

CHAPTER 2

“We’re off to the Myalls”

That evening the family sat down to dinner.

“Holidays in six weeks,” said Mr Ryan.

“Are we going away, Dad?” asked Bill.

“Well, your mother and I thought we might take you up to the Myalls,” said his father. He was referring to a series of large lakes north of Newcastle on the New South Wales coast.

“The Myalls!” said Cate with her eyes aglow.

“Are we going to go up by boat again?” asked Tom.

“No we’ll drive but we can tow *Emerald* on the trailer. We’ll camp at Mungo Brush on the Broadwater. I have been speaking to Mr Parfitt and he said he and Mrs Parfitt would be happy to see us up there.”

“Then Mark and Liz could bring *Sapphire!*” said Tom looking wide eyed at the others.

“That’s a distinct possibility,” said their father. The three children looked at each other with smiles of anticipation on their faces.

“Two weeks on the Broadwater,” said Tom. “Sailing every day.”

“What adventures we will have.”

“Especially with Mark and Liz coming too.”

“I wonder if it’ll be like our holiday at *O’Reilly’s*.”

“That was a bit exceptional,” said Tom. “I doubt there’ll be anything quite so exciting.”

“Remember that trip we did in *Antico* with Mum and Dad up the Myall River? Poor Bill would hardly remember it,” said Cate, “he was so small.”

“I *can* remember it,” said Bill, offended.

“And Mary Rose was not even thought of,” said Mr Ryan turning to his smallest daughter sitting in the high chair next to his wife. She looked up at him from her food at the mention of her name.

“Sleeping in the boat at night,” said Cate.

“With the tide gurgling around the keel.”

“When you lie down the whole world goes round and round.”

“That only happened once,” said their mother. “I don’t think your father would anchor off Tea Gardens in the tideway like that again. The boat never stopped moving all night.”

“No. I didn’t get much sleep either,” her husband responded. “I was up every hour to see whether the anchor had dragged. It was a good bottom though and I needn’t have been so worried.”

“Remember the pelicans perched on top of the mooring piles?” said Tom to Cate.

“Looking down their noses at us as we sailed by.”

“I can remember them,” said Bill. “They used to shift from one foot to the other as we got closer.”

“Remember when we went aground on the mud!”

“We were inside the port hand marker,” said their father with an aggrieved look on his face.

“Yes, but we were on the way back to Port Stephens so we should have had it to starboard,” said Tom.

“How Daddy laughed,” said Cate.

“Yes. Mummy was not very complimentary about his navigation.”

“Well, one of these days you will have the worries of sailing a boat full of argumentative children down a difficult stream,” said their father.

“It would be marvellous to do it again,” said Cate. “We will, won’t we Daddy?”

“There’s nothing, absolutely nothing, so much fun as messing about in boats,” said their father.

“Kenneth Graham,” said their mother.

“Who?” said Bill.

“Author of *Wind in the Willows*,” said Tom. “You remember, Ratty talking to Mole.”

“Oh, yes.”

Tom wrote off his message in Morse to Mark before he went to bed to be posted in the morning:

Morse a great idea. All practising hard here. Dad says we all going Myalls for hols. Bring sapphire. Tom

The message took him the best part of thirty minutes to write out. "It would be far quicker to tap it out," he thought to himself.

In the mail the following morning Cate received a letter from Elisabeth Parfitt, Mark's sister who attended a boarding school for girls in Sydney.

Rose Bay

Dear Cate,

Daddy has been appearing in a defamation action which has been in all the newspapers. Mummy was at Government House last week. School is dreary. I'm so looking forward to the vacation. Of course we aren't allowed to sail at this school. It will be some time before sailing will be part of the sports curriculum here—not ladylike!

It's dreadful being imprisoned in a classroom looking out on the harbour while all those yachts are sailing on Wednesdays. I am accused of being a dreamer . . .

Liz

That night Cate wrote back to her.

Dear Liz,

I assume you have heard the news that we are all off to the Myalls for two weeks in the hols. We are bringing

Emerald. Mark has written to Tom to make sure you bring *Sapphire*.

You'll get all the sailing you want. Stick it out! We've gone mad over Morse here. It was Mark's idea. Has he got you involved too?

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Tom got a reply from Mark a few days later which, when translated, read as follows:

Going to join wireless instit to speed up my send and receive. Liz writing to cate. Bringing saff to myalls.

M

Both Tom and Mark were learning the virtues of reducing what they wanted to say to basics when communicating in Morse.

