

Chapter 10

POST WAR PROGRESS and DRAMA IN THE RIP

With the unconditional surrender of Germany on 9 May 1945, the War in Europe came to an end. Then when the Americans dropped the first atom bomb on the large Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, followed 3 days later with the second one on the city of Nagasaki, Japan was also quick to surrender just 7 days later.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, held at the Club House on August 27, 1945 there were about 60 members in attendance with the Commodore, Mr. Wm. Smith in the chair.

The adoption of the Annual Report, which revealed a very satisfactory financial situation, was moved by the Commodore. In seconding the motion, Mr. W.P. Heath congratulated Mr. Smith for the part he had played in the affairs of the Club and the Secretary and the Committee for the wonderful position the Club was now in. Mr. Heath also donated the sum of £25 towards the forthcoming Peace Regatta to be held in Melbourne on Foundation Day weekend.

Mr. Jos. Glover also spoke at length on the Club's sound situation and congratulated the Chairman/Commodore. It was planned to have a dinner to welcome home those members who had served in the Armed Forces.

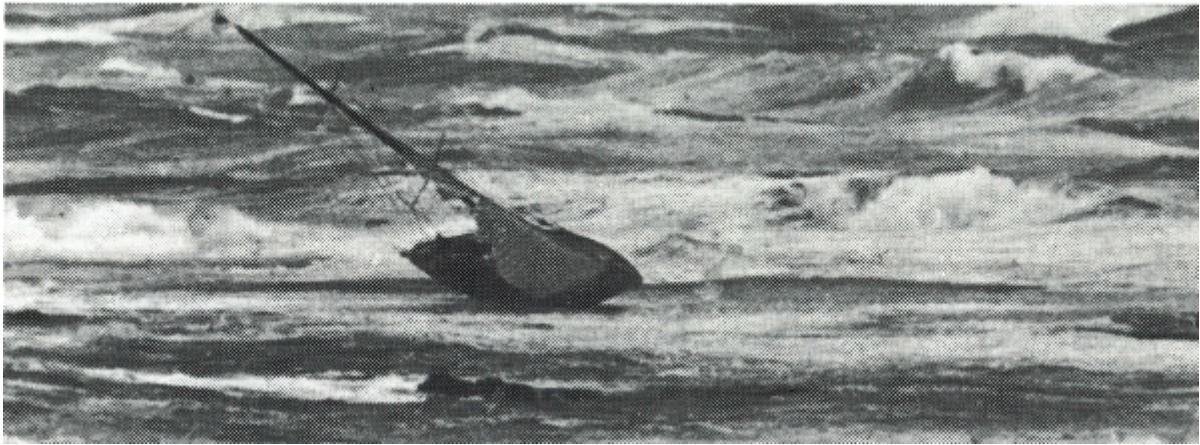
The 87th season was opened by Commodore Smith on Saturday, November 17, 1945. Conditions were ideal with a steady north westerly breeze to send the yachts around on their manoeuvres. Twenty-five boats, including yachts, sailing dinghies and motor boats took part and being the first opening since the war, many of the members were still in service uniform.

In opening the season Commodore Smith stated that the Club had a commendable record in regard to war service -many of the younger members had served on the water, under the water, in the air and on land. He also revealed that the 1939, £700 deficit had been cleared and that the Club was in credit with a substantial amount invested in War Bonds.

The first race for the new season was conducted in a full sail north westerly on November 24. Five yachts competed and the event was won by Lance Curtis's Killara, Russell Kitchen's Topsy D was second, Gannet retired and J.C.W. broke her mast. Seven boats started in the Cadet Section with Caress 1st, Ariel 2nd and Vivid 3rd.

On January 26, 1946 a Victory Regatta was held at St. Kilda and Brighton. The R.G.Y.C. was well represented and Harold Anderson's Gannet gained third placing in A Class. Geelong scooped the pool in B Class with S.J.S. 1st, Windara 2nd and Killara 3rd. In a race back to Geelong on Sunday the placings were the same. And in an event sailed over a Club course the following day Windara gained line hours but the placings on handicap were again the same as the race from Melbourne.

The Aggregate for the season was won by Gannet. Although the fields were small, racing in Corio Bay had got off to a good start with a financially sound base and increasing membership, so had the R.G .Y.C.



Merlan I on the reef at Point Lonsdale, January 1949.



Merlan 1 off the east coast of Tasmania in the Sydney to Hobart Classic -December 1948.



The crew of the ill-fated Merlan 1: photographed before sailing for Sydney to compete in the 1948 Sydney to Hobart classic.

Left to right: Alan McGlashan, Tom Curtis, Noel Johnson, Kan Walker, John Spence, Jim Sim, Neil Tomkins & Skipper, Lance Curtis.

Shortly after the war, British yachtsman, Captain John H. Illingworth was in Sydney and became an honorary member of the newly formed Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. A fellow member mentioned to Illingworth that he intended to cruise to Hobart and suggested that they sail in company. Illingworth replied, "Why don't we have a race?" So the now internationally famous Sydney to Hobart Classic was born. It is now history that Illingworth won the race, which started on Boxing Day, 1945.

The following year, 1946, Mr. Wm. Smith stood down as Commodore of the R.G.Y.C. Mr. Harold Anderson, owner-skipper of the Gannet took over as Commodore with Mr. Lance Curtis Vice-Commodore and Colonel J. G. H. Hanby, Rear Commodore. But Lance Curtis had other things on his mind. He was busy building a boat to compete in the 1946 Sydney to Hobart race. The new yacht, named Merlan, a combination of Lance's wife's name, Merle, and his own, was finally completed in mid-December and launched just the day before she set sail for Sydney for the start of the race. Designed by R.G.Y.C. member, Tal Searle, the 43 foot sloop was a beautiful craft. She was, for those times of radical design, an experiment in racing efficiency at a time when ocean sailing was mainly confined to heavier displacement cruising vessels.

The crew for the trip was Lance Curtis, skipper, Geoff Wood, navigator, Eric Walker, Kan Walker, Laurie Gibson and Keith Young. The voyage to Sydney was uneventful except for problems with the bilge pump which was constantly blocked by the wood shavings which were still in the hull, following the rather rushed final construction. There were 19 competitors in the race, eight of whom were forced to retire in the extreme weather conditions.

Merlan was not without her problems. The track on her mast was wrenched away and they were forced to run seaward for a day and a half until conditions abated sufficiently for Lance to go up the

66 foot mast and screw the track back on. No mean feat, with the ship pitching in the Pacific rollers. This mishap cost Curtis any chance of success and it was a weary crew which eventually made their way into Hobart. However, a piece of R.G.Y.C. history had been created. Lance Curtis and the crew of the Merlan were the first of a long line of local yachtsmen to compete in the famous classic.

Two years later, in 1948, Merlan once more set off for Sydney to compete in the Sydney-Hobart. But this time she was hardened by two seasons of competitive racing and extensive cruising in Corio Bay and Port Phillip. She was thoroughly prepared for the task ahead. There were no wood shavings in the bilges this time!

Merlan sailed from Geelong about December 12. The crew for the trip to Sydney was, Lance Curtis, skipper, Tom Curtis, Lances' brother, Noel Johnson, Alan McGlashan, Jimmy Sim, John Spence, navigator, Neil Tompkins and Kan Walker. Jimmy Sim describes the trip to Sydney as follows:-

"We had a very good trip along the south coast past Lakes Entrance and the Ninety mile beach in a fresh south westerly. We were averaging 10-12 knots and were going so well we were thinking we may even break the record. But then, after we passed Eden and were somewhere off Bermagui the breeze dropped off and finally petered right out. So there we were, completely becalmed for about a day and a half before a very light north easterly came in and we were able to get going again. For the rest of the trip we had a beat all the way. However it was a pleasant sail and we eventually reached Sydney after six days at sea."

