

"THURLOO"—E. J. (Ern) Merrington—
first S.A.S.C. entry in Hobart Race.

Photo courtesy J. A. Middleton.

Different ships—different splices. Apparently Tasmanian cigar-shaped clouds are quite different from New South Wales cigar-shaped clouds, and half an hour later we had the spinnaker set and drawing again, and were romping along over a lumpy sea with the breeze a steady force 4 on the Port beam.

These conditions continued all day, but shortly after dark the breeze backed right round to the nor'east again and freshened, and for the rest of the night we bucketed across Bass Strait with the wind nearly dead aft. A low scud of cloud raced across the moon and disappeared ahead, to be followed by a short clear patch and then another procession of broken, low cloud.

It was most impressive. The whole world seemed to be hurrying to Hobart, and, with a rising sea and an occasional wave top coming over the quarter, "Thurloo" did her best to keep pace with it, shouldering her way south at a constant 8 knots, and rolling a bit more than was comfortable.

By daylight the breeze had moderated, though it was still in the nor'east. But the day had a strange, unreal quality about it. Overhead there was a clear blue sky. But "Thurloo" was sailing in a grey haze which reduced visibility to about five miles.

At the mid-day change of watch Joe asked:

"When do you reckon we'll see land?"

Roger took a look at the chart and fiddled with the dividers. "Well if you could see 15 miles you could see some now. Cape Forestier is off our Starboard bow."

His tone was very confident. And why not? With the haze blotting everything out who could argue with him?

"And, by golly, I can too", said the Skipper.

It was one of those miracles. For less than a minute there was a thinning of the haze in the west and the coastline could be faintly, but clearly, seen. It soon closed in again, but we had all seen it and there could be no doubt that Roger's navigation was "spot on", as we used to say in the Air Force.

"Well, bugger me," said Joe in an awed voice. "That sextant thing works after all. I thought it was a lot of bull. I kid you not."

For the rest of the day a breeze which constantly made and died and backed and veered kept the watch on deck very busy, and frequent trips to the foredeck were necessary to handle the boom-guy. Young Geoff (Piper), the baby of the crew, found it quicker to go through the cabin—much to the discomfort of the watch below.

He would grab the hatch, swing down below, let go when he was nearly horizontal, take two giant strides and shoot up the forehatch, almost in one movement. But there came the time—it was inevitable—when he forgot to unclip his safety harness from the cockpit. He swung down below, let go in the horizontal position, and reached the end of his tether while he was in mid-air near the cabin roof. And there he hung, with a look of utter amazement on his face, for what seemed like several seconds before crashing to the cabin sole on the flat of his back. He continued to do it, but thereafter the flourish was missing.

The awkward conditions lasted until midnight when the breeze finally settled in the sou'sou'east, and for the first time since leaving Sydney we had to stow the spinnaker and haul our wind. "Thurloo" revelled in it and tramped along with her rail down, making light work of the rising seas.

Contrary to expectations, however, the rising wind did not dispel the fog. In fact, it got thicker, and our watches on deck became a struggle against drowsiness as we took turns at staring at the compass, and staring into the fog, constantly on the look out for the yachts which we knew were in our vicinity, each one sailing, as we were, in its own grey bubble of isolation.

Once during the night our little world was visited by a steamer which materialised, without warning, out of the murk astern. She held us in her searchlight for a few moments and then vanished, just as suddenly, into the fog ahead. And again, shortly after daylight, we were overtaken by another. This one slowed down, flashed a message too rapidly for us to read, speeded up again and was swallowed up in a matter of minutes. At least these two appearances confirmed that we were on track, as they could only be making for Cape Pillar. Both, we learned later, had picked us up on radar from several miles astern.

We beat on down the coast for the rest of the morning with vague bits of land appearing and disappearing—a lot of it no doubt imaginary—until finally Tasman Island came up out of the murk just when and where Roger had said it would.

And what a rugged sight it was. Sheer pillars of rock, fluted like gigantic organ pipes, and broken off in jagged, uneven rows. A hundred feet above the water the cliffs disappeared into thick, dark grey clouds, and even below that they were more or less veiled by rain and scud. The base of the cliffs was being pounded by seas coming straight from the Antarctic, and with spray being flung high into the air, it was at once a grand and an awe-inspiring sight. It was a dead lee shore, and with sheets eased "Thurloo" tore past it at between 7 and 8 knots.

It was 11.20 a.m. when we rounded Tasman Island and set a course of 235(C) for Cape Raoul, hidden somewhere ahead in the fog. At 12.30 it appeared dead ahead and at 12.45 we checked sheets round it and began a thrilling run up Storm Bay with both wind and sea on the quarter. And there was plenty of both. The fog stayed with us as far as Betsy Island, then gradually cleared as we closed the Iron Pot. The wind, too, began to take off and with the end in sight we took it in turns to shave with the Skipper's electric shaver.

Approaching One Tree Point the Skipper asked:

"Is there enough water to go inshore of that big red beacon up ahead?"

Roger looked at the chart.

"Plenty", he replied, "3½ fathoms half way to the shore."

"O.K., we'll go inside", said the Skipper, and held his course.



Crew of "THURLOO" in Hobart Race—
left to right: J. Piper, G. DeTores, R. Hopkins,
E. Merrington and D. Rayment.

Photo Mrs. M. Merrington.

It was a very short leg from there to the finish, and the dying breeze gasped its last as we crossed the line at 5.28.

We were lucky. The only other yacht in sight—and not so far astern—went back down the Derwent with the tide and did not finish till the next morning. It was “Lass O’Luss”.

But we had finished. And apparently all Hobart had turned out to welcome us. We crossed the line to a deafening cacophony of motor horns, hand clapping, whistles and cheers. It was incredible. And it continued until we had been towed into Constitution Dock and moored—bow to the wharf with an anchor out astern. It was a thrilling and moving experience, and one which, I am sure, none of us will ever forget. I know I found myself blinking and swallowing hard, and Roger confided later that he nearly burst into tears when he was asked for his autograph as he passed a warp ashore.

After we had settled down and had time to look around, Roger asked a question which had been in my mind for some time.

“Where is everybody?” he asked quietly. “There are only 15 other boats here. That makes us 16th out of 32. Forty-eight hours ago we were sixth last, according to the Sched positions.”

But here the Old Girl was. Seventeen years old, and sailed with one main, one jib and one flat spinnaker—apart from storm sails. Sixteenth over the line and eighth on handicap, against modern thoroughbreds with bags and bags of sails.

We felt we had done the Amateurs proud—until the Commodore of the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania came aboard to welcome us.

“Welcome to Hobart”, he said. “But why on earth did you go the wrong side of the John Garrow Light?”

“John Garrow Light? Wrong side?” the Skipper looked bewildered.

“Didn’t you read the Sailing Instructions? It’s there in black and white.”

Without a word Ernest took them from the drawer where they had been thrown before the start “to be read later”.

He read them for the first time—and laughed. A slightly hollow laugh.

“Across the Starting Line in Sydney Harbour to the Finishing Line in Hobart, LEAVING THE JOHN GARROW LIGHT TO PORT!!”

It was the ONLY mark of the course. We could have gone round Lord Howe Island or down the west coast of Tasmania with impunity. But we had sailed the wrong side of the John Garrow Light—a matter of perhaps twelve feet—and that was the wrong thing to do.

They did not disqualify us. They were kind and said we had retired. And that is why all subsequent Hobart Race Programmes show the 1960 race as having 30 yachts finishing with two retirements—“Ile-Ole” (the only three-masted vessel ever to compete in a Hobart Race) and “Thurloo”.

But “Thurloo” did not retire in vain. Because I’ll wager that nobody who has heard her story, nor anyone who reads this account, will ever again—be he experienced skipper or complete novice—start in a race without first reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting the Sailing Instructions.

YACHTING CARGOES

(With apologies to John Masefield)

Stately motor cruiser with flying bridge gleaming,
Anchored in the Basin for a mid-week spell,
With a cargo of tycoons, top brass executives,
Bikinis and chorus girls, Hock and Moselle.

Overcanvassed Eighteen planing down to Bradley’s,
Pride of Sydney Harbour and the bookies’ joy,
With a cargo of experience, muscle and profanity,
Trapeze men, skipper and bailer boy.

Sordid ocean racer, running under storm jib,
Rolling down to Hobart over Bass Strait swells,
With a cargo of wet spinnakers, ghosters and staysails,
Double-clewed genoas, seasick man and Kwells.

Written by Roger Hopkins during a night watch while hove-to in “Thurloo” during a Bass Strait gale on the way back from Hobart.

A NAME TO REMEMBER

Walter Rayment joined the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club in October 1907 and was an active member until his death in 1959 at the age of 86.

He was introduced to the sea at the age of seven when his family migrated to Australia from Liverpool, England, aboard the full-rigged ship "Melanope" in 1880. Despite his extreme youth he was able in later years to describe in detail how "Melanope's" crew handled her in a gale, and under what rig she was finally hove-to. This facility of what is now known as "total recall" stayed with him throughout his life.

His first sail on Sydney Harbour was in 1886 in an old open boat hired from Jack Smith's Iron Cove Boatshed, and it ended in tragedy. A southerly buster capsized them near Callan Park and the skipper was drowned while attempting to swim ashore for help. The boat, with Walter and two other lads still clinging to it, was finally blown ashore and they and the boat were rescued.

Undeterred by this unfortunate introduction the three boys—the other two were Walter's younger brother, Ted, and Bert Scrutton—were out again in the same boat the following week-end, and continued to sail Jack Smith's hire boats for several years.

In 1891 Walter, Ted and Bert joined the crew of the 22-ft. half-decked centreboarder "Margarita", and when her owner-skipper, A. Munday, died the following year they joined forces with the fourth member of her crew, Billy Whitton, and bought the boat between them. Gradually, over the next few years as his partners found other interests, Walter bought their shares and in 1906 became sole owner. He joined the S.A.S.C. in 1907 and commenced racing "Margarita" in Club events.

Two years later he was elected to the Committee and began a remarkable record of service to the Club. From that year, 1909, he was never without some official position until he retired as Treasurer in 1953 at the age of 80. It is even more remarkable that he retired at the same time from the position of Starter. Treasurer and Starter at 80 years of age, and handling both jobs with efficiency. Not only a remarkable, but an incredible record.

During those years he held office as Club Captain in 1911 and 1912, and again from 1916 to 1923. He was Treasurer from 1928 to 1953, and Starter for the three seasons 1951, 52 and 53. He was made an Honorary Life Member in 1937.

He sold "Margarita" after the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, but was prevented from joining the Services by a chronic deafness which he had suffered from early childhood. His brother, Ted, however, died on active service in 1917.

In 1919 he bought the 17-ft. centreboarder "Frolic" (A6), and the same year introduced Ted's 7 year old son, David, to sailing. His own 15 year old son, Laurence, sailed regularly with his father, but his elder boy, John, was serving as a Midshipman in the R.A.N., and was able to join the crew only when he was home on leave.

Walter had raced "Frolic" with moderate success for two seasons, when he saw a boat which really took his fancy.

She was named "Snowdrop" and his enquiries disclosed that she had been built of Huon Pine on the roof of the School of Arts in Pitt Street. Her owner, Oscar McKay, was curator of the School of Arts and he had built her himself in his spare time. Carrying the timber up a piece at a time had not presented any problems, but getting the finished 20-ft. boat down to street level was a major project in the days before the "Men from Marr's" were available.

She had been in the water only a very short time when Walter saw her and it is, perhaps, surprising that Oscar was prepared to part with her so soon. But he was, and Walter became the proud owner of one of the best of the "Pukka B Class" boats ever to race with the Club. She was registered with the number A4 in 1921.

"Frolic" was not sold till the following year, and for a season Laurence raced her against his father in "Snowdrop". There were always two "firsts" in B Class that year. First in the class, and first of the Rayment's. It is interesting to note that both father and son went on eventually to win Gold Medals and the Kelly Cup—twenty years apart.

In the middle twenties Laurence left Sydney and Walter signed on his young nephew, David. It was the start of a unique Skipper-Mate relationship. These two were destined to sail together, both racing and cruising, for the rest of Walter's life. Years later David said, "Everything worth knowing that I ever learned I learned from the Skipper". And he wasn't just talking about sailing.

Walter Rayment had three great attributes. He was a gentleman, he was modest, and he was scrupulously honest. He was so honest that when a lifelong friend of David's, who had crewed in "Snowdrop" for a season, asked to be nominated for membership the Skipper said, "Sorry, I haven't known you for two years. If you still want to join in twelve months' time I'd be delighted." And he was meticulous in his work. The Club's auditors often said that while Walter Rayment was Treasurer they had nothing to do but sign the Balance Sheet.

His entire sailing career—including every race he sailed in, whether in his own boat or as crew in someone else's—is recorded in some thirty hand-written logs. His records of his races contain not only what "Snowdrop" did, but what every other boat in the race did. This fetish for "putting it on paper" was one of the things he passed on to David who is still carrying on the tradition of "writing up the log". Anyone who has ever had David in his crew, or who has raced against him in either harbour races or JOG events, would be surprised to find his performance is faithfully recorded in David's logs. That includes what happened at barbecues and rendezvous.