That afternoon Tom looked up from his school work as Bill came into the schoolroom with a book on sailing.

"Tom. What's sailing by the lee?" he asked.

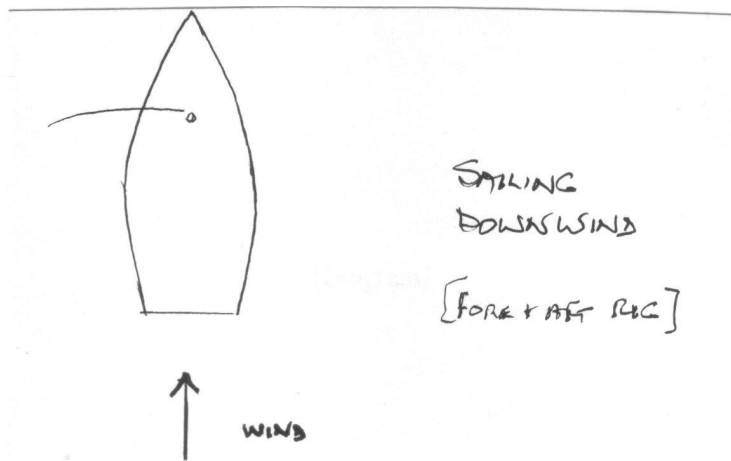
"Sit down here and I'll draw it for you," said Tom. He took out a piece of clean paper. Bill sat down beside him. He drew a diagram of a sailing boat looking from above.

"When you are sailing down wind the wind is coming from where?"

"From behind the boat, of course."

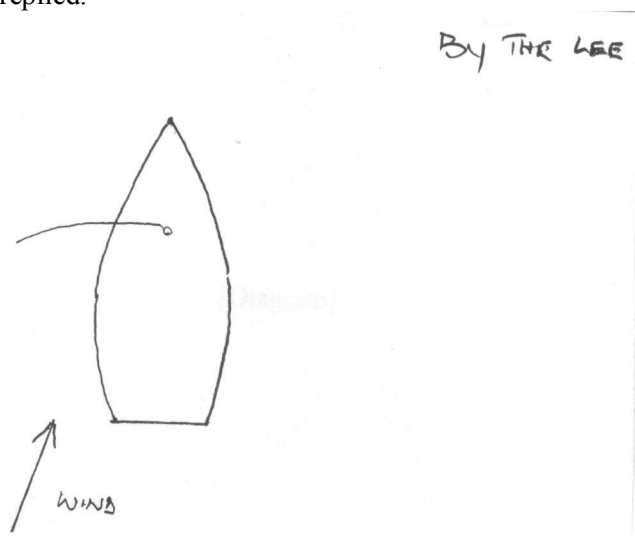
"That's right. Now the boom must be out on the port or the starboard side. If it is on the port side like this," he said drawing it, "the boat is on starboard tack. Why?"

"Because the wind is coming from the starboard side."



“And if it’s on the starboard side the boat is on port tack. Now if the wind passes from directly behind the boat to a point over the port quarter like this, that means that the boom wants to gybe over because it wants to be on the other side of the boat. Understand?”

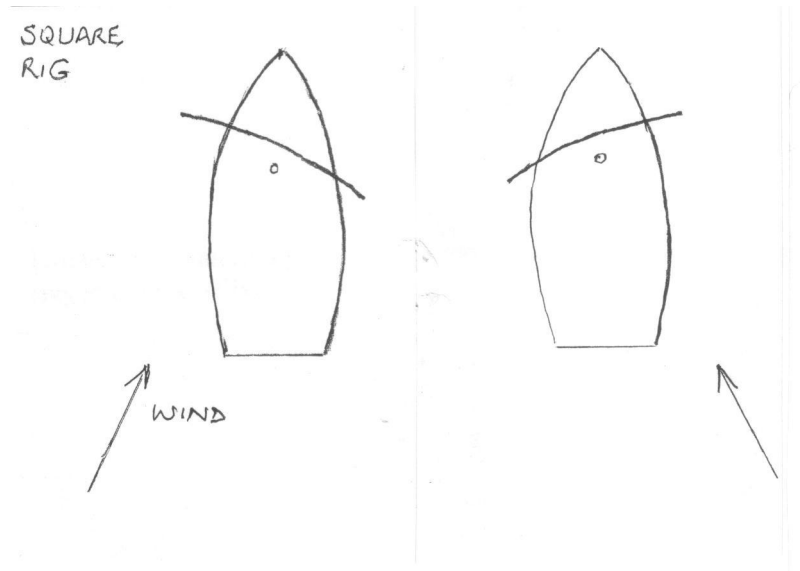
“Yes,” Bill replied.



