sea off Durban in a quiet light southerly wind [Force 2] in the remains of huge swells after a big sou'westerly where she climbs effortlessly over these vast swells without a single sound except a quiet flap of the Genoa luff at the summit of each huge swell before you pull off ever so slightly and the jib fills completely.

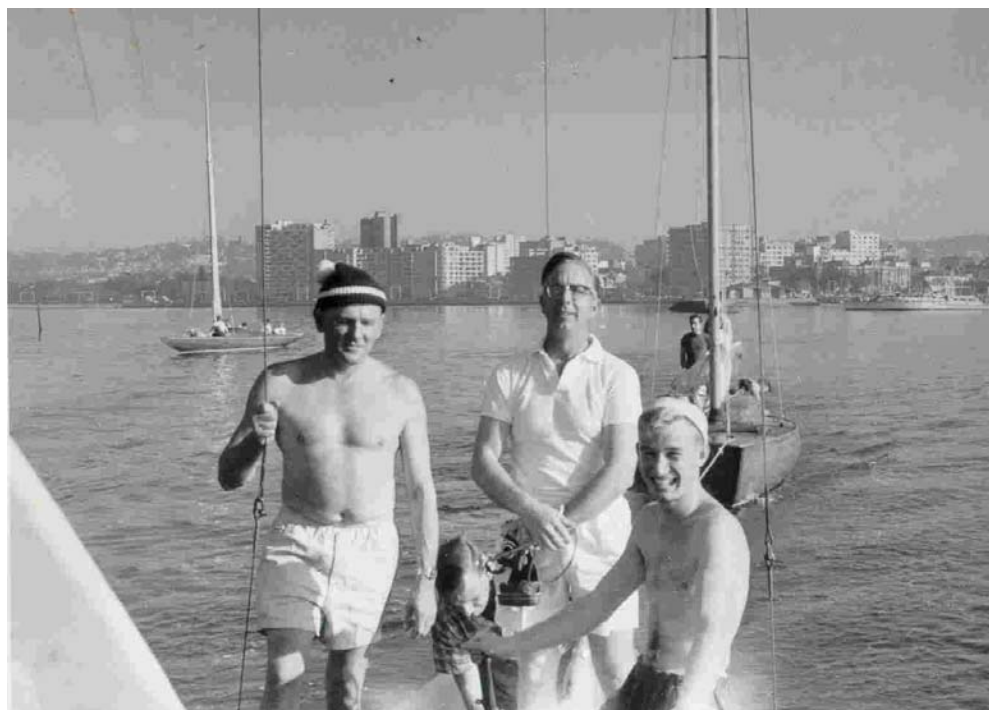
Silent power - awe-inspiring! I hope you may be able to get a sail in a 30 off SA one day."

This is the memory of one of the most beautiful sailing experiences possible, and one that lives on as though it were yesterday in the mind of Dr. Hamish Campbell, Official Measurer and stalwart of the class in the '60s, when he was in his thirties. It expresses the spirit of sailing this wonderful class, the conditions in which 30 Square sailing was enjoyed and at the same time the welcoming attitude of South African 30 Square sailors.

In the course of writing this article, I had the good fortune of making contact with some past and present sailors in the class, and wonderful new doors were opened and new friendships made which I never imagined possible over long-distance correspondence. This is a witness to the binding power of 30 Squares (as this great class is referred to in SA), overcoming generation, location and time differences. Most of the material came from Hamish Campbell (HC), owner of HJALMAREN from 1961 to 1968 when the class was at its height in South Africa (SA), with up to twelve 30 Squares participating in the annual Lipton Cup races. Where the text is written in the first person and *"italics"*, the words are taken directly from HC's recollections. The rest comes from records and tidbits from other contributors, my interpretations thereof and my personal memories.