Walter Rayment at helm of "SNOWDROP".

Photo D. W. Rayment

In his early days Walter was known, for some obscure reason, as "Daddy". After he bought "Snowdrop" and grew a beard he was known as "Captain Kettle". But to his family, and to most of his intimate friends, he was always "Skipper".

Walter raced "Snowdrop" until 1937. And he raced her with success. Apart from odd regatta trophies, he won the B Class Gold Medal for the 1926-27 season, and the Kelly Cup in 1928. "Snowdrop" was the first B Class boat ever to win this coveted trophy. Ten years later she proved she was still a force to be reckoned with, despite her age, when she won the White Horse Cup for the S.A.S.C. Division of the Vacluse Regatta.

But by 1937, at the age of 64, Walter felt he was getting beyond sailing an open boat—with all the necessary slipping and maintenance to keep her in top condition. His two sons were away. John in the Navy and Laurie on the land. And David had moved to Brisbane. So he put "Snowdrop" on the market. She was bought by Norman Brooker who changed her name to "Naïad IV".

Shortly after arriving in Brisbane David bought his first boat. She was a 12-ft. skiff—in a bad state of disrepair. He paid £5 for the hull, which he spent a whole winter reconditioning. And he built all the spars, complete with rigging, himself. With a second-hand suit of sails he launched his first command and owned the world—for a week. His spars, sails and all his removable gear were stolen, and he had to start all over again.

He called this boat "Southerner" and sailed her for twelve months on the Brisbane River. But the urge to go further afield was too strong, and he sold her and bought a 17-ft. clinker-built, raised decker, with a deep keel and a self-draining cockpit. David christened her "Southerner II" and set about exploring Moreton Bay. World War II put a stop to his wanderings, however, and he sold "Southerner II" when he joined the R.A.A.F., in which he served four years as a pilot. Walter's son, John, now a Commander, was made Navigation Officer for the Australian Squadron, won the Distinguished Service Cross, and was killed in the Philippines when a Kamikaze Pilot crashed onto the bridge of HMAS Australia. Laurence joined the Army, did a tour of duty in the Middle East and was then posted to small ships in the Pacific.

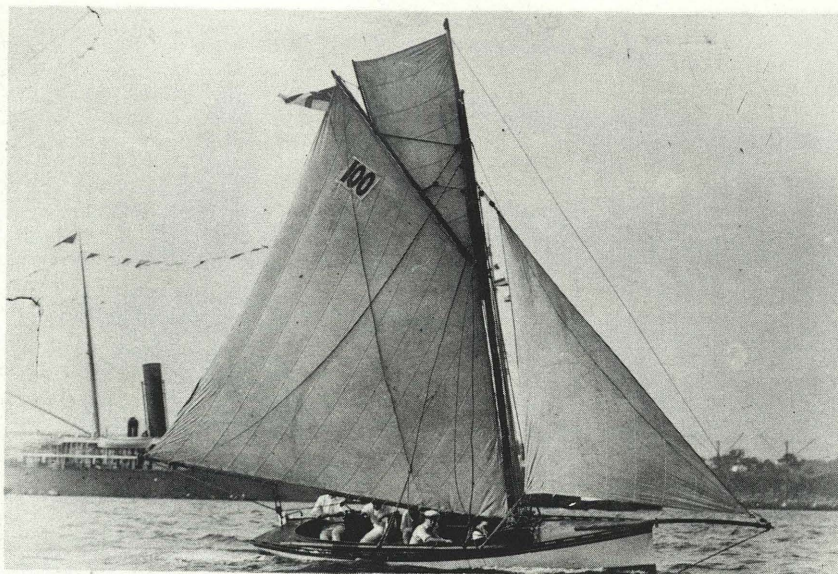
Back in Sydney in 1945, David bought the 20-ft. centreboarder "Rambler" from Mick York (of "Gretel" fame) but when he found that Bill Oxby had just registered his "Rambler" with the Club, he changed her name, at the Skipper's suggestion, to "Frolic II". She wore the number A8.

The following year, as David was committed to a young family and a growing business, Laurie became part owner and skippered "Frolic" in Club events. David crewed when he was free, but at this time "Frolic" was, on Saturdays, Laurie's boat. And he did her proud. He won the Kelly Cup in 1948 and the 3rd Division Gold Medal in both 1949 and 1950.

David spent whatever free time he could get taking the Skipper sailing and teaching his own son, Ted, to sail. Ted was only twelve months old when he first sailed in "Frolic", but before she was sold at the end of 1950, young Ted, at the age of six, could work her to windward and put her on the moorings with no way on while his father picked up the chain.

With the sale of "Frolic" it was supposed that the Skipper would finally sit back and watch. But a man like Walter Rayment is hard to pension off. Not content with still being Treasurer, he took on the job of Starter, and carried it out with his usual efficiency until 1953. He stood down as Treasurer at the same time.

But his retirement lasted only two years. In 1955 David bought the 20-ft. clinker-built, double-ender "Stardust", and the Skipper, now 82, dug out his oilskins, bought a new yachting cap, stuffed a bottle of rum into his dilly-bag and declared himself ready for sea.



"MARGARITA"—W. Rayment, E. Rayment,
W. Whitton and A. Scrutton.

Photo courtesy L. Rayment.

The Skipper sailed with David for two more years before the doctors told him he must have an operation from which he might not recover. But before they could get him into hospital David smuggled him aboard "Stardust" and took him up to Broken Bay, where they spent a fortnight revisiting all the Skipper's old haunts. Places which he remembered so well, but which he had never expected to see again. When "Stardust" ran back into the harbour before a fresh nor'easter with the 84-year-old Skipper at the helm, both he and David knew that his last cruise was over.

Walter Rayment died after a long illness on the 30th April, 1959, at the age of 86.

In this same year David became the first Secretary of the JOG Association and was largely responsible for laying the solid foundation on which the present thriving organisation was built. His services were recognised in 1964 when he was made a Life Member of the Group.

David was in "Thurloo's" crew when she became the first S.A.S.C. yacht to compete in the Hobart Race, and he was the first S.A.S.C. representative to sit on the Y.A. Safety Committee. As a committeeman he was deeply involved in the events leading up to the purchase by the Club of the Green St. premises, and he was one of the first directors of the newly formed S.A.S.C. Ltd. His years of JOG racing in "Stardust", with his son, Ted, and Laurie as crew, came to an end when he gave up ocean racing to devote his time to helping out with the boatshed, which in the early days had to be run with voluntary labour. Disliking the limelight, and believing that he can be of more use working in the background, David has twice declined to accept nomination for Flag Rank.

In addition to his activities with the S.A.S.C., David has also been a member of the Sailing Committee of the Cruising Yacht Club since 1956, and is well known to local, interstate and overseas ocean racing yachtsmen as a Safety Inspector for the Hobart Race. He has been doing inspections, without a break, for the last ten years.

Laurence crewed with David in "Stardust" until 1962 when he retired from active sailing. The following year he became a Life Member, having joined the Club in 1928.

Young Ted, having developed a taste for blue water, continued crewing in JOG races and cruising offshore. He was with Roger Hopkins when "Gallivanter" was rolled and dismasted in November, 1967. After bringing his crippled ship 100 miles back to safety under jury rig, Roger stated that the high morale of his crew after a near disaster was in no small measure due to Ted's cheerfulness in adversity, and his ability to laugh when there was "damn little left to laugh about". As this is being written Ted is spending twelve months' leave of absence from the ABC crewing aboard the 90-ft. ketch "Milena", doing charter work in the Mediterranean. Ted joined the Club as a Junior Member in 1961.

David's younger son, John, also cut his teeth on a mainsheet. At 8 he was racing his Manly Junior with the Woollahra Sailing Club. At 14, with another lad of the same age, he took "Stardust" for a three weeks' cruise to Broken Bay—and was so conscientious with his flag drill that other holidaymakers set their watches by "Stardust"—and at 16 he won the Cranbrook Sailing Club's Championship Cup, and represented the school, sailing a GP14, in the CYC Winter Harbour Races.

By 1969 David was forced to accept the fact that his family had outgrown "Stardust's" limited accommodation. He sold her to Michael Bernsten and started building a 33-ft. steel yawl to be called "Blue Jacket". He hopes to have her in the water by 1972. She will carry the number A4, which was first carried by Walter Rayment in 1921.

Rayment—a name to remember.



"SNOWDROP"—Walter Rayment at helm,
R. Cooper, R. Drummond, L. Cole and
C. Wenborn crewing.

Photo Hall & Co.

LOOKING BACK

In the year 1929 or 1930—I forget which, but anyway I was still in my teens—"Snowdrop" came to anchor in Store Beach and I went ahead rigging the tent while the Skipper got lunch.

"White bread or brown, Mister?" he asked.

"Oh, either thanks", I replied.

A characteristic snort caused me to look round. The Old Man was glaring at me, and his beard was fairly bristling.

"WHICH DO YOU PREFER?" he roared.

He pronounced it preFAH.

"Oh, white, I think."

"Then for God's sake say so."

His tone lost its edge and became avuncular.

"You must learn to make decisions, Old Chap. Very important."

—.—.—.—

In the year 1959 or 1960—I forget which, but I know Ted was still in his teens—"Stardust" came to anchor in "Snowdrop's" old spot at Store Beach and I went ahead rigging the awning while Ted rustled up something to eat.

"Tea or coffee, Dad?" he asked.

"Oh, either thanks", I replied, with that strange feeling that this had all happened before.

Then in a flash I was back thirty years, waiting for a snort that didn't come.

Instead, my son's voice, very unfilial in tone, said:

"O.K. You'll have coffee. It's easier."

—.—.—.—

This second episode, so similar to the first, brought back the past so vividly that for the rest of the evening I was back in my youth, living again those wonderful days in "Snowdrop" when my uncle, Walter Rayment—always the Skipper to me—was not only teaching me the fundamentals of sailing and seamanship, but was also guiding my young and uncertain footsteps along the road to manhood with such simple but telling remarks as the one about making decisions. Another which I have never forgotten, and which I have tried to live up to, was "A gentleman, Old Chap, is a man who never makes anyone feel uncomfortable." I cannot think of a better description.

"Snowdrop" in those days was a force to be reckoned with in B Class, and was the first B Class boat to win the Kelly Cup, but it was our cruises and day sails which provided my happiest memories and during which most of those little incidents occurred which are recalled from time to time when yarns are being swapped.

The Skipper's knowledge of nautical matters, both Service and civilian, was profound, and his habit of using nautical terms even when ashore was so natural that no one ever found it strange or affected. It did, however, cause an occasional laugh. Like the time when he excused himself from a group of his wife's afternoon tea guests because his "trouser halyards had carried away".

And his seamanship was such that I doubt if we would ever have got into any sort of trouble if it had not been for two handicaps he was saddled with throughout his life. His eyesight was poor, and he had been very deaf from birth. In everyday life he overcame these disabilities by wearing glasses and, in the early days before pocket hearing aids had been developed, by carrying round with him a large box called an Acoustican connected to a headphone, but when we were sailing he would leave his glasses off except when we were racing or sailing in congested waters, and his cumbersome receiving set was quite impractical when we were under way.

I remember the beautiful afternoon in the early 20s when we took "Snowdrop" outside for a couple of hours. As we left the harbour the Skipper put his glasses in his pocket with the remark: "Keep a bright look-out, Mister, and tell me if there are any boats about."

The only boat in sight was a tug towing a peculiar, lattice-like framework on a long hawser, but it was not close enough to worry us and I said nothing about it. We sailed on out to sea for about an hour, and I was rather intrigued by the tug which simply towed its charge up and down between North Head and The Gap, an occupation which seemed to me to be pretty pointless. Finally I mentioned its odd behaviour to the Skipper.

He put his glasses on and had a look.

"Good God, Mister, can't you see he's wearing a RED FLAG? He's towing a target. That means target practice from Middle Head. We'd better get out of here."

He pulled away and we ran back into the harbour, the Skipper telling me on the way of an occasion when Jack Want had complained of a shot from Middle Head going between the masts of his ketch-rigged "Miranda". At a Committee meeting the following night Stan Spain reported that his son had been very upset because "one of your ruddy Amateurs forced us to postpone our target practice yesterday afternoon".

The highlights of my days in "Snowdrop" were our cruises to Broken Bay. And though there were many of them, and I have long since lost count of the number of times I have been back over nearly fifty years of sailing, I have never quite recaptured the thrill, the excitement, or the sheer happiness I experienced the first time the Skipper took me up the coast and introduced me to the beauties of Refuge Bay, Hallett's Beach, Cottage Rock, The Oval—now called Castle Lagoon—Coal and Candle and Smith's Creek. But how different things were in those days.



The Skipper—Walter Rayment;
the Mate—David Rayment.

Photo courtesy D. Rayment.

There were no moorings. No Halvorsen hire boats. Very, very few motor boats—or “Larnches” as the Skipper used to call them—no two-way radios, and once round West Head the only places to get stores were Brooklyn and Windybanks up Cowan Creek.

