

Chapter 12

SAILING INTO THE SIXTIES AND A RECLAMATION PROJECT

With fine new premises and a liquor licence the Club moved into the sixties with well-founded confidence.

At the Annual General Meeting on August 18, 1961, with some 90 members in attendance Commodore Howard Glover was elected for a further term, with Mr. Eustace Wilson Vice-Commodore, Mr. Geoff Wood Rear Commodore and the evergreen Mr. Ernie Brockman Club Captain.

The Annual Australia Day Regatta took place as usual in January 1962, with a record number of 161 yachts competing in the Williamstown to Geelong race.

Commodore Glover completed a memorable term in the Club's top position in August 1962 when Mr. Eustace Wilson was elected Commodore, Mr. Geoff Wood Vice-Commodore and Mr. Ray Walter Rear Commodore.

These positions remained unchanged until 1964 when Mr. Geoff Wood was elected Commodore, Mr. Ray Walter Vice-Commodore and Mr. John Collins Rear Commodore. Also, at this time, Mr. Reg White was re-elected as Club Captain, having taken over that position in March that year. Reg White was to serve in this capacity with distinction for a number of years.

It is interesting to note that as far back as 1965, consideration was being given to the construction of a marina. At a Committee Meeting in May that year the Marina Committee was authorised to prepare their master plan and submit this plan to the General Committee. No doubt, little did they realise that it would be a long 22 years before the proposed marina became a reality.

And already moves were afoot to carry out alterations and extensions to the new clubhouse. The kitchen was considered to be unsuitable, more storage space was required for bulk and bottled beer supplies and the bar was considered to be inadequate. At a special General Committee meeting on August 8, 1966, it was resolved that the Club architect's plan for the alterations be displayed at the forthcoming Annual Meeting of members in August.

At this meeting, held in August 1966, Mr. Ray Walter was elected Commodore with Mr. John Collins Vice-Commodore and Mr. Walter Wiggs Rear-Commodore.

A significant development with regard to the Geelong Advertiser Trophy took place at the General Committee meeting in September, 1967. At this meeting Club Captain, Reg White advised that the Sailing Committee had decided to conduct this event during the 1968 Regatta on the basis of having two boats from each club competing. The boats to meet R.O.R.C. requirements and a waterline length to be from 24 feet to 36 feet. Two races to be held, viz: Williamstown to Geelong on Saturday and an Olympic course event on the Sunday afternoon. It was further resolved at the October meeting that the minimum waterline length be amended to 20'6".

Under the banner headline of "Sturrock's yacht wins the Geelong Advertiser Trophy", the Geelong Advertiser of January 29, 1968 reported the conduct of the Geelong Advertiser trophy as follows:-

"Australia's Americas Cup skipper, Jock Sturrock, virtually won the 1968 Geelong Advertiser trophy single-handed for the Royal Brighton Yacht Club by winning both heats on corrected times. Sailing the 42 foot ocean racing sloop Phantom Sturrock and his hand-picked crew proved their supremacy in both the long Williamstown to Geelong race on Saturday and the testing Corio Bay course race yesterday.

The event was marred by a reported collision during the second heat yesterday resulting in a protest by Sandringham Yacht Club's Sarda of Burnham against the second placegetter Kyamma of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

The protest was upheld after a lengthy enquiry and Kyamