

Chapter 5

THE BIRTH OF OCEAN RACING IN AUSTRALIA

The Rudder Cup.

Until the early part of the twentieth century yacht racing in Victoria and, for that matter in other states, was confined to "round the buoys" affairs in comparatively confined waters, such as Port Phillip Bay, Sydney Harbour, the Derwent Estuary in Hobart and the Swan Estuary in Perth. However, plenty of yachts of varying sizes and rigs were engaged in ocean cruising, with some venturing as far as Hobart and the northern ports of Tasmania. There was a distinct difference between these craft and those engaged in bay racing. They were rigged and equipped for ocean work, with the emphasis on safety and seaworthiness, rather than the speed of the "skim dish" design, which was now making its appearance.

Things were much the same in the United States, until the editor of the American Yachting magazine, the Rudder, one Thomas Fleming Day, felt that a change was needed. Day was concerned that, in yacht racing circles, the wholesome sturdy cruising type of craft was being neglected. So, in 1904, Day began moves to establish Amateur Ocean Racing in the United States. One result of Day's efforts was the New York to Bermuda race for small cruisers, a distance of about 800 miles.

Day was a close friend of the Commodore of the Geelong Yacht Club, Mr. T.A. Dickson. Anxious to develop his theory in waters outside the sphere of the U.S., he wrote to Dickson and offered a trophy for an amateur ocean race to be sailed in local waters. Thus the long and successful history of ocean racing in Australia was germinated.

The hierarchy of yachting in Victoria were contacted by Dickson and the Geelong Yacht Club and agreed to a race for the Rudder Cup from Port Phillip Heads to Low Head near Launceston, a distance of 196 miles across the unpredictable waters of Bass Strait.

A Notice of Race was drawn up by the G.Y.C. and this, together with the conditions of the race and the rules read as follows:-

The Geelong Yacht Club's OCEAN RACE
Port Phillip Heads to Tamar Heads for
THE "RUDDER" CUP
Valued at Sixty Guineas
Presented by:
THOMAS FLEMING DAY, ESQ.,
of New York, U.S.A.
Starting Boxing Day, December 26, 1907.
From Port Phillip Heads. Finishing at Tamar Heads.
(Additional Particulars will be issued later).

PRIZES

First Prize -The "Rudder" Cup, value 60 Guineas, presented by Thomas Fleming Day, Esq.

Second Prize - £10.

Three Starters or no Race.

Five Starters or no 2nd Prize.

CONDITIONS

The race is open to cruising-sailing boats belonging to any organised yacht club in the Commonwealth, not measuring more than sixty feet over all. Any rig.

Boat to enter must be a bona-fide cruising vessel, having full deck, water-tight cockpit, and of substantial construction and rig. Yachts built to any special racing class, or that are used solely for racing, or yachts having bulb keel or metal fin which is not an integral portion of the hull, are barred.

Crew, Amateurs. Corinthian Helmsman. Yachts under 12 tons may carry two paid hands, over 12 tons three paid hands.

Boats must carry stores and water sufficient for eight days. Not less than one half- gallon per day per man of water to be carried. This may be carried in tanks or breakers at the captain's option.

All Yachts must carry a number, (which will be allotted to them) on a conspicuous part of mainsail.

Entries Close Friday, December 20th, with the Hon. Secretary, G.Y.C., and must be accompanied with Measurer's Certificate of overall length.

Entry Fee: One Guinea.

RULES

Unless otherwise specified in this notice the Rules of Geelong Yacht Club will apply.

Anchors, chain or hawsers, side-lights and complete cruising outfit must be on board, including two compasses, one for use in binnacle, and a small spare one in reserve; also a life-preserver or ring for each member of the crew.

Boats must carry or tow a dinghy of not less than 8 feet long, canvas and collapsible dinghies not allowed.

No restrictions as to light sails carried, but the lower canvas must be that used by the yacht when cruising.

Towing by rowing dinghy and rowing with sweeps in case of danger will be permitted .

The shifting of weight fore and aft to trim the vessel will be allowed, but no weight in the form of ballast or stores must be jettisoned except as a measure of safety.

Before starting the committee will inspect each yacht and decide as to its right to participate in the race. All entries are accepted conditional to this inspection.

Before starting the captain of yacht must satisfy the committee that he has on board charts, compasses, lead-line, lights and proper sailing directions, also a log-book which must be kept with hourly entries and handed in at completion of race. The committee reserves the right to postpone this race should they consider weather conditions unfavourable.

The committee reserves the right to refuse the entry of any boat that they do not consider a bona-fide cruising craft, or that is in their judgment unseaworthy or otherwise unfit to make the race. As the spirit of this race is to encourage genuine cruisers. Cup defenders and acknowledged racers are barred.

Measurement for computing allowance will be the length of the boat over all, i.e., the length on deck from the fore-side of the stem to the after-side of the stem-board or transom. Fractions of six-inches to count as a half foot. Allowance per foot is 22 1/2 minutes. No allowance for difference of rig.

Entry blanks may be had by applying to Walter Wiggs, Hon. Secretary Geelong Yacht Club, or the Hon. Secretaries of Tamar Yacht Club, Launceston, and the Derwent Yacht Club, Hobart.

PROTESTS

Verbal notice of protest must be made to the Acting Committee, or the Officer in Charge, 1 hour after finishing, and be followed in 3 hours by a written statement signed by owner or representative, of the facts on which the protest is based addressed to:-.

THE COMMITTEE,

Geelong Yacht Club,

Club House,

Eastern Beach, Geelong."

The Queenscliff area, just inside the notorious Rip, which constitutes Port Phillip Heads, was chosen so that race officials could arrange the timing of the start to coincide with slack water. This procedure is still followed for the start of the Queenscliff to Devonport race, (as the original Rudder Cup became), the West Coaster to Hobart and other shorter races to Apollo Bay, Portland and King Island.

It will be noted that the conditions of the race called for a crew of amateurs and "Corinthian Helmsmen", with some allowance for paid hands for the larger craft. The Oxford Dictionary describes a Corinthian, among other things as "a man of fashion and pleasure" and one cannot help but speculate as to how some of our yachtsmen of today would fit into that description! The emphasis on amateurism fitted in with Thomas Day's objective, which was to sharpen the skills of amateur yachtsmen in open waters where, until that time, the tendency was, when venturing out into the ocean, to use a professional crew and make the amateur yachtsmen "cabin passengers".