And in “Snowdrop” we literally camped. She was a 20-ft. quarter-decked centreboarder over which we rigged a tent supported by the boom which was lashed to the mast about three feet above the gooseneck and supported at the after-end by a long crutch. The fore-deck was covered by a shark’s nose so that the whole boat was enclosed. This arrangement was both roomy and snug, but it also limited our field of vision to the open after-end. This was a contributing factor in one or two amusing incidents.

The first occurred in The Oval. We arrived just on dark one evening on the last breath of a dying breeze. The Skipper let go anchor, tent was rigged and dinner prepared. We had reached the coffee and cigarette stage when we were startled by a bump alongside.

“What’s that?” The Skipper had felt it even though he couldn’t hear it. I scrambled aft with a torch to find “Snowdrop” nestling against a rock on the opposite side of the bay from where we had anchored.

“Don’t see why she should have dragged”, said the Skipper, “I gave her all the chain and plenty of line.” When we went for’d in the dinghy to tow her off the reason was very apparent. The anchor was hanging on the bobstay! With his deafness and poor eyesight the Skipper had failed to notice in the failing light that the stock of our Admiralty pattern anchor had hooked on the bobstay when he let go.

Later on the same cruise I hurried aboard to get out of a sudden shower of rain as we lay to a light westerly in Careel Bay, and in my haste I forgot to make the painter fast. We immediately shoved the sweeps out under the sides of the tent and while I swept her astern the Skipper paid out the anchor warp under the shark’s nose. But the dinghy had got a fair start and we had to join all the spare lines on board before we finally caught it, almost on the mud flat. My efforts with those cumbersome sweeps left me completely exhausted, but I have never made the same mistake since.

Any of the old timers who were there may remember one lovely calm night in Refuge Bay when we had Jim Langham and Doc. Kirkland aboard for a game of bridge.

The Skipper was not using his Acoustican and we had to shout our bids. Our voices must have carried because about 10 o’clock an exasperated bellow came over the water from the other side of the bay:

“Seven bloody no trumps, and how about calling it a night and letting us all get some sleep!”

Looking back over the years it is amazing how few incidents there were that could be the subject of a yarn, and yet reading over my logs I find that every day was filled with activity and interest. Cruising is not a succession of amusing or adventurous episodes.

I think that Cliff Gale summed it up very neatly when he was asked what he did all the time on his cruises. “I do nothing”, he replied, “and I haven’t got time to do it.”

Walter Rayment will be best remembered by the Amateurs as a tireless Club official—he was Honorary Treasurer for more than twenty-five years—and as a successful skipper in B Class—later to become 3rd Division, but it was from his cruises that he derived the greatest pleasure. When circumstances and advancing years forced him to part with “Snowdrop”—he sold her to Norman Brooker—he first remark to me was: “Well, I’m afraid that’s the end of our cruises to Broken Bay, Mister.”

“We’ll go back, Skipper”, I replied, “I’ll get a boat one day and we’ll do it all over again. I promise.”

But I did not realise then just how many years were to pass before that promise could be kept. A few years later the war started and cut a large slice out of my life. Then when it was over I found myself with a young family and a growing business which, between them, demanded all my time and money. And the Skipper was not getting any younger. Even after I had bought “Stardust”, circumstances, for some time, made it impossible.

But I did keep my promise.

In 1957, when the Skipper was 84, he and I took “Stardust” up the coast and spent a fortnight visiting all his old haunts.

Many years ago, when I was a very junior member of “Snowdrop’s” crew, the Skipper told me that one of the greatest pleasures of owning a boat was the pleasure you could give to other people. Frequently, during this cruise, that remark of his came to mind, because my greatest pleasure was derived from watching the Old Man enjoying himself. He was so happy doing again the things he had done so many years ago, and seeing again the places he had given up hope of ever seeing again, that it did my heart good to know that my ship and I were able to make it possible.

He died two years later and was cremated at Northern Suburbs.

On Saturday the 30th of May, 1959, his son Laurie and I took “Stardust”, under close reefed main and staysail, up to Store Beach in a southerly gale, and there off the beach, where he had spent so many happy hours, we spread the Skipper’s ashes on the water.

It was a slow and very wet thresh back down the harbour and we did not see another sail the whole way. But we felt we had given the Skipper a fitting send-off on his last passage.

OSCAR BACKHOUSE

Oscar Backhouse, son of a Foundation Member, was born in Elizabeth Bay in 1870, and at the age of ten he commenced sailing in an 8-ft. canvas dinghy built by Windybank.

He then sailed for a time as for'd hand in the 10-ft. canvas dinghy "Endeavour", owned and sailed by Percy Summerbelle.

After a year or so of crewing he again acquired a boat of his own. He had an 18 footer built for him by Kennedy. He called her "Nell" and raced her with the Neutral Bay Amateur Sailing Club.

At twenty years of age, after ten years of experience as both skipper and crew hand, he joined the crew of "Iolanthe" as assistant for'd hand, and went from her to "Assegai" and then on to "Volunteer".

In 1897 he joined the crew of "Isea" and stayed with her for several years until the first "Culwulla" was built.

By this time he was one of the best racing hands on Sydney Harbour and when "Culwulla" was launched he was asked to join her hand-picked crew. It was in no small measure due to his ability on the foredeck that "Culwulla" won her first two races and came second in her third.

He left "Culwulla" to join Arthur Marks in "Gadfly", which raced successfully for some years in S.A.S.C. events.

His years of crewing came to an end in 1907 when he purchased the one-rater "Dawn". "Dawn" had been built by Fay of Southampton and brought to Sydney by Mark Foy. Oscar, having become an owner-skipper, joined the Amateurs the same year and sailed with the Club for the rest of his life. He had his share of successes in club events, both with his first "Dawn" and later with a Melbourne-built 28 footer which he also renamed "Dawn".

He was elected Club Captain in 1910 and Commodore in 1911, holding that position for two years. He resigned from the Club in 1915 after the outbreak of the Great War but rejoined in 1919 after the cessation of hostilities.

He became a Life Member in 1950 and was made an Honorary Life Member in 1956. He died three years later, in 1959, being survived by his son, Jack Backhouse, who was Vice-Commodore in 1935-36.

Jack Backhouse and A. H. S. Spain were the first Junior Members—elected 1920.



"DAWN"—Oscar Backhouse.

Photo courtesy M. Grace.

STANLEY SPAIN

Born 1873 at Neutral Bay, Sydney, in the family home "Wallaringa". His father, Staunton Spain, owned "Grampus", "Varuna" and "Happy Thought" and these were the principal boats in which he learnt to sail. 1878 was a milestone as this was the year of his first sailing race and I quote from a cutting in his own scrapbook (paper or magazine from which extracted not indicated. Ed.). "The first sailing race that I can recollect as having taken part in was on Boxing Day, 1878, the occasion being the Neutral Harbour Amateur Regatta. Flagship—the well-known old coastal cruising yacht "Opossum", owned by the late Alex Oliver, to whom so many of us owe a debt of gratitude for trips up and down the coast, and our knowledge of boating. The Committee of Management for the Regatta was my father Staunton Spain, Archibald C. Fraser and Alex Oliver. "Opossum" was moored just off my old home "Wallaringa". There were not any programmes as far as I can remember but the printed card of admission to the flagship reproduced here sets out the particulars.

(Sailing Races fixed to begin about 11.30 a.m.—refreshment interval 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.—pulling races after 2.30 p.m.—other nautical sports as may be arranged—on behalf of Committee of Management S. Spain—A. C. Fraser—A. Oliver. Ed.)

The dinghy I sailed in was about 15 ft. long, 4 ft. 6 ins. beam and 2 ft. deep, fitted with a fixed fin. Centreboards were only to be found in a very few boats in those days. She was rigged with a sprit sail, bamboos being used for spars—partly for lightness, but principally because they grew in great numbers in Wally Bennett's old home "Honda" in Hungry Bay. (Shell Cove Bay. Ed.) The course was round Fort Denison and back. Of course spinnakers were unknown—and I think our parents prohibited us from using square-sails, except when they were with us. I have long since found out it is safer to carry either a squaresail or spinnaker when running free. I think there were about six dinghies of the foregoing type in the race—some of the other competitors were Livvy and Vic Mann, D. W. Roxburgh, Sainty George, Billy Gilchrist, Alf and Wally Bennett, Fred Love and Ned Lord. It was my brother Bill's dinghy that I sailed in. I don't think she was ever christened but was always known as the "Blue Dinghy". Our victory was mainly due to the fact that most of the others in the race capsized. It was quite the usual thing to do if you could not win. It was a kind of excuse. I never did hold this view and although I have been in many races since I have never been in the "drink". Perhaps I am lucky."

Thus started a life of sailing.

Joined S.A.S.C. in 1903, Honorary Life Membership conferred 1937, died 1967. Sixty-four (64) years continuous membership—the greatest in the Club to date.

During his active life in the Club he was always to the fore, having held office as Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Club Captain, Rear-Commodore and Vice-Commodore.

Wrote many sailing articles for the "Journals of the Day" under such pen names as Sasca, Bucolic and Double S.

Stan and "Mischief" were very well known on Sydney Harbour. Built in 1902 by W. Golding for D. W. Roxburgh (a cousin of Stan's) she was 22 ft. long and under Stan's hand she was Champion of Champions in 1920 and at this point of time was acquired by him. He again sailed her to Champions of Champions in 1921.

In 1923 he won the "Tempest" Trophy (refer Gales) and requested that he be allowed to convert same into a perpetual trophy for annual competition. The Club agreed and the original trophy then became the "Tempest Memorial Trophy" and the winner received a miniature.

Having made his annual pilgrimage to Broken Bay for the Christmas break he was returning to Sydney on 1st January, 1928, when a southerly buster caught him off Long Reef and unable to make headway he turned and ran back to Broken Bay where "Mischief" was lost on Pearl Beach, Woy Woy.

Stan was always a great supporter of the Pittwater Regatta and served on the organising committee for many years, thus, following the above tragedy a Mischief Memorial Race was always on the programme.

Not wishing to be without a boat he purchased the "Imp" in 1928 and she carried the S.A.S.C. registration A2 as on "Mischief". She was a very handy 21-ft. restricted class and Stan soon had her winning races but she was not his type of boat and he sold her. (It is of interest to note that she sank off Cremorne Point in a heavy westerly in 1935 and was not recovered. Ed.)

Actually Stan was never without a boat because he kept the "Happy Thought" (built 1874) a boat that he dearly loved and since his death his sons have retained her, and although nearly one hundred years old she is still in good condition in a shed in Neutral Bay.

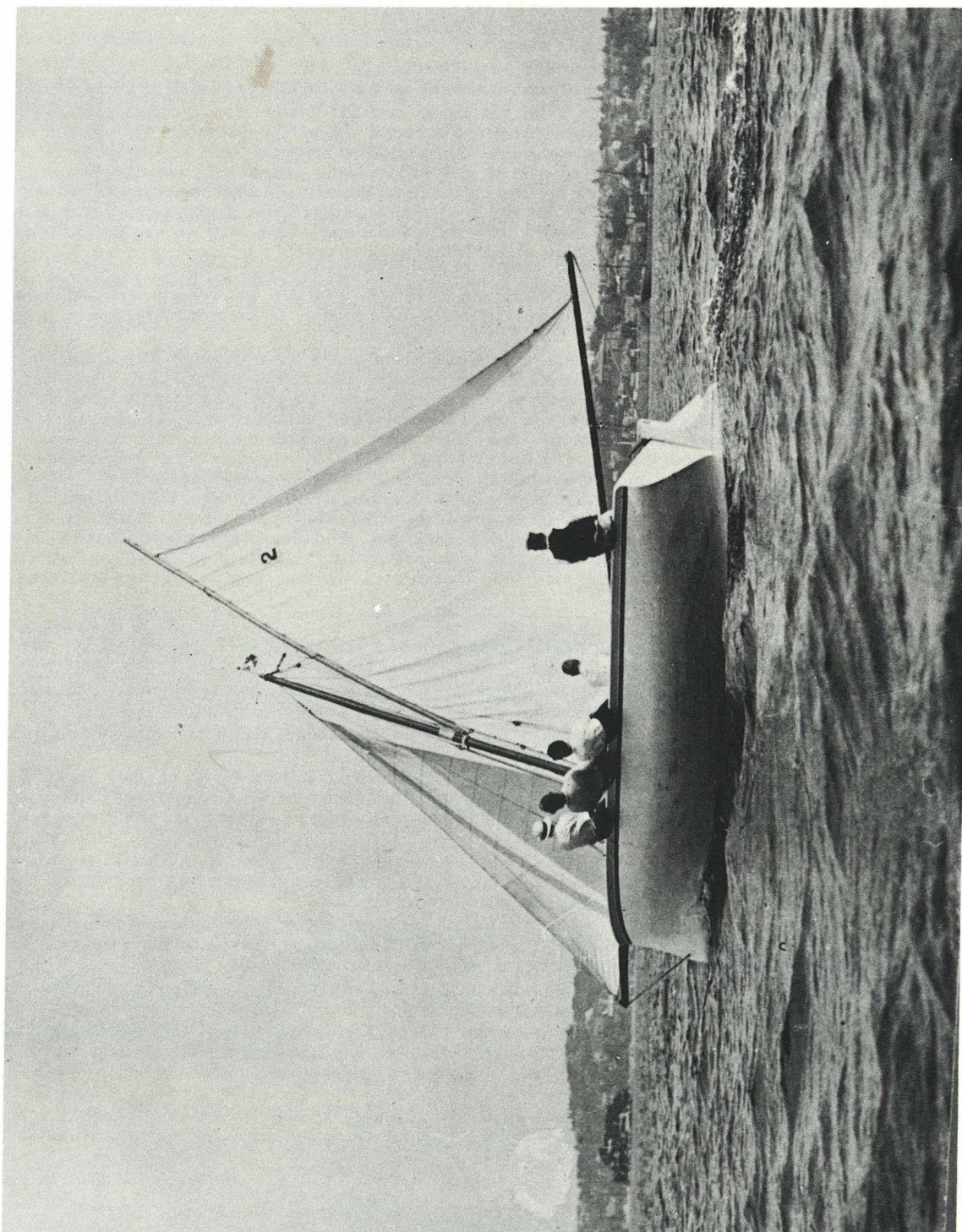
Probably about this time he obtained a half rater which he named "Mischief" but was so shocked at her handling that he very quickly disposed of her.

