

## Chapter 1

# The First Decade: 1859 – 1869

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It was probably the sight of ship's gigs and long boats running between ship and shore which prompted the idea of aquatic competition in the harbour at Geelong and there is a report of a regatta being held on March 20, 1844, but it was not of a very ambitious nature.

Most of the competitors were sailors from vessels in the harbour and it appears that the ball held the same night in Strachan's building far outdid the regatta' as a social event.

But on Friday, January 21, 1859 a meeting took place at the Victoria Hotel of what would appear to be the first official Geelong Regatta Committee.

The following is a transcript of the Minutes of that meeting:

"Minutes of meeting of Regatta Committee held at the Victoria Hotel, Friday 21 January 1859.

*Mr. H. C. Campbell in the chair.*

*Moved by Mr. Sholl.*

*Seconded by Mr. Robinson and carried:*

*That it is desirable that a regatta should take place this year in Geelong Bay.*

*Moved by Mr. Blacker.*

*Seconded by Mr. Scott and carried:*

*That the following gentlemen be appointed a Sailing Sub-Committee to arrange and decide on all matters connected with the value of prizes, length of course etc. Messrs McLean, H. C. Campbell, W. Lloyd, J. Ross, H. R. Murray, P. Nixon, H. Ray, J. C. Blacker, M. Boyce and A. M. Mason. Five to form a quorum.*

*Moved by Mr. George.*

*Seconded by Mr. Nixon and carried:*

*That the following gentlemen be appointed a sub-committee to regulate all matters connected with the land arrangements, booths etc., Messrs. S. W. Carter, I. Finch, H. Richter and C. I. Stafford with power to add to their number. The stewards and office bearers to be ex officio members of this committee. Three to form a quorum.*

*Moved Mr. Lloyd.*

*Seconded by Mr. Sholl and carried:*

*That the day on which the regatta shall be held be taken into consideration at the next meeting of the General Committee.*

*Moved by Mr. Rose.*

*Seconded by Mr. T. Brown and carried:*

*That the next meeting of the General Committee take place on Monday next at 1/2 past 7 at the Prince of Wales Hotel*

*Moved by Mr. Ross.*

*Seconded by Mr. Carter and carried:*

*That the captains of vessels in the harbour be invited to become honorary*

*members of the General Committee.*

*Messrs. T. Brown, I.M. Main, J. Ross and W. Lees were added to the General Committee.*

*Signed Arch Craig*

*Hon. Sec"*

The next meeting of the Regatta Committee took place as scheduled on the following Monday, January 24, but this time at the Prince of Wales hotel. It is interesting to note that the Regatta committees changed the venue for their meetings from one hotel to another. This was apparently done to avoid offending any one publican and no doubt the hotels where the meetings were held benefited from additional trade.

The following is a transcript of that second meeting which is of interest because it gives a clear indication of the very thorough manner in which these no doubt responsible gentlemen carried out their duties.

"Minutes of meeting of Regatta Committee held at Prince of Wales Hotel, Monday, January 24, 1859.

*Mr. A. C. MacDonald in the chair.*

*Minutes of the last meeting read and confirmed.*

*Moved by Mr. Craig.*

*Seconded by Mr. Blacker.*

*'That the day of the regatta be fixed for the last Wednesday in February, (Feb. 23, 1859)'*

*Amendment.*

*Moved by Mr. Carter.*

*Seconded by Mr. Murray .*

*'That the day of the regatta be fixed for the last Friday in February.'*

*After considerable discussion, during which some eloquent and spirited speeches were made, the amendment was put by the chairman and lost. The original motion was carried.*

*Three members of the committee guaranteed respectively, 8 pounds, 15 pounds and 5 pounds.*

*Mr. Meadows offered a clear half house at the theatre for the benefit of the regatta and,*

*Mr. Finch moved.*

*Mr. Craig seconded.*

*'That Mr. Meadows liberal offer is accepted.'*

*The motion was carried with acclamation*

*Mr. Finch proposed that the joint Hon. Secs., Mr. Blacker and himself, the mover, be appointed a sub Committee to confer with Mr. Meadows on the subject of the proposed benefit, but on the suggestion of Mr. Craig that it was a matter strictly appertaining to the Land Sub Committee the matter was agreed to be left in their hands.*

*Moved by Mr. Craig.*

*Seconded by Mr. Carter and carried:*

*'That the next general meeting of the Committee take place on Friday next athalf past seven at the Royal Hotel to receive a report from the Sailing Sub Committee as to the programme and from the General Committee, collecting, as to the amount of money received and subscriptions promised .'*

*The names of Messrs. W. Fraser, H. Over and W. T. Morris were added to the list of the General Committee and Mr. W. Fraser's name was added to the Sailing Committee. The names of Messrs. Muirhead and Magarey were put upon the list of stewards.*

*Signed A. C. Macdonald.*

*Arch Craig  
Hon. Sec.*

Three days later, January 27, 1859 the Sailing Sub Committee met, this time at the Commodore Hotel. It is not disclosed whether this venue was chosen because of its rather appropriate name.

Once again a full transcript of the minutes of this meeting is included here. This is done primarily because they are considered to be of historical significance but also because they provide an insight into the thinking of those gentlemen planning the regatta and the type of events they were recommending

## **First Meeting of the Sailing Sub Committee**

At a meeting of the Sailing Sub Committee of the Regatta held at the Commodore Hotel on Thursday, January 27, 1859.

The following programme of races was agreed to be recommended to the General Committee for adoption:

### **Sailing Matches**

#### **1st Class Sailing race:**

For all yachts or boats open or decked - Half a minute a ton allowed for tonnage.

#### **2nd Class Sailing race:**

For all boats 20 feet or under overall.

#### **3rd Class Sailing race:**

For all boats 16 feet and under overall.

#### **Lighter Race:**

For all bona fide lighters.

(This committee to have the option of striking this race out if sufficient encouragement be not given by the lightermen.)

#### **Consolation race:**

For all beaten yachts or boats .To be handicapped by three judges to be appointed by the Sailing committee.

#### **Pulling Matches:**

Four oared gig race.

Four oared gig race for amateurs.

**Fisherman's race:**

For boats the bona fide property of and manned by fishermen, pulling or sailing or both at option.

**Pair oared race:**

For all boats (outriggers excepted) pulling a pair of oars:-no steersman.

**Punt race:**

For all flat bottomed boats pulling a pair of sculls.

**Ships boat race:**

For all boats belonging to ships laying within Port Phillip Heads on the day of the regatta. To pull four oars and be manned by the crew of the respective vessels to which the boats belong. All boats with a steer oar excluded.

**Sculling match.**

With one oar.

**Duck Hunt:**

To last at least a quarter of an hour.

The members present were -Messrs. W. Fraser (in the chair), J.C. Blacker, A. M. Mason, P. N. Nixon, H. R. Murray, J. Ross and W. Lloyd.

Mr. Nixon tendered his resignation in consequence on being called to Melbourne on duty, which was accepted.

Signed

Arch Craig.

Hon. Sec.

The day following this meeting, January 28, 1859, the General Committee met for the third time, the venue being the Royal Hotel. At this meeting the programme recommended by the Sailing Committee was approved, except that outriggers were excluded from the four oared gig races. In addition the following two motions were carried:

*Moved by Mr. Craig.*

*Seconded by Mr. Nay and carried.*

*'That all collectors be requested to hand over the amount of their collection to the treasurer at each meeting of the General Committee.'*

*Moved by Mr. Craig.*

*Seconded by Mr. Lloyd and carried.*

*'That the General Committee meet next Friday at Birdsey's Three Tuns Hotel.'*

Signed

Arch Craig

Hon. Sec.

On Tuesday, February 1, 1859, the first meeting of the Land Sub Committee took place at the Royal Hotel. Present were, Mr. N. Carter (in the chair) and Messrs. Finch, Stafford and Craig.

The following motions were passed at this meeting and it will be noted that, at this and subsequent meetings of the Land Committee, great importance was vested in the erection and operation of the refreshment booths!

*"That Friday week, February 4, be the night for the benefit kindly offered by Mr. Meadows at the theatre and that the prices be five shillings for the boxes, three shillings for the stalls and two shillings for the pits."*

*"That the right of erecting booths at the regatta be sold by auction by Messrs. Ogilvie and Co. on Saturday the 12th instant at eleven o'clock. That there be three booths, the first being the stewards and committee booth and the purchaser of this booth to provide a tent separate from the general booth for the accommodation and refreshment of ladies and others inside of the enclosure which is to be erected. The other two booths shall be on an equal footing."*

The fourth meeting of the General Committee took place as scheduled at the Three Tuns Hotel on Friday, February 4, 1859. The only motion of any significance passed at this meeting was as follows:

*"That all members of the General Committee who do not attend at meetings of the said committee, unless prevented by personal or family sickness or bona fide business, and whose excuse is not satisfactory to the chairman, shall be fined 2/6 for every nonattendance -the fines to go to the funds of the regatta."*

Also a deputation was appointed to wait upon the Merchants and Tradesmen of the Town to request their signatures to a requisition to the Mayor asking him to declare the day of the regatta a public holiday.

The next meeting of the General Committee was scheduled for Monday the 9th instant at the Union Hotel.

The second meeting of the Sailing Sub Committee, set down for February 2, was abandoned when after two hours of waiting by three members, a quorum was not obtained.

However, stern measures were taken at the next meeting held at the Commodore Hotel on Monday, February 7, when a motion similar to that adopted by the General Committee, imposing fines for non-attendance was passed.

At this meeting it was decided to continue with the race for lighters "as several of the lightermen had expressed themselves willing to subscribe to the fund."

Also, at this meeting, a great deal of time was devoted to determining the courses for the various events to be contested at the regatta. For example the course for the lighters was -

*"From the Flagship, round the fairway buoy off Moorabool Street wharf, round a buoy-boat moored off Cowie's Creek, round first black dolphin in Ship channel, round a buoy-boat moored off Point Henry -winning at the Flagship once round"*

The course for the Yacht Race was –

*"From the Flagship, round the fairway buoy round the fairway buoy round a buoy-boat moored off Cowie's Creek, round a buoy-boat moored in Stingaree Bay off Point Henry - three times round, winning at the Flagship."*

The course for four-oared gigs was –

From the Flagship, round the fairway buoy, round a buoy moored off Limeburner 's Point and back to the Flagship -twice round."

All the courses were approved on a separate motion, proposed and seconded and passed by the committee. It must have been a long night! And it was by no means finished because the committee then set about determining the order of starting and the prize money allotted to each event. This was as follows:-

Order of Starting		Prize Money (Pounds)
1 <sup>st</sup>	The Lighter Race, to start at 9 a.m.	20
2 <sup>nd</sup>	The First Class Sailing Race	25
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The Yacht Race	50
4 <sup>th</sup>	The Fishermen's Race	15
5 <sup>th</sup>	The Ships Boat Race	10
6 <sup>th</sup>	The Pair Oared Race	10
7 <sup>th</sup>	The Second Class Sailing Race	20
8 <sup>th</sup>	The Third Class Sailing Race	15
9 <sup>th</sup>	The Sculling Race	3
10 <sup>th</sup>	The Four Oared Gig Race	25
11 <sup>th</sup>	The Punt Race	5
12 <sup>th</sup>	The Four Oared Amateurs' Gig Race	20
13 <sup>th</sup>	The Duck Hunt	5
14 <sup>th</sup>	The Consolation Race. To be started as soon as the sailing boats come in and are handicapped by the judges	20

This programme was approved by the General Committee at a meeting held at the Union Rote on February 9 and two days later the Land Sub Committee met at the Royal Hotel whe111t was announced that Mr. Meadows had offered to provide a second benefit for the Regatta at the theatre on February 15 "in consequence of the paucity of attendance on Friday night through the inclemency of the weather."

The final meeting of the Sailing Sub Committee took place at the Black Bull Hotel on February 14th when Messrs. Campbell and Kay were appointed as judges for the regatta "with the third name being left blank at present. The Commodore and umpire to be judges ex officio."

A motion was also carried,

*"That no head sails be hoisted until the starting gun had been fired."*

And so the stage was set for the great day. It is assumed that the Mayor must have declared the day of the regatta to be a public holiday. The report from the files of the Geelong Advertiser dated February 24, 1859 tells the story of this historic occasion and clearly indicates the importance attached to the regatta by the citizens of Geelong at the time. It provides a fine impression of the day and one can visualise the crowd the bunting, the music from the bands, the cries of the bookmakers calling the odds' the general excitement as the contests reached their climax to say nothing of the activity surrounding the three booths.

And not only the three booths. The enterprising Mr. John Birdsey, proprietor of the Three Tuns Hotel on the corner of Yarra and Corio Streets, where it will be recalled the Committee had held one of its meetings, advertised as follows:

*"The Grandest Panorama in the world: Beats peak of the Barrabools into fits. John Birdsey determined to give the public an opportunity of witnessing the regatta on Wednesday; with the greatest comfort and convenience to themselves, notifies that the awning will be rigged over the roof of the Three Tuns Hotel at 9 o'clock in the morning. A brass band will be in attendance and cards of boats entered for each race, with their distinguishing colours will be distributed. Telescopes will be provided. Those who patronise the Three Tuns will be free from the dust and turmoil of the crowd, and no more favourable position for witnessing the days sport could be selected. Jack Birdsey's old style Twenty X is on tap."*

There is no report as to how well the Three Tuns was patronised on the day of the Regatta but it certainly sounded like a great way to spend the day!

### **Report from the Geelong Advertiser. February 24, 1859**

"A moist overnight followed by a cold wind and cloudy dawn gave small promise of a fair sky for the 'fete of the season.' A slight shower, just sufficiently demonstrative to make garden walks feel damp to slippered early risers, perpending peripatetically the mutational aspect of the day's weather, fell at about 4.30 a.m., and soon afterwards there sprung up a chilling breeze from the south-east, which steadily increasing in force, and adding to the enjoyment of early chops and coffee, became an almost gale as the hour approached at which, according to pre-arrangement, the regatta was to commence, viz., 9 a.m. Not daunted, however, by the weather, those who had looked forward to the day as their holiday of the season, donned their gala attire, and made towards the beach through an intermittent drizzle, to which the impetus of a sixteen knot 'southerly-buster' lent the appearance and effect of a soaking shower.

The first race; -the lighter race, owing to been only one entry, that namely of Mr. Levy's "Secret" did not come off, and before a start was effected for the next race the rain had (for a time) blown over, the wind somewhat abated.

Those who were detained 'expecting the event' found shelter during the rain in the three large tents occupied for purposes of refection by Messrs. Skarratt Upston and Free. A commodious tent erected within the reserve that had been fenced in for the select convenience of ladies and those accompanying them afforded also a roomy shelter to those who choose to avail themselves of its accommodation.

Messrs. Wilton and Edwards' band maintained appropriate harmony during the interval preceding the starting of the race, and also, with but little intermission, during the remainder of the day.

As the reserve was immediately opposite the flag ship, and was well furnished with tiers of benches, spectators had every facility for watching the preparation making for the race, and for noticing the cut and rig of the various competitors for their favour. Betting went on freely during the half-hour preceding the start for the first race. The odds offered, so far as concerned the first-class sailing boats race having in most cases reference solely to the contest for the second prize; it being matter of general certainty that for the first prize, Mr. Casey's 'Anonyma' had no competent rival. Mr. Meadows' 'Annie', and Mr. Murray's 'Spray' appeared the favourites: the 'Spray' the rather of the two. The betting was very wild -not as to the amounts jeopardised, but as to the extreme variety in the odds offered, which displayed in most instances more spirit for sport than acquaintance with the sailing qualities of the boats booked. The chief interest of speculation was monopolised by the Yacht Race, for which Mr. Murray's new boat, the 'Eclipse', was freely backed in large sums and at considerable odds. This boat has been lately built by Murray, and was, as is known, launched only a few days ago. She was quite new to her work, and had scarcely been tried under canvas. She carried no topmast. With most who doubted the wisdom of staking their ventures upon an unknown craft, the 'Paddy from Cork' (Mr. Cosgrave's) was the favourite Mr. Holland's 'Mystery' was looked upon as a safe boat, and snugly backed by many of the more cautious. Mr. Anderson's 'Leader' was not without some friends. The race was, however, generally thought to lie between the new boat and the Paddy. The squally weather made the varied reputations for seamanship enjoyed by the respective sailors of the boats a considerable item in the calculation of chances.

#### **FIRST-CLASS SAILING BOAT RACE**

For all boats 27 feet and under over all. First prize £25. Second prize, half the entrance money. Three to start or no race. Four to start or no second prize. The entries were as follows:-

Mr. Casey's Anonyma, green flag  
Mr. Murray's Spray, white flag red cross  
Mr. Lloyd's Echo, blue flag red cross  
Mr. Alder's Phantom, masonic flag  
Mr. Meadows's Annie, red flag  
Mr. Jenkyn's Bell Bird, red, white, and blue flag.

Mr. Meadows, in entering his boat, the Annie, protested against the regulations which forced a boat only twenty-four feet four inches over all, into competition with a craft like the Anonyma, which latter, he thought should rather have been restricted to competition in the Yacht Race. Had this protest been accepted and the Anonyma denied competition with the first class sailing boats, Mr. Meadow's 'Annie' would have taken the first prize, and Mr. Murray's 'Spray' the second. As it was the race resulted in a clear walk over for the Anonyma, and a very well contested second achieved by the 'Annie'.