The 30 Squares in SA were sailed in open seas off the South African coast: in the warm Indian Ocean off Durban and Port Elizabeth, and in the cold Atlantic waters off Cape Town, with the next nearest coast being thousands of miles away - the Antarctic! With one exception their 30 Squares were imported from European fleets, and consisted mainly of Swedish and UK boats. The first 30 Square that arrived in the Cape was SEA SWALLOW with the UK sail number of K-12 which became SA-12. She had been designed and built by Uffa Fox and arrived in CT in 1949. Soon after she arrived, some Cape Town boat-builders built SONNET - a pretty good approximation of a 30 Square, but she didn't measure. They called her a 29-and-a-half Square Metre, and she was disallowed from racing in the Lipton Cups.

About the same time VANJA V came out from Europe, receiving the sail number SA-2, followed by the lovely AVOCET (K or SA-4, built by Fox to a Reimers design), a much more powerful boat than his later self-designed SEA SWALLOW. By 1961 there were twelve 30s in SA: five designed by Knud Reimers, two by Erik Nilsson, two by Harry Becker (including the longest ever built, RAPID at 14.60m), two by Arvid Laurin and one by Uffa Fox. All were built in Sweden apart from the two built by Uffa Fox in England



This 30 Square crew photo is of Harold Kohler on TRICKSON II in Durban in one of the dead-calm races of 1962 or -3 Liptons. With him is Scott Pearson who died shortly after this photo was taken when the SAA Viscount flew into the sea when coming in to land at East London and of which no trace was ever found.

On the left of the picture is MARIQUITA (Wilfrid Hancock), and the boat astern is probably TINTOMARA. They were both PE boats and would be given the same towing vessel. Usually a rather better towing boat was always allotted to visiting 30's than to local ones – "a courtesy we naturally felt they earned by coming all the way from CT or PE."

Jimmy Whittle was a Durban boat-builder who imported CHIQUITA (S or SA-175), and sailed her until he got the much more up-to-date SUN ROSE (S or SA-191). CHIQUITA was sold to Taylor boat-builders in Port Louis, Mauritius, where she was sailed at Grand Baie in the NW of the Island. She was taken up the Riviere Noire in SW of the Island for shelter when a big hurricane hit in late 50's but still had one side bashed in. She was repaired but never raced again, and her whereabouts today is not known.

Some known facts about South African 30 Square Metres:

Sail No.	Ex-sail No.	Name	Owner (SA)	Previous owners	Designer/ Boatyard/ Class. No.	Built	LOA/ Beam
SA-4	K-4	AVOCET	Fred Meadows (Cape Town)	Dr R. Elsdon-Dew (Durban) Joe Harris (Durban)	Knud Reimers/ Uffa Fox/	1938	
SA-9	K-9	TARPON	Ivor Jamison (Cape Town)	J.S. Maclay, H. Peterson	Knud Reimers/ Kungsörs batvar/ 79	1936	
SA-12	K-12	SEA SWALLOW	Stan Moffatt (Durban)	Leon Polickansky (Johannes-burg), Col and Mrs Richardson	Uffa Fox/ Uffa Fox/	1938	
SA-18	K-18	KULULU ex- SUNMAID	Paddy Goodall (Port Elizabeth)	Wilfrid Hancock (Durban)	Knud Reimers/ Kungsörs batvar/	1938	
SA-179	S-179	RAPID	Bill Bolton (Durban)	Noel Horsfield (Durban), Ivor Jamison (Cape Town), L. Polickansky (Johannes-burg)	Harry Becker/ Rödesunds batvar/ 91	1938	14,60/ 2,25
SA-2	S-152	VANJA V	Helly Lasch (Johannes-burg)	Jimmy Whittle (Durban) Bill Gunn (Durban)	Knud Reimers/ Strängnäs batvar/ 93	1938	13,20/ 2,10
SA-164	S-164	HJALMAREN ex- Inger, ex Lill Singva II	Hamish Campbell (Durban)	N Reynolds (Durban)	Erik Nilsson/ Kungsörs batvar/ 103	1938	13,60/ 2,20
SA-6	S-169	YVETTE ex- Lill Singva IV	Ronnie Chedburn (Cape Town)		Erik Nilsson/ Kungsörs batvar/107	1939	13,62/ 2,22
SA-175	S-175	CHIQUITA ex- SSS-1941	Jimmy Whittle (sold to Mauritius)		Erik Nilsson/ Kungsörs batvar/ 106	1941	13,60/ 2,17
SA-182	S-182	TRICKSON II	Harold Kohler (Port Elizabeth)		Arvid Laurin/ Motala batvar/ 117	1944	12,41/ 2,08
SA-191	S-191	SUN ROSE	Jimmy Whittle (Durban)	Jimmy Radcliffe (Cape Town)	Knud Reimers/ Linköpping (home built)/119	1950	12,90/ 2,18
SA-192	S-192	TINTOMARA	Graham Packer (Port Elizabeth)		Harry Becker/ C. Anderson, Orust/ 123	1955	12,96/ 2,17
SA-1		MARIQUITA	Mike Daly (Cape Town)	Wilfrid Hancock (Durban)	Arvid Laurin / Kungsörs batvar/	1958 (?)	?