The crew spent about a week in Sydney, which enabled them to do some sight-seeing as well as to bring Merlan up to top racing condition. There is no doubt that, this time, the boat was extremely well found. Kan Walker left the ship in N.S.W. and his place was taken by another of Lance's brothers, Jack Curtis. On December 26, the 14 or so competitors for the race to Hobart lined up for the start in Sydney Harbour at 11 am. Jimmy Sim gives his description of the race:-

"The fleet got away to a good start in a light north easterly giving the yachts a beat down the harbour to the Heads. Once outside we set a course in accordance with our planned strategy which took us well out to sea, over the Continental shelf, and about 150 miles off the coast. At about 4 a.m. the following morning the breeze came out a bit fresher and we set our biggest spinnaker. We carried that huge kite for three full days, on the port gybe all the time. During this period we averaged about 190 miles a day, it was an absolute "dream" sail and Merlan revelled in it. This took us a long way down towards Tasmania, where Lance had predicted we would pick up a southerly. And sure enough, just at the right time, in it came. So, down came the spinnaker, up went the big genoa and a course was set for Maria Island. We were just five days out of Sydney which was very good going for those days. Off Maria Island we were greeted by planes with the press on board who took photographs of ourselves and the crack eight metre yacht, Sandra. Sandra was only about four miles ahead of us so, presuming that Moma, the sixty foot scratch boat was ahead of her, this put us in third placing for line honours. We calculated that at that time our handicap allowance would be about 26 hours. So, therefore, we must have been in a strong position to take out first placing on handicap as we were only about 10 hours sailing time from the line and anticipated that we should be finishing about midnight."

But things did not work out that way. We passed Cape Pillar on the south east corner of Tasman Island, but, instead of turning N. West into Storm Bay, carried on too far in the pitch black conditions towards Bruny Island. I was on watch about midnight as we ran on under spinnaker at about 10 knots. I felt most uneasy, things did not seem to be quite right. Too much time had passed for us not to be sighting the Iron Pot light which marks the entrance to

the Derwent River. I went below, woke Lance and told him of my misgivings. Lance shared my feelings and we quickly dropped the spinnaker, put the boat up into the wind, dropped the sails and put an anchor out while we waited for daylight. Imagine our horror when daylight came about 4 a.m. to reveal a line of huge rocks rising from the ocean no more than 150metres off our stem! In other words, we had been no more than a couple of minutes sailing away from disaster! A disaster: the proportions of which do not bare contemplation. We had been sailing straight towards the rugged coast of Bruny Island!

Weighing anchor, we set sail once more. But now it was daylight and our course was clear. Late in the afternoon, that same day, we sailed up the Derwent to the finish. Our miscalculation had cost us about 16 precious hours and also, with little doubt, the race.

After enjoying the fleshpots of Hobart for about five days Merlan set off on her return journey. They stopped off in Coles Bay for a couple of days before setting sail for Georgetown at the mouth of the Tamar estuary. Being a native of Georgetown, Lance elected to stay there for a few days prior to setting out across Bass Strait and home to Geelong.

But time was running out for the crew members who had sailed in the race. They had work commitments back home which could not, in those days, be ignored. So reluctantly the crew flew home to Victoria leaving Lance to sail Merlan home with a skeleton crew of four. These four were Lance himself, Eric Walker, Kan's father, from Sydney, Keith Young from Melbourne and Brian Shaw from Launceston.

After a few days in Georgetown Merlan farewelled Tasmania for the last time and worked towards the Victorian coast. Conditions were good on the afternoon of January 14 and the four men expected an untroubled crossing, despite an approaching westerly weather front.

Here we look at an account of the tragic end to Merlan and the heroism of the Queenscliff fishermen which was published in the Geelong Advertiser on October 30, 1971 and written by Geoff Heriot:-

"The front, however, developed rapidly, and before they were half way home. Curtis was forced to order a shortening of sail, reefing to tri-sail and jib.

At 8 p.m. on Saturday, they were off San Remo (Westernport) and stood off until daylight. An increasingly strong wind whipped about the ears of the early morning watch as the titillating purple mass of land that bordered Westernport appeared occasionally between crests.