The amateurs would, as well, have to develop their navigational skills whereas, here to, they had largely relied on professional advice. The race attracted four entries two of which were from the Geelong Yacht Club. These were: Mr. E. Newland's Thistle and Mr. T. A. Dickson's Shamrock. The other two were Mr. Murphy's Rambler, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria and Messrs. Poole and Cobb's Ellida, St. Kilda Yacht Club.

The Thistle, previously raced in Geelong over a number of years by Mr. Charles Shannon, and recently purchased by Mr. Newlands, was the oldest boat in the race. Built in Sydney in 1889, the Thistle was 48 feet 6 inches overall 37 feet 6 inches on the waterline, had a beam of 11 feet 3 inches and drew six feet. With an eight and a half ton keel she also had half a ton of moveable ballast inside for trimming. Under the rules the inside ballast could be moved during the race if desired. Yawl rigged, she was well known as a powerful, hard weather cruiser. With plenty of gear and stores for cruising comfort, there was stillroom on board for the owner's wife, his daughter, Minnie, nineteen and his son, Felix, seven, as well as captain and crew. Despite her age, the Thistle with her proven sea-going qualities, proved to be the eventual winner.

Newest boat entered was the Shamrock, which Mr. Dickson had had built to an American design published in Day's magazine, the "Rudder" and, not surprisingly, she was equipped with a Yankee yawl rig. This placed the main-mast well forward, allowing her to carry a single big headsail, considered to be much handier than the pair of headsails demanded by, in those times, the conventional cutter rig. Some critics considered that the placing of the main-mast so far forward might "drive her under" but this was solidly refuted by her subsequent performance. Launched only a few weeks before the race, much interest cantered in the newcomer. Thirty-eight feet, six inches overall, 31 feet on the waterline, with a twelve foot beam the Shamrock drew four feet with her external keel. Although originally designed as centre boarder, Mr. Dickson had ordered the external keel solely for cabin room considerations. The Shamrock's lines were similar to the larger Sea Bird design which had proven ocean going qualities.

The largest yacht in the field, the Rambler, then only a couple of years old was heavily built for ocean cruising. Fifty-one feet overall, she had a straight stem from which protruded a long bow-sprit. She

had a wholesome beam of thirteen feet and drew five feet, five inches. Because of her great length, under the rules, the Rambler was the scratch boat.

Smallest entry was the amateur designed and built Ellida. Thirty eight feet overall, thirty two feet on the waterline, the Ellida had a comparatively narrow eight foot beam and a generous seven foot draft. Well known as a hard weather boat, she had already been to Tasmania and had visited Hobart.

Christmas Eve, 1907, saw many yachts, including the four competitors, heading for Queenscliff for the start of this historic event. At sunset on Christmas Day, the wind freshened and, with the barometer dropping sharply, dawn on Boxing Day was greeted with a strong northerly blowing. The pundits tipped a southerly change, but this did not eventuate until the yachts were well out into Bass Strait. But, when it did come, it came in with a "bang"; first from the west, then to the south and finally to finish as a "black south-easter". According to seamen, the weather was the worst experienced in Bass Strait for twenty years.

Shortly before 6 a.m. the race officials, together with a small group of enthusiasts and early rising seaside visitors, assembled on the end of the Queenscliff pier to see the yachts on their way. The race officials were - Messrs. H.P. Douglass', W. & E. Curnow, E. Brockman, V. Nosedá and W. Smith, all from the Geelong Yacht Club.

By courtesy of the Commandant of the Queenscliff fort, the prep guns were fired from the fort at 5.45 a.m. and 5.55 a.m. But the second gun had started a grass fire, which the gun crew became embroiled in quelling, causing the starting gun to be 2 1/2 minutes late. The race was, therefore started by signal from the pier. Shamrock won the start, crossing the line 1 1/2 minutes past the hour, to the loud cheers of the assembly on the pier. The Ellida and the Rambler crossed shortly afterwards. But in the confusion caused by the non-firing of the gun on time, the Thistle was late in getting away and started about 12 minutes late, and then with only half of her sails set. However this was soon rectified, and in the fresh northerly she was soon bowling along, hugging the Point Lonsdale side of the entrance, whilst the Rambler set a more southerly course. The Shamrock and the Ellida bore away in a more south easterly direction.

The yachts cleared the Heads in the following order; Shamrock. 6.23 a.m., Ellida, 6.25 a.m., Rambler, 6.27 a.m., Thistle 6.30a.m. Once clear of the Heads and after about 10 miles, the Rambler was reported to be ahead of the Thistle and both well ahead of the other two, who had sailed a more easterly course towards Cape Schanck. Little did the yachtsmen realise what a torrid time was ahead of them. But it would be appropriate and, no doubt, the most effective way to piece the progress of the race together, to quote from the logs of the competing yachts, then, to look at the race in retrospect through the eyes of the competitors.

Thistle



Thistle

THE CREW

E. Newlands, (Owner)
V. Riggings
W. S. Dagg
Dick Edwards
Alf Farnel

Capt. Brennan, (Navigator)
Mrs. Newlands
Miss Newland s
Felix Newlands, (Cabin boy)
W.L. Baker

LOG

"Christmas Eve: -all aboard by 6.30 p.m. ready to start for Queenscliff, being delayed several hours, having to wait for one of the crew. A few lengths away was our rival, the Rambler, busy as ourselves during the afternoon getting luggage and stores on board in time to cruise down the bay the same evening. As time was getting on, it was thought that supper would not be a bad idea, so the cook, known as 'Son', managed to light the stove, during which time the late comer arrived. Not waiting to yam over the coffee, things were bustled away and the moorings cast off.

Left Williamstown on Tuesday at 10 p.m., with light southerly, stood over to Red Bluff on starboard tack, when we saw ahead one of our competitors, the Rambler, and thought this would be a good opportunity of testing speed against her. On going about to make our course to the Cliff, we found that Thistle held a much better wind, and soon left Rambler astern. The night was fine for sailing, the moon rising about 11 o'clock. We soon sighted and passed the West Channel pile light. As we progressed, the wind hauled to the East and freshened, giving us a lead right down to Swan Bay, where we anchored outside the channel at 2.15 a.m. for the night with intention of going on to the Cliff next day.