#### **YACHT RACE**

For all yachts or boats open or decked. Half a minute per ton allowed for difference of tonnage. First prize, a Cup value £30, with £20 added. Second prize:, half the entrance money. Three to start or no race. Four to start or no second prize.

Five entries -

Mr. Murray's Eclipse -blue flag, gold Liver

Mr. Anderson's Leader -blue flag

Mr. Holland's Mystery -red flag

Mr. Lewis's Messenger -Blackwell flag

Mr. Cosgrave's Paddy from Cork -green flag

A little extra smartness at the start put the new boat in a good leading position which she maintained till rounding the first buoy. It soon became evident, however, that she was fast making water and could not keep up the speed with which she had led off. The Leader and the Mystery pushed ahead; but were cleverly passed by the Paddy from Cork, who now had it all her own way, steadily followed by the two last mentioned boats . In the second lap the Mystery got dismayed and upset in a squall, and left the race to the Paddy from Cork, coming in first, and Leader second. The Messenger made a lagging third. The Eclipse was given up, and went to the wharf at the second round.

#### **FISHERMAN'S RACE.**

For all boats the bona fide property of, and manned by fishermen. To pull or sail, or both at option. Prize £15. Three to start or no race.

Three entries:

Mr. Howard's Eliza -white flag

Mr. Duffy's Help me thro' -green flag

Mr. Halfpenny's Leviathan -red flag

A bad start and a poor race. The white flag came in, but the green and red were nowhere

#### **SHIPS' BOAT RACE.**

For all boats belonging to vessels lying within Port Philip Heads on the day of the regatta . To pull four oars, and to be manned by the crews of the respective vessels to which the boats belong. Prize £10. Three to start or no race.

One entry

Mr. Lowrie's Flying Fish -red, white and blue.

There being but one entry, this race was struck out of the programme .

#### **PAIR OARED RACE**

For all boats (outriggers excepted) pulling a pair of oars, no steersman. First prize, £10. Second prize, half the entrance money. three boats to start or no second prize. Two boats to start or no race. The entries were -

Mr. Mason's Bill Downey -black and white

Mr. Kenny's Fresh Arrival -red flag

Mr. Morgan's Flying Fish -blue flag

The second boat on the list did not start. The Flying Fish took the prize. As there were not three boats in the race, the second prize was not given.

While the above race was proceeding, the 'boys' (as they were styled by those who knew their boat and them), who were to sail the Bonito in the next race, managed to manoeuvre her very cleverly under water, getting her upset Just as they were preparing to take their place, in

readiness for the race in which she was to sail. The boat filled and sank, and the 'boys' - Smith, Robinson, Trew, Russell and Reeves -were picked up by the Water Police. They soon righted their boat again; and, as will be seen further on, put her through the race for which she was entered a very good first despite their accident.

## **SECOND CLASS SAILING RACE**

For all boats twenty feet and under over all. First prize £20; second prize half the entrance money. Three to start or no race. Four to start or no second prize.

The following boats were entered for the above race -

Mr. Scott's Petrel -red flag white cross

Mr. Ross's Commodore, -red pennant with gold cup

Mr. Carter's Sheshebweg -white flag

Captain Lessing's C. F. Lessing -Hamburg flag

Mr. Shea's Ballarat -red ensign and 1st distinguishing pennant

Messrs. Robinson and Smith's Bonito -green flag gold harp

The Sheshebweg declined coming up when the gun was fired for the start. The other boats got away very well together, the Petrel gradually pushing ahead. The Lessing had been anticipated to creep past everything in this race and to be a sure first, but unexpectedly made a not very brilliant third. The Ballarat declined following the prescribed course, and the race resulted in an almost neck and neck contest between the Benito and the Petrel at the second round . The Benito keeping better up to the wind managed to head her rival when almost within hail of the flagship, and the 'boys' were compensated for their ducking with a hearty cheer from all the spectators at their unlooked-for triumph.

## **THIRD CLASS SAILING RACE**

For all boats, 16 feet and under, over all. First prize £15 . Second prize, half the entrance money. Three to start or no race.

Mr. Anderson's Nightingale -red flag

Mr. Blunt's Tam o'Shanter -flag black

Mr. Blunt's New Era -blue flag, with white star

Mr. Howe's Dough-Bag -white flag

The Nightingale afforded another 'incident' by an upset immediately upon her starting. The Dough-Bag went aground at the Point in returning towards the flagship. The New Era came in first by long chalks, and the second place consequently remained to the Tam O'Shanter.

## **SCULLING RACE**

For all boats sculling with one oar. Prize, £3. Two to start or no race

Mr. Dingwell's Mary Ann -white flag

Mr. Kelly's Rose -blue and white flag

Mr. Lawrence's Maggy -blue flag

#### **FOUR-OARED GIG RACE**

For all gigs pulling four oars (outriggers excepted). First prize £25; second prize, half the entrance money. Three to start or no second prize

Mr. Kenny's New Chum -red flag

Mr. Kelly's Native Youth -blue and white

Mr. Morgan's Flying Fish -blue flag

There was a good deal of difficulty in getting a fair start for the above race.

#### **PUNT RACE**

For all flat-bottomed boats pulling a pair of sculls. Prize £15 . Three to start or no race.

Mr. Swift's Iris -white flag

Mr. Ashmore's Cygnet -black swan on white ground

Mr. Heath's Curlew -yellow flag

Mr. G. Smith's Lightning -red flag, black ball

Mr. Baker's Maggy -blue flag

#### **FOUR-OARED AMATEUR GIG RACE**

For all gigs (outriggers excepted) pulling four oars, manned by amateurs. First prize, £20, second prize, half the entrance money .Two to start, or no race; three to start or no second prize.

Mr. Kelly's Native Youth

Mr. Mason's Meteor

Mr. Morgan's Elswick

The Consolation Race was not made up, only one boat, Mr.Murray's Spray was offered for entry. It was arranged that if the requisite number of boats were entered the race should take place today.

The final Duck Hunt with Allen for duck and McCrae as drake, was very well kept up; and considering the sport offered, and the cold endured by the men, the prize was well won.

With regard to the general management of the day's sports great praise is due to the committee and stewards for the very satisfactory mode in which all the arrangements had been both devised and carried out.

Captain McPherson acted as Commodore, Capt. John McLean as umpire and Messrs. Rae, Campbell and Lucas as judges.

The prizes will be delivered between 10 and 11 this morning at the Victoria Hotel.

The cup for the yacht race will be presented to the winner this evening at the supper at the Western Hotel.

The regatta had obviously been an outstanding success both as a spectacle and the enjoyment of the contestants. It was also a financial success and the now enthusiastic committee went a step further at their meeting held at the Terminus Hotel on Friday, March 4, 1859.

The Minutes of that historic meeting tell the story and are, because of their great significance to this history, transcribed here in full:

"Minutes of a General Meeting of the Regatta Committee held at the Terminus Hotel on Friday March 4, 1859.

Captain McPherson in the chair. The Balance Sheet of the Regatta Fund showing a surplus of £72.0.9 was read by Mr. Sholl and adopted.

*Moved by Mr. J. Ross.*

*Seconded by Mr. W. Lloyd and carried.*

*'That a Yacht Club be formed in Geelong.'*

*Moved by Mr. S. W. Carter.*

*Seconded by Mr. H. R. Murray and carried. '*

*That the club be called the Geelong Yacht Club.'*

*Moved by Mr. Sholl.*

*Seconded by Mr. Arch. Craig.*

*'That the surplus of the Regatta fund be appropriated to the 'Geelong Yacht Club.'*

*Moved by Mr. J. Finch.*

*Seconded by Mr. Sholl and carried*

*'That the annual subscription to the Club be One Guinea and that not less than forty members be enrolled before the rules are made and confirmed and that if it should be decreed necessary by a General Meeting, the subscription be raised.'*