* Data may be incomplete: taken from historical records and information; current day details generally unknown



YVETTE (SA-6, ex Lill-Singva IV, S-169) after winning the Lipton Cup in Table Bay in 1956

The prestigious Lipton Cup was intimately linked to 30 Square: it was sailed for in this class from 1952 to 1973, in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Durban. To accommodate the design of the boats, the regattas were held at the quietest time of the year: our autumn, May and June. Analysis of past contests showed that 70% were sailed in less than 10 knots; the remaining 30% were from 10 knots gusting up to Force 8 *"with sails shredding and winches flying over the side!" In every wind-strength we marvelled at the magnificent behaviour of the 30 Square hull design and the Swedish yacht builders.*

The winner would always nominate his home waters and this necessitated the 30 Squares from the other ports being shipped to the race venue, usually on a Coastal Steamer Company for almost gratis transport cost with the yachts as deck cargo. Sailors were deprived of use of their boats for 3 to 4 weeks before the Lipton till 3 to 5 weeks after it. *"That was one of the reasons for my daft attempt to sail a 30 Square from Durban to Cape Town. I hoped to arrive there in racing trim without having to dismantle her for shipping and re-rigging her at her destination when she arrived."*

The first 30 Square Lipton Cup defence was sailed in Durban in May 1953. The five boats taking part finished in the order: TARPON, SUNMAID, VANJA V, SEA SWALLOW, and AVOCET.

In Port Elizabeth in 1958, SUNMAID was raced by Wilfrid Hancock with his mainsail twice rolled with his roller reefing and a double gauge storm-jib. *"With this rig, he managed to pull the metal frames holding his mast shrouds away from the hull and the rivets holding the planks on to them. This left the crew with the job of stuffing the holes with insulating tape to stop jets of water pouring in!"* She finished first but needed extensive repairs before she could race again.

HJALMAREN was participating in that same race, having just arrived in SA. *"She had cost the man I bought her from about 7,000 Pounds - a fortune in SA Pounds in 1957 - just to import her. His first race in her was the ill-fated "shambles of Port Elizabeth", when a Sou'westerly buster clobbered all the boats and stripped HJALMAREN of all her old cotton sails." The story was told to HC via her for'ard-hand: "... it went from 0 to over 60 knots in 10 minutes. It blew out 3 ("rotten cotton") jibs and then the mainsail. We were hammering towards Madagascar under bare-poles faster than the Port Elizabeth harbour tug that was trying to catch up with us to tow us in!" Her owner never took the helm again, and sold HJALMAREN to me for a tenth of his expenditure. "Who says an ill wind blows nobody any good!"*

"I raced her with little success but with great enjoyment for nearly 8 years. After I sold Hjalmar in 1967, the 30 Squares went on Sailing for the Lipton Cup for another six years, but with continually dwindling numbers." The last year finally arrived in 1973, and although the Lipton Cup was to become dormant once more it seemed fitting that Jimmy Whittle, who had done so much to revive the cup in 1952, took the honours in the last Lipton Cup sailed in the 30 Squares.

Lipton Cup Results

Series	Year	Location	Host Club	Boat Name	Helmsman
7	1952	DURBAN	PYC	AVOCET	F.MEADOWS
8	1953	DURBAN	RCYC	TARPON	L.E.THOMAS/A.AUSTIN
9	1954	CAPE TOWN	ZYC	YVETTE	G.L.BARTHOLEMEW
10	1955	CAPE TOWN	RCYC	TARPON	L.E.THOMAS
11	1956	CAPE TOWN	ZYC	YVETTE	M.GRONN
12	1957	CAPE TOWN	RYC	TRICKSON II	H.W.KOHLER
13	1958	ALGOA BAY	RNYC	SUNMAID	W.L.HANCOCK
14	1959	DURBAN	RNYC	MARIQUITA	W.L.HANCOCK
15	1960	DURBAN	CN	RAPID	L.N.HORSFIELD
16	1961	DURBAN	CN	RAPID	L.N.HORSFIELD
17	1962	DURBAN	RNYC	MARIQUITA	W.L.HANCOCK
18	1963	DURBAN	HSC	RAPID	L.N.HORSFIELD
19	1964	CAPE TOWN	RNYC	MARIQUITA	W.L.HANCOCK
20	1965	DURBAN	RNYC	MARIQUITA	W.L.HANCOCK
21	1966	DURBAN	RNYC	MARIQUITA	W.L.HANCOCK
22	1967	CAPE TOWN	RCYC	YVETTE	R.S.CHEDBURN
23	1968	CAPE TOWN	ZYC	TRICKSON II	H.A.VAN HOOGSTRAATEN
24	1969	CAPE TOWN	HYC	SUNMAID	C.C.BOWLEY
25	1970	CAPE TOWN	ZYC	TRICKSON II	W.BONGERS/H.A.VAN HOOGSTRAATEN
26	1971	DURBAN	RNYC	SUNROSE	J.M.WHITTLE
27	1972	DURBAN	PYC	TINTOMARA	D.L.COX
28	1973	CAPE TOWN	RNYC	SUNROSE	J.M.WHITTLE

In those days, 30 Square sailors were all engaged in cloak and dagger operations to find out who was altering their sail plan or hull and by how much. *"We were more than suspicious of the RAPID boys because they had her out on the slip for no reason we could see other than adding lead to her keel to make her stiffer. This would have been allowed if we had been able to measure hulls in SA (I knew this was well outside our capabilities). Three of the RAPID crew were really good engineers in their own right claimed that their external ballast additions were within the rules, and they would know."*

"The basis of our 30 Square racing was dependant on all the owners accepting each hull as complying with the Skerry Cruiser rules - no difficulties would ever be raised provided the flotation complied with the builders' marks and they all did. Both RAPID's and MARIQUITA's crews managed to abstract their sail plans from the 30 Square Owners' measurement files to avert the intense curiosity (bordering on espionage!) that was being made by all crews into any other boats alterations. This was done in the year that both HJALMAREN and RAPID both removed their 'Q' Factors - that is, straightened their masts."

SEA SWALLOW and AVOCET were later fitted with a rotating masts (deck-stepped) copying WATERWITCH (K-1). WATERWITCH's rigging was successful but AVOCET and SEA SWALLOW returned to normal rigging.

"MARIQUITA was designed by Arvid Laurin, specially for Wilfrid Hancock who had been deeply impressed when Harold Kohler sailed Arvid Laurin's TRICKSON II to victory in his first Lipton in Cape Town. Wilfrid was a very wealthy man, a fine gentleman and an excellent 30 Square skipper. He ordered Arvid to design MARIQUITA soon after that series." Wilfrid and Noel Horsfield dominated the fleet for most of the 1960's.

As a boy starting out in my sailing career in the '60s, I heard a story that had become legendary about some local sailors who tried to sail a 30 Square the thousand-or-so sea miles from Durban to Cape Town for the 1964 Lipton Cup. The story had it that the mad skipper, with a crew of two, made it as far as Port Elizabeth after about 4 or 5 days and two wild Sou'westerly depressions. They finally had the sense to put their boat on a Coaster for Cape Town when they "got tired of pumping"! You can imagine my surprise when in the course of my communication with HC he told me that *"That imbecile was me!"* And the reason HC gave for turning to shipping HJALMAREN the rest of the distance: *"I feared we might have missed the start of the racing!"* HJALMAREN apparently showed no signs of any strains and although they were tired of pumping; the water that came in was *"over the sides - none through the hull - of course she hadn't Avocets "turtle-deck" and was a wet boat!"*

Where are those great boats of yesteryear, and their owners? SEA SWALLOW lived up to (the unintended meaning of) her name: *"Stan Moffatt had to sail her onto Durban beach when she started falling apart on a day of little wind but immense waves from an undersea disturbance. The next high tide completely destroyed her"*, and she was swallowed up by the sea. *"Stan sailed her through amazing storms, but Uffa Fox had built her as an "inshore racer" for the Solent and Long Island Sound - not for seas off the Cape or Natal."*

Two boats have been renovated and are still sailing: MARIQUITA and the "29½ m²" Sonnet, and both lie at the Royal Cape YC in Cape Town. MARIQUITA was the last of the 30 Square to arrive in South Africa. Her original owner, Wilfrid Hancock, passed away in 1990. She was in Richards Bay for a time and owned by a syndicate when Mike Daly purchased her in February 1990. Unfortunately the previous owners did not appreciate the historic value of the yacht, so major restoration was necessary which started in February 1995. MARIQUITA has competed in numerous wooden boat regattas since restoration and has done very well. Sonnet was also purchased by

Mike Daly, in 1989, and extensively renovated. She has also been entered into numerous regattas. To date they are both still water-borne.

SUN ROSE, built in 1950, suffered the indignity of being hung up as decoration for several years in "The Workshop", a Durban shopping centre. In fact this may have saved her from suffering a similar fate to other SA 30 Squares, most of which appear to have been broken up as scrap. *"The last owner tells me that the lead had gone from her keel or they would never have been able to suspend her in the shopping mall. Apparently Mr Pace-Balzan is trying to restore her now - he has a back- (and bank-!) breaking job if he wishes to get her back to sailing trim."*

"HJALMAREN, designed by Erik Nilsson, was shipped to New York where she was exhibited in the Swedish Pavilion of the World's Fair (so I was told and I would like confirmation of that). There she was apparently suspended above the crowds - all 44 foot 4 inches of her in perfect Honduras Mahogany - if this is true, she must have looked a treat. She was shipped to the Seychelles in the 70's. In 1979 I hunted her down and saw her hull chocked up on shore without a mast and looking very forlorn. She had obviously reached the end of the road. Sic transit Gloria!"

RAPID was bought from Leon Polickansky by Noel Horsfield and sold after about 4 seasons to Bill Bolton and (I believe) was never raced again. All trace of RAPID has been lost.

Perhaps an indication of the times, possibly the most active South African 30 Square sailor these days is the writer of this article. Although LILLIE III has similar origins in time and place to the other 30 Squares sailed in SA, she has kept her original sail number (S-148) and is currently sailed on Lake Starnberg, Germany. It seems unlikely that we will be able to enjoy the conditions in my hometown as described at the beginning of this article, together. But we can still be inspired by the memories of others who did.

Note: this article is a summary of information gathered to date on a topic of ongoing interest and possibly historical value. If any reader can add to this or correct any details listed, please be invited to contact me to do so!