Christmas Day: -At daylight, with a light breeze, sailed into Swan Bay harbour. After breakfast we went ashore to see our old friends the officers in charge of the Boys' Naval Brigade, who have always treated us so well, that something must be amiss if we did not call at Swan Bay at Christmas time to see the boys. Once a year they have ten days in camp, being taught discipline and the various duties that are found in the daily life of a sailor.

One of the conditions of the race being to report at Queenscliff this day for inspection, we had lunch, and made a start with ebb tide, but very little wind. As we were clearing the last pile in the Channel the wind dropped, and tide set us on to the edge of the bank, where we stuck fast for an hour. The Mayflower passed us but eventually had to drop anchor to avoid grounding. The day was very hot with light air. By 5 o'clock we anchored at Queenscliff, the Rambler arriving a few minutes before under power.

We found a great number of yachts had come down to see the start of the great race, so much talked over during last two months. Shamrock had passed us while at Swan Bay, and got to the Cliff early. We were anxious to see the new boat, the last time being on the stocks before launching. The design being a new one here, it gave the critics something to talk about. However, tomorrow would decide a good deal. The Rambler being an untried boat, also the largest, was considered a favourite by some. The Ellida is a well-known battler, and looking at it from a broad view, we considered there was very little between us, and that it would be a matter of judgement as to how we should get there in the fastest time.

As it was necessary for us to be up early next morning, we turned in at a reasonable hour, with some doubt as to the weather, a strong Northerly blowing, with glass low.

Thursday, 27th December - Turned out at 4.30 a.m. All on board alive with excitement to get started for the big race, being the first of its kind in these waters. Breakfast was the first important item, orders being given by the cook to take as much inside as possible, no knowing when the next hot meal would be served. Needless to say the crew took the hint.

A strong northerly wind was blowing, and not wishing to set main-sail too long before preparatory gun, were waiting anxiously for the report, and thought it strange that the guns were not punctual. To our surprise we found the other boats had started, we having not heard any gun.

We lost no time in getting under way, some 12minutes late, which was rather disappointing, the general opinion being that we would have nothing to spare with our handicap.

With barometer at 29.70 we looked for a change. However, we started with the intention of doing our best. Passing the pier, which was crowded with visitors and yachtsmen, who sent us away with hearty cheers. We set jib-headed topsail, jib topsail and balloon foresail while under way. The Shamrock was a long way ahead, with Ellida close, and Rambler following, all to the Eastward. We kept more to the Westward, and when near the Lonsdale Reef jibed to get on the other tack. The Rambler then stood over more to the Westward, while Shamrock and Ellida took the usual steamer course as far as the Schanck. By 7.15 a.m. we had overhauled Shamrock, also Ellida, who was to windward of the latter boat.

The boys felt somewhat thirsty after the bustle of getting under way and setting sails; the pot of coffee that was left hurriedly at breakfast was brought on deck and served out, and soon cleared. The cook's mate was below making up a hamper for use during the day.

Steering S.E. by S., with wind abeam, and sailing at a good pace, by 8.15 a.m. we were abreast of Cape Schanck, the log showing 8Yz knots for the hour. This was so far encouraging, our intentions being to make up all we could while wind was fair.

8.48 a.m.	Wind hauled round N.N.W., took in jib topsail and mizzen, and set balloon foresail as spinnaker
9.00 a.m.	Going strong, all sail drawing
9.18 a.m.	Passed the S.S. Oonah; hoisted yacht's code
9.40 a.m.	23 knots out. Hove the log.
11.00 a.m.	Log registered 11 1/2 knots, making 34 1/2 knots
11.35 a.m.	Set jib-headed mizzen
12.00 noon	42 1/2% knots.
1.00 p.m.	50 1/2 knots. Weather getting dull to westward. We had cold lunch. Other boats out of sight
2.30 p.m.	Shift of wind to E.
3.00 p.m.	65 knots.
3.10 p.m.	Spinnaker and topsail off
3.40 p.m.	Double-reefed mainsail. Very threatening, heavy swell, wind N.N.E.
4.00 p.m.	70 3/4 knots. Wind light
4.20 p.m.	Shook out reef and set large spinnaker
4.20 p.m.	Afternoon tea; the Skipper having first cup, tasted it, but said nothing and waited for the fun. The others, who drank also, looked round, until a burst of laughter settled it. The cook would have come in for a rough handling if it was not that an important race was being sailed, and not time for pranks. It was the found that the tea had been made with salt water, the cook getting e credit for his joke, which he denied. However, to get the crew in good humour again, fresh tea was made, and we were all good friends once more.
5.00 p.m.	76 1/4 knots. Looking dark in the West. Glass falling, 29.64.
5.05 p.m.	Took in spinnaker and topsail. Change still brewing. Shortly after a fresh breeze from West
6.00 p.m.	83 1/4 knots

7.00 p.m.	90 3/4 knots. Wind light. Took advantage of weather to get our tea.
8.00 p.m.	94 1/4 knots
9.00 p.m.	Raining. Hardly steerage way
10.00 p.m.	98 1/2 knots
11.00 p.m.	104 knots
Friday	
12.15 a.m.	112 knots. Wind strong S.W. Close reefed mainsail; furled mizzen
1.00 a.m.	116 1/2 knots
2.00 a.m.	123 knots
3.00 a.m.	130 3/4 knots. Yacht sailing well, taking over very little water
4.00 a.m.	136 3/4 knots. Wind dropped. Table Cape light on weather bow, which can be seen in clear weather 29 miles off; a very welcome sign. We then knew that our steering was close to our mark.
5.00 a.m.	143 knots. Set mizzen and shook out reef and changed jib.
6.00 a.m.	150 1/2 knots
7.00 a.m.	156 1/2 knots. Hot coffee for all hands; very much appreciated.
8.00 a.m.	163 knots, Wind light. Cook turned out and made a hot stew, which soon disappeared
9.00 a.m.	170 1/4 knots. Showery. Headlands very indistinct. Wind S.S.W.
10.00 a.m.	177 1/2 knots. The cook, although not feeling well managed to get a hot breakfast ready for us, which was enjoyed by all; the pure ozone being a great appetiser
11.00 a.m. -	184 knots. Light breeze. Set large spinnaker.
12.00 noon	189 3/4 knots. Sighted sail to North. Not quite clear if Rambler misty.
1.00 p.m.	194 1/2 knots. Weather thick, raining. Land difficult to make out.
1.30 p.m.	Wind lightened and hauled to S.W. Spinnaker off.
2.00 p.m.	197 1/2 knots. Still raining. Prepared cold lunch
3.00 p.m.	202 1/2 knots. Off Point Sorell
4.00 p.m.	206 1/2 knots. Badger Head abeam. Wind freshening. Jackyarder off. Barometer 29.40
4.25 p.m.	Blowing hard. Double reefed mainsail
5.00 p.m.	214 3/4 knots
5.15 p.m.	Crossed line between Hebe Reef Buoy and Lighthouse. Blowing a gale; blinding rain and very cold. After beating up entrance against ebb tide, anchored at Lagoon Bay.
6.00 p.m. -	Pilot Evans came alongside and informed us that the other boats had not arrived and no sign of them. With wind in same quarter no hope of them getting in that night.