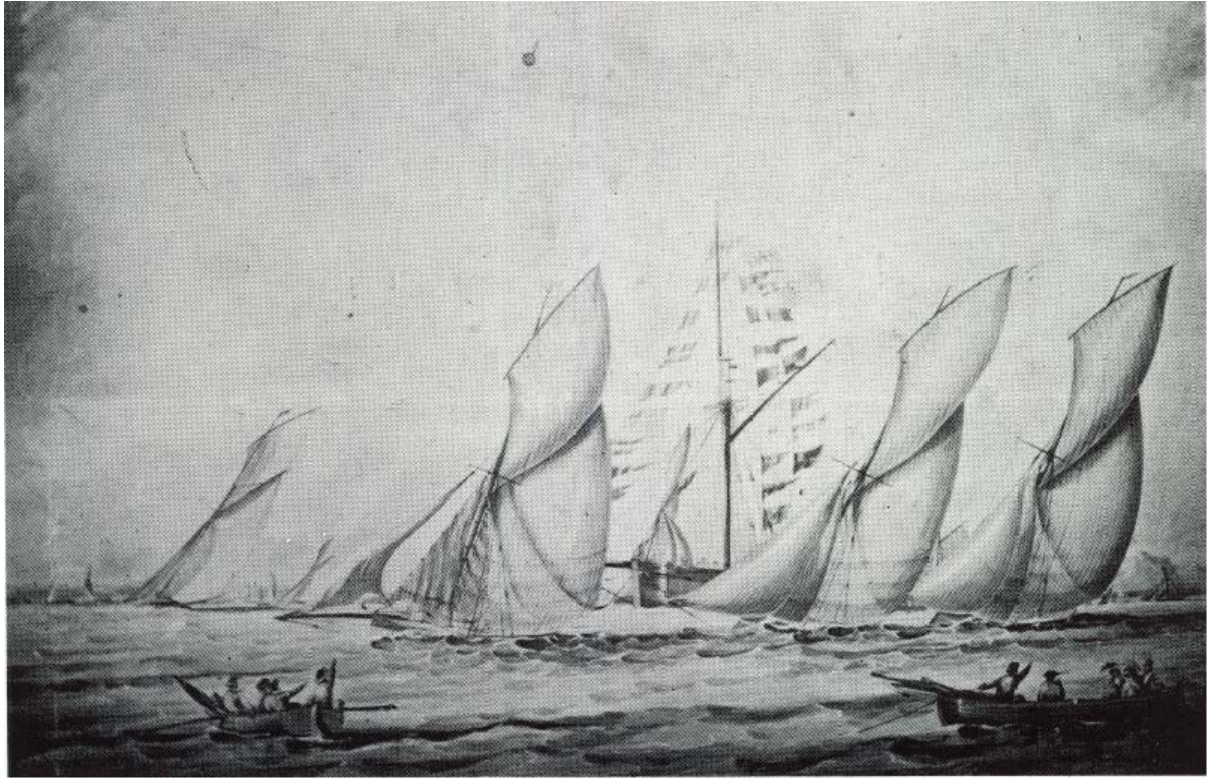
*Moved by Mr. Carter.*

*Seconded by Mr. Finch and carried.*

*'That the following gentlemen form a committee to draw up rules for guidance of the Club, Capt. McLean, Capt. McPherson, Messrs. Galletly, A. Craig, J. D. Little, H. N. Ray, H. Campbell, M. Sholl and V. Giblin, with power to add to their number.'*

*Arch. Craig.*

*Hon. Sec."*



Mystery

Southern Cross

Psyche

Eclipse

#### The Regatta in Geelong: 1859

The first meeting of the Committee of the newly formed Yacht Club took place at Macks Hotel on an unspecified date in May, 1859, with Capt. McPherson in the chair. At this meeting Capt. Kon of the "Loelia", apparently a vessel then in port, and Mr. T. Lyttleton were added to the Committee and a start was made in formulating a set of rules to be presented to a General meeting of the Club.

The first general Meeting was held at Macks Hotel on June 1, 1859 when the rules were read and either confirmed or altered. It was then resolved that the meeting be adjourned for one week when the election of office bearers would take place. In the meantime all members were required to pay their subscriptions for the ensuing year to entitle them to vote at the meeting.

This meeting duly took place on June 8 at Macks Hotel when Capt. McPherson was appointed Commodore of the Club and Mr. H. C. Campbell, Vice Commodore, subject to his acceptance of the office. Mr. Sholl was appointed Treasurer and Mr. A. Craig Secretary. It was also approved that members resident more than three miles from the Geelong Post Office be allowed to vote by proxy, but that no one member be allowed to carry more than three proxies.

And now, getting down to future sailing activities, the following motion was passed:

*"That the balance from the Regatta fund be supplemented by twenty guineas from the Yacht Club funds for the purpose of offering a prize to be sailed for at the regatta of 1860 by all yachts of all classes and that a private subscription be opened to raise the prize to 100 guineas. The entrance fee to be 5 guineas each and all regulations respecting the race to be made by the Committee of the Yacht Club."*

At the next General meeting of the club, held at Macks Hotel on July 6, 1859, a letter was read from the private secretary to the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Buckley, advising that His Excellency

would act as a Patron to the Club. And Mr. Campbell had agreed to be Vice Commodore. Because of Sir Henry Buckley's involvement, it was now seen fit to revise the design of the club flag and the club burgee. It was decided that the flag should be the Blue Ensign with the letters G.Y.C. in gold in the "field" and the burgee, "blue with a star in gold".

The Honorary Secretary was granted his rail fare to Melbourne and 12 members were elected to the Committee

But the matter of the flag and the burgee was by no means finalised. Three months later, at a General Meeting held on October 5 at Macks Hotel, Mr. J. W. Meilley gave notice of his intention to move at the next meeting that the club flag be altered to a blue flag with the Union Jack in the corner and the Southern Cross in gold in the field, the burgee to be blue with G.Y.C. in gold.

Then, not to be outdone, Mr. J. C. Smith gave notice of his intention to move that the blue flag be altered to the Red Ensign, the burgee, red with G.Y.C. in white.

Four weeks later, on November 2, a modified version of Mr. Smith's motion as follows was carried:

*"That the club flag be the Red Ensign with the letters G.Y.C. in gold, the burgee, red with G.Y.C. in gold."*

At this same meeting they got down to planning the sailing programme for the coming season, and the following motion was carried:

*"That the following matches (as the opening cruise of the season) be advertised to be sailed for on Saturday, November 24 instant:-*

***First** - For all yachts owned by members of the club - a sweepstake of 5 sovereigns each, with £5 added from the club funds. Three boats to start or no race -if four or more boats start, the second to save her entrance. Course same as sailed by yachts at the last regatta, only twice round .*

***Second** For all yachts five tons or under owned by members of the club, a sweepstake of two guineas each with two guineas added from the club funds - same regulations and course as the other, only once round ."*

But three weeks later, the date was changed to December 3, "in consequence of several new yachts now building not being ready." It is interesting to note that the races were referred to as "matches" between yachts participating in a "cruise".

At this time Mr. Craig tendered his resignation as Secretary of the club and a number of new members were admitted, each one being formally proposed and seconded at a special General meeting. It was also determined that Rule 22 of the Sydney Yacht Club rules (whatever that was) be struck out and the following substituted.

*"That the amount of entrance fee be left to the Sailing Committee and that a month's notice be given of any match to be sailed."*

At a Special General meeting held on December 1 it was decided that, "the first race on Saturday start at one o'clock punctually and that entries to be taken up till eleven o'clock Saturday." Also "that 20 seconds per ton be allowed to yachts under five tons in the second race and half a minute per ton for all yachts in the first race."

The "Psyche" and the "Eclipse" were announced as entries for the first race and the "Sheshebweg" and "Gauntlet" for the second.

Brief details of this contest are recorded in the minutes of the yearly meeting of the club on July 11, 1860 as follows:-

On December 3, the opening cruise of the season 1859-1860 and in aid whereof, by special motion, the sum of five pounds was voted from the club funds. For this there were three entries, viz, the 'Eclipse', 'Psyche' and 'Gauntlet'. The match was won by the former."

No mention is made of the "Sheshebweg" which was apparently withdrawn and evidently the "First" and "Second" matches were combined.

Shortly after the first "Cruise" it was agreed that the names of seven members, "who had either left the district or refused to pay their subscription be expunged from the list of members of the club."

It is apparent that whilst the Geelong Yacht Club was now well and truly established in its own right, the club did not conduct the annual Geelong regatta. The regatta was the responsibility of a special local committee set up for this express purpose. It is recorded, however, that the Yacht Club was willing to help with the regatta and in fact, had donated the one hundred guinea trophy for the main event. However it must be borne in mind that the Yacht Club had appropriated the surplus of £72-0-9 from the 1859 regatta, to its own funds.

So perhaps they were not being all that generous after all. But they were keeping their finger on the pulse as is evident from the following motion passed at a General meeting in early February 1860:

*"That the Secretary be instructed to request the members of the Yacht Club Committee to meet the Regatta Sailing Committee at the next meeting on Tuesday evening to confer as to the regulations under which the one hundred guinea prize be sailed for."*

The following report, taken from the files of the Geelong Advertiser, dated March 1, 1860 is an interesting insight into sailing and other water sports conducted on Corio Bay in these times. It also reveals that the Yacht Race, the main event of the day, contested for the Yacht Club 100 guineas prize, was sailed under Yacht Club rules. The difference was between these rules and the Regatta rules were not clarified.

