

Chapter Six

Social Events

Introduction

Over the past 25 years The Amateurs social scene has developed and improved particularly with the use of the Clubhouse encouraged by the work of enthusiastic committees.

New chairs and tables were purchased mainly with donations from members, the facilities in the kitchen were improved including such 'modern' innovations as dishwashers, microwave ovens, glass washer and new refrigerators. General cosmetic measures were undertaken including new framing of photographs, better lighting and painting by a group of volunteer members.

There has been an increase in the number and variety of functions always with maximum attendance of members, their families and crews. Who could forget some of the memorable functions and dinners over the past 25 years?

The English Dinner – a fancy dress function where the Commodore of the day and his lady (Vic and Beryl Dibben) were placed on a throne in robes and crowned king and queen for the evening. Santa Claus, aka Peter Garrow arriving on the *Nancy K* distributing presents to all who sat on his knee. Irene Barnes acting as interpreter to a full house during the showing of the film on the German four master *Pamir*.

We could go on; the National Gaffers Days, launch of the Jack Earl book, Opening of the Season functions and prizegiving dinners at the end of the season. Past Commodores dinners were always outstanding, one at the Club in particular with an excellent after dinner speech by John Jeremy. At times we have had up to 120 seated at dinners at the Club served by volunteers from the Clubhouse committee. The Friday night social scene at the Club after the Twilight races is always a maximum capacity event.

Commodores, Officers and their partners from other major yacht clubs who have attended our functions have often expressed their approval of the Amateurs social scene.

SASC members like sailing and they also appreciate well organised social functions. The enthusiasm generated by the Clubhouse committees over the past 25 years and the support for these activities ensures the continuing success of the Amateurs.

Northcott Days Afloat

In 1964 John Jackson was the Rear Commodore of the SASC and a member of Parramatta Rotary Club, which was a sponsor of the Northcott School for Crippled Children. John later became a member of the Board of that school, which was at Parramatta. John had the original idea of taking crippled children sailing on the harbour, and after a lot of hard work organising it, the first Northcott Day Afloat took place on 14th March 1965

Vic Dibben celebrating with crew and friends aboard Salamander A17, Mosman Bay 1975



Rotarians drove the children and carers from an area extending from Sutherland to Hornsby and from the lower Blue Mountains to the city, to wharves at Longueville, Rose Bay, and Mosman where after the difficulty of embarking wheel chairs and wildly excited children, yachts motored off to arrive at the SASC for lunch.

On the first outing a very hesitant officer in charge of the School decreed that sailing was too dangerous and that yachts should just sedately motor. Skippers from that day will well remember the cries from children to "put up the sails Captain", and they did! From then on the adventure began.

Pontoons were donated by Fenwicks and moored at the Club as landing stages. A member of the RSYS carpeted the pontoons with hessian. Members and friends brought speed boats for fun thrilling rides, the late Tony Ashleigh, boat shed manager fed the unsuspecting fish of Mosman Bay during the week before, Rob and Val Skinner provided all the children with fishing lines and plastic bags (to take home the catch) the Water Police called in to show the children over their boat, members provided everyone with lunch (large quantities of ice cream, cakes and apples were donated by various individuals) and even the Sydney Harbour ferries endeavoured to cooperate. Such was the interest in the day that newspapers and television stations gave coverage and everyone had to be home for the evening TV news.

The day was a great success, and the SASC, Parramatta Rotary and most of all, Northcott School, agreed that it should be held again the next year. For the first few years drivers from Rotary picked up the children from their homes, drove them to the pick-up wharves and came out on the yachts with them, together with a large number of teachers from the school, who were vital in looking after the most handicapped and frail children. After the outing the Rotarians had to return the children home. This was a very long day for the drivers, so it was changed so that the children had to assemble at their school, and were picked up and returned there.

Another school for crippled children from Warringah also joined in and this increased the number of children and helpers to well over 100 for most years. John Jackson became Commodore, and handed over to another member, Geoff McCorquodale of both SASC and Parramatta Rotary who organised it I think for 23 years.

First both schools were contacted and a date fixed. The principals of the schools then had to obtain permission from parents, and eventually a number from each school was known, approximately. Rotary organised the drivers, and in later years the school bus was used from Parramatta to add to the cars.

The long job was phoning yacht owners to see who was available and willing. The majority of yachts became regulars, but every year the date was unsuitable to some, some had sold their yacht, etc. But we were never short of yachts, in fact one of the disappointments was that on the day the number of children that came could be five or six less than expected, and sometimes a yacht was sent away without passengers.

Very quickly the number of wharves was reduced to those which were protected in all weather – Mosman Bay, Hayes Street Neutral Bay, Alexandra Street Hunters Hill and Northwood Wharf. At each wharf there was a wharfmaster from the SASC and a teacher-in-charge from the school, and the yachts came in appointed order to be loaded. They then went for a sail (motoring was considered dull by the children who had sailed the year before) and then came to the SASC Clubhouse. Quite a number were in wheelchairs, even more wore leg-irons, and some of the teenagers were astonishingly heavy and awkward. With a southerly blowing into the bay it was quite a job! Bill Gale with his foghorn voice was wharfmaster at the club for most years, but eventually he had to use a loud-hailer!

Ashore everyone was fed and watered, which was a fantastic job by the members, or more truthfully by the ladies. One member, Les Ardouin, provided steaks and ran the barbecue for year after year. Other SASC members were needed to

 1971

July: Office Bearers elected—assets \$26,545—membership 407—yachts regularly racing 110 with 114 on register with "A" numbers and 43 with unprefix numbers.