Needless to say we were glad to have arrived safe and sound without any accident, and winner of the first ocean race; also the fact that two ladies had faced the trip across, and proved themselves good sailors.

The rain and mist continued all night; it was hopeless to go ashore till next day, so we made ourselves comfortable for the night. The cook and stewardess prepared a good hot meal, during which the race was discussed in many ways, with sympathetic thoughts for the boats that had not arrived, as it was likely they would have a worse time than we had. After washing up, it was time to retire, when there was no difficulty in getting off to sleep after the excitement of the previous 35 hours.

Saturday: -All up early. No sign of other boats. After breakfast, went ashore for a couple of hours to see the small township near the lighthouse. As we were anxious to see all the sights in our limited time, we took advantage of the kind offer of the Tamar Yacht Club, who provided a pilot to take us up the river to Launceston. At 12.30, with all sail set and free, we left Lagoon Bay with Pilot Evans, who escorted us to Georgetown to pick up Mr. Poultney, who then took charge. The day was misty and raining most of the time. Nevertheless we could see that it was a beautiful river, with its reaches and coves, which must be a boon to the local yachtsmen. Towards evening the wind lightened so much that about a mile from Launceston it was suggested that the dinghy be launched and tow, when a Good Samaritan in a launch came alongside and towed us into an anchorage. The city is surrounded by high hills, and the lights at night look like planets in the sky.

Sunday: -Rose early to get sails dried, which were soaking wet with so much rain. The local rowing club sheds were put at our disposal, being close to our moorings. We soon had sails ashore, and with the bright sun they were soon dry. The yachts are all moored in a snug little spot at the foot of the Cataract Gorge, one of the beautiful sights of Tasmania. The local boats are much smaller than ours, 28 feet being the limit, owing to the high rise and fall of tide (10 feet).

From early morning the yacht was the centre of attraction, being visited by a great number of residents and yachtsmen; something like what you read about, where the arrival of a strange vessel being surrounded by canoes wishing us compliments instead of goods. We were presented with flowers and thistles, as a token of interest in and pleasure at our success. The afternoon was spent in visiting the Gorge and grounds close by, which have been laid out in a most beautiful manner, and is one of the principal of attractions Launceston.

A report was received that Rambler had arrived Saturday night at 6 p.m., and later Shamrock had put in an appearance at 3.30 a.m. Sunday, but no sign of Ellida."

The Shamrock



Shamrock.

The Crew:

J. R. McPherson, (Captain and Navigator)

T. A. Dickson, (Owner and Mate)

Victor Wiggs

Walter Wiggs

W. E. Dickson

Log

"Leaving Geelong at 1 a.m. Christmas morning, 1907, for Queenscliff, to take part in the big Ocean Race, which is the first of the kind ever undertaken here, we all felt that we were starting out History making, and as things have turned out later, we believe we have been making a name for ourselves. Our crew were all pure amateurs. We got away about 10 minutes before our good friends in the Caress, who were making for the Cliff also; as nearly every yacht in Port Phillip Bay was bound for the same port, but many had made a much earlier start. We had a nice S.E. breeze, which was in our favour as far as the Hopetoun Channel, but meant a close haul; and we were at it all night. When daylight came Caress was about a mile ahead of us, and Portarlinton abeam. Several of the G.Y.C. boats had put in the night before, but we had to beat on, as the rule said that all competing yachts in the race must be at Queenscliff, for inspection, by the Committee on Christmas Day. Caress (our mate) had to stand a long way out, around George Bank Buoy, but we, being of easier draught, kept along the shore, arriving at the Cliff an hour before our good friends. When breakfast was on, we passed Thistle and Rambler, both lying in Swan Bay, where they had put in during the earlier hours of the morning, and Ellida was already at the Cliff; they all having sailed down from Melbourne, accompanied by a great number of other boats. They all reported a fresh Easterly wind during the night, and several had to tuck away three reefs: this with a falling glass is not looking too good for our race on the morrow.

Christmas Day at Queenscliff -Arrived here 9 a.m., wind had now died quite out, and sweltering hot. Our new ship "Shamrock", on the lines of the Big Sea Bird, is coming in for a good deal of criticism at the hands of all the local boating men and the fishermen. Some who have an eye for a good wholesome sea-going ship are delighted, and are warm in their expressions, but others who judge a yacht by her long beautiful overhangs and graceful spars, think she will arrive at Tamar Heads when her competitors are thinking of returning home; but we who made the trip and faced the 'music' were thankful that we had not gone to sea in one of those 'real pictures' as they are often called. The heat all day has been most trying, and Thistle and Rambler did not arrive in until late in the afternoon, when a dozen or more yachts also arrived from the various clubs around Port Phillip Bay. Amongst the Burgees I see Brighton, St. Kilda, Port Melbourne, Robson's Bay and Geelong, and with one exception not a Royal Burgee amongst the lot. This, to me, seems a poor spirit from the senior club of Victoria, but, however, this is not a social event but its bigger game we're after.

Just as the Committee of the G.Y.C. have completed their inspection, a heavy thunder storm burst over us, followed by a strong north wind. This is somewhat unusual, as our northerlies always come up in the morning or early day. After tea and a crowd of visitors, we turned in, with great expectations for the morrow; as we will have to make an early start getting things ready. Wind during the night a strong Northerley.