## GEELONG ANNUAL REGATTA

The Geelong Annual Regatta came off yesterday. The day was kept as a close holiday, and although the weather was far from propitious for outdoor sight-seeing, the attendance both of ladies and gentlemen was sufficiently numerous to mark a pretty general determination on the part of the public to honour the event with their presence.

The Brilliant made a first-rate flagship, and the thanks of the stewards and committee are due to the captain of that vessel for the pains he took to make things as thoroughly convenient as possible. Sergeant McRitchie, of the water police, and his men were also of considerable service on board.

Captain McPherson, the Harbor Master, officiated as Commodore, and Messrs. Campbell, Cummins and Craig as judges. Messrs. Campbell and Cummins had also the duty of measuring committeemen to discharge, and they declared tonnage of the boats entered for the Yacht Race to be as follows:- Mr. Carrick's 'Alarm' 9 tons; Mr. Over's 'Eclipse' 16 tons; Mr. Ball's 'Psyche' 11 tons; Mr. Holland's

'Mystery' 11 tons; Mr. Cosgrave's 'Paddy' 9 tons; Messrs. Heath and Jackson's 'Southern Cross' 7 tons. The lengths of the boats entered for the First- class Sailing Boat Race were declared as follows:- Wildfire 30ft. 3 in., Gauntlet 24 ft. 2 in., Echo 20 ft. 9 in., Prince of Wales 22 ft. 8 1/2 in Annie 21 ft.

At about a quarter to 10 o'clock, the first gun was fired, and preparations were made for the Lighter Race. It was certainly a grotesque sight to see a trio of fine old lumbering lighters getting into position to the air of Rule Britannia, but as they were capitally handled, the spectator had no worse wish for them than that they might get as stiff a breeze as appeared necessary to make them go. The second gun fired, and a beginning was made in earnest with the first event of the day, which was the:-

### **LIGHTER RACE**

For all bona fide lighters, viz., those at present engaged in the lightering trade within Port Phillip Heads. 1<sup>st</sup> prize £15; second boat to save her stakes. Course from the Flag ship; round Fairway Buoy, round buoy off the bluff, round the first Black Dolphin, round buoy in Stingaree Bay, to win at Flagship.

Mr. M. Stafford's 'David' , white flag, red cross

Mr. Huddart's 'Kathleen' red, blue and white flag

Mr. Hayes' 'James and Amelia' Union Jack flag

The race was occupied between two and three hours, the fortunes of each of the competitors varying with the breeze. 'David' came in an easy winner, neither of the others taking the trouble to finish at the Flagship.

Some considerable delay occurred before the next event was competed for; this was principally owing to the tardiness of one of the boats in putting in an appearance. The gun was fired at 10 minutes 41 seconds late for:-

### **FIRST CLASS SAILING BOAT RACE**

For all boats twenty-seven feet and under over all. First prize £30; second prize

£10. Three to start or no race. Four, or no second prize. One minute per foot allowed for time. To start at 10 o'clock. Course -Once round the yacht course to Flagship; thence round the Fairway Buoy, and thence around the buoy in Stingaree Bay, winning at Flagship.

Mr. W. Chamber's 'Wildfire', 21ft. 3 in., green flag

Mr. Lloyd's 'Echo', 20 ft. 9 in. blue flag with a red cross.

Mr. Scott's 'Gauntlet'. 24 ft. 2 in. blue and white flag, chequered.

Mr. Brodie's 'Prince of Wales'. 22 ft. 8 1/2 in. blue and scarlet flag

Mr. Meadow's 'Annie', 21 ft. red flag.

A capital start was affected, and as a nice breeze was blowing aft, the little 'Annie' shot ahead as long as it served her. After the Fairway Buoy was rounded, the 'Wildfire' took up a determined position, in front, the Prince of Wales second, Annie third, Gauntlet fourth, and Echo astern. From this point to the Cowie's Creek Buoy 'Wildfire' so much increased her distance that it was early evident that the race would be a gift to her. After the 'Wildfire' had rounded the buoy at her ease, there was a slight struggle for next honours between the 'Gauntlet', the 'Prince of Wales', and 'Echo', the Gauntlet bidding fair to make a creditable second throughout the race. It was remarked however, that she lost a good deal by not carrying her gaff top sail earlier in the event. The run to

Stingaree Bay and thence home offered nothing remarkable, and the first time round was wound up in the following order:-

Wildfire first, Gauntlet second (4 1/2 minutes behind), Echo third, Prince of Wales fourth, Annie fifth, there being a difference of six minutes between the coming in of the first and last boats. The second time round was rather an exciting affair, a stiff and squally breeze blowing between Cowie's Creek and Stingaree Bay. The Wildfire appeared to go all the better for it, while some of her lagging competitors were left out of sight in the squall. From Stingaree Bay to the Flagship the Melbourne boat was all alone, and she came home some 20 minutes before anything else was in sight. At length, however, the Gauntlet came up, with Echo in close attendance, and the allowance for length being taken into consideration, there was some promise of a near race home. The Gauntlet came in only 1 min. 9 sec. before the Echo, and as the latter boat was allowed something like 2 minutes, she was declared the winner of the second prize.

The next event was the -

### **PAIR OARED RACE**

For all boats (outriggers excepted) pulling a pair oars -no steersman. First prize

£10- second boat to save her stake. Three boats to start or no race; four or no second prize. Course - from the Flagship round the Fairway Buoy, thence round a buoy moored off Limeburner's Point, and back to Flagship - once round.

Mr. Meyer's 'Elswick', red and white flag

Mr. Gillett's 'Anti-Teetotaller', pink flag

Mr. Harty's 'Flying Buck', blue flag

This race was won easily by Mr. Myer's Elswick, The Flying Buck gave up early, and the Anti-Teetotaller managed to bring their boat home literally half seas over. The wonder is they made so good a second, for their craft was swamped almost to the water's edge. At noon the gun fired for the great event of the day, which was:-

### **YACHT RACE OPEN TO ALL COLONIES**

For all yachts -half a minute per ton allowed for different tonnage. First prize 100 guineas, the gift of the Geelong Yacht Club; second prize £40, third prize

£20 added from the Regatta Fund. This race will be sailed under Yacht Club rules. Three yachts to start or no race -four or no second prize, six or no third prize. Course, from the Flagship round the Fairway Buoy, thence round a buoy moored off the bluff beyond Cowie's Creek, round a buoy moored in Stingaree Bay, and home to Flagship, three times round.

Mr. Holland's 'Mystery' 1

Mr. Over's 'Eclipse' 2

Mr. Ball's 'Psyche' 3

Mr. Cosgrave's 'Paddy' 4

Mr. Carrick's 'Alarm' 5

Mr. Heath's 'Southern Cross' 6

After a false start, the boats got well away together, the Eclipse and Mystery leading the ruck in the run down to the Fairway Buoy. The Mystery crept ahead of the Eclipse, and rounded the buoy some yards ahead of her. From this point to Cowie's Creek the wind appeared of a light baffling description, but somehow or other it suited the Mystery who profited by it considerably. It was soon

seen that the Eclipse was not in her old racing trim. Her pace was lazy compared with what it used to be. The Psyche on the other hand did more than was expected of her. She collared the Paddy, and stole a march on the Eclipse, and made a very fair second to the Mystery. This order was preserved with some slight changes until the fleet was making home for the first round from Stingaree Bay. Within a couple of hundred yards from the Flagship, the Eclipse and Mystery were straining their utmost for the honour of rounding it first. A smart breeze was blowing, and up came the two yachts in as gallant a style as could be desired. The excitement was intense, and the applause enthusiastic. The Mystery had the advantage, and made play for the Moorabool buoy, leaving the Eclipse astern minus her bobstay. The Psyche came in third, and was warmly cheered, the Paddy fourth, the Alarm fifth, and the Southern Cross last. At Cowie's Creek, the whole ruck got into plenty of hard weather, and remained out of sight for nearly half an hour. They passed the Flagship the second time in the following order, Mystery first, Eclipse 12 minutes after, Psyche half a minute after the Eclipse, Paddy 6 minutes after the Psyche, the Alarm fifth, and the Southern Cross sixth. Round they went again, and were again lost to sight, and the shades of evening had long fallen over the Bay before the course (some 30 miles as sailed) was completed; they came in as placed above.

The next event was the:-

### **PUNT RACE**

For all flat bottomed boats pulling a pair of sculls. Prize £2. Three to start or no race. Course, round the Fairway Buoy and back to the Flagship.

J. Geoffrey's 'Retribution', red, white and blue  
John Pearce's 'Shandigaff', white flag  
J. Smith's 'Young Australian', blue flag, white star

Young Australian gave up early, and the two others pulled round the course in pretty good style. Retribution won by several lengths.