He knew where there was a 22-ft. half decked boat "Ena" built by W. Dunn in 1903 that was of similar hull lines to the original "Mischief" and in 1935 he was able to purchase her. Removing the half deck, altering the rig, strengthening the hull to allow for the half deck removal he renamed her "Mischief".

Actually this boat proved to be better than the original and he won many races in her, but in himself he was happy and content because he had the correct type of boat again.

He disposed of her in 1953 and completed that season in "Happy Thought" who remained on the Club Register as A2 for his remaining years.

Spain's Steps, Spain's Lookout, Spain's Wharf and Spain's Wharf Road are all well known round Neutral Bay and it was from a small shed at the foot of the latter that Stan always sailed.



"MISCHIEF" (original)—Stan Spain at helm,
John Rayment sheet hand.

Photo courtesy L. Rayment.

Being from a nautical family, running a tug and lighterage business and being associated with sailing it was only natural that Stan should be known as Capt., a rank conferred before the First World War.

A. S. H. (Alwyn) Spain—joined 1920 and shared with J. Backhouse the first Junior Membership of the Club. Sailed with his father in "Mischief", "Imp" and "Happy Thought". Spent many years away from Australia. Sailed in "Bona" 1922 and with D'Arcy Shelly in "Jane Kay" 1936-54. Joined R.S.Y.S. 1930 and still vitally interested in sailing.

Another son, I. A. H. (Ian) Spain, also maintains his interest in sailing through R.S.Y.S.



"HAPPY THOUGHT" (built 1874)—Stan Spain
at helm, 1954.

Photo courtesy Alwyn Spain.

CHEATING FAIR

Many ruses were used to "cheat fairly" in days gone by and to some extent having done it and "got away with it" was part of the thrill of the sport.

Here is a recorded instance from a protest "Dawn" v. "Mischief", 9th January, 1923.

In the race of November 9th, 1922, the spinnaker boom of "Mischief" was set from the shroud. This fact was admitted. The boom was the usual one carried by the boat 12 ft. 3 in. overall length. The only provision for setting same is by a "snotter" from the mast.

The registered sail area of "Mischief" permits an effective fore-triangle of 96.91 feet on a base of 12.94 feet.

It has been admitted that the spar 12 ft. 3 ins. was set from the shrouds which is a position approximately 3 ft. from the mast and the protestor contended:

1. That the setting of the spinnaker boom in this position in itself is a breach of the rules.
2. That the above action increased the registered sail area by increasing the base line of the fore-triangle and is a breach of the rules.

Rule 40 read: "In races where 'booming out' is allowed the spinnaker boom shall not be set from the shrouds, nor in any other such manner by which the distance from the mast to the outer end of the boom is made to exceed the base of the fore-triangle."

"Mischief" gave the following explanation. "In setting up the headsail prior to the race the jib block carried away and a temporary halliard was rove with a single part. This was set up with a "Handy billy" purchase and the whole "wrapped" round the mast to prevent stretching. The "snotter" for the spinnaker boom was inadvertently wrapped up under the beforementioned gear and was not usable. The spinnaker was then made fast to the spar approximately 8 inches inboard from the outer end and the boom attached by a lanyard to the shrouds as nearly as possible could be judged to give the sail its actual registered position."

"Dawn" disputed the fact on any unusual length of the outer end of the spinnaker boom being unused and also contended that there was "clear daylight" between the inboard end of the spar and the mast.

The Committee after full consideration were of the opinion that as the actual measurement of the "Mischief's" spar so closely approximates the full registered length of the base of the fore-triangle it would have been impossible for the distance from the mast to the outer end of the spar (when set in the manner admitted) not to have increased the registered base of the fore-triangle.

The Committee unanimously found that "Mischief" committed a breach of Rule No. 40 and is therefore disqualified.

And so the Backhouses and the Spains had fun.

WHO ELSE?

In the years between the Depression and the Second World War it was not uncommon for the sailing fraternity to see, on a quiet summer Sunday, a yawl sailing peacefully along with her skipper sitting on the gunwale, one foot on the tiller and a violin tucked under his chin, playing classical music.

Who was it?

It was the same skipper who, in the same yawl, cruised up and down the coast of N.S.W. making his own charts of all the navigable inlets, rivers and harbours. And the same skipper who made his own chart of Sydney Harbour which was far more complete and detailed than any Admiralty Chart.

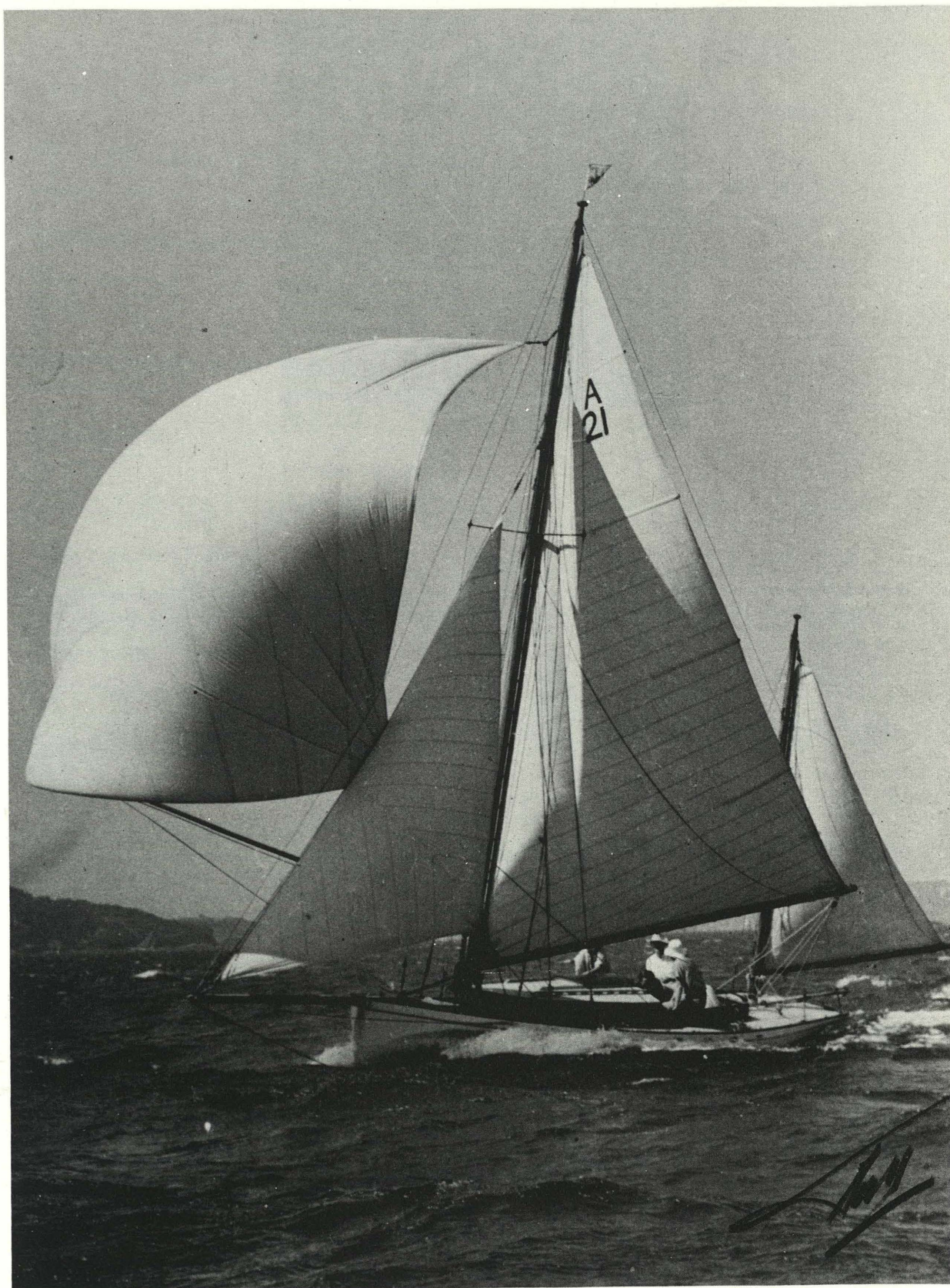
Who was it? Who else but Alan Patrick Mackerras.

A. P. Mackerras joined the S.A.S.C. in 1923 while crewing aboard Dr. Gordon Craig's "Chance", but shortly after becoming a member went to America where he spent some years. He returned in 1927 and sailed with Claude Plowman in "Sea Rover".

In 1928 he bought the Holmes built yawl "Maracita" and, in addition to the activities already mentioned, raced with the Club until the outbreak of World War II. He sold "Maracita" in 1941.

After the War he bought the 21-ft. "Bettina", which he raced with the Middle Harbour Yacht Club until 1949 when he had his present sloop "Antares" built by Andy Riddell.

He became a Life Member in 1958.



"MARACITA"—Alan Mackerras at helm.

Photo Hall & Co.



W. L. Dendy.

Photo courtesy Mrs. M. Grindrod.

W. L. DENDY

A young man from Western Australia who had his first race with the Sydney Amateurs in A. Dendy's rater "Hiawatha" in 1899 played an important part in the Club from his election in 1914.

Walter Leslie Dendy took a temporary job with the Port Jackson and Manly S.S. Co. Ltd., expected to last six months, and remained there for the rest of his life. He listed 30 yachts owned by him but claimed the total was 33. Those registered with the Amateurs comprised:

1914 "Chance"	
1915 "Chance II"	Owned jointly with Fred Lomer.
1918 "Sea Belle"	Now "June Bird".
1919 "Native"	Later "Triton", "Niobe" and "Seafire".
1920 "Sea Bird"	Returned to Melbourne.
1922 "Salacia"	Now "Nyria"
1923 "Sea Rover"	

The two "Chances" were built by Hayes at his old Balmain shed, but the others were built in Melbourne. The "Native" and "Sea Bird" were raced successfully with the Club. "Salacia" was sold to E. J. Bayly Macarthur without being raced.

"Sea Rover" did very well in the 1923/24 season when she won the "A" Class Gold Medal for her skipper with three wins, two seconds and four thirds, the Fred White Trophy and the L. J. Thompson Trophy for the most proficient crew and the best kept yacht.

The following season, although well back in the point score, "Sea Rover" won the Cruisers Championship and the H. M. Shelley Trophy for the most proficient crew and the best kept yacht.

At the end of the 1924/25 season "Sea Rover" was sold, and Walter Dendy gave up active sailing to concentrate on his job as General Manager of the Manly Ferries, but continued as a Committeeman (having first been elected in 1919) and a tower of strength to the Club.

In addition to racing he made many cruises along the coast in "Sea Belle" and "Sea Rover", the 1924 cruise to Port Stephens and the Myall Lakes being the subject of a well written log. The crew on this occasion comprised Tom (T. B. Sorrell), Mick (H. V. Hartley), Punch (A. H. C. Dendy) and the skipper.