Boxing Day, 26th December, 1907 -Up at 3.45 a.m. Breakfast served. Two solid hours' work getting everything secure; one reef in mizzen, 2nd jib, and full mainsail. Bar. 29.85. Fresh Northerly. First Gun, 5.45, set watch; start to run down for line, which I judge we will cross about 10 seconds after starting gun. Ellida is also under weigh, but Thistle and Rambler are just hauling sails. A photo man in a motor boat is running us very close, but I know what he is after, and have no time to waste on him. A hundred feet off the line and gun has not gone, 50 and no sign of the gun. We run along the line for half a minute or so when Committee on pier

wave us to go on; and the air rings with three hearty good cheers, as we cross, still no gun. Ellida crosses next, still no gun, then 2 minutes late off goes the big gun from the fort. We afterwards learnt that the second gun had set fire to a quantity of grass, and the men were occupied in putting out the fire, which threatened to burn the place down. We were now bowling along at a big bat, and holding our lead from Ellida, although she was carrying a topsail and no reefs down. Thistle, a mass of canvas, was keeping along the Point Lonsdale shore, now jibed over and headed to clear the Corsair Rock, on which the famous P. and O. co.'s Australia ran a few years ago. Rambler was heading due south. Cleared Point Nepean and now our log starts. Through the Rip none of the crew sick - they think a wonderful feat -but the famous Rip was in one of its quiet moods that day.

6.30 a.m.	Wind N.Bar.29.79 on our course. S.40E.or S.E. ½ S. Tamar Heads 196 miles
7.21 a.m.	Thistle passed us carrying every stitch of canvas and looking a beauty. I got a snap of her, but she will appear small, as she was somewhat to the South of us.
8.00 a.m.	Conditions same, except for the loss of a beautiful steak, which we deemed advisable to pass overboard; evidently the thundery weather had affected it.
8.40 a.m.	Passed Cape Schanck. Log foul with kelp, but we know our distance, which is 17 miles correct. Ellida has got her topsail and staysail off, and has dropped about half a mile astern.
9.00 a.m.	Double reefed mainsail, stowed mizzen; two of crew sick. Ellida reefing and keeping much closer in under the land. Wind very fresh off the Schanck.
10.00 a.m.	Can just make Ellida out with reefed mainsail running away to Eastward. We are wondering if she is going into Western Port. Thistle almost out of sight, away much more to the Southward. We are still keeping on the true course.
11.00 a.m.	Conditions same. No other Yachts in sight. Big following sea.
12.00 noon	Conditions same.
1.00 p.m.	Log 50 miles. Bar. 29.69.
2.00 p.m.	Conditions same, only wind lighter.
3.00 p.m.	Log 62 miles.
4.00 p.m.	Wind North, freshening again. Sky very overcast. Double reefed mainsail and second jib. Yacht running beautifully and steering easily with big following sea. Course. S.E. x half S. Afternoon tea served. Spirits of the crew good, but the majority have stopped singing sea songs and got very quiet.
5.00 p.m.	Conditions much the same. Wind fresh. We have not sighted anything since leaving the other yachts and the Schanck. Big cross swell travelling from N.E.
6.00 p.m.	Life lines rigged. Experienced mariner sick. Sky very overcast; expect thunderstorm. Bar.29.59
6.10 p.m.	Heavy shift to W. and S. W. Mainsail stowed. Set second jib and reefed mizzen. Heavy rain. Bar. 29.63.
7.00 p.m.	Raining heavily. Wind lighter. Set second jib, three reefed mainsail, and one reef mizzen. Bar.29.67. Wind W.
7.40 p.m.	Log 89 1/4 miles. Wind gone down. Still raining.
10.00 p.m.	Wind S.W., fresh.

11.30 p.m.	Log 104 3/4 miles. Hove to. Head S. by W. Yacht riding well. One of the crew says hit on head with block when heaving to, but I cannot find much of a lump or bruise. Sighted steamer about a mile to weather. Supposed 'Loongana,' which corresponds with our position.
Friday, 27th	
4.00 a.m.	Under weigh again. Close hauled with three reefs in mainsail, one in mizzen and second jib -this we know means we are quite out of the race, as we cannot be anything like up to our course. Log 115 3/4. I; estimate 10 miles for leeway.
8.00 a.m.	Raining heavily all the morning. Should have a couple of reefs out of mainsail, but with exception of Captain and Mate our crew are very much knocked up - all asleep just now except the two already mentioned. However, I will say when the call comes they always turn out willingly.
9.00 a.m.	Shook out one reef
10.30 a.m.	Log 139. Sea very rough. Close hauled. Raining hard.
12.00 noon	Log 148. Raining hard. Sea rough, blowing heavy S.W. Working under reefed mizzen and small jib. Mainsail stowed.
1&2 p.m.	Conditions same.
3.00 p.m.	Blowing hard, S. W. Changed to trysail; reefed mizzen and small jib.
4.00 p.m.	Log 169 ¾
5.00 p.m.	Log 177 ¾. Heavy rain. Wind hauling round Southerly.
6.00 p.m.	Wind very fresh. Reefed trysail. Bar. 29.65
7.30 p.m.	Log 189. Hove to under double reefed trysail and spitfire jib. Things are far from comfortable and none of us are too keen on ocean racing just now, but our noble little ship is doing well, and is riding over everything. Sidelights won't burn, riding light at cabin door. All hands below. Tiller lashed down. S. E. gale all night.
Saturday 28th	
4.00 a.m.	Under weigh again. Reefed trysail, second reef mizzen, and second jib. Steering W. by S. On examining Chart for position, we find we were about 10 to 15 miles off Low Head light, bearing S.W. last night.
11.00 a.m.	Experienced mariner still below; won't take anything or say anything. Shook him up and gave him some rum and water. Says he must have an attack of Rheumatic Fever, but I find his temperature and pulse right.
12.00 noon -	No land in sight yet. We find we were about 10 to 15 miles off Low Head Light when we met that S. Easter last night, and think we were blown off shore about 20 or 25 miles, making us somewhere about 40 miles off this morning. Little wind today, but big roll, which spoiled our sailing well. Have not seen the sun or land since soon after leaving Cape Schanck. Just rain and wind all the time, and plenty of both.

2.45 p.m.	Land sighted by Boson on starboard bow - first time since leaving. We have a light breeze from W., and sea has gone down, and things are looking much better. We won't mind one bit our grilling last night if we only get a good safe quiet little nook like Georgetown to drop our anchor in this evening. I feel inclined to put full mainsail on, but our Captain, who has been below for some time, has been watching the glass, which has dropped to 29.25, says something is coming. Our spirits are good, but when we look at the glass. Oh MY!
3.00 p.m.	Cook has got our little shipmate stove going, and has a pan full of bacon and eggs under way. The smell is most encouraging. Poor old mariner still seems bad. Just had our first glimpse of sunlight since leaving Cape Schanck, but there are some very suspicious looking big clouds about which may mean further rain. It surely can't blow any more.
4.30 p.m.	Had a real good meal, and I am pleased with our shipmate stove; warm plates and warm food. Getting our clothes dry our galley looks like a miniature laundry now but all this come in at the right time when you are cold, wet and hungry.
5.55 p.m.	Log 273. Coast about eight miles distant. Glass 29.10. Whatever can this mean?
6.30 p.m.	<p>First of heavy Westerly coming. We cannot exactly locate our position, but conclude we are about 10 or 12 miles to Westward of Low Head, and about eight miles off shore. Taken in mizzen, shifted to spitfire jib, and reefed trysail; hove to heading North. It is impossible for me to describe what a bad time we had when we could carry nothing but third jib abaft the mast. At about 9 p.m. we decided to swamp our dinghy and lie to it, as a sea anchor, which proved very effectual. We had been using a small sea anchor before, but it was not large enough to hold us head to wind. After hours of this kind of thing, I picked up the Low Head Light, and the flash being very indistinct we at first thought it was the Mersey Light, it being fixed. However, when we got the leading lights it did not take us long to settle where we were, and a little later, when we were running for them, we heard the Bell Buoy, which soon removed any doubts. We crossed in at 3.30 a.m. Sunday, but as we had not enough sail on at the time, and the tide seemed to be setting us towards the lighthouse, we stood out again and got the reefed mainsail on and worked in at 4.30 a.m. The gale having almost died out at least down to an ordinary sailing breeze; but the size of the sea was something appalling. Getting inside, our Log read 292 ¼ miles. We passed Rambler anchored in Kelso Bay, and apparently they had not been long in, as her sails and gear were not squared up; they were evidently also all asleep. Arriving at Georgetown, we were in the hands of kind friends, who looked after us in the kindest manner possible.</p> <p>Resting all day Sunday, we left Shamrock at Georgetown on the Monday morning, and went up the Tamar River by S. S. Niree for Launceston, where we were lionised and entertained most royally.</p>

THE SONG OF THE OUTWARD BOUND

How cheer ye, fore and aft, my lads?

How cheer ye, fore and aft?

We've got a fearless skipper and you've got a speedy craft;

With the wind to do your bidding heave off to sea again;

Blow high or low,

it's out you go,

to cruise upon the main."

The Rambler



Rambler

The Crew:

Mr. Murphy, (Owner)
Mrs. Murphy
C. Daly
L. Bennett
C. Hack
W. Armstrong
H. S. Scales
Capt. W. Tait, (Navigator)
A. Fourcoux, (Mate)

LOG

The Rambler is quite a new boat, having been recently built by her owner, Mr. Murphy , purely for cruising, and is fitted with auxiliary power. She is a very comfortable cruiser, her dimensions being 51 feet overall, with straight stem and short counter, 13 feet beam and 6 feet 6 inches draught. She is rigged as a ketch, and all her gear is heavy and essentially for cruising. The Rambler proved herself a wonderful sea boat, and demonstrated the fact that she would be safe in all weathers.

The Rambler arrived at Queenscliff during the afternoon of Christmas Day, under power, there being no wind, and a strong flow of tide. The Racing Committee came on board and made an official inspection, also sealed down the engine.

Thursday, Boxing Day, 26th December -A heavy northerly blew throughout the night, and our glass began to fall steadily, reading 29.72 at 4.30 a.m. It was not considered likely that one with any knowledge of weather conditions would start a race across the straits, so no preparations were made; breakfast had to be served while under weigh. At 5.45 the preparatory gun was fired at the fort, and it was then found that the Committee had decided in its wisdom to send the boats out, and the crew realised that they were in for a rough trip - which was subsequently fully justified. Sail was immediately hoisted, and the anchor weighed with all lower sails set. The boat stood out on the port tack to the N.E., and put about just as the five minutes gun went, and then stood down to the starting line. We were several hundred yards to windward when the starting gun boomed out, and the Shamrock crossed first, followed closely by the Ellida, and then the Rambler, with the owner (Mr. Murphy) at the helm, while the Thistle brought up the rear. A course was set straight out through the Heads, and the Rambler was headed S. by E., half E., to fetch Rocky Cape, the other boats steering rather more to the Eastward. Set the topsail and got the square sail ready, which was hoisted at 7 a.m. The wind blowing very fresh from the north, very hazy weather, and we soon lost sight of the other three boats. We anticipated that the change would shortly come from the West, as the Northerly had been blowing for over 10hours, and thus leave us well up to windward, but it held off until late in the afternoon.

8.00a.m.	Watch changed, Hack taking the helm from Bennett; wind still fresh from North; carrying all canvas.
10.00 a.m.	Log 35 miles, bar. 29.65, falling. Sea rising as we got further out from the shelter of the land.
12.00 noon.	Watch changed, Daly taking the helm from Armstrong; wind still from North; glass still falling. Large school of porpoises playing round the boat, and several attempts were made to secure snap-shots. At this time, though some 60 miles off shore, a piece of thistle down blew past, which was taken as an omen that the Thistle would win the race.
2.00 p.m.	Very black in the West; wind shifting to N.W. Topsail stowed. Shortly after the Thistle was seen about a mile and half ahead on the port bow.
3.00 p.m.	Wind N. W. Log 70miles. Two reefs in main sail, followed shortly after by one in the mizzen.
4.00 p.m.	Watch changed, Armstrong taking helm from Mr. Murphy. Barometer still falling. Very black in the West. Wind very light.
5.00 p.m.	Heavy squall from West. Stowed squares ail, then mizzen and staysail, and eased peak of mainsail.
6.00 p.m.	Dog watch. Fresh from the West. Carrying full mizzen, second reef mainsail, staysail and jib.
11.00 p.m.	Heavy rain squalls from W. by S. Lowered mizzen.