August: Two new Divisions formed, thus Club races eight—Thunderbirds, Endeavour/Southerly, Special, Bluebirds, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4.

help up and down the steps into the Clubhouse, and one of the most difficult jobs was assisting the children in the toilets. Fishing lines were then provided, and the excitement of a little handicapped lad catching his first fish had to be seen.

At the end of the day when all the yachts had left, the wharf and club area had been cleaned up, the Clubhouse crew assembled for a drink and to eat leftovers. One year we then received a phone call, one small girl was left at Mosman wharf with no-one to pick her up!

A few other incidents occurred over the years. A common one was that children would arrive at their school after the cars had left, so a taxi to the SASC was the answer. The most frightening was a boy wearing leg-irons falling in while fishing. An SASC member went in immediately, and the boy was out and on the pontoon without any difficulty. I think that was the nearest to anyone being hurt that occurred.

One year the Maritime Services Board objected because the event had not been registered as a Regatta! Some smooth talking fixed that, and thereafter it was listed on the SASC sailing programme.

The event was almost certainly the biggest effort by members that has happened at the club, with about one hundred members and ladies involved. Other events may be larger, such as the Gaffers Days, but much fewer members work on the day than Northcott required. I think it was this that made it such an event, plus the fact that the crippled children are a happy lot, and enjoyed the outing to the full. Some yachties requested the same wharf and the same children, they had enjoyed them so much. The other factor was the dedication and cheerfulness and enjoyment of the teachers who gave up a Sunday for it. They were a wonderful group.

In 1989 the Department of Education closed the special schools, and integrated the children into the mainstream schools. The following year we investigated holding the day, but it was not the same, the children had been scattered, it was nearly impossible to get the attention of the principals of the schools, and there was no point in continuing.

This must have been this Club's best activity for the 25 years that it took place. The enjoyment of the handicapped children was so real, and everyone involved went home feeling rewarded.

SASC National Gaffers Day

The first Gaffers Day was held in October 1972 as a Club centenary event. The inspiration was Laurie Schneider's. The rally was conducted in three divisions, in a light nor-easter, *Nerida*, Sir James Hardy being a popular winner in Division 1. There was great enthusiasm and coverage from the media, the spectator fleet was enormous, and many of the yachts were on show at the SASC wharf, *Playmate of Maldon*, Gino Coia, being the centre of attraction.

Lady Hopetoun was the Starter's vessel and MV *Kathleen*, Les White, the Flagship. A large spectator ferry fleet attended to carry interested people. Thirty five boats crossed the starting line on the day which was such a success that there was a very strong wish to continue Gaffer's Day in future years.

The 1975 Gaffers Day was again very successful, beautiful weather, a good turnout with many of the same boats present and some new ones.

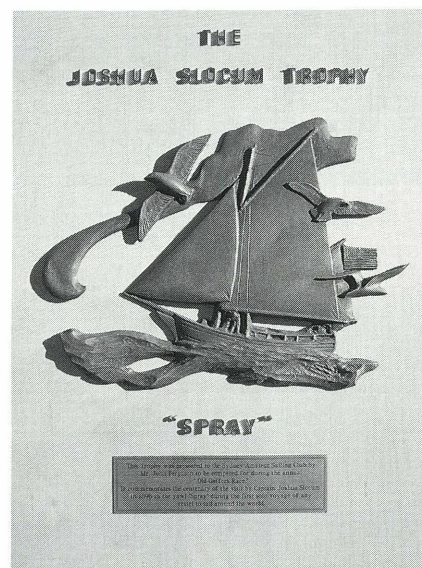
The *New Endeavour* was committee boat in 1978 and SY *Destiny*, David Swinfield, the Flagship. Numbers were up a little from 1972 and 1975, and included a new entry, the outstanding *Curlew*, Tim Carr. She is a Falmouth Quay Punt, 28 feet loa, built to meet sailing ships for orders when first alongside got the order so she had to be fast. She was constructed in 1896. No other vessel of moderate or heavy displacement up to 35 feet can successfully compete with this boat. She won.

New Endeavour was again the committee boat in 1981 and The Honourable Derek Freeman's *Silver Cloud* was Flagship. Again about 30 boats crossed the line in two divisions into a 14 knot nor-easter, Roger Gale taking the gun in a close finish in Division 1 from the magnificent fifty foot William Fife designed and built *Ron of Argyll*.

New Endeavour again in 1983 and Flagship Richard Wilson's *Karinya*. Three divisions this time. Gino won Division 2 in *Playmate of Maldon* by a handsome margin, flax mainsail and four other sails all drawing well. All went well with the usual fine weather, no untoward incidents and as always a great display at the Clubhouse.

The Sydney Maritime Museum provided their handsome vintage Tugboat *Waratah* as starting boat and Keith Storey's *Marabou* was Flagship for the 1985 Gaffers Day. Many old supporters started again and of course some new ones. Outstanding was *Yendys* a famous SFS 18 footer from 1925 rebuilt and skippered by George McGoogan and friends. She set 1936 cotton sails and won handsomely in Division 3.

The 1988 Gaffers Day was an official Bi-centennial Event and a record 102 entries were received, every state of Australia was represented with *Perception of Howick* entering from New Zealand. We were very pleased to have Governor Air Marshall Sir James Rowland and Lady Rowland as guests of honour. The TSMV *Monteray* was Flagship and as usual many prominent yachting people and other distinguished guests were royally entertained. Sydney Maritime Museum's *Boomerang* and the Steam Schooner *Ena* formed the start line. The Cousta Boat Club of Victoria sent seven superb boats to rally with us and they all were as pleased with the SASC as we were with them. They make such an impact that Sydney personality Philip Kinsella ordered one to be built and has attended every rally since. The New Zealand bi-centennial gift to Australia *Akarana* took part. She was



Above, the Slocum Trophy was presented to Martin Van der Wal by the trophy's designer, Dennis Adams, after Hoana won the inaugural gaff rig race in 1996.