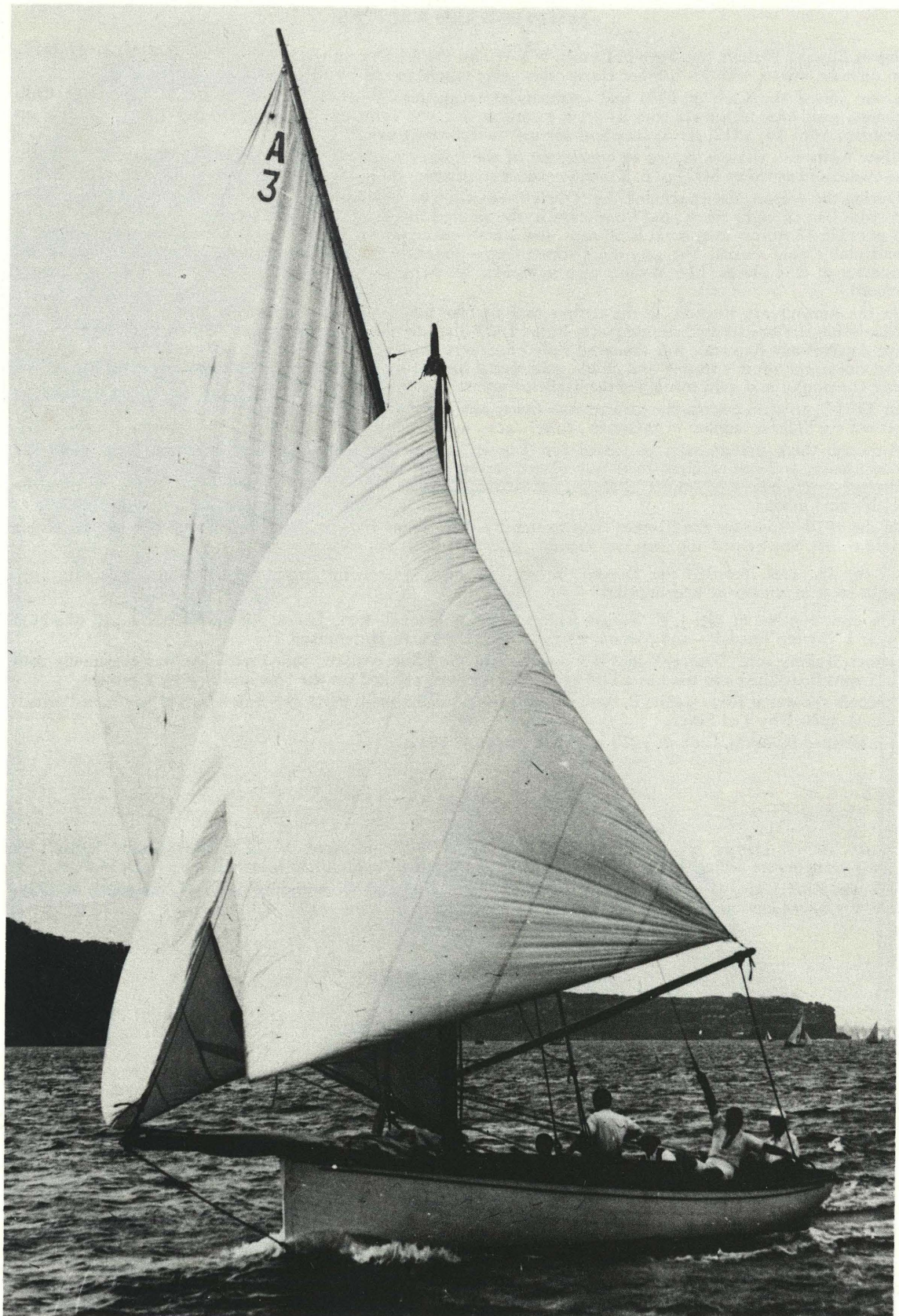
Other Club members who crewed in the boats owned by Walter Dendy were F. Venables, D. McCluskey, Fred Lomer, F. J. Doran and Alex. Wedderburn.

From 1924 onwards the Dendy Trophies were presented every year for a race in each class, nominated by the donor, but not disclosed until the end of the season. The winner then found himself receiving yacht enamel, varnish, antifouling and rope at the annual prizegiving.

The Club also had Manly Ferries made available for nights afloat, Opening, Flag and Closing Days either free or at a nominal cost by courtesy of Walter Dendy.

Other Club activities included Honorary Auditor from 1925 on and delegate to the Sydney Yacht Racing Association from 1933 on; strong support for the twenty-one footer restricted class, the cadet dinghies and the erection of the memorial Sundial to the memory of Mrs. Morris at the Basin. Mrs. Morris lived at the Basin from 1868 until 1921, supplied yachtsmen with milk, eggs, etc., and was a friend to all yachtsmen.

Walter Dendy died in 1948, still in harness, and the Garrison Church at the Rocks was packed by mourners from the ferry service and yachtsmen in addition to his family and other relatives.



"SEA ROVER"—Walter Dendy at helm,
Tom Sorrell, Mick Hartley, Arthur Dendy and
Jarvis crewing.

Photo Hall & Co.

JAMES EDWARD WALTERS

James Edward Walters was born in Picton, N.S.W., on the 4th December, 1860, but spent his early adult life in Balmain where, with his brother Harry, they were taught to sail by their father.

James joined the Club in 1905 and commenced racing his 20-ft. carvel-built cruiser "Doreen" in Club events, with four of his six sons as crew members. He was so successful over the next few years that on Sunday, April 14, 1912, the Sydney Sun carried the following story:

"Few boats can show a record to equal that of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club's 20-ft. cruiser 'Doreen'—owned and sailed by Mr. Jas. E. Walters—whose consistency during the past five seasons has been remarkable.

During the season just concluded the 'Doreen'—in Club events—won every trophy it was possible for her to win. Out of eight starts, and from scratch, she secured five firsts and three seconds. She scored 15 out of a possible 18 points in general handicaps and cruiser races, which secured for her the commodore's trophy and club's gold medal. She gets the Yvonne Cup—presented by Drummond and Napier for the greatest number of first places. Mr. Walters also wins Mr. W. M. Marks' trophy for the skipper holding the best record.

At the Anniversary Regatta, in the cruiser race for the S.A.S.C. boats, she was placed third, while, at the Manly Regatta she secured second place. In the 1907-8 season the 'Doreen', out of 12 starts (including two at the Anniversary Regatta), was unplaced only once, securing five firsts, three seconds, and three thirds; won the vice-commodore's trophy and club's gold medal for the greatest number of points in general handicaps, and the trophy and gold medal for the highest number of points in cruiser races.

In 1908-9, in club events, she secured two firsts, one second, two thirds, and was unplaced in three races, scored the highest number of points in cruiser races, and received a trophy and the club's gold medal.

Although there are no wins to record for 'Doreen' in the 1909-10 season, she again demonstrated her consistency, and out of seven races was placed second four times and third once, and tied with Yvonne for the greatest number of points in cruiser races; she won the sail-off, and secured another trophy and the club's gold medal.

In the 1910-11 season the 'Doreen' was beaten by the Yvonne by one point for all trophies and the club's gold medal. She gained one first, two seconds, and two thirds out of seven starts.

Of the 45 races recorded the 'Doreen' has had 14 firsts, 14 seconds, and nine thirds, which leaves only eight races in which she was unplaced.

The crew consists of Mr. J. E. Walters (skipper), his four sons—Roy, James, Alex and Charlie (all of whom wear a 'Doreen' medal)—and Messrs. Clem Molloy and H. A. Hutchinson."

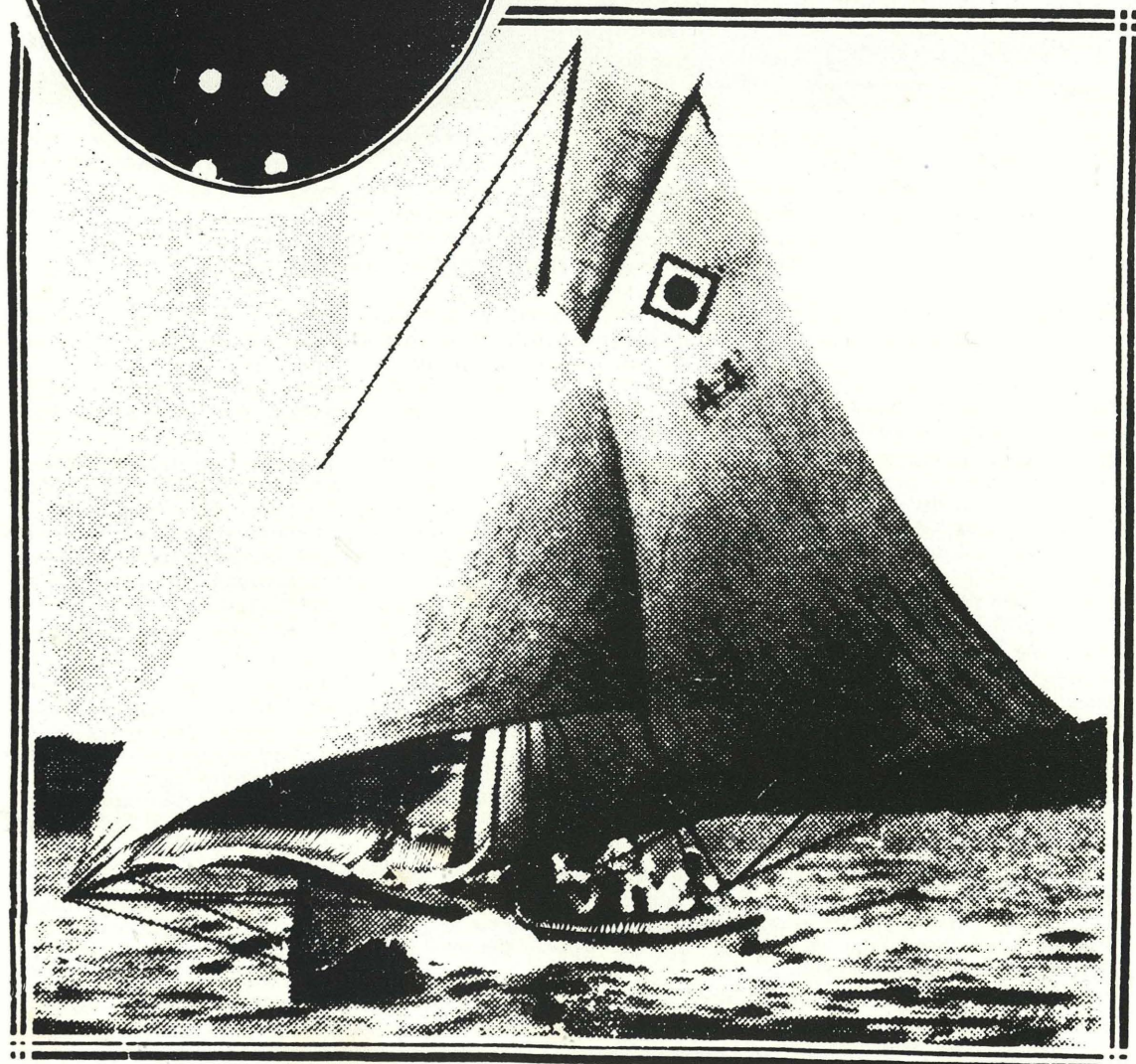
James Walters sold "Doreen" in 1913 and bought the cabin cruiser "Scot Free". She was eventually sold to Lyons Boat Shed and used as a hire boat until she was wrecked on the Sow and Pigs by a hirer.

Records show that Roy—James E. Walters' eldest son—sailed as jib hand in Frank Albert's "Sayonara" which was skippered by Ted Sayer.

He resigned from the Club in 1920 and died 4th July, 1932.

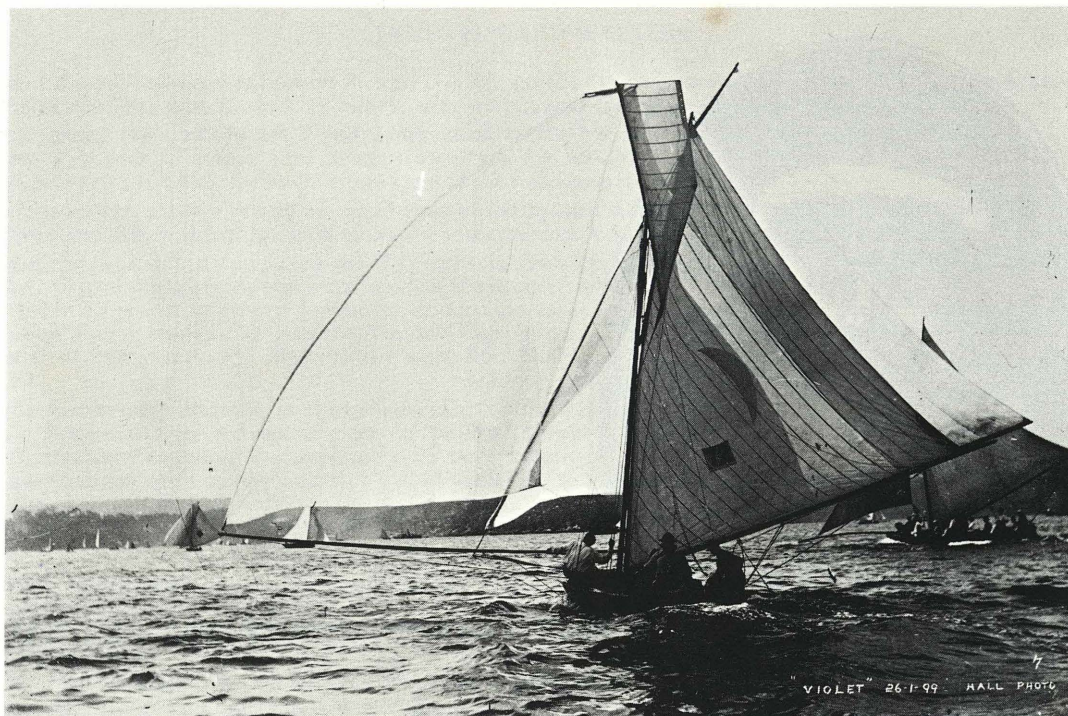
Harry Walters (James' brother) also joined S.A.S.C. in 1905 and raced the 22-ft. clinker-built "Olive" for some years before selling her and buying the yawl "Hermione" which had been sailed up from Hobart.