12.00 p.m.	Watch changed. Blowing hard from West. Thick with rain squalls, carry on with double reefed mainsail and jib; as it lightened hoisted mizzen and staysail.
Friday	
2.00 a.m.	Wind freshening still from West, with continued rain (now sleet).
4.00 a.m.	Watch changed. Barometer 29.58. wind fresh from West; monotonously raining; dry socks at a premium.
6.00 a.m.	Wind dropping. Sighted Rocky Cape Reefs shaken out and staysail set
8.00 a.m.	Watch changed. Wind light. Course changed to S. E.; log 158
10.00 a.m.	Wind very light - doldrums. Set squaresail; course E. S. E.; raining steadily. Sight boat in shore, presumed to be Thistle with jackyarder topsail set, apparently doing fairly well with wind off shore.
12.00 noon	Watch changed. Off Devonport.
2.00 p.m.	Good dinner of hot curry just despatched; spirits all high, which even the rain cannot dampen, in expectancy of reaching Tamar Heads before nightfall. Wind fair from S. W., though light.
4.00 p.m.	Watch changed. Sharp southerly squall. Topsail and jib stowed, and main and mizzen reefed; spitfire jib set; barometer 29.50.
6.00 p.m.	Off Badger Head: Low Head in sight; log 193miles. Phonograph giving selections below - "Sailor beware, Sailor, Take Care!"
7.00 p.m.	Wind freshening strongly from the S. E. On lookout for Hebe Buoy. Within two miles of Low Head light-house when gale from S. S. E. with strong ebb tide came straight out of Heads and had to heave to under reefed mizzen.
9.00 p.m.	Being hove-to on the starboard tack drifting somewhat to the N. N. E., Hoist the head of the staysail, wore ship, and get several seas over the bows in the process. Gale continued throughout the night one man on watch to look out for passing craft. Water tanks in sail locker breaking adrift, make a difficult job getting them fast again, causing the ship's carpenter (Armstrong) some heavy work.
Saturday	
1.00 a.m.	S. E. gale still raging big seas running, being lit up with phosphorescent breakers, making a beautiful effect, though hardly to be appreciated in the bitterly cold rain and sleet. Barometer 29.40
6.00 a.m.	S. E. gale still blowing. Loongana passed inward, making heavy weather of it.
8.00 a.m.	Still blowing hard, and raining heavily.
10.00 a.m.	Wind eased considerably and veering to West.
12.00 noon	Watch changed. Ascertained that we could make S.E. Hoisted staysail. Wore ship and set course.
2.00 p.m.	Wind light, still raining. Badger Head in sight. Barometer now 29.15
4.00 p.m.	Low Head in sight once more. Wind very light. Very black all round, particularly in N. W. Barometer 29.05. There being a certainty of very dirty night and not sufficient wind to get us to the Heads before sundown, and knowing that the Thistle must certainly be in, it was decided to break the seal of the engine and go in under power.
5.00 p.m.	Engine started, all lower sails and topsail and square sail hoisted to try and get in before the storm broke.
7.00 p.m.	Wind freshening from N. W. to W., and soon blowing a gale. Pass through the Heads with everything set and engine going strong.

8.00 p.m.	Pilot came out and was informed that his kindly proffered services were not required. Mainsail and staysail lowered. Brought up in Kelso Bay, where both anchors were put out as a fierce gale was now blowing from the W. After snuggling down on deck, savoury odours from below gave evidence of the important offices of the cook, and all hands (and mouths) were soon busily engaged with curry, making the world seem quite bright again, in spite of the cold and rain. Turned in with feeling of relief; no watch had to be set or called, and that we were once again riding in a safe anchorage.
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Sunday -After a sound and long sleep we were thankful to once again see the sun, which had deserted us since the previous Thursday. Soon everything was brought up from below and spread out to dry, making the decks look rather like an old clothes shop. Dry once more! Dry socks again!! Luxury!!!

Looking back over these trying experiences, too much cannot be said for the seaworthiness of the Rambler. Hove to under reefed mizzen only, she rode out Friday night's gale without taking a single sea on board, and proved herself a thoroughly sea-going vessel. No apology need be made for breaking the seal of the engine, with the knowledge that the Cup could not be won, and the weather conditions prevailing at the time.

Steam power is very well in its place,
When water's smooth and the ship's in a race.
But when sea's rough and wind blowing a gale
There's certainly greater safety in sail.

The Ellida



Ellida

The Crew:

C. B. Poole, (Master)
H. Ryan
Rev. T.J. Redhead
Hamish Russell
W.M. Timms.

Log.

Ellida, the property of Messrs. Poole and Cobb, of the St. Kilda Yacht Club, is a yacht well known to Victorian yachtsmen. Built in 1894 by Mr. J. McPherson and other amateurs, she is of 12 tons displacement, 32 feet L.W.L., eight feet beam, and seven feet draught.

Leaving St. Kilda at 10.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 24th December, she proceeded under easy sail to the West Channel Pile Light, which was passed at daylight the next morning, anchor being dropped at Queenscliff at 6 a.m., where she was inspected by the Committee, and passed as satisfactory. All hands had an easy day, and the Christmas dinner was voted a great success.