Understating things somewhat, Curtis later recalled: 'In a hard wind from the west, we struggled on under tri-sail and second jib through tremendous seas until we sighted Point Lonsdale at 3 p.m.'

And understate he did, for, during that blustery Sunday, winds averaged between 50 and 55 miles an hour, gusting to more than 60, causing much damage to the property of mariners and urbanites alike.

Melbourne shop windows were smashed, trees were uprooted, houses unroofed, communications upset and the Middle Park Baths demolished. Inland, there were blizzards and heavy snow falls reported at Mountains Buffalo, Hotham and Donna Buang.

A ship moored in the Yarra River broke from its moorings and careered into two others, badly damaging all three. Another coaster, the River Hunter, rammed the wharf while berthing, smashing piles and timber over a wide area, before being finally secured. Other cargo vessels had to run for shelter along the coast while many other were hours late in docking.

It is not surprising that Curtis found pinpointing his boat's position difficult through the driving rain, breaking seas and intermittent rain squalls. Perhaps he should have stood out to sea under such conditions and delayed the boat's home-coming for a day, or even waited for slack water before entering the Rip. But he did not.

Fifty-seven years old, the late Eric Walker, with a lifetime of sailing at the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club (Sydney) behind him, said that he had never before experienced such conditions.

"We had been looking for Point Lonsdale for hours," he said. "Suddenly it loomed through the mist and squall. We could see it for a flashing second; then we were lost in the trough of a wave or carried on the crest of another."

To avoid the worst of the strong ebb tide, Merlan approached Port Phillip Heads close to its Western shore below Point Lonsdale, seeking passage in the small ship channel.

Their navigation, more guesswork than science, piloted the Merlan into the notorious Rip. By then the yacht had been sighted by the duty lighthouse-keeper at Point Lonsdale.

It was Walker's trick at the helm as the boat appeared close to the outer Lonsdale reef.

"I thought we had made the channel," he recalled. "Then we were lifted high. The Merlan heeled over in the wind. "Then she broached on a particularly large sea. Slewling uncontrollably on the face of the breaker, her bow rounded up towards the spray drowned cliff base. The wave's rushing crest enveloped the whole ship, drenching its four sea-weary occupants in the cockpit.

Momentarily they saw the jutting perimeter of the Lonsdale reef. Then, the tiller snapped in the helmsman's hand, causing the yacht to round up out of control plunging bow first on to the jagged edge of the reef.

Walker was jerked outwards from the cockpit and was saved from pitching head first into the ditch only by his lifeline.

The lifeboat warning signal at Queenscliff began ringing at 4.15 that Sunday afternoon, and its eight-man crew had the boat launched and proceeding to the wreck within eight minutes. Attracted by disaster, a Sunday afternoon crowd began to congregate on the cliffs near the lighthouse. - Soon there were hundreds, causing chaotic traffic jams by abandoning cars in the middle of roads in their excitement.

Below them, barely visible, four men fought for their lives. Successive waves had twisted round and wedged their ship between two reefs, and now she lay prostrate, beaten mercilessly by the surf.

Though shocked beyond feeling, Curtis and his crew, having donned life-jackets, crawled past the coach-house and made to un-lash Medan's dinghy with unaccustomed urgency, and clumsiness. Curtis then led his crew and their dinghy across the reef, which was awash, making progress slow and footholds precarious.

Ignorant that their performance held such an audience, the men of course could not hear the crowd groan when a rogue wave swept the four into the boiling ocean. Nor could they fight the Rip's tidal race, and were quickly exhausted by the white water that broke over them. Scattered, they were swept up to half a mile seaward through the Heads.

Brian Shaw and Keith Young apparently let go their grips on the dinghy almost as soon as they were snatched from the reef, and did not drift as far as the others.

Walker reckoned that he "was travelling 10 miles an hour seaward." So he let go the dinghy and grabbed an oar as support. His skipper was left alone, clutching, he thought, his one hope of survival, before realising its death intent.