The next event of the day was the –

### **SECOND CLASS SAILING BOAT RACE**

For all boats twenty feet and under over all, half a minute a foot allowed for time. First prize £20; second prize £5. Three to start or no race; four or no second prize. Course - once round the Yacht course to Flagship, thence round the Fairway Buoy, thence round the Buoy in Stingaree Bay, winning at Flagship.

Mr. Timms' 'Ariel,' (late New Eva), blue flag  
Mr. Shea's 'Fairy Queen,' (late Ballarat) green flag  
Mr. J. C. Smith's 'Bonita', green flag and gold harp  
Mr. L. W. Carter's 'Sheshebweg,' pink flag  
Mr. Williams' 'Kelpie', red and white chequered  
Mr. Scott's 'Petrel,' blue and white chequered flag

This race was far more interesting to those who were sailing the boats than to persons in the flagship or ashore. The Petrel did not start. Ariel led off, and Bonita took up second place, the Kelpie keeping well in shore, and the Sheshebweg in close attendance. The only change for some time was in favour of Mr. Carter's boat, but she could not maintain her advantage. The light little fleet got considerably dosed with weather off Cowie's Creek, and they struggled away enveloped in a hazy squall. The next we saw of any of them was the appearance of the Kelpie from the direction of

Stingaree Bay, with the Bonita second, and nothing else. Upon the course being completed the order was considerably changed. The Ariel came in a winner and the Fairy Queen second.

The next race was the –

#### **FOUR-OARED GIG RACE**

For gigs pulling four oars (outriggers excepted) open to all the colonies. First prize, £30; second prize £10. Three boats to start or no race; four or not second prize.

Mr. Ryan's 'Young Australian,' pink flag with Emu

Mr. Graham's 'Native Lass,' blue and white flag

Mr. Meyer's 'Elswick,' red and white flag

Mr. Gillett's 'Flitting Shadow,' white flag

Mr. Morgan's 'Ariadne,' blue flag.

A fair start. The Young Australian pulled capitally in every respect. While the boats were coming in from the Limeburner's Point there appeared to be a case of fouling, and subsequently a protest arose from it. The Adriadne got filled with water, and did not complete her course. The Young Australian gained an easy victory, but Graham stated that if the Fleeting Shadow had not fouled his boat, the Australian would not have won the race at all. Gillett's coxswain was accused of unshipping Elswick's rudder.

The next event –

#### **THIRD-CLASS SAILING BOATS**

For all boats 16 feet and under, over all. First prize, £10; second boat to save her stake. Three to start or no race; four or no second prize. To start at a quarter past three. Course round the Fairway Buoy thence round buoy in Stingaree Bay; home to Flag ship.

Robert Fawcett's 'Agnes,' light blue flag

J. Anderson's 'Blue Bell,' white flag with blue bell

M. Champion's 'Anything,' red flag blue cross

No race. It appeared that 'Anything' was nothing but a dingy with a lug sail and one man in her. The committee regarded the affair as a 'do' to make a race, and very properly ordered the gun to fire for the:-

#### **FOUR-OARED AMATEUR GIG RACE**

This race was also a failure, on account of the several crews grumbling against each other about the steersman of one boat not being an amateur and the stroke oar of another being a Yarra waterman. After a deal of unsatisfactory altercation one of the crews put an end to the squabble by rowing home. Thus the race lapsed.

#### **SCULLER RACE**

No entries.

#### **DUCK HUNT**

Prize £3; to last at least a quarter of an hour.

The victory fell easy to Crotchett, the drake, who caught Harty, the duck, in less than 1/4 of a minute. This was a very 'shy' affair of the kind."

If there were any further races conducted by the Yacht Club for the remainder of this season, 1859-60, there is no record of them in either the minutes of the Club or the press. At the adjourned yearly meeting held at the British Hotel on July 11, 1860 the main item of interest, apart from recording the results of the first cruise and the Yacht Race at the Regatta, was that the club now had about 83 members of whom only 57 had paid their subscriptions. However, after the Secretary had explained that, because of the continued absence of the Treasurer, Mr. Shell, it was impossible to produce the yearly accounts, 14 members then paid their subscriptions.

Capt. Thomas Ogilvie was elected Commodore and, after a ballot, Mr. Campbell was elected Vice Commodore, Mr. Giblin was requested to act as Treasurer and Mr. Charles Hall was appointed Hon. Secretary. At the August meeting Mr. Neilly, now appointed Treasurer, disclosed that the club had the amount of £15-9-0 in hand out of which an account of £2-7-0 for advertising was required to be paid.

On February 23, 1884, the Geelong Advertiser published a lengthy article, written by an unnamed scribe, titled, "Yachting on Corio Bay". This piece of writing traced sailing on the bay back to 1859 and referred to an incident which occurred during a match between the yachts "Psyche" and "Southern Cross" on October 6, 1860.

This match was the result of much argument as to the merits of the two boats and was sailed for a £50 side wager. The historian recorded the following:-

*"It was in this match that the late Jack Spilling earned his sobriquet of 'Gunny-bag Jack'. On the stem deck of the Cross was a number of gunny bags, their presence created no little wonderment and the crafty Jack was abused for his untidiness. That, however, he had an object in view was certain and that he achieved it was quickly seen. Managing to be first away, he got directly in front of the Psyche and, without looking around, as if by mere accident, he pushed the gunny bags with his foot into the water and they, lodging across the very nose of the Psyche, stopped her way for several minutes before those in charge could make out what was wrong. This, in the opinion of many, won the race for the Cross, the Psyche, which had to allow her two minutes, coming in only 58 seconds ahead of her."*

Although the dates are somewhat conflicting there would seem little doubt that the following motion, passed at a General meeting of the Yacht Club about that time, would have been the direct result of this incident

"That a new rule, to be numbered 19, be added to the sailing regulations as follows:-

*"Rule 19. That any person, having charge of a yacht and wilfully disobeying the orders given by the Commodore, Vice Commodore or judges upon any point regarding such yacht in the said race or shall use any abusive language to them or shall wilfully throw any impediment calculated to retard the start or progress of any other yacht sailing in the same race, shall be fined a sum not exceeding five pounds, the same to go to the club funds and upon his repeating or again disobeying the said orders shall, on the case being proved, be disqualified from sailing any yacht in any match of this Club."*

At a General meeting, held on September 5, 1860, it was decided that

*"sailing matches for the exercising of crews of various yachts belonging to the club take place once a month on either the first or last Saturday as the Committee may decide."*

The first of these matches was planned for October 6 and it is apparent that this sailing programme was carried out although there is no record of the actual races, or the results. But at the November meeting, despite some opposition, a motion was carried, "that no square sails or booming out of jibs be allowed" for the match to be contested on November 10. Also at this meeting, Mr. Hodgkinson was appointed collector of members' subscriptions at a commission of 5% and the following yachts were entered for the forthcoming match; Southern Cross, Thames, Psyche and Gauntlet. Psyche was to allow Southern Cross 2 minutes, Thames 2 minutes and Gauntlet 10 minutes, and all yachts were to have all of their after canvas set before starting. But this was amended on the motion of Mr. Craig who moved

*"That all sail be down".*

An important move about this time was the planning for the 100 guinea Geelong Yacht Club Challenge Cup and at the January 1861 meeting the following motion was carried:

*"That in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable that the Club should purchase a Challenge Cup of the value not exceeding 100 guineas to be sailed for by yachts belonging to members of this club at the Geelong Annual Regatta and that a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs Olgilvie, Craig and Robinson be appointed to consider the best means of carrying out this object and furnish their report and draw up conditions under which it is to be competed at the adjourned meeting on Wednesday next."*

The Special meeting planned for January 9 lapsed for want of attendance and it was not until the monthly meeting on February 6, 1861 that the matter of the Challenge Cup was again dealt with, when the following motion was carried

*"That a Sub Committee consisting of Messrs. Neilley, Heath and Carter be appointed to canvas for subscriptions towards giving a Challenge Cup to be sailed for as a First Prize for yachts at the ensuing Geelong Annual Regatta . To be won by the same yacht two years following and then to become the property of the owner of the said yacht. The race to be sailed under Yacht Club rules and under the management of the Sailing Committee of the Yacht Club. And if the said Sub-Committee find that they can obtain enough money to be added to the funds in hand belonging to the Club to give a cup worth £60. The Secretary to be authorised to communicate with the Regatta Committee to allow them to advertise the same without delay."*

As a result of this, 29 guineas was immediately guaranteed by 22 of the members present.

The meeting was then adjourned to February 13, when part of the motion relating to the Challenge Cup was amended as follows: "The words two years following to be altered to two years."

The design of the Challenge Cup was finalised at this meeting and it is recorded that the "Mystery" from Melbourne won the race in 1861 from a field consisting of the Southern Cross, Eclipse and Psyche.