Turned in at 11.30 with an eye to getting a good sleep before the battle, but, alas, at 2 o'clock all hands were on deck, paying out more chain and standing by, as the yacht Caress had dragged anchor almost on top of us. To bed again in half an hour; but the Skipper had all hands up again at 4 to make sail and have breakfast, the last meal we were to have in comfort for some days, as we afterwards learnt. At the start we were second boat over the line, and with full sail and fresh North wind, roared along at a great bat. Anticipating that the change (which our glass told us must soon be along) would stay W., or at the most S.W., the yacht was kept in the direct course to Low Head, viz., S.E., S. As the day wore on the wind increased to half gale, and first topsail then staysail and mizzen came off, then second reef in mainsail; later on the whole lot were set again, and by 4.30 we had logged 74 knots, then the trouble began, the threatened change came with heavy rain and hard wind from the S.W. Quarter of an hour of hard work saw the boat again snug, and on her course under two reefed mainsail and second jib. At 8 p.m. wind fell to nothing, and the watch had a pleasant 2 hours of doldrums in the still pouring rain; then the wind came again, this time from the S. S. W., and soon developed into a moderate gale; still raining and very cold. Wind and sea gradually got worse, and at 1.15 on the morning of the 27th December all hands were once again on deck to take in the third reef in the mainsail and change No. 2 for spitfire jib. This was the first time that the boat had been under 3 reefs since she was altered to a yawl, and we here found what a great advantage the yawl rig was over the cutter in such awful weather. The yacht was still laying her course, although only five points off the wind, and the weather conditions throughout all that day were as miserable as could be, rain and sleet incessant, the boat with still plenty of sail on fighting her way through the tumbling broken seas in such manner as made cooking out of the question, and comfort a luxury long ago forgotten. Nobody had any dry clothes, and as soon as the four short hours below were up it was put on your wet clothes again and crawl on deck to do another four hours' freeze. Our thermometer now stood at 46 degrees and the aneroid at 29.40. At 5.30 p.m. the yacht was hove to on the port tack, it not being deemed safe to drive her any longer against the increasing wind and sea. According to the reckoning, Low Head then lay S. E. by S., distant 41 miles. This was the first time the vessel got to her intended destination; hove to all night, weather conditions still the same, and glass still falling. At midday, 28th December, the boat was again got under way, but this time the course was for Cape Woolami, the Skipper intending to shelter there if the rain eased sufficiently for us to see, our way in.

2.30 p.m. -The gale redoubled itself and blew with great violence from the same quarter, S.S.W., had to heave to. Made sea anchor in order to ease the boat, and set reefed mizzen to help the anchor; ten minutes later mizzen bumpkin carried away by the force of the wind, and a few minutes afterwards the line on sea anchor parted, so we had to heave to again under three reefed mainsail with throat lowered -an awful wind; all adjourned to cabin, as nothing could be done on deck. Got storm trysail ready in case mainsail went, and after getting a little warmth, Ryan and Redhead went forward and set the storm jib to weather, which made her lay easier. The gale blew with unabated vigour all through the night, and by morning the two numbers, which were strongly sewn on the peak of mainsail, had completely disappeared.

Throughout Sunday, 29th December, the gale raged, but the yacht behaved splendidly, the helm not being touched during the whole time she was hove to.

By midnight the gale was broken, and the glass rising, having touched 29.15; and at 2.15 a.m. on Monday, 30th December, a course was laid N.W. by W. for Port Phillip Heads. Wind gradually died away until on the 31st December there was hardly any at all, and with all sail set we passed through the Heads at 7.45 that evening and dropped anchor at Queenscliff, much to the relief of our relations and friends, and ending what was to us a most disappointing race, yet thankful to be once again in sheltered waters."

Oh brave white horses! you gather and gallop
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins:
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop,
In your hollow backs, or your high arched manes."

And so the race for the Rudder Cup was successfully concluded, with all yachts and crews safe and sound. The race was won convincingly by the Thistle, with the Shamrock placed second. The Rambler was officially listed as "retired" because she started her motor as was the Ellida who eventually turned back and safely reached Port Phillip Heads. During the time following the safe arrival of three of the contestants at their destination and the arrival of the Ellida at Queenscliff on December 31, considerable fears had been held for her safety. On January 1, 1908, the Melbourne Argus reported her arrival at Queenscliff, and made the following comment:-

"In view of the fact that the Ellida's absence had extended over five days, measures were taken yesterday to institute a search for her. Telegrams were sent by the Ports and Harbours Department to the various lighthouse keepers and wharf managers along the south eastern coast of Victoria, asking them to keep a lookout for the yacht. A telegram was also sent to Devonport, Tasmania, requesting Captain Creswell to allow a torpedo-boat to be despatched in search of the Ellida. The owner of the racing yacht, Rambler, which is equipped with an oil engine, and was in the port of Launceston, was asked to visit the Hummocks and Hunter Islands, where it is thought the Ellida might be sheltering. At San Remo, which is situated on Westernport, the rocket crew had arranged to make an organised search."

This emphasizes the vast difference between the safety facilities available to yachtsmen in those distant days to those which exist today, when we have efficient two way radio, mother ships, emergency beacons, depth sounders and a myriad of other navigational and safety aids.

Although it was minimal, there was some criticism for not postponing the start because of the ominous weather conditions. A report in the Melbourne Age, dated January 4, 1908, quoted Mr. Clem Hack, a crew member of the Rambler, as making the following statement:-

"Information is available regarding the exceedingly rough experiences endured by the contestants. One of the conditions of the race was that the Geelong Yacht Club Committee, which was managing it, had the power of postponement if the weather conditions were thought unsuitable. Seafaring experts declared that the barometrical indications at the start rendered this course advisable, although, at the time there was a strong favourable wind."

Further, it will be noted that the Rambler's log stated:-

"It was not considered likely that one with any knowledge of weather conditions would start a race across the Straits, so no preparations were made; breakfast had to be served under weigh."

These views were solidly refuted by Mr. T. A. Dickson, owner and mate of the Shamrock, who stated:-

First, it has been stated that the Committee should not have started the race in view of threatening weather. This is a mistaken opinion. There was nothing in the weather at the time of the start to prevent any of the four yachts from starting, and the Mate would be only too

willing to make a start in Shamrock under the same circumstances again. The prospect was only that of an ordinary summer change of wind with possibly a good breeze from westward. That it developed later to an abnormal backing from S.E. to a westerly gale was a circumstance that will probably not trouble the ocean racers again for the next twenty years."

On his return to Geelong, Mr. Dickson was interviewed by the Geelong Advertiser and gave virtually the same story as that revealed in the ship's log. However, he concluded the interview (published on January 3, 1908) with the following statement:-

"I might add that all aboard the Shamrock are amateur yachtsmen and we are very proud of the way our little vessel acquitted herself. We were done up completely on reaching an anchorage, and you cannot imagine how thankful we were to know that we could at length rest our heads with the knowledge that we were in safe waters."

It is of great historical interest that the Geelong Yacht Club not only planned and conducted the first ocean race in Australian waters between two ports but, as well, the Club's two representatives, the Thistle and the Shamrock, gained first and second placings respectively.

Although there was much talk of making this race an annual event, it was to be 22 years before the next race across Bass Strait. But more of that later.