His brain, numbed beyond definition, Curtis was saved only by instinct, when he let his hold slip from the little rowing tender, and relied instead on a clump of floating kelp, which slowed his drift and afforded some illusion of security.

Suddenly, with the contrived precision of a Hollywood melodrama, the outflowing water's rush was spent and the tide turned.

Half an hour's struggling in the awful seas drained the strength from Curtis' body, and slowly emptied it of hope.

"When a big wave hit me, I swam towards the reef, but the wave receded and carried me back again. How many times this happened I don't know," he said later. Then with "impossible" clarity Curtis saw a vision of his wife and son in the waves.

"Suddenly I seemed to get renewed strength. An extra big wave heaved me on to the ledge, and I hung on to that sharp rock for dear life. Once on the ledge, I knew I had won."

Scrambling to temporary safety, on the flat-topped ledge, after nearly an hour in the water, Curtis joined his crew to await rescue. The others had one-by-one dragged themselves out - first Young, then Shaw and Walker - each to the cheers of their audience 200 yards away.

The lifeboat stood about 100 yards from the marooned yachtsmen, reluctant to come closer for fear of fetching up on the outcrop itself.

On shore at Point Lonsdale, four fishermen realised the danger of the sailors being left on the ledge with the rising tide. Ron Shapter, Tony Jurgens, Tommy Warren and Frank Ferrier manned a rowing dinghy used for onshore rescue work and began sculling out towards the Heads. One witness "gave the boys Buckley's chance when the dinghy reached the boat channel.

But they persevered in their leaking boat, and while Ferrier sculled, the others bailed with a jam tin to keep afloat. At one stage, the water level rose so alarmingly that they had to stop and concentrate on bailing, delaying the rescue for minutes.

Paradoxically, this delay saved Lance Curtis who, although thought to have been overpowered and swept out to sea, had been returned by the tide to safety. In a day of miracles, there was still one more to come. As the fishermen neared the reef, wondering how they could land and snatch away the four yachtsmen, an eddy appeared, allowing rescue to be effected.

During the night, while the facilities of the Esplanade Hotel were offered to the survivors, a spot-light was trained on the Merlan from the lighthouse. The £8000 yacht lay before the incoming tide holed and listing badly. It was feared that she might break up before morning.

In a few feet of water and 150 yards offshore, Medan's tangled shrouds and 12 tons of straining hulk seemed strangely unreal in the pastry, artificial glare of the spot beam. She

looked like some grey phantom of the night, the unwilling companion to hundreds of silver-bright nymphs dancing about her.

By morning, she was gone. She lifted with the tide early on Monday morning for a final pathetic passage, drifting through the Heads and past the Point Lonsdale pier until she settled about 200 yards from the beach, opposite the local cinema.

The end? No, the Merlan survived for a time in print and pubs and public feeling.

All Monday, flotsam littered the sea and debris the beach. But the public's attention was focused on the newspapers for moving stories of the survivors and their daring rescuers, not the miserable demise of a beautiful ship.

"Don't call us heroes," was the matter-of-fact request of Tony Jurgens. 'Any Queenscliff fisherman could have done the job.' But they were rightly lauded by the Victorian Premier, Mr. Hollway, and others.

For Mrs. William Ferrier, the 64-year-old mother of Frank, it was a time of remembrance, of reminiscing on a duplication of history. In 1905, her husband won a Royal Humane Society silver medal for his rescue of a crewman from a wreck at Warrnambool.

By Wednesday, a public appeal had been launched by the Mayor of Queenscliff in recognition of the heroes. About £320 was raised and presented to the fishermen at a luncheon by a local Member of Parliament.

Plans to build a new Merlan around the old boat's shell were thought possible even after a diver's report indicated the craft to be wedged firmly on the seabed and badly holed. All attempts at raising the hull failed, as no barge large enough could be obtained. Gradually, an assortment of gear was retrieved, including her engine, navigation equipment and even the galley sink, before the Merlan was finally buoyed and deserted.