Below, on Gaffers Day 1995. John Ferguson and two of Australia's great maritime artists, Jack Earl (left) and Dennis Adams (right)

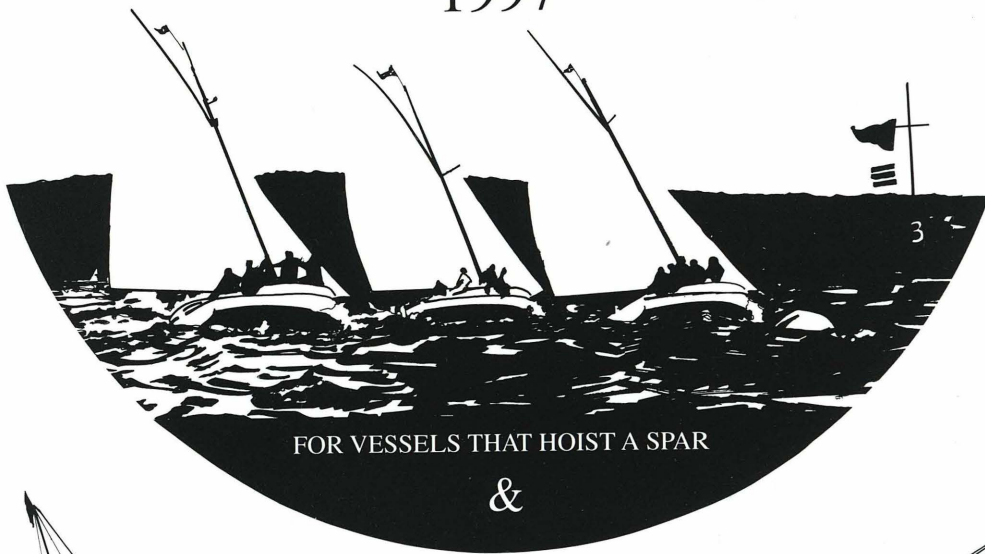
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ANNIVERSARY REGATTA

125 YEARS

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GATFER'S DAY

1997

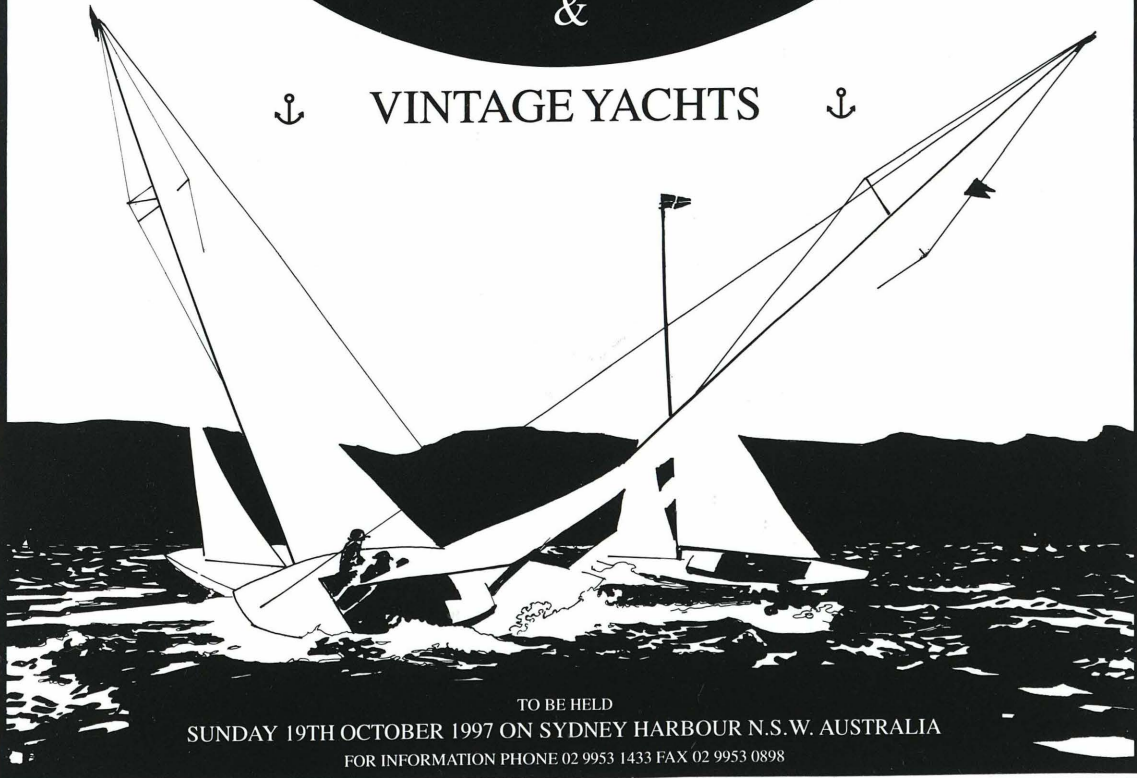


FOR VESSELS THAT HOIST A SPAR

&



VINTAGE YACHTS



TO BE HELD

SUNDAY 19TH OCTOBER 1997 ON SYDNEY HARBOUR N.S.W. AUSTRALIA

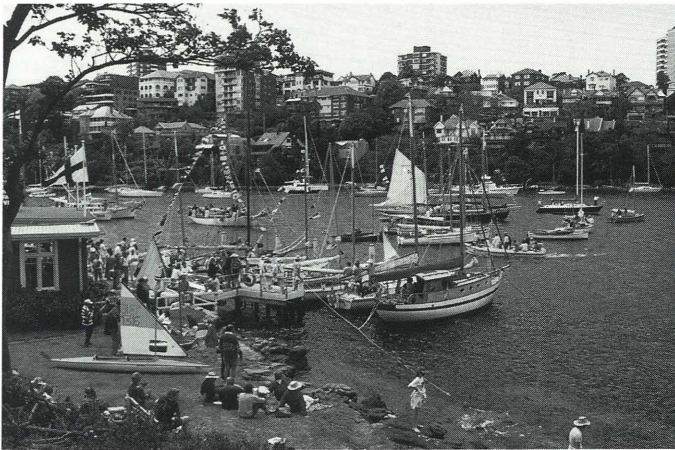
FOR INFORMATION PHONE 02 9953 1433 FAX 02 9953 0898