In 1862 the Secret came down from Sandridge (Port Melbourne) and the following report in the Geelong Advertiser of February 21, 1862 tells the story:-

*"The Yacht Race for the Champion Cup came off yesterday at noon; but, notwithstanding the event was published in aquatic circles in Melbourne more than a week ago, only one Melbourne boat, the Secret, was sent down to contest the race. The two yachts, the Secret and*

*Southern Cross, made a capital start at 12.35, the Secret slightly leading. The wind was very light and afforded but little opportunity for the display of smart seamanship; but both boats were capitally handled, and although the Secret had the advantage in starting, she was unable during any portion of the race to improve it greatly by superior sailing capacity. On rounding the boat at Limeburners', however, the Cross went too far to leeward, and had to tack and the loss of at least three minutes to her by this mishap was fatal to any chance she might previously have had in the race. The Secret came in the winner. The times were as follows:-*

1 <sup>st</sup> Round	Secret	2h 08m 00s
	Southern Cross	1h 10m 00s
2 <sup>nd</sup> Round	Secret	3h 27m 00s
	Southern Cross	3h 32m 00s
3 <sup>rd</sup> Round	Secret	4h 35m 00s
	Southern Cross	4h 44m 00

*The Secret will thus hold the cup for twelve months, but must win next year also to be entitled to retain it.*

Twenty months were to pass before the next recorded meeting of the Yacht Club when, on October 29, 1862, it was resolved that the club would render all possible assistance to the 1863 Geelong Annual Regatta. And in November the same year it was agreed that the Challenge Cup should be sailed under the same rules as in 1861 and 1862.

On January 9, 1863, the following motion was carried: "That the Challenge Cup be sailed for on a day hereafter named between February 1 and 20 and that money prizes be added for the first and second yachts, the amounts to be decided here-after. The cup to be sailed for strictly under the laws and regulations of the Geelong Yacht Club and that the Secretary be empowered to advertise same in Bells Life in Victoria."

This match duly took place on February 19, 1863 and it would appear that it was not part of the Regatta but rather, a special event: a match between the Southern Cross and the Secret.

The Southern Cross was owned by Major Heath and Mr. Wm. Jackson and an 1884 account of her building by a Mr. Sinclair and her launching, about 1859, reads, in part, as follows:-

"The Southern Cross was built in the yard at the rear of Major Heath's late residence, now occupied by his new villa, on the eastern slopes at the foot of Swanston Street by Mr. Sinclair, then a new arrival in Geelong, under the personal supervision of the gallant soldier owner whose instructions to Sinclair were -

'Choose the timbers with greatest care,  
Of all that is unsound beware;  
For only what is sound and strong  
To this vessel shall belong.'

And faithfully were these instructions carried out, as proved by the fact that, although not built of oak or teak, the Southern Cross although old in years is still young in strength. But we go ahead too fast; in due time the Southern Cross was taken to the beach where:

'Spurning with her foot the ground,  
With one exulting joyous bound  
She leapt into the ocean's arms.' "

The following account of the third race for the Challenge Cup, extracted from the files of the Geelong Advertiser dated February 20, 1863, reveals that on this occasion the "Cross" ran out an easy winner. It is also of interest to note that her skipper for the race was the redoubtable Jack Spilling of "gunny-sack" fame who was loudly cheered by the spectators at the conclusion of the race.

**20/2/1863**

### **The Annual Yacht Race**

*"The annual race for the Geelong Yacht Club Champion Cup came off yesterday, in the Bay, under the most auspicious circumstances. The Cup, it will be remembered, was won the year before last by the Mystery; last year, it was carried by the Secret; and but for the challenge offered this year by the owner of the Southern Cross, the only respectable boat we possess to represent local aquatic sport, the cup must have somewhat ingloriously passed from Geelong without a struggle. Captain Bragg, of the ship Sunda, lying at the wharf, very pluckily entered his little yacht for the event, at the same time courteously placing his vessel, as a flagship, at the service of the promoters of the race, and keeping all day an open table for visitors.*

*Shortly after twelve o'clock the boats took up position.*

	<b>Tons</b>	<b>Sailed By</b>
<i>Southern Cross</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>J. Spilling</i>
<i>Secret</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>J. Stanley</i>
<i>Sunda</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Captain Bragg</i>

*A good start was effected at half-past twelve, the Cross getting away first, but by some mishap with her balloon jib flying bottom upwards. Setting this right lost her at least a dozen lengths before reaching Hutton's Wharf, and it was not until rounding the buoy at Cowie's Creek that the Cross began to gain on the Secret. Here, however, the Cross carried away her bowsprit shroud, and in setting a second 1t caught the water and caused additional delay. About half way between Cowie's Creek and Stingaree Bay the Cross overhauled the Secret, and could have passed her either to windward or leeward. The two boats were now handled very prettily, and there was some capital seamanship displayed until the 'jockeying' became so fine that a collision ensued. The Secret's crosstrees went through the mainsail of the Cross, leaving a great rent in it, split up the foresail, and threw a quantity of water on board. Getting clear the two kept pretty well together, till they rounded the buoy near Stingaree Bay, when the Cross came on a wind and bade goodbye to her rival, increasing her distance between them rapidly, in beating to windward and rounding the red buoy, in following time.*

<i>Southern Cross</i>	<i>1h 57m</i>
<i>Secret</i>	<i>2h 09m</i>

*The race was at this point virtually won, for the Cross kept on increasing the distance till reaching the Stingaree buoy. Again there was a space of some miles between the boats. The second time they rounded the red buoy it was*

<i>Southern Cross</i>	<i>3h 07m</i>
<i>Secret</i>	<i>3h 24m</i>

*The Cross sailed over the course the third time, the Secret apparently giving up the race. Indeed to try her powers evenly with the Cross, the Secret went down and met her at Stingaree Bay, and for a few seconds the two boats sailing dead to windward, kept together. Presently*

*however, the Secret fell astern and lost ground every instant. The Cross rounded the red buoy at 4.15 winning the race in three hours and three-quarters. The Sunda gave up early in the race.*

*There was a large concourse of persons on the wharf, and on board the Sunda. When the race was concluded, and when the Cross came alongside, Jack Spilling was loudly cheered.*

*The Southern Cross is the property of Messrs. Heath and Jackson, and was built by Sinclair of Geelong, on lines improved by him."*

At the Annual General meeting of the Club, held on November 18, 1863, there were only four members in attendance, including the Vice-Commodore, Major Heath, who was in the chair. The only business of any note was that the Secretary was directed to call a Special General meeting to be held on the following Wednesday at 4 o'clock. This would seem to indicate that the affairs of the club were at low ebb which is further emphasised by the fact that this Special meeting was apparently never held, or, if it was it is not recorded.

Once again there were only four members present at meetings held on February 17 and 18, 1864 and there were only two entries, the Southern Cross and the Secret for a race to be sailed on February 19. But this race, the result of which is not recorded, was not a part of the Challenge Cup series and at a meeting on September 27, 1864 it was determined that the Club Cup would be sailed for only by yachts owned by members of the Geelong Yacht Club. This resolution obviously put "paid" to any chances which the Secret or the Mystery may have had of retaining the cup, for at this stage the Mystery, the Secret and the Southern Cross had each won one race of the series. One is inclined to wonder if the Secret had beaten the Southern Cross in the race sailed on February 19!

A further indication of the lack of interest in the Yacht Club was given at the October 1864 meeting when it was resolved that three members in lieu of 10 would form a quorum at future meetings. It is not revealed how the last three meetings, when only four members were present, had been conducted when the official quorum at that time was 10. It was also decided that the Challenge Cup to be sailed for on November 30 would be advertised in Bells Life in Victoria and the Geelong Advertiser.

This time the Cross's rival was the 12 1/2 ton Corio, a new boat built by Mr. Sinclair for a Mr. Balfour. The following Geelong Advertiser account, somewhat briefer than before, shows that the Cross won by four minutes.