He was Club Captain 1906-07, Vice-Commodore 1907-08 and Commodore 1908-11, resigning in 1920. He was Rear-Commodore of R.P.A.Y.C. 1923-24.



"DOREEN"—James Walters.

Photo Sun Newspapers.



"VIOLET"—James Middleton.

Photo Hall & Co.

AMATEUR

When the S.A.S.C. was formed in 1872 a neat row of terrace houses stood in John Street, Pyrmont and one differed from the rest, in that it was the end house, had a piece of land alongside it to the street and had a tower above the roof. The owner, a quarryman by trade, worked in Saunder's Quarry, over the hill. However, by mutual agreement he was also employed on a part time basis by the Post Master General as a Mail Officer and this explains the building of the tower as in those days the South Head Signal Station could be clearly seen from the roof of 63 John Street.

Upon sighting a mail boat from South Head, a signal would be run up and when seen from the tower a bell on the rim of the quarry was rung by a wire from the tower. From the method of ringing James Middleton knew the urgency of the matter. Hurrying to the foot of Harris Street, he would launch his 22-ft. open boat "Violet" and sail her single-handed down the harbour and often well outside the heads to meet the mail boat. When alongside, the mail bags would be thrown aboard (he had a special reinforced bottom in the boat for the purpose) and while the mail boat proceeded to quarantine, etc., he would sail back to Man-of-War Steps where the mail was transferred to a waiting four-horse-drawn waggon which then galloped madly to the G.P.O.

(The 22-ft. "Violet" was the work horse and family outing boat—she was never raced—Ed.)

He sailed the 16-ft. "Violet" with the Club and later sold her and sailed the 16-ft. "Regina" as he had joined in 1877, but in 1884, when Rule 6 was altered to read—"Amateur: The word shall exclude all fishermen, oystermen, boat builders, sailmakers and persons gaining or having gained their living on the water or any person who is or has been employed in or about yachts, boats or ships as a means of livelihood or any person who has received any monetary consideration for his professional knowledge."—he retired from racing as this left him no option, as he not only built his own boats but made his own sails as well. Boats or sails were not sold to other people. He was still serving on the Committee in 1888 and resigned from the Club in 1900.

There were other people affected by Rule 6, but permission to disclose the names has not been obtained.

At least ten separate cases appear in the minutes where applications for membership have been returned to the proposer because of violation of Rule 6 and some of these families still "operate" on Sydney Harbour. Although later Committees and Officers did not enforce the rule it was not altered to any great extent till 1960, when it was liberalised.

When James Middleton died in 1935, the Club saw fit to forward a message of sympathy and acknowledged the fact at a General Meeting, thus again proving the Club's unilateral thought—sailing.

One often wonders what was the real extent of the effect of the word "Amateur" on this Club?

CAPRICE

A Grand Old Lady with an Eternally Youthful Heart

"Caprice" is entitled to be called a Grand Old Lady because she is over 70 years old and still sailing. But she does not fit the picture of the traditional Grand Old Lady sitting with dignity in her easy chair watching the youngsters at play, because she has refused to concede that old age makes any difference. She is not only still playing with the youngsters, she is still beating them on their own terms. She is a Grand Old Lady alright. But a Grand Old Lady with a difference, as her story will show.

She was built in Hobart by Charles Lucas in 1900 for a Mr. Webster. Her planking was full length Huon pine, grooved to allow for hidden caulking. The hull was 32 feet overall on a waterline of 21 ft. 5 ins., with a beam of 8 ft. 5 ins. and a draught of 6 feet. She was rigged as a gaff cutter and carried a huge spread of canvas. Her boom was 21 ft. long and her bowsprit extended 12 ft. beyond the stemhead. On these she set mainsail, staysail, jib and jackyard topsail.

Although she is generally believed to be a William Fife creation, her design was, in fact, drawn up by a Mr. A. Blore, who made a number of alterations to the original Fife design. His presumption in daring to modify a design of the great William Fife has, however, been fully justified by "Caprice's" performance over the years.

Little is known of her early history beyond the fact that Mr. Webster raced her in Hobart and sold her, sometime before 1908, to a gentleman named Starkey, who brought her to Sydney. It is known that she first raced on Sydney Harbour in 1908, and that she raced with the Prince Alfred Yacht Club before that club received its Royal Charter. She is next reported in Pittwater in the early 'twenties where, it is said; she spent some time on the hard at Newport. However, in the middle 'twenties she was bought by two brothers, A. J. Stone and H. J. Stone, from the then owners, Messrs. Sid Hosking and Thorpe. She commenced racing with the Amateurs with Arthur Stone at the helm, and from then on her history is fully documented.

Arthur Stone won the Club's Gold Medal in A Class for the 1926-27 season, and in March, 1927, he purchased his brother's share and became sole owner.

The following year he converted her from gaff rig to Bermuda rig, "Caprice" thus becoming one of the first yachts on Sydney Harbour to adopt the new Marconi mainsail, as it was then called.

Although "Caprice" was greatly improved by the change she was not to enjoy wearing her new plumes for very long, because when he sold her to Mr. John Taylor Cooke in January, 1929, Arthur Stone would not part with his recently acquired Bermuda rig and her old gaff was re-installed when she changed hands.

Mr. Cooke purchased "Caprice" for his two grandsons, Harry and Jack Pfeiffer, who were still both at college. He moved her to his own mooring in Vaucluse Bay where she has remained to this day, except for a period during World War II when she was taken to The Spit for security reasons.

The two boys immediately joined the S.A.S.C. and commenced racing. They were young and new to yacht racing and their success in the years to come was in a large measure due to the assistance and advice they received from the late Cliff Gale and another "Master", the late Arthur Stevens.

Harry and Jack Pfeiffer learned fast, but by the end of their second season they were becoming concerned about "Caprice's" old gaff rig which was beginning to show signs of wear, and they decided to go "modern". For the second time "Caprice" was converted to Bermuda rig. The late George Griffin designed and built the mast and rigging, and the new sails were made by the late Harry West.

This time, however, "Caprice's" trendsetting marked the beginning of the end of the era of the gaff rig, as more and more yachts followed her example and discarded the old for the new. "Culwulla" and "Scarab", to mention only two, converted to Bermuda rig in the same season.

The Pfeiffers found, as had Arthur Stone, that she performed better and handled more easily with the reduced, but more efficient sail plan, and the following season—1932-33—Harry Pfeiffer won the Gold Medal for A Class yachts, being the second skipper to win this coveted trophy at the helm of "Caprice".

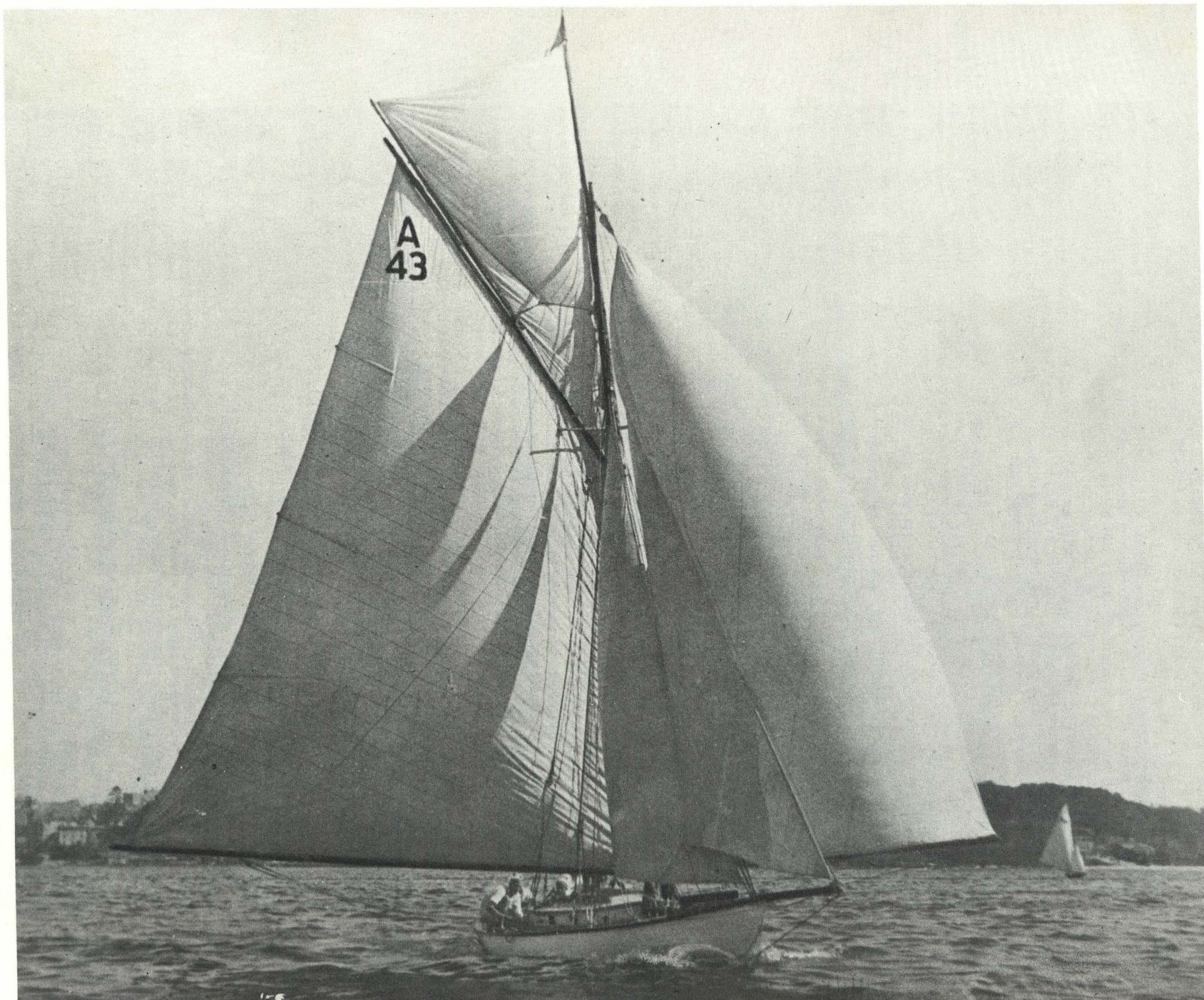
It was during this season that the first Easter race to Lake Macquarie was held, and "Caprice" was one of the S.A.S.C. fleet which pioneered the event. She again showed her quality—and Harry Pfeiffer again demonstrated his ability as a skipper—by winning the Belmont Trophy from the combined S.A.S.C. and Lake Macquarie fleets.

Two years after their success in 1932-33, "Caprice" and her skipper proved it was no fluke by again winning the Gold Medal in her class. She had, by this time, added a jib topsail to her sail plan and earned the reputation of being one of the fastest light weather yachts on Sydney Harbour.

"Caprice" was also a regular starter in the annual Pittwater Regatta and by the time the war put a stop to yacht racing she had won six trophies in this event. A commendable effort over a period of only ten years.

After the war Harry's two sons, Michael and Tony, were old enough to take their place in "Caprice's" crew, and the three Pfeiffers have sailed as a team ever since. In 1950 Harry bought his brother's share and, like Arthur Stone, before him, became sole owner. He and his sons celebrated the occasion by once again winning the Gold Medal in 1950-51 and with it the Jubilee Cup for the first skipper to win three Gold Medals.

"Caprice" did not race during the early 'sixties because Michael and Tony were overseas, and Harry preferred not to race without his sons as crew. They returned in 1967 and "Caprice" was completely overhauled and re-rigged. Her boom was cut down to 18 feet, she was equipped with solid monel standing rigging, roller reefing was fitted and a set of Dacron sails was made by Cliff Ayers. This new sail plan gave her 800 square feet of working sails with 1200 square feet in her masthead spinnaker. "Caprice's" new suit improved her even more and she was soon sailing off scratch in No. 1 Division.



"CAPRICE"—Harry Pfeiffer at helm (Gaff Rig).

Photo courtesy H. Pfeiffer.



"CAPRICE"—Harry Pfeiffer at helm (Marconi Rig). Michael and Tony Pfeiffer crewing.

Photo courtesy H. Pfeiffer.

It is surprising that the name of A. Blore did not become better known, because he must have been a designer of great ability. Certainly his modifications to the original Fife design produced a really outstanding hull, because "Caprice" is probably the only yacht ever built still able to give time to all her younger and more modern competitors at the ripe old age of 67. It is true that her rig had been altered several times to keep up with new developments, but her hull was still the same as when she was launched in 1900.