Bill Gale explaining a complicated aspect of gaff rigs to the Governor of NSW, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair and Mrs Sinclair on Gaffers Day 1993. Commodore John Morris (who owns one of those other kind of yachts) is paying close attention, but Lil Morris is finding the Governor's Aide more interesting



Members are encouraged to dress for the occasion on Gaffers Day. Rear Commodore Peter and Kate Garrow set a fine example for Gaffers Day in 1983



Colourful activity in Mosman Bay on Gaffers Day, 17th October 1993



Ranger after the start in a fresh southerly on Gaffers Day 1988



Commodore David and Jenny Willis with their daughter Rebecca, Gaffers Day 1985



Playmate of Maldon showing a modern 18 footer how it is done with style during the Gaffers Day regatta in 1983

Photos: John Jeremy

I believe 100 years old then and caused great comment. The southerly gusting to 34 knots did not suit her as she was designed as a light weather flyer. *Jessie*, Milton Green, took the gun in the fast Flying Division while *Soliloquy*, Spike Ross, won on handicap.

We were back to three divisions and 55 entries for 1990. We were blessed with sunny weather and a light nor-easter. The Australian National Maritime Museum's restored Couta Boat *Thistle* won in Division 1. It was pleasing to see fourteen dinghy type boats start in Division 3 and a very good turn out in Division 2. Schooners *Boomerang* and *Ena* were again the committee vessels and Hon. D. Freeman's *Silver Cloud* the Flagship. The steam launch *Kelly Jean*, Colin Wear, was in attendance. Guests of honour were Rear Admiral and Mrs Horton.

There was a small increase in numbers in 1993. The breeze was very variable, but the weather very bright; the fleet making a marvellous sight slowly sailing around with 50 or so gaffers bunched together before the start. Ranger class yachts *Etrenne* and *Valiant* won in Division 1 and 2, and the pretty double ender *Stardust* was successful in Division 3. For the first time historic skiffs had their own division having 6, 10, 12 and 18 foot gaff dinghies. They created huge interest, the winner being a superb replica of the 1930 *Tangalooma* built by Reg Barret. A group of canoes and dinghies was started on a short course around Clark Island, but this idea was not a success.

The tenth National Gaffers Regatta was held in October of 1995 with entries holding steady at sixty. The day was mostly light winds with patches of rain which led to some outstanding photography. *Silver Cloud* and *Trevasa* appeared again in their usual role. Richard Wilson's *Synergy* was an additional flagship in order to accommodate more guests. The outstanding yacht on the day was the fabulous *Waitangi* from the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria. She was built and designed by R Logan in 1894 in New Zealand. On the broad reach to the finish she showed amazing pace just pipping *Nerida* for second place. This writer will never forget the sight. The club were delighted to receive His Excellency Rear Admiral and Mrs Sinclair as guests of honour for the second time, the first being in 1993. The Governor and his wife again took great interest in the proceedings and the boats and were obviously very popular.

Wee Georgie a six foot replica was successful in the Historic skiffs and it was great to see *Kathleen Gillett* Jack Earl's old boat first in Division 2. A fun race for yachts dinghies was inaugurated the course being from the Club's pontoon across the bay to a floating mark and back. Jim Lawler gave a commentary and everyone, particularly children were greatly entertained. There were no handicaps place-getters or prizes. This is a morning event and will be a major part of future Gaffers Days.

The event to be held on October 19th 1997 will mark the SASC's 125th anniversary and is sure to be a great event. A number of traditional Bermudan yachts will be invited to rally in a separate division to mark our anniversary.

Flag Officer's Night, 25 October 1985

John Jeremy

When our Rear Commodore rang me to say that his social committee had decided that I should be asked to speak after dinner tonight – I must confess to some surprise, and some, well at least a moments, hesitation.

Why should I be asked? Could Frank Tebbut be recalling my debating years at school, when he was a master, and I a pupil? (I now realise, Frank, how young you must have been then).

But then, I reflected, perhaps the suggestion was not inappropriate. Take John Bertrand for instance, he is a well known after dinner speaker, and we have something in common – he is a brilliant helmsman and I, too, sail. In this passing moment I agreed, and what is more, waived the usual fee.

My real problem with facing the task I had now accepted was to think of a suitable topic. Perhaps something technical? As yachties we are always interested in keeping up to date. Hydrodynamics perhaps? – no, the flutter of submerged oblate spheroids could be soporific after dinner, moreover, I wouldn't understand it either.

Finally, I thought, what could be a better topic for flag officers night, but flag officers themselves.

What is a flag officer? The trusty dictionary (the Macquarie of course) defines a flag officer as “a naval officer, as an admiral, vice-admiral, or rear admiral entitled to display a flag showing his rank”. Not really appropriate – lets look under Commodore. Here we find “a naval officer next in rank below a rear admiral, usually in temporary command of a squadron”, etc, then “the president or head of a yacht club or boat club”.

That's more like it.

Actually, I rather like the naval definition – particularly the sense of command.