The end -at last -came when the yacht's hull broke away from its lead keel and washed ashore, its weeping carcass to bleach in the late summer sun."

But despite their pleas not to be branded as heroes, the four fishermen were duly honoured by the Royal Humane Society by being presented with the Society's Silver medal for bravery.

At the Annual Meeting of the Club on August 17, 1949, Lance Curtis was elected as Commodore, a position in which he served with distinction for the ensuing twelve months.

Eventually, the lead from the keel of the Merlan was salvaged and Lance Curtis set to and built Merlan II. Merlan II was a smaller boat designed primarily for bay racing and Lance sailed her for many years with considerable success in R.G .Y.C. and other events. But the experience in the Rip had left its mark on Lance and he was never really the same person. One day in March, 1962, after flying home from Tasmania, where he had attended his niece's wedding, Lance blacked out whilst driving his car from the Essendon airport. The car smashed into a pole and tragically Lance Curtis was killed.

Merlan II was sold and rather appropriately, went to her new owner in Hobart, where she still sails the waters of the Derwent today.

Another matter of significance during this era was the inauguration of the annual Geelong Advertiser Trophy event. At a meeting of the Committee on January 7, 1947, it was reported by Commodore

Anderson that the V.Y.R.A. was out of Commission and that there would be no Association Cup race on the Sunday afternoon of the A.N.A. weekend Regatta at Geelong. But that the Geelong Advertiser had agreed to provide a trophy to be raced for at this weekend. After some discussion it was agreed that the club publicise a race for this trophy for one boat to be nominated by each club and that handicaps be under the LY.RU. time allowances. The distance of the race shall be 14 nautical miles. Other conditions shall be as for the V.Y.R.A. Challenge Cup and to be raced for each year during the R.G.Y.C. Regatta on Corio Bay. The course to be to windward and return three times round.

Following the demise of the V.Y.R.A. a new body was formed known as the Victorian Yachting Council, and at the General Committee meeting of the Club on July 21, 1947, Vice-Commodore Curtis reported on his attendance at the inaugural meeting of this new organisation and gave detail of the workings of the Council.

At the end of this decade the Club was progressing well, membership was increasing steadily and the financial position was sound. At the committee meeting held on December 5, 1949, the Treasurer reported a bank balance of £586 pounds plus £80 in Bonds, giving a total in hand of £666.

At the Annual General Meeting held on August 13, 1950, it was reported by Commodore Curtis that at the commencement of the season the membership was approximately 280. During the year 12 members had resigned, but the total had increased to 320, consisting of 200 senior, 85 junior, 29 country and 7 life members.

He also reported a particularly successful season with a record 90 entries being received for the A.N.A. weekend regatta. For the first time, at the request of the V.Y.C., the percentage system of handicapping had been employed. The results were not perfect but it was considered that with the experience of this season the results in the forthcoming season would be considerably improved.

The season had also seen an increase in the number of yachts on the register. These included Mr. Peter Blakiston's Marie, Mr. John Sykes Destruction II, Mr. R. Julien's Pedro II and Mr. H. W. Cosh's Peter.

For the forthcoming season the H 28 Marloo would sail under charter to Mr. W. Libby, Mr. John Taylor had purchased Sonia and Mr. Ran McAllister had purchased Petrel. In the process of building were Mr. Geoff Wood's Marco Polo (to be named Ile Ola), Vice Commodore Jacobs, Sea Mist and his own Merlan II.

Another item of considerable significance in Commodore Curtis's report read as follows:-

In an endeavour to attract more junior members to the Club and train them as future crew members for our larger craft, the Committee decided to sponsor some type of small boat that could meet the requirements of a handy and reliable craft and yet be a good type of training boat. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to select the Yachting World Cadet. The plans were obtained and a committee formed to look after this project. The materials for building will be prefabricated into kits and made available to all who wish to build. The estimated cost per kit was approximately £35. The committee have also made special nomination and subscription fees to help young lads to take on this class of boat. The committee consists of Mr. J. Searle, the Hon. Secretary, the Commodore and Messrs. E. Armstrong, E.J. Fairnie, S. Jewell, K. Lloyd, J. O'Brien, T. Searle, Alan Taylor and E. Wilson. We take this opportunity to thank Alan Taylor for his co-operation in making available equipment to machine the necessary materials. To date this committee has done a vast amount of work in getting these kits together."