#### **Geelong Advertiser – 1/12/1864**

*The Yacht match yesterday was the fourth occasion on which the cup offered by the Geelong Yacht Club five years ago was competed for. At the first competition the cup was won by the Mystery, on the second by the Secret, last year by the Southern Cross, and yesterday it was again won by the Cross, thereby entitling her owners to the prize. The rival of yesterday was the Corio, the new yacht recently launched by Mr. Sinclair from his building yard on the beach near the old custom house, and she is the property of Mr. Balfour, Messrs. Jackson and Heath being the owners of the Cross. The latter is about 7 1/2 tons, and the Corio about 12 1/2 tons, and consequently the Cross got an allowance of a trifle over two minutes in time. The owners of both boats were very sanguine of success; and the day promised an exciting contest, a fine spanking breeze blowing from the north and north-west. The course was three times round four buoys, laid down as follows:-*

*One off the wharf, one off Cowie's Creek, one at the far end of Stingaree Bay, and one a little beyond Limeburner's Point, a distance in all of something like thirty- four miles. The Corio was*

*sailed by Martin Stafford, and the Southern Cross by Alec Davidson. At about a quarter past twelve o'clock both boats started, the Corio getting a good lead just after getting away from the wharf, and as the wind was dead in their teeth to the first buoy off Cowie's Creek, the people from the shore, who felt sufficient interest in the race to come and look on, had a good chance of seeing them. They both stretched away close on the wind, towards the opposite shore on the Bay, when the Corio seemed to be still leading. She put about just here, while the Cross held on, close hauled, for about half a mile further and then tacked, and as she passed the Corio, who had gone about a second time, it was evident she had not only made up her first loss but had also got two or three hundred yards to windward of her opponent. The Cross rounded the first buoy in about thirty-five minutes after starting, and about two minutes and a quarter ahead of the Corio, and the friends of the latter made sure she would overhaul the Cross when she got the wind fair and was going free. But such was not the case, and the Southern Cross, first time round, was exactly 2 minutes 15 seconds ahead of the Corio. Each succeeding round was nearly an exact counter-part of the first. The second time round the fairway buoy the time stood as follows:-*

*Cross 3 hours, the Corio 3 hours and 8 minutes; and on coming in it was -the Cross 4 hours 27 minutes, the Corio 4 hours 31 minutes. It is worthy of remark that the Southern Cross has contended for this cup in every one of the four matches sailed, and that both she and the Corio were built in Geelong by Mr. Sinclair. When a boat or a horse loses a race there are numbers of people ready to say they knew it would be so, and to point out how a different result might have been achieved. Such was the case yesterday; some said the Corio was in bad trim, some that she was overmasted, and others that her sails did not set right. On these points we can offer no opinion."*

Thus the Southern Cross became the winner of the Cup and at a meeting of the Club on December 1, 1864, it was resolved that the Cup be handed over to Messrs. Heath and Jackson and inscribed as follows:

Geelong Yacht Club	
1859	
1861	1st MATCH WON BY MYSTERY
1862	2nd MATCH WON BY SECRET
1863	3rd MATCH WON BY SOUTHERN CROSS
1864	4th MATCH WON BY SOUTHERN CROSS

The last meeting held in 1864 was on December 16 and there is little record of sailing activity on Corio Bay for the next five years and certainly no record of any Yacht Club meetings or races. On January 28, 1869 a regatta was held in Geelong but in the Geelong Advertiser report of the following day no mention is made of any Yacht Club participation although Major Heath's Southern Cross and Mr. Balfour's Corio were both entries in the main event, the Yacht Race.

However, the reporter went to some length to criticise the business people of the town who, he contended, were largely responsible for the poor attendance. He commented, in part, as follows:

*"No doubt the attendance would have been very materially increased but for the apathy of the tradesmen, more especially the drapers. It is certainly to their interest to promote these sports, and make the town as lively as possible, but they do not seem to think so, or, if they do they do not show it. Not a single draper closed his establishment during the afternoon, and very few other trades-men recognised the holiday at all. Mr. W. T. Morris acted independent of his*

*brother drapers, and gave his assistants leave to close during the afternoon, but as all the others were remaining open, they considered it would be an injustice to their employer to leave business, and consequently did not avail themselves of the permission given. We mention this merely to show the other drapers that there is at least one man among them with spirit enough to act independently and trust that on future occasions some understanding will be arrived at."*

In the Yacht Race, the Sedulous, a 15 1/2 ton yacht from Melbourne was the only other competitor. Major Heath had problems at the start, as the following account of the race reveals:

"Yacht Race. First prize, £30; second prize £10. Four boats or no second prize. Three to be entered or not race.

Entrance fee, £2.

Mr. Balfour's Corio, 12 tons (Alf Holland)

Mr. Schofield's Sedulous, 15 1/2 tons (Shepherd)

Major Heath's Southern Cross, 7 tons (Owner) withdrawn.

All three boats came to the post, but at the start, which was a good one, the two large crafts got well off on even terms, while the Cross, which had the worse position, got foul of one of the anchor-buoys dropped by the boats in the fishermen's sailing race. This kept her back about a couple of minutes, and her owner called for a fresh start. The starter declined, and the Major then determined not to go on and entered a protest. The other two went off with a light breeze from the north east, which gave the Melbourne boat an advantage, as it is well known that the Corio does better in a heavier wind. However, when going up the eastern shore of the bay on the wind she gained materially on her opponent and also along the north shore. At the buoy in Stingaree Bay, off Point Henry, it was doubtful from the flagship which was ahead, but eventually turned out that the Corio was far to windward of the Sedulous, and as neither of them made the buoy on that tack but had to go about, the Geelong yacht, which was most skilfully handled all through by Holland, rounded first by about four minutes. The breeze by this time had become quite fresh, and the Corio was making splendid running, although the other boat kept well up to her. Gradually, however, the Sedulous fell astern notwithstanding that the Corio lost considerably owing to a squall which came up from the north-west just as she was between the flagship and the Yarra Street Pier. She, however, maintained a strong lead all through, the other boat being evidently unable to touch her, although sailed remarkably well by Shepherd, who lost no point in the race that seamanship would make for him. The start took place at 12.30 p.m., and the four rounds were completed as follows:

	<b>Corio</b>	<b>Sedulous</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Round	2h 18m 30s	2h 22m 00s
2 <sup>nd</sup> Round	3h 27m 30s	3h 44m 00s
3 <sup>rd</sup> Round	4h 52m 00s	5h 02m 40s
4 <sup>th</sup> Round	6h 14m 30s	6h 30m 00s

The Corio consequently won the race by 15% min., exclusive of the time allowed her on account of being of less tonnage than her opponent. Each boat was greeted with hearty cheers as she passed the flagship."

The next recorded meeting of the Yacht Club was held on July 16, 1869. This meeting was called by Major Heath who explained the objects of the meeting which were apparently to rejuvenate what would appear to have been a club which had reached a very low ebb. It was revealed that there was only four shillings and threepence (42 cents) in hand: Mr. Fred Pincott was elected Secretary and Mr.

Farrell elected Treasurer. Six new members were elected and after a vote of thanks was passed to Major Heath, the meeting was adjourned to July 23.

At this meeting the Treasurer reported that there was now £8.8.0 in hand, apparently after some of the subscriptions had been paid. Eight new members were elected including the Mayor, Dr. Reid and Messrs. Hitchcock and Belcher and a sub-committee was appointed to revise the rules.

At the August meeting the rules were approved, Capt. Nicholson was elected Commodore and Major Heath Vice Commodore. Nine new members were elected and the Secretary was directed to write a letter to his Excellency, the Governor of Victoria, requesting him to become a Patron of the Club. This invitation was, in due course, accepted.

At a meeting on November 3, 1869, at which only six members were in attendance, it was unanimously agreed that a letter be sent to all of those members who had not paid their subscriptions, requesting them to do so at once. And the Secretary was instructed to call an extraordinary meeting on the 10th inst. for the purpose of taking into consideration the desirability of fixing a time for the opening "Squadron of Evolution" and other matters connected therewith.

This meeting took place as scheduled with only seven members present. But no mention whatsoever was made of the proposed "Squadron of Evolution."

Accounts for £2.17.6 to Franks and 11/6 to the Geelong Advertiser were passed for payment and some discussion took place as to the desirability of supplementing the Regatta Club subscriptions from the Yacht Club funds.

Here the original minute book of the Regatta and the Geelong Yacht Club comes to an abrupt halt at page 133. But the book was by no means filled. Some 36 blank pages were still available for recording the minutes of any meetings which may have taken place. So, if there were further meetings, why were they NOT recorded?

It can only be concluded that the Geelong Yacht Club lapsed for at least the next decade; which is not surprising when one takes into consideration the obvious lack of enthusiasm clearly evident in 1869, and, in fact, for some five years before then.

Meetings were poorly attended, many members were unfinancial and the club had apparently no plans for a sailing programme for the season ahead. Also, it would seem, there was a paucity of suitable craft belonging to members of the club for active competition. The Eclipse is not mentioned in any contemporary reports and, according to one story, had gone to India. Major Heath had disposed of the Southern Cross which was destined to become an oyster boat, and had purchased a new boat, the Haidee from Sydney. The Haidee had been sailed round to Geelong and it is reported to have experienced very rough weather on the way and Capt. Balfour's Corio was still in the club.

And so we pass on to the next decade and trace, as accurately as possible, events in the sailing world on Corio Bay in that period, during which, it can only be concluded that the Geelong Yacht Club had 'gone to sleep'.



Town Challenge Cup.

Won by the Southern Cross in 1864