Some years ago, when engaged in post refit sea trials of HMAS *Yarra*, a destroyer escort, my ego was given a lift, at the end of one trial, when the captain turned to me and said

“Well John, what would you like to do next?”

The temptation to suggest a high speed run to Broken Bay, shooting up Long Reef on the way, was considerable. Could this have been the sign of destiny? – that in due course I should become Commodore of the Sydney Amateurs? After all SASC Commodores are definitely “temporary” and a yacht club fleet is a bit like a squadron.

There is, of course, an origin in the naval use of the word commodore which links it to its use today in the very civilian position as a “president or Head of a Yacht Club”. The influence of the traditional chain of naval command can be seen if we look at some of the early activities of our yachting forefathers.

Take for example, the opening function of the Australian Yacht Squadron (now the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron) on Saturday 18th October 1862. Newspaper reports before the event stated that it was intended that yachts should muster under orders of the Commodore, who will proceed to sea, and, by a series of evolutions give the aspirants for fame an opportunity of showing what a deep keel squadron can do in crawling to windward in a seaway.

The A.Y.F. safety regulations hadn't been thought of in 1862 – no doubt yacht squadron manoeuvres and signal code books were the rules to study in those days.

I quote from the squadron's history:

The procedure was eloquently reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the following Monday, 20th October 1862. The wind on Saturday morning had set in “Eastward of South, with heavy squalls, accompanied with rain and thick cloudy weather”. At 11am the yachts took up their stations at the rendezvous to the leeward of HMS *Orpheus*, which lay at anchor in the stream. Commodore Walker's schooner yacht *Chance*, in a squall off Bradley's Head on the previous Thursday, had carried away her jib-boom, along with the standing ironwork. Although every effort was made to repair the damage in time, this work was not quite completed. The Commodore accordingly gave orders that Vice-Commodore Milson should take command of the squadron.

At signal 87 from the Vice-Commodore the yachts weighed anchor, following in line at half a cable's length distance in the wake of the Vice-Commodore to abreast of Moore's Wharf, where the yachts hauled their wind, tacked in succession, and stood down the harbour. Off Dawes Battery, the Vice-Commodore hove to, and made signal for yachts to close up in line abreast at equal distances. By the time the yachts were abreast of Fort Macquarie, the evolution was completed, when signal was made to “proceed”.

1976

June: The Club has now erected a flagpole in a very prominent position. Our thanks to Dr Tom Selby who donated it. As you know we have several small flagpoles on top of the Clubhouse and to have one like this donated to us called for a major decision on a suitable site. The Directors considered it, referred it to the Development Committee who decided upon a sub-committee, who thought of building a stone breakwater as the only possible site ...

Eventually the rigging and setting up were carried out expertly by Tony Ashleigh and his assistant Peter Wargent.

Note: It had to be removed subsequently due to wharf extensions

On reaching Bradley's Head, on signal given, yachts again formed signal line, open order, following in the wake of the Vice-Commodore, and it may fairly be said that this evolution was not only carried out by the yachts with creditable precision, but the effect of the manoeuvre from the shore was "picturesque and beautiful in the extreme".

In view of the squally south-easterly weather conditions, the Vice-Commodore decided not to make for Manly Cove, but to bear up for the more sheltered anchorage at Watson's Bay. The newspaper reported "He sent up signal for Watson's Bay, at the same time hauling his wind, with starboard tacks aboard, standing over for the south reef. The effect of this change was again very interesting to witness; the skill each displayed in maintaining position was to be commended. Several boards had to be made before reaching the rendezvous, when the squadron anchored, by signal, in two divisions, the Vice-Commodore taking position to the westward of the Bay."

The members then "piped to lunch and fortified themselves below, so as to contend with any kind of difficulty above", but when they come on deck again they had "an agreeable surprise". The Commodore's yacht, *Chance*, was in sight, sailing at a smart clip down the harbour to join the squadron! Her jib-boom had been repaired, and she had set sail in pursuit one hour late – but not entirely too late. She could lead the squadron home.

The Commodore hoisted his pennant, and took up his position. After the exchange of a few complimentary signals, the order went up "Prepare to get under way"; next, "Are you ready?"; next, "Follow me". The Commodore then led the squadron up the Harbour. On reaching Fort Denison, the

Bill Gale with Vice Commodore
John Jeremy and Commodore Vic
Dibben ready for anything on
Gaffers Day 1981



Commodore shortened sail, with signal, "Prepare to salute". He then hove-to on the starboard tack, with signal, "Salute", when each yacht in succession saluted the Commodore's Flag as they passed under the stern of his splendid vessel. On signal being given, "Part company", each yacht gave three cheers for their Commodore and three for their Vice. Then, each member wishing the other "Goodnight", the yachts proceeded to their own moorings, gratified with the day's proceedings.

I must say times have changed. The degree of respect shown to the Commodore of today is positively appalling. As immediate past Commodore, I have had to give some advice to Commodore David – in order that he should not be overawed by his position. For example, he should know that, when running free on the port tack from Manly, and coming upon the whole of No. 3 Division, in line ahead, on the starboard tack, the clear and commanding call of "Commodore" will bring forth entirely the wrong response.

I can almost hear members of the Amateurs say – what do you expect, all that sort of bull is typical of the Squadron, not the Amateurs! Indeed, I recognise that there are members of the Amateurs who would choke on their chilled refreshments at the suggestion that they might wear a cap with a badge on it, let alone engage in evolutions!

Careful, Ladies and Gentlemen! Let me remind you of the SASC sailing directions of 1884, which, naturally you will have read in the club's history. In a section headed "Evolutions, denoted by the telegraph flag being hoisted above numerals", it says:

Yachts assembling on certain days to cruise together under the direction of a Commodore, having a far different view from racing, and as order and regularity tend to the comfort of all, especially of the ladies who may honour the meeting with their presence, the following regulations should be adhered to:

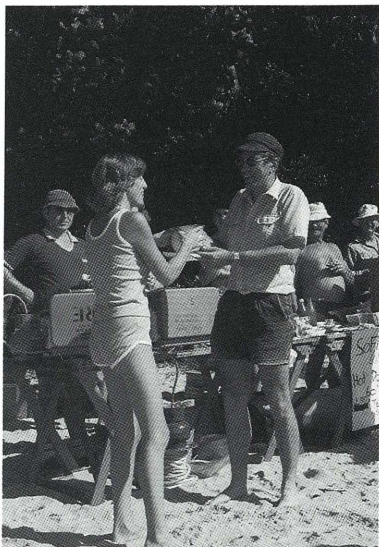
Each yacht having taken a station is to preserve the same throughout the day, unless directed to the contrary or permitted to part company. The starboard division is always the van, and forms on the starboard quarter of the Commodore. The port division is always the rear, and forms on his port quarter. The division leaders are always to keep the Commodore four points on their bows. The distance between each yacht is always to be a half a cable's length (50 fathoms), unless otherwise directed; and the distance between the lines is always to be one cable's length (100 fathoms), unless otherwise directed.

There follows a long list of signals, each with quite a precise and readily understood meaning, although No 21 "Follow Commodore's Motions" could be subject to some misinterpretation, particularly in moments of extreme stress.

Noting the old motto of the SASC "We Strive to Excel" I propose Commodore, that we suggest that the racing committee might like to review the 1985 sailing directions to see if we can set new standards in order that we may be the envy of the yachting fraternity.

Flags, signals and flag officers seem to go together. Naval flag officers make their intentions and orders known by signal, nowadays mostly by radio, of course. Whilst much of their signal traffic must be very dull, there are occasions when quick wit emerges. I have often thought that a dry and cutting sense of humour must be a pre-requisite for naval flag rank.

Flag officers are very senior people however, and one must be careful when addressing them by signal. The British aircraft carrier *Formidable* was a little indiscreet late in World War II.



Commodore John Jeremy presenting the Idle Hour trophy "pot" to the skipper of Hoodoo at Store Beach in December 1983. Tradition requires the pot to be filled with beer and drained by the skipper of the winning yacht. Today most skippers seek help from their crews, no doubt concerned about being caught "three sheets in the wind" on the way home (Photo: Terry Spilling)

From *Formidable*, after being attacked by Kamikaze, to *Indomitable* (flying flag of Admiral Vian):

LITTLE YELLOW BASTARD.

Reply from *Indomitable*:

ARE YOU REFERRING TO ME?

Another place, another time:

On a foreign station. A cruiser squadron at sea. One cruiser is leaving the squadron to return home and pay off. The departing cruiser signals the Flagship:

I HOPE I HAVE SERVED YOU WELL.

Reply:

ADMIRAL IS CONSULTING SQUADRON VET WHOSE VERDICT WILL BE PROMULGATED IN DUE COURSE.

Somewhat less than proper respect is apparently all right, provided the flag officer in question is out of the way, as in the case of:

Two submarines were returning to harbour after the annual inspection by their Admiral, Rear Admiral Dent. He was embarked in one of the submarines and had just retired from the bridge. During the inspection the submarines had to carry out an attack on a battleship, firing a torpedo with a crushable head. After attacking, each submarine recovered its own torpedo and lashed it to the casing. The submarine carrying the admiral had obviously scored a hit for the head of their torpedo was well crushed. There was no visible damage to the 2nd submarine's torpedo. The following signals were exchanged.

From 1st submarine (with admiral) to 2nd submarine:

DID YOU GET A HIT?

From 2nd submarine:

YES, DENT IS IN THE HEAD BELOW.

From 1st submarine:

HOW DID YOU GUESS.

Some people can't get it quite right even when trying hard.

From flag lieutenant to senior officer, Port:

WHO DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR ADMIRAL'S WOMAN?

The senior officer ashore was most perturbed, and asked for a repetition of the signal. In due course he received this amendment.

From flag lieutenant to senior officer, Port:

REFERENCE MY SIGNAL PLEASE INSERT WASHER BETWEEN ADMIRAL AND WOMAN.

Naval evolutions have spawned many good signal exchanges. One which I like would be entirely appropriate on occasions to be made to members on yachts in the vicinity of the Clubhouse by the Commodore.

A cruiser was trying to secure to head and stern buoys near her flagship in a congested harbour. The Admiral watched the proceedings from his quarterdeck. The cruiser made a good approach and appeared to be judging the manoeuvre well. The Admiral signalled:

GOOD.

Then things started to go wrong for the cruiser. She missed the buoys and got more and more tangled up. After watching for some time the Admiral again signalled:

ADD TO MY PREVIOUS SIGNAL, GOD.

Whilst the introduction of evolutions might improve the skills of members in yacht handling, and boost the egos of the flag officers, perhaps it is better that we

simply encourage Vic Dibben with his inshore skippers course and leave our evolutions to those involved in completing a racing course on Sydney Harbour on a summer Saturday afternoon.

Flag officers will just have to dream of leading columns of yachts in close order around the harbour. After all, they are not Admirals, but officers of a yacht club. In this role, not only do they perform an important administrative function, they do enjoy a special position.

A skipper of a yacht is, in the manner of the captains of all ships, master under God. He leads a group of friends, knitted together as a team, to pursue a common interest and to enjoy the satisfaction of skillful sailing, be it racing or cruising. The Commodore, Vice Commodore and Rear Commodore represent and lead the membership of the club, a band of people with a common interest who get together to share common adventures and traditions.

Tonight it is our honour to entertain flag officers of other clubs whose members share those same interests. We welcome them not only as individuals, but as representatives of the members of their clubs, all members of the fraternity who go down to the sea in small ships.

Footnote: The Naval signals quoted are from *Make Another Signal*, by Captain Jack Broome, William Kimber & Co. Limited, London 1973.

Jeanette Percival

A regular face at the Club each Saturday, Friday Twilight, General Meeting, Gaffers Days and other club functions for over 16 years in the last 25 was Jeanette Percival.

Her pleasant manner was appreciated by members and crews who, after returning from a harrowing day's sailing, were met with Jeanette's happy smile as she dispensed their choice.

Her retirement after so many years was a loss to Club members and their appreciation of her efforts were generously expressed at her farewell. The crew of *Tingari* decorated the Clubhouse and a number of speeches were made acknowledging her contribution to the happy working of the Club. Bob Lawler's speech will be remembered with interest.



Jeanette Percival's departure after 16 years was honoured on the evening of the last Twilight race of the season on 29th March 1996. The gifts included a rather large cake here being carefully handled by Lindy Danvers as Michael Tomaszewski and Commodore Fred Bevis look on. The cake was soon demolished by all present (Photo: John Jeremy)

Club liquor function licence

After some twelve months of negotiations with Lands Department, MSB, Cremorne Precinct Committee, Police, North Sydney Council and the NSW Liquor Licence Court, a licence to sell liquor on 26 specified occasions per year was granted in June 1992. The reason for applying for the licence was to rationalize club bar operations for Friday Twilight barbeques and other major functions when significant quantities of liquor are being sold.

In the negotiations which preceded the court applications, undertakings were given to the North Sydney Council and the Cremorne Precinct Committee that no increase of noise or traffic would result and that the Club would be shut down at the closing times nominated.

As Council approval of our licence application was given in spite of several letters of objection from near-by residents, it was essential that those residents were not given cause to complain about noise at the club, members or guests ignoring parking regulations, noisy behaviour of members and guests when leaving the Club, particularly late at night. Any serious breach of our assurances of concern for our neighbours would prejudice our licence and so upset Friday Twilight functions and the like. It is pleasing to note that Council and residents have had no cause to complain.

Friday Twilights

The idea of twilight races being conducted by the Club developed from the positive response to a survey of members conducted in 1984. Following the survey an extended period of consideration and debate took place regarding the organisational requirements and workload of the Racing Committee, manning of the Starter's boat and catering. The decision to commence the Twilight races was finally made and racing commenced in 1986-87 season. The then Commodore Peter Garrow and the Vice Commodore Frank Tebbutt crewed the Starter's boat for the first races. Peter Garrow has continued his commitment to the event by continuing as Starter every year since.

The development of the Friday Twilights has changed the social scene at the Club. The workload placed on the Rear Commodore by the event was dramatic.



Flying Circus, A57 close on the heels on Tingari during the Twilight Race on 8th January 1993 (Photo: John Jeremy)

At times up to 300 people have returned to the Club after the race wanting to be fed and watered and be seated at a table. Dennis Williams was Rear Commodore at the inception and, with the help of his volunteer team, did a great job coping with the after race gathering.

John Morris, and his Clubhouse Committee helpers, in his term as Rear Commodore, quickly found the catering demands on the same people each week not sustainable. He addressed the problem by coming up with the idea of having a roster where the crew of one of the boats would be nominated as the "Duty Crew" for the night. These "volunteers" would, once each season, help serve behind the bar, sell meals, collect glasses etc.. This extra help has shared the workload and (as described in a letter to the Club) "bond members to the Club". This largely volunteer structure has continued and has been the key to making the catering arrangements work.

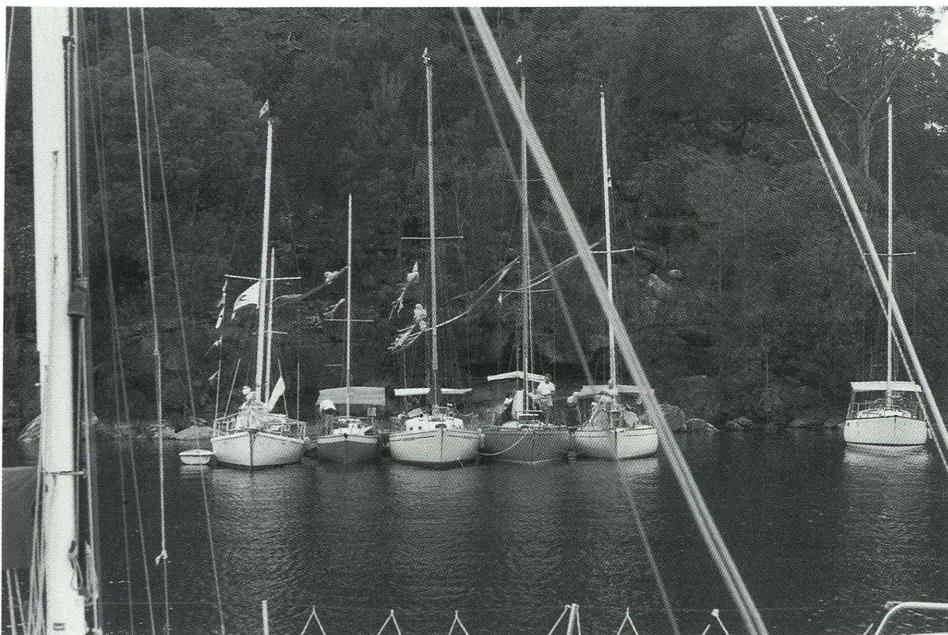
This after race social aspect of having a meal, relaxing with friends and mixing with other members at the end of the working week is a successful formula. It has been a great innovation in increasing the use and enjoyment of the Club by members and their crews. It would be hard to imagine the Club today without the Friday Twilight.

The History of the Castle Lagoon Sailing Club (or the Les Ardouin Story)

Tony Saunders and Peter Garrow

Many members would remember the late Les Ardouin, a magnanimous fellow who used to provide the barbeques at the clubhouse for the crippled children's sail, year after year. Members would also note the Les Ardouin cannon in our clubhouse as an Idle Hour trophy. Les was also instrumental in the formation of the Castle Lagoon Sailing Club (CLSC) as its one and only Commodore.

The CLSC was formed for fun around 1980, and operated for eight to ten years. It was an "informal Pittwater sub branch" of the Amateurs (no memorandum of articles, fees or anything fancy). Castle Lagoon, also known as Sams Hole, is a small well-protected inlet on Cowan Creek, not far from Cottage Point. The Lagoon is steep sided, where dropping an anchor in the middle, and tying



1982

The first breakfast on the wharf was organised in 1982 by Peter Garrow and his committee. These have continued over the years and are a popular social occasion. At one of these breakfasts a string quartet played Bach and Mozart; who said we don't have class at the Amateurs?

Castle Lagoon at Easter 1985. The cheerfully decorated raft-up includes Sunchaser (Peter Garrow), Scaramouche (John Emery), The Hum (Max Miller), Sea Major (Frank Tebbutt) and Volos (Brian McGain) (Photo: John Jeremy)

the stern up to a tree is possible, allowing easy rafting up. Every year, a bunch of Amateur yachts used to drop anchor to celebrate New Years eve in Castle Lagoon, and being a sociable lot, we used to form a raft, stern to shore. Notable regular attendee yacht owners included Les Ardouin, (and brother Harry in his H28) Max Miller, John Gents, Peter Garrow, Frank Tebbutt, myself, and other Amateur members who dropped in from time to time. One year, I took the kids' Laser along, and Peter Garrow borrowed another sailing dinghy and we had an Americas Cup challenge around the half dozen boats moored in the middle of the Lagoon. Great fun we thought, and the next thing we knew, it had grown into a rowing dinghy race, then a powered dinghy race with 2 horsepower motors (in later years "unlimited" horsepower) around the same moored boats.

As it was now getting serious, we decided to make a Commodore of the fleet and Les Ardouin was unanimously elected as he was a quiet fellow and had a generous nature. Les took his new duties to heart, and for the following year kindly purchased us "Amateur-sub branch" members, CLSC pennants and tee-shirts with individual nicknames. My tee-shirt had the name "Topal" as I was supposedly always fiddling with equipment on-board *Rapier*, Max Miller was "Cruise Director" to plan our movements, and so on for other members' nicknames. The following New Year, Les took it one step further and together with some of his staff from work brought a small cannon on the back of his ute down to Cottage Point wharf to load onto the bow of his Columbia 27, *Lakatoi*. It was a working field cannon, about quarter size with large wheels, and from memory Les had purchased it at an auction, along with the cannon with small wheels which now resides in our clubhouse. This was the starting/finishing gun for the dinghy races, and caused quite a

Past Commodore John Merrington's yacht Warana approaching the start for the Ladies Day race in 1979 (Photo: John Jeremy)





Gino Caio in his usual rig aboard Playmate of Maldon, Gaffers Day 1995. Playmate of Maldon turned 100 in 1996 and was given a birthday party at the Club

stir in the Lagoon. Les tied it down, loaded it up with some gunpowder and chaff, and off it went, his yacht rolling somewhat on firing. The black marks made from the gunpowder on his foredeck were virtually impossible to remove, despite many subsequent scrubblings. After the finish, Les called the winners over to his yacht and presented prizes of bottles of Scotch which he had paid for. Needless to say, at no stage over the years, did anyone ever suggest another Commodore. The New Year dinghy races expanded and went on for a number of years, and people started to use larger outboards with subsequent occasional tipping over, barging, throwing buckets of water and so on. One time, someone lost a new 4 horsepower motor over the side when there was a bit of jostling whilst rounding a mark.

Another notable CLSC event included a Sunday lunch in the clubhouse when Vic Dibben, our Commodore at the time, was presented with a CLSC pennant by Commodore Les. This pennant is still part of our collection.

The CLSC were also responsible for commencing the Castle Lagoon New Years eve raffle. A dinghy was rowed to every boat in the Lagoon (could be around 50) with an entry fee of 4 cans of beer, or the equivalent; including baked beans from one tee-total yacht. Commodore Les drew the winning ticket for the dinghy load of beer/baked beans each year, and used to donate extra cans.



Overcast skies seem to be a regular part of the scene at Easter, but the showers rarely dampen the enthusiasm of the participants in Bob Brown Trophy race to Pittwater. Here on Good Friday 1989 Honey Bee, Invader, Idle Hour, Mark Twain, Firetel, Morning Tide, Grumpy and Sunchaser place great trust in a single mooring at Coasters Retreat (Photo: John Jeremy)

What caused the subsequent demise of the CLSC? Well unfortunately Les passed away, his brother Harry sailed his yacht to Queensland, Frank moved to Lake Macquarie and Max started going up there for the Christmas/New Year period. It also started to get a bit rowdy with hangers-on due to the popularity of the powered dinghy race, so those Amateur members that were left, drifted over the coming years to the third arm of Smiths Creek, where we were subsequently joined by Tony Clarkson in his motor yacht. Despite the success, at the time, of the CLSC, there has never been any suggestion of the formation of Smiths Creek Sailing Club.