Thus, the Yachting World Cadet dinghy as a training and racing craft for cadet members of the R.G.Y.C. was born. These sturdy little craft were to play a very important role in the future of the Club to such an extent that the Cadet Squadron is the subject of a separate chapter in this history.

At this meeting Mr. Henry Jacobs was elected as Commodore for the ensuing year with Mr. Neil McAllister as Vice-Commodore and Mr. Alan Taylor as Rear-Commodore. At the half-yearly meeting of the Club held on the 16th March, 1951, Commodore Jacobs reported that the sailing season had been an excellent one with some splendid racing and some very close finishes. The courses set out had been a credit to the race officials and this had a lot to do with the season's success. He also congratulated Mr. Lawrence Solomon for his fine sailing in the Queenscliff to Devonport race when his yacht "Westward" finished second on corrected time. He further stated that the 1951 Regatta had proved highly successful; the weather was good, and the racing excellent. This being especially so for the Advertiser Cup event which was won by Mr. E. Digby in "Francis", by 9 seconds, after a very fine race.

The number of clubs entered for this event this year had been a record.

Also at this meeting a considerable amount of discussion took place as to whether lady associate members of the club should be allowed to attend general meetings of the club. It was finally resolved that the meeting recommend to the general committee that lady associate members be admitted to general meetings. The matter was raised at the committee meeting on April 9, but was left in abeyance for the time being, to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. But there is no evidence of the matter being brought forward again, so it can only be assumed that it lapsed.

Another matter which was receiving a great deal of attention at this time was the slipway and traverser to service the newly acquired east yard. A special meeting of the committee was called for June 18, 1951 to which Mr. E. J. Faimie was invited to present his plan for the traverser to the committee. Mr. Fairnie duly explained his plan and answered questions from members of the committee. Rear-Commodore Alan Taylor then submitted a scheme which had been built up from ideas of other members plus his own. He outlined his plan of carrying out the scheme in sections and submitted costs which he considered to be on the generous side of the ultimate cost. Mr. Taylor's scheme was accepted in principle and a sub-committee formed to proceed with negotiations and to report back to the committee. The plan was finally adopted at an ultimate cost of £1,000, of which £500 was to be paid to the Harbour Trust upon the signing of the contract to carry out the work. The committee was also considering the advisability or otherwise of allowing members to consume liquor in their lockers. This matter was thoroughly investigated by committee member and Geelong solicitor, Mr. Eustace Wilson, who presented his report and recommendations to the Annual Meeting on August 13, 1951. After some discussion, it was resolved that no further action should be taken until the club could secure a licence for a bar. And at this same meeting Mr. Alan Taylor was elected Commodore, with Neil McAllister, Vice-Commodore and Mr. Ken Nall, Rear-Commodore.

In his report to the half-yearly meeting of the Club on March 28, 1952, Commodore Taylor stated that the season's racing had been exceptionally keen. He further stated that the Club now had the best fleet of A Class yachts in Port Phillip Bay, and that there was every chance that this fleet would be increased.

The Australia Day Regatta had been most successful with over 100 yachts competing in the Williamstown to Geelong race. The Geelong Advertiser trophy had been won by the crack 8 metre yacht "Erica J" from Tasmania and her owner, Mr. Ted Domonie, had promised to sail the trophy across the straits for competition in 1953.

At a special general meeting held in conjunction with the annual meeting on August 15, 1952, it was resolved to raise the subscription of senior members from three guineas to four guineas and country members from £1/1 1/6d. to two guineas. At the general meeting the Commodore reported that membership had increased by 140 during the year and urged all members to pay any arrears due, as the club was going to need all the money it could possibly find during the coming year. The flag officers for the year ahead remained unchanged.



The Yard, circa 1949.