

SYDNEY AMATEUR SAILING CLUB LIMITED
 Clubhouse and boatshed, Green Street, Cremorne
 (Founded 1872)

NEWSLETTER

May 1976

5c PER COPY

Rather quiet around the Harbour on Saturdays lately - quite a change to go sailing without having to watch out for low flying 5.5's & 18-footers - still, it will be good to get out there again in the next racing season, pitting our skill and judgement against 'them others'.

At last we are able to publish the long-promised article on an interesting looking club yacht WIRRAMINNA. The history shows how a yacht can change ownership with various owners imposing their ideas on the design, everyone apparently caring for the appearance and performance. Full marks to the present owner, SASC member Herschel Stanley Smith and his son Herschel, for the work they have carried out.

WIRRAMINNA by R W Glassford, SASC.

The name rolls easily off the tongue. Aboriginal words seem to be capable of various translations according to locality - one, ascribed to this yacht's name is "tee by the water" which may be apt, whereas it hardly fits tiny "Wirraminna" station, two stops east of Kingoonya on the Transcontinental Railway Line. Most of the water thereabouts is usually dry saltpan!!

The yacht we know - A54 and moored off the Club in Mosman Bay - began life as a centreboard cutter in the yard of W M Ford at Berrys Bay in 1907. Her designer is not known for certain, but contemporary recollection of old-timers puts her down to the work of E W Heywood, Hon. Sec. SASC 1890-92 and Captain 1902-3, who had made something of a name for himself as a yacht architect (though originally a lawyer by profession) and had been complimented two years earlier for his design of the Carment's graceful gaff cutter ATHENE (also, incidentally, still afloat in Sydney Harbour).

WIRRAMINNA was originally just over 31ft long, but this was reduced by some inches when part of her 'tipped-up' arch-board was cut off some years ago resulting in the 'mini-tuck' she has today. Her beam is 9.1ft and present draft about 5.7ft - a great change from her shallow centreboard days when she was only 4.9ft from the side of the deck amidships to the bottom of the keel!

Her first owner was George Herbert Hoskins of Burwood and he kept her about 6 years. He put her first engine in - an 8hp converted single-cylinder De Dion, then very popular. This was the forerunner of a succession of auxiliaries including an Invincible, a Universal and a Rugby - the latter now in process of replacement by a Coventry.

G H Hoskins sold her to Charles Horace Ralph, an engineer, in 1913. Mr Ralph was a well-known yachtsman in his day and among the celebrated yachts he owned was AKARANA (one of Logan's most beautiful creatures) ENDEAVOUR and the steam yacht ADELE which lay in Rose Bay in the 30's and was wrecked on Kembla breakwater while on Naval Service in World War II. He only kept WIRRAMINNA for a year and sold her in March 1914 into the joint ownership of Edwin Hubert Wilsallen and Percival Stanley Wilsallen both of Gunnedah NSW. Edwin died in 1918 and his share reverted to Percy Wilsallen who sold the yacht back to her builder, W M Ford, in March 1919.

Ford sold her in October of the same year - 54 shares to Archibald Paul Kennedy and 10 to Sep Stevens, both of whom were then living at Balmain. A year later Sep Stevens sold his interest to A A Preston of Balmain. Kennedy died at sea in 1923 and his executor bought up Preston's 10/64ths and sold 'the whole piece' to John Edward Norman of Rose Bay on Feb 21 1924 - who almost immediately (within 3 weeks) resold her to Dr Percy Glover Cooley of Double Bay.

As far as can be ascertained it was in this period that her centreboard was removed and a deep keel added although, curiously enough, the Certificate and Register make no mention of this, then or at any other time. Dr Cooley and his family raced the yacht with the Amateurs (then as #14) and cruised in her regularly, and did not part with her until May 1935 when she passed to William Bryan Long, a grazier of Yerina, Victoria. Sydney, however, remained her home port and Long sold her 15 months

later to John Herne Mingaye, described in the Register as "financier, of Young Street Sydney".

Seven years later, the middle of World War II, Mr Mingaye resold her to Roy James McCall, who was then a Captain in the Army. He was succeeded by Mr J N King and a Mr J Hilton from whom present SASC member and well-known architect Greg Grant Neave of Clifton Gardens purchased her on March 5, 1950. Greg Neave lavished considerable affection on the old boat, by now sloop rigged after a period as a yawl and a cutter, and made several alterations and improvements to the cabin. He was often seen sailing her alone which was quite something as she is a very heavy and powerful craft. In due course he conceived a desire for a smaller vessel - a 'Vivacity' I and sold WIRRAMINNA on April 4 1966 to her present owner Herschel Stanley Smith of Camden.

While Herschel and his son have had great pleasure from old 'WIRRA' they have also had some moments of trauma. She was very nearly lost off Sydney Heads in November 1966 when caught out in a sudden and violent storm. It happened at night WIRRAMINNA was knocked down by a 90 knot squall and only had about 3 inches of freeboard when they stood up again.

Their distress signals were picked up by Bob (now Sir Robert) Crichton-Brown in BALANDRA who was participating in a Montagu Island race. He abandoned the race, located WIRRAMINNA which was no mean feat at night, sent a radio message for police assistance and stood by until they arrived. Phil Deaton in BACCHUS D also abandoned the race and stood by. Herschel said it was a frightening experience but it made a world of difference to them to know they had help standing by if they needed it while they were bailing furiously.

Repairs were carried out by Treharnes at Fairlight.

Next she lost her mast and her bowsprit when she dragged her Club mooring in the Southerly gales of May 1968. Repaired, she behaved admirably until May 1974 in another Southerly gale, she picked up the Club's heaviest mooring and after tango with BURADDOO waltzed off mooring and all on the high tide down to the head of the

Since then she underwent first a partial refit to cure a leak in the rudder trunk and then in December 1975, a major refit when she was recaulked after her copper sheathing had been stripped off. This great old-timer, at the age of 69, now seems for many more years of service in the devoted care of the Smiths.

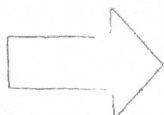
Incidentally, look at the association between WIRRAMINNA and the S A S C - Designer (?) - E C Heywood, Hon. Secretary SASC 1890-92 and Captain 1902-3

Owners: Dr Percy Glover Cooley, raced WIRRAMINNA with the Amateurs.
Greg Grant Neave, present SASC member.
Herschel Stanley Smith present owner, a member of the SASC
and
John Norman, an SASC member, is the son of a former owner,
John Edward Norman.

It seems that when speaking of the history of "The Amateurs", WIRRAMINNA should be included...

DIARY NOTES

- .Annual Dinner/dance on 26th June 1976 at Hunters Hill Bowling Club.
Tickets \$9.50 each. (Waiting list ONLY for reservations)
- .General Monthly Meeting - Wednesday 19th May - when a film on the latest Sydney-Hobart race will be shown. Alastair Merrick will also show a small selection of slides of interest, accompanied by a brief commentary.
- .Wine Bottling - to be held at the club on - Saturday 5th June - commencing at 11 a.m. Bring your own steaks!



Please note the enclosure of your subscription notice for 1976/77, payable within 60 days.