But Harry Pfeiffer also demonstrated that he was a skipper of unusual quality, because at the end of the season, in 1968, he did it again, and took out his fourth Gold Medal—35 years after winning his first one, and 41 years after Arthur Stone had won it with "Caprice" in 1927.

In addition to his Gold Medals, Harry also won the Gretel Trophy in the 1967-68 season, but the trophy which he prizes most is the Hoana Trophy, won over three seasons 1934-35-36. This trophy is a scale model of "Caprice" made by the Merrington family. It is created in silver, complete with beaten silver sails.

In 1968 Michael and Tony were again posted overseas—Michael to the Solomon Islands and Tony to New Guinea—so that "Caprice" was missing from No. 1 Division for the 1968-69, 1969-70 and 1970-71 seasons, but as this is being written, Harry is giving "Caprice" a complete overhaul in anticipation of their return in time for the 1971-72 season.

Harry has not given up sailing during his sons' absence. He has been racing as a regular crew member aboard Bob Wild's "Tilliar"—and, incidentally, keeping abreast of the performance of the opposition he will meet when he is back at the helm of his own boat.

It will be interesting to see if "Caprice" can repeat her 1968 performance by again coming out of retirement to win another Gold Medal. The result of her return to No. 1 Division will be known by the time this goes to press.

But one thing is certain. "Caprice", with Harry Pfeiffer and his sons handling her, will give a good account of herself, and whether she wins or loses she will always be the Grand Old Lady of the S.A.S.C. fleet.

A Grand Old Lady with an Eternally Youthful Heart.

A. J. STONE

Arthur Joseph Stone—born 1895, died 1971.

His first known boat was "Swallow" a 16 footer which he bought on 17th March, 1913 in partnership with a Mr. McEwen for £14.

On 21st March, 1918, he purchased "Bat" a 22 footer from G. Williamson for £70.

(Interesting to note here that "Bat", built 1913 by Al King of Hong Kong (who learnt his trade in Sydney) to the design of a Naval Architect, Hayward Hayes. She was the one design Champion of the Corinthian Yacht Club in 1914-15-16 and was brought to Sydney on the deck of a steamer by Mr. Robertson of Vacluse in March, 1917—sold to G. Williamson, November, 1917, who sailed her to Jervis Bay and South Coast. Ed.)

1st April, 1919 entered partnership with F. Stone and joined S.A.S.C. with "Bat". Partnership purchased back February, 1920. Arthur changed the name to "Avona" and sold her in 1922 when he bought "Caprice" in partnership with his brother Henry James Stone for £270 from the partners L. F. Thorpe and S. A. Hosking.

June, 1923 he ordered a new set of sails of best Egyptian Cotton from Cranfield and Carter of Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex and they arrived in Sydney 19-12-23 at a total cost of £42-6-0 including freight, wharfage and Customs Duty.

March, 1927 he purchased his brother's share and became sole owner of "Caprice".

June, 1928, a jib and mainsail for the Marconi rig of "Caprice" again came from Cranfield and Carter at a cost of £43-2-0 and he was thus one of the pioneers of the Marconi rig as it was then known on Sydney Harbour.

January, 1929, "Caprice" sold to J. T. Cooke with the original gaff rig. Arthur kept his new Marconi sails and fitted them to "Ozone" after he purchased her in 1935, selling her in 1954.

Arthur Stone won his share of prizes probably the most notable being the Club's Gold Medal 'A' Class 1926-27 with "Caprice" and the Kelly Cup in 1939 with "Ozone".

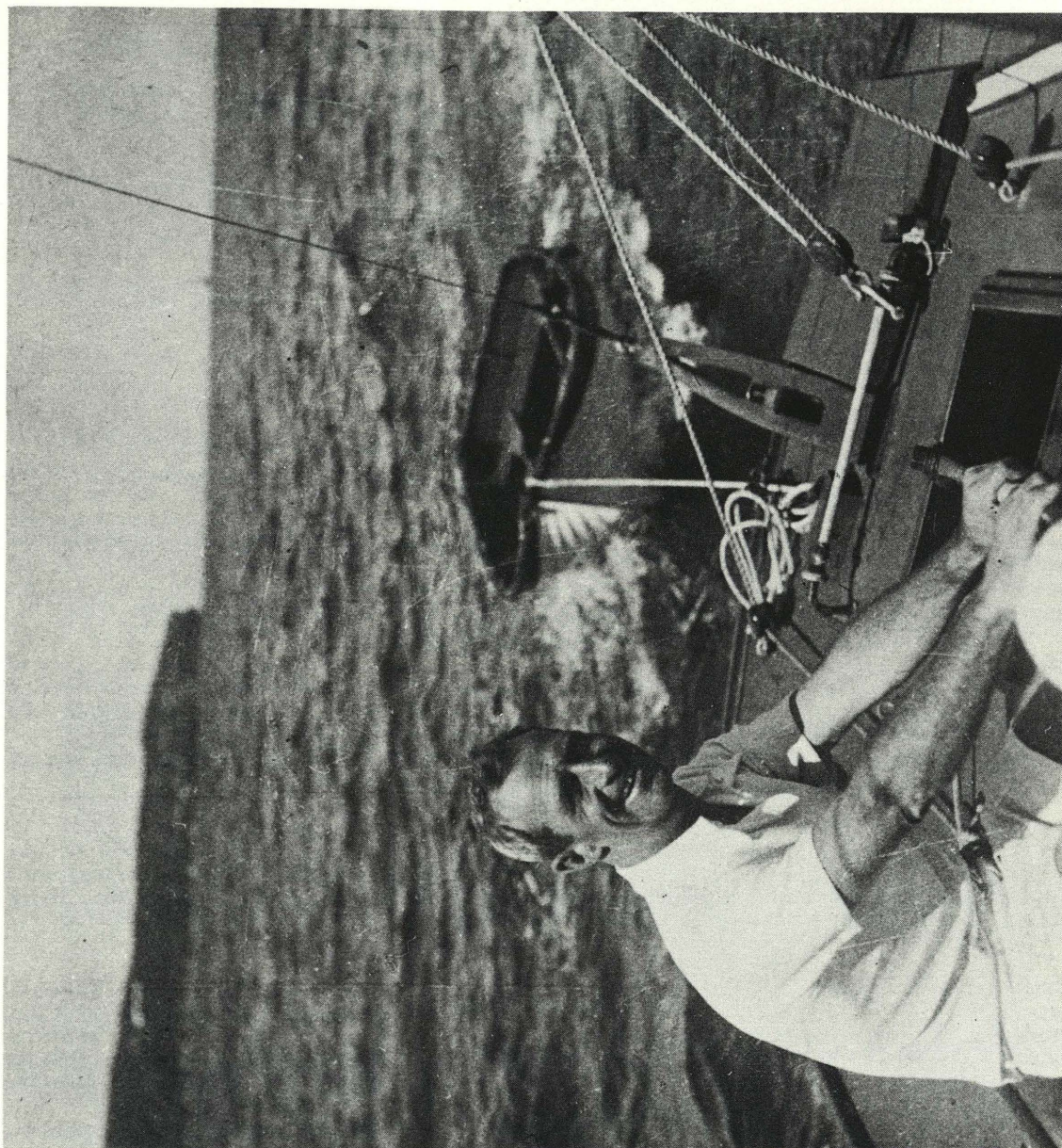
He never sought the limelight—would never accept nomination for Flag Rank but was always active behind the scenes. He acted as Starter and/or Race Official on many occasions, laid race marks, but his main untiring effort was in the job of Official Measurer which he accepted in 1923.

31st August, 1926 "Formula and rating for the Kelly Cup were discussed and it was decided to allow A. J. Stone, the Official Measurer to formulate a factor for each boat for the purpose of handicapping this and other races". This was really an unenviable task but Arthur tackled it methodically using his mathematical knowledge, being a Civil Engineer.

The Register that he set up with the sail plans and measurements of each yacht, showing all calculations is in the possession of the Club and the Championship Formula as submitted was accepted.

Extracts from Minutes 17.8.27—"During the season the new system of time allowance devised by the Club's Measurer, A. J. Stone, was tried and proved very successful and is to be continued as on corrected times as many as seven boats of entirely different types have finished within five minutes. The system consists essentially of a time allowance proportionate to the boat's rating and again proportionate to the time occupied in sailing the course by the first boat to finish and was first tried out 15.1.27".

1928—Open Boats wished to compete in Outside Racing and the Committee ruled that they could do so if the owner could satisfy the Official Measurer that they could float themselves and their crew in the event of a capsizing. Arthur cheerfully tackled the problem of flotation of Open Boats. He was never convinced and in 1929 Outside Racing was restricted to Cruising Class Boats.



A. J. Stone at helm of "OZONE".

Photo courtesy Mrs. Lloyd.

1931—Arthur resigned as Official Measurer after a sharp clash with the Commodore.

1933—"Owing to the diverse types of boats in the Club it was not possible to arrive at a handicap which was fair and equitable to all starters. Mr. Stone moved, seconded J. Backhouse that three or four boats be selected from each class or division to race for the Kelly Cup on a date to be fixed later in the season—carried unanimously". Still in use today.

1948—A. J. Stone suggested that in view of the Anti Barging Rule governing boats at the start of a race adopted by the I.Y.R.U., and used at Olympic Games, this Club should adopt a similar rule—agreed that this was an excellent idea and that the matter be raised with S.Y.R.A. so that a uniform rule can be adopted by all Clubs.

1949—A. J. Stone suggested a meeting of boatowners to discuss courses.

The above two illustrations serve to show A. J. Stone's interest in the Club's activities and he attended meetings right up to the time of his death.

He was elected to Life Membership in 1954.

A legacy which he left the Club will be used to perpetuate his name.

"CYNTHIA"

"Cynthia" A6, 25 ft. overall, straight stem, came into prominence on 28th November, 1925 when she foundered at the start of the races.

The remarkable picture "Foundering of 'Cynthia'" taken by an unknown photographer, probably from the Sydney Ferry Steamer "Lady Carrington" engaged to follow that day's races, shows the start of the "A" Class race, viz.:

A46	"Mavis"—L. V. Buckingham	C6	"Cherry Too"—A. H. Davies
A23	"Nyria"—E. J. B. MacArthur	A13	"Willangi"—C. J. Templeman
A33	"Sea Rover"—C. Plowman	32	"Athene"—D. S. Carment
A19	"June Bird"—E. C. Gale	A16	"Dawn"—O. Backhouse
A41	"Spray"—L. Robertson	A6	"Cynthia"—A. Butler
A14	"Chance"—Dr. G. Craig		

and an unknown boat.

The following quotations best describe the incident.

A Newspaper Report Yacht Sinks—Thrill on Harbour End of "Cynthia"

"One of the best-kept cruisers in Port Jackson, and one that has done remarkably well in a blow both on the harbour and at sea, Mr. A. Butler's 'Cynthia', is lying on the bottom of the harbour.

The accident occurred on Saturday afternoon before the flying start of the 'A' class handicap race of the S.A.S.C. in the vicinity of Birt & Co.'s buoy, Neutral Bay. The manoeuvres for the best position among the 14 competitors were very exciting against the north-east breeze and flood tide. 'Cynthia' became mixed up with two other craft and the bumpkin of one caught Butler's boat under the 'horse' at a time when she had her mainsheet 'hard on'.

In endeavouring to get free, water rushed aboard and soon found its way down to the cabin, much to the surprise of the crew, who appeared almost helpless.

Sank Within a Few Seconds

Within a few seconds 'Cynthia' dived nose first, throwing her six 'hands' into the water. One who appeared to be unable to swim was soon in difficulties, and a member of the crew of another boat jumped overboard and held the man up until he was rescued. Mr. W. D. M. Taylor, who was cruising in the vicinity with 'Triton', did good rescue work.

This is one of the biggest yachting disasters that has occurred in Sydney for years. 'Cynthia' was insured, but it is likely that big expense will be incurred in endeavouring to raise the craft."

Extract from Minutes Committee Meeting, 15.12.1925

"'Cynthia'—Committee sincerely regrets the accident, but the protest from Mr. Butler was not in order as it was not received by the Hon. Secretary within the time stated in the rules. It was also resolved that a letter of appreciation be written to Mr. Hosking re his gallant action in jumping overboard from 'Nyria' A23 and saving the life of a member of 'Cynthia's' crew."

Extract from 54th Annual Report

"On the 28th November, 1925 the Club undertook and successfully conducted the most ambitious afternoon's programme in its history. On that day, separate races were held for 'A' Class, 'B' Class, All Yachts, 21 Footers and 12-ft. Dinghies. The start of the 'A' Class is memorable, by reason of the sinking of Mr. A. Butler's 'Cynthia' and it is hoped will always be remembered by competitors as a warning of the risk attendant upon crowding the weather end of the starting line. Fortunately, there were no casualties to the crew, owing to the prompt and seamanlike handling of the rescuing boats."

(Ed. This was the first "Flag Day", when the other clubs were invited to participate in an organised Regatta conducted by S.A.S.C. It was such a success, even this accident did not stop it.)

In January, 1926 "The Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly" published the following account:

WHEN "CYNTHIA" FOUNDERED

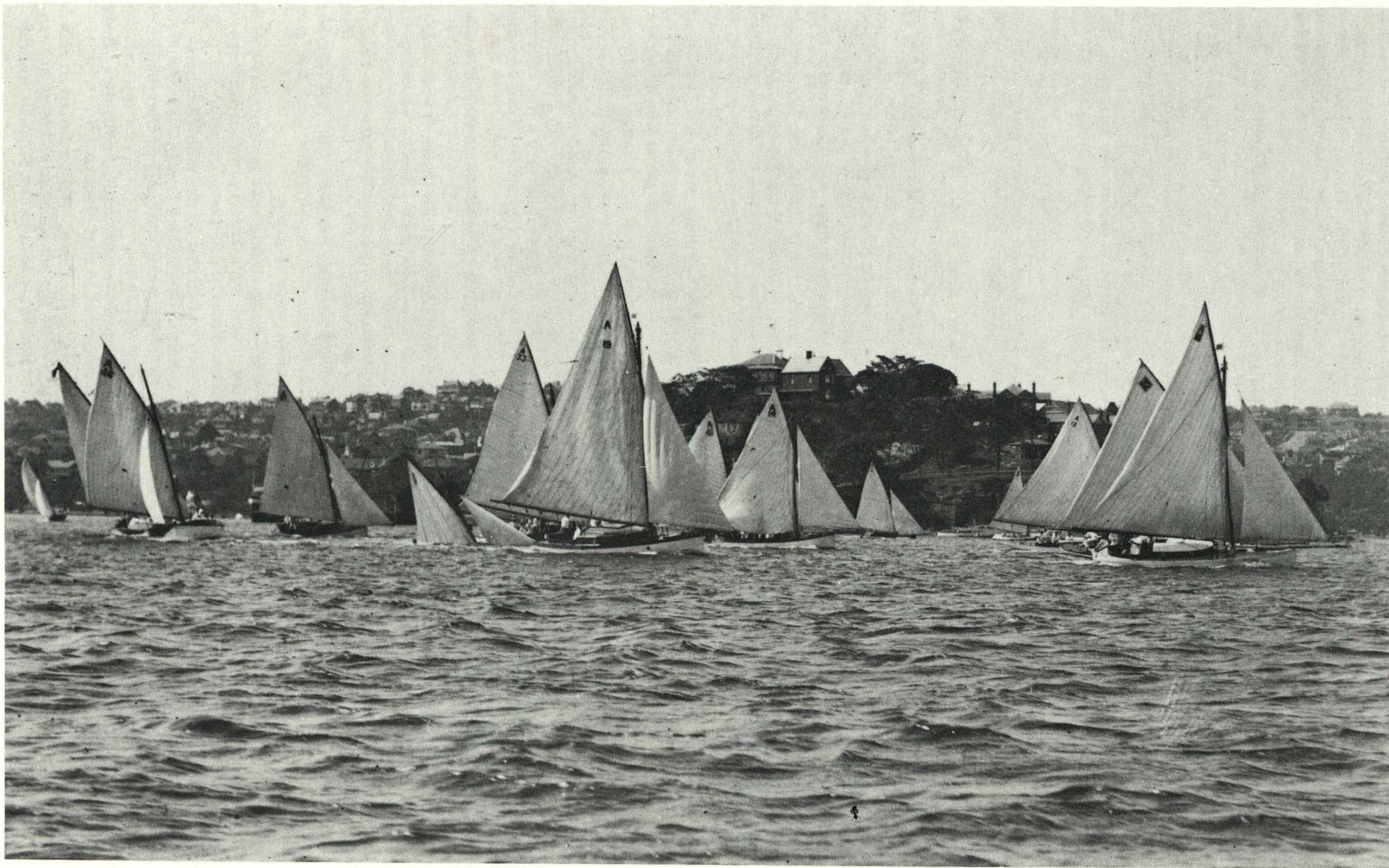
"As I wended my way to Fort Macquarie to board the 'Lady Carrington' (the boat engaged by the Sydney Amateur Club for their big gala day), I happened across a friend, who enquired what particular brand of mischief I intended to indulge in that bright sunny afternoon. I explained to him in a few short words, whereon he gave me a sorrowful look and said: 'Watch a sailing race! Why I've come at a few things in my time, but I've never been to a sailing race.'

As a devotee of the 'sport of kings' he could tell you the sire and dam and starting price of every gee-gee that has sported silk for the last twenty years.

Accepting my invitation to come along and view his maiden race, I told him I could not promise him very much excitement, but he would certainly see some first-class racing. The subsequent events proved I was wrong, for he got both, and when 'Cynthia' filled right up and sank like a stone, leaving her crew bobbing around like corks in a tub, he turned to me in wild excitement and said, 'How many times does that happen during a race?'

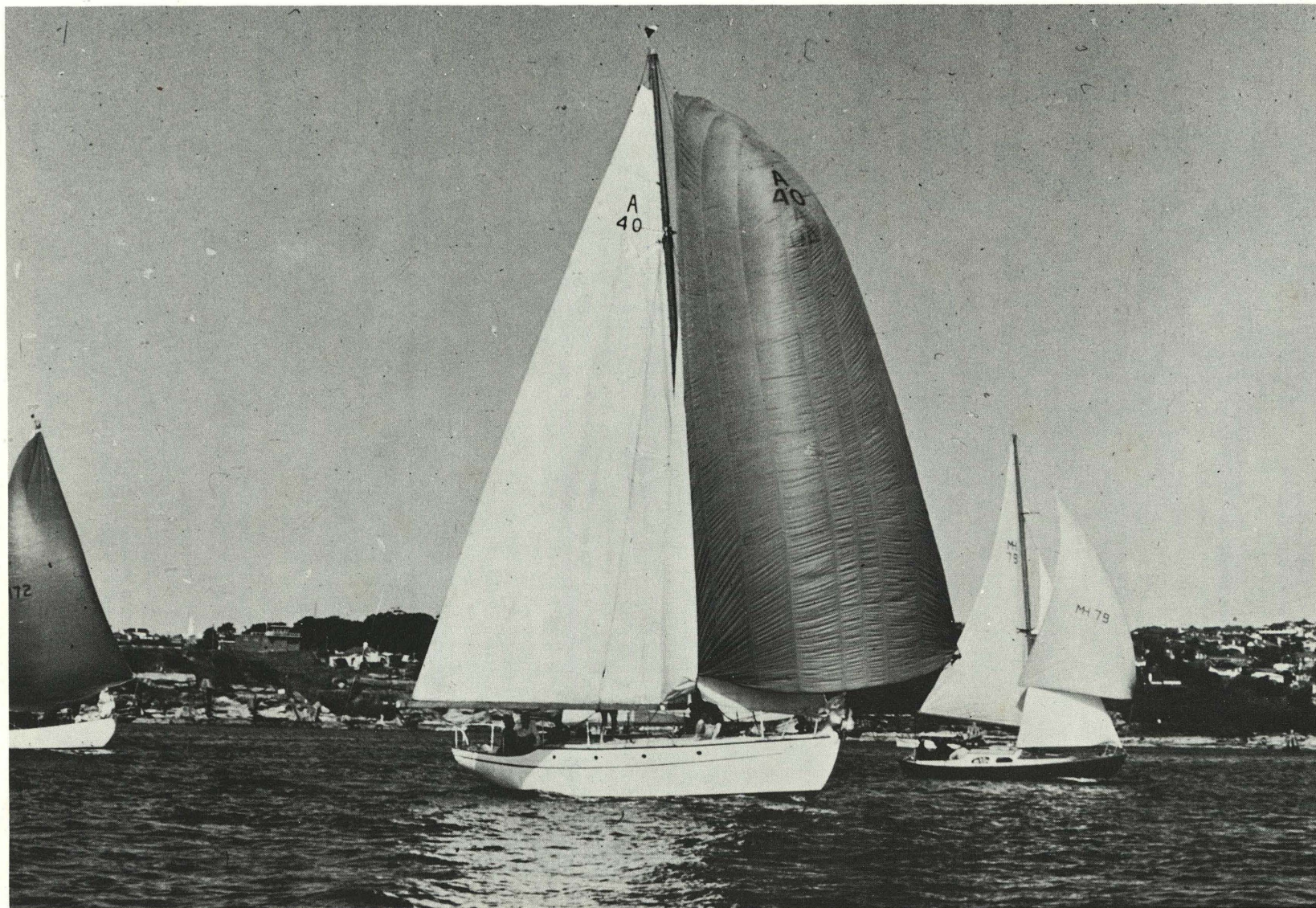
He looked quite disappointed when I told him that what he had just witnessed was a happening that he would probably never see again if he followed boat racing for the rest of his life, especially the class of craft we were watching at that moment.

Capsizes were a common occurrence among the open boats, but the foundering of a cruiser was the one-in-a-million chance.



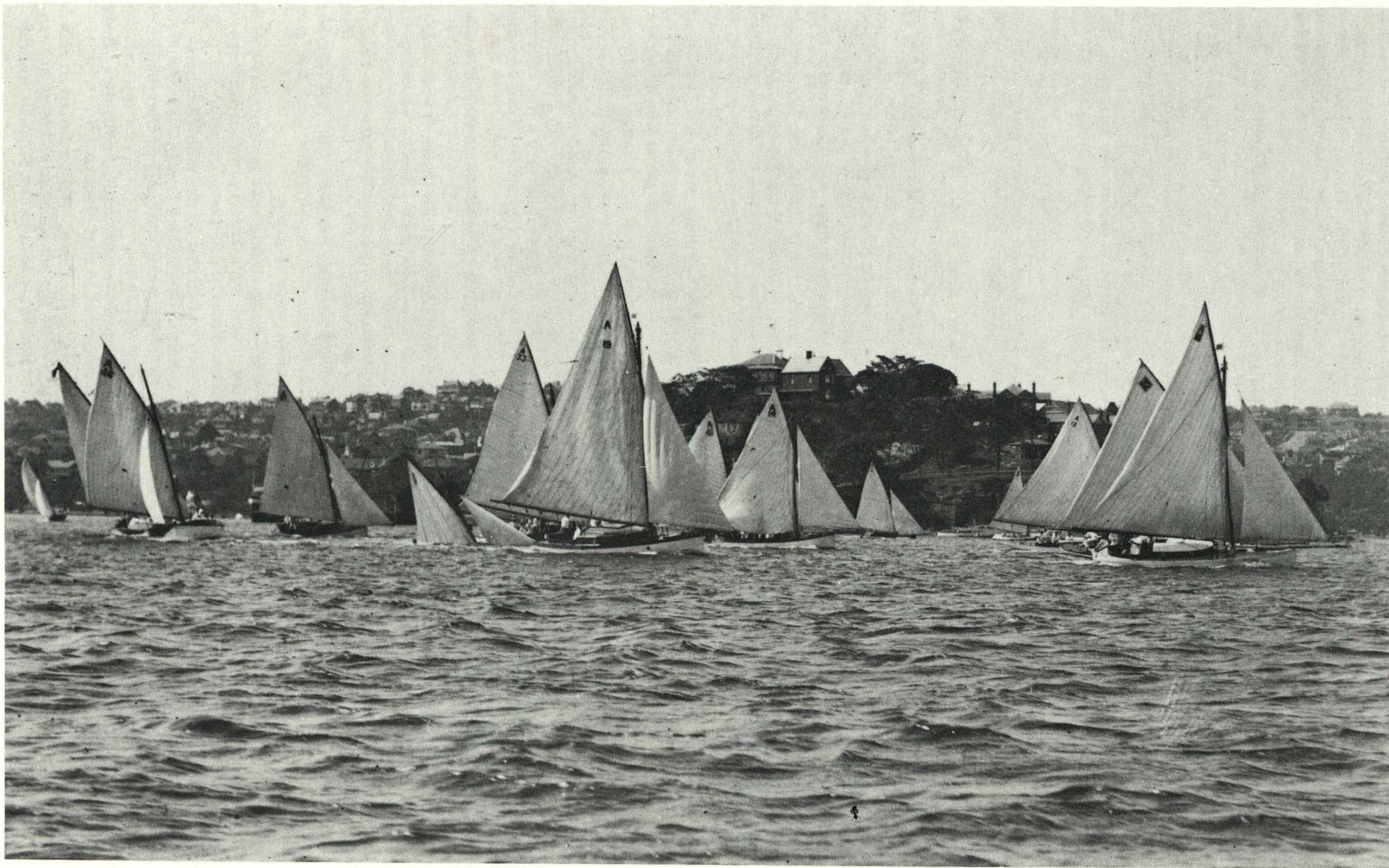
Foundering of "CYNTHIA".

Photo courtesy L. Rayment.



"THURLOO"—E. J. (Ern) Merrington—
first S.A.S.C. entry in Hobart Race.

Photo courtesy J. A. Middleton.



Foundering of "CYNTHIA".

Photo courtesy L. Rayment.