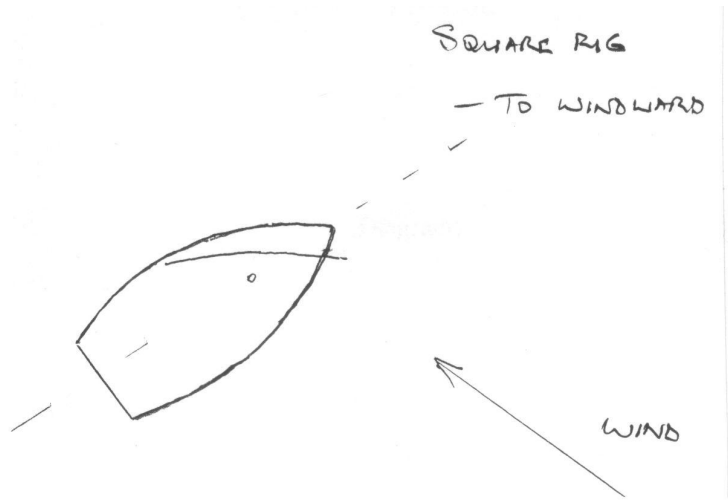
“When the wind moves like that so that it’s starting to hit the leeward side of the sail the boat is said to be sailing by the lee. And you have to do something pretty quickly about it. Why?”

“Because if you don’t you’ll get your head knocked off by the boom,” Bill answered.

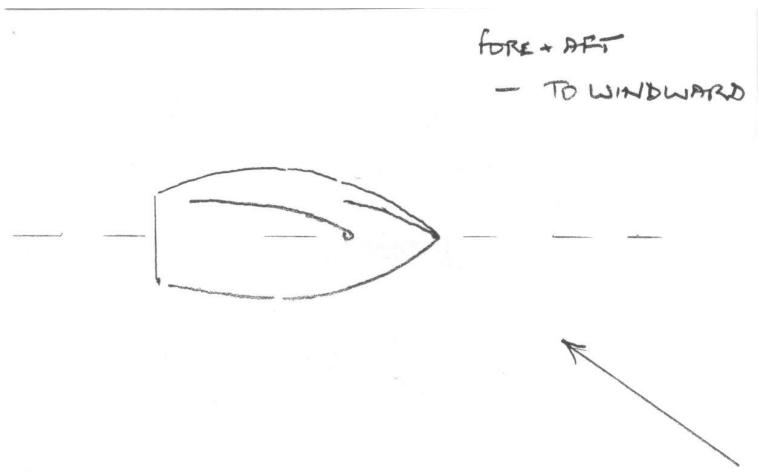
“Right,” said Tom. “Boats with square sails have a number of shortcomings. For instance, they don’t sail to windward very well at all. But they don’t have to gybe their square sail yards. Here I’ll show you.”



“And here’s a square sail boat trying to sail to windward.”



“And a fore and aft rigged boat like *Sapphire* or *Emerald* sailing to windward.”



“You start off with the cardinal points—north, east, south, and west. Then the intercardinals—north east, south east, south west and north west. Then each of the angles is subdivided again into nor’nor’east, east nor’east, east sou’east, and sou’sou’east and sou’sou’west, west sou’west, west nor’west and nor’nor’west.”

“How many is that?”

“That’s sixteen points so far. Then you have to divide each of the angles made by these again making a further sixteen. Now the tricky bit is learning the names of all the subsidiary points in correct order. The secret is that they all take their names from a cardinal or an inter cardinal point. So the next point east from due north is ‘north by east’ and the point between nor’nor east and north east is ‘north east by north’.”

“What are you doing?” asked Cate coming to the room suddenly.

“Learning to box the compass,” said Tom looking up.

“Good luck Bill,” she said. “I’ve always got to look the points up.”

“Just thank your lucky stars we don’t have to subdivide the points further like the early sailors used to have to,” said Tom.

“What’s that Bill is muttering to himself, Mary?” asked Mr Ryan when he came in that evening.

“He’s boxing the compass. And Mary Rose is learning Morse Code.”

“Ah. We live in exciting times.”

Two days later Cate received a letter from Liz in reply to hers—

Dear Cate,

Hooray for the hols! I know about Mark. It’s Daddy’s dreadful ham radio influence. Mark is such a fanatic. He won’t stop until he’s a Morse expert. I’m making lists already of things I will need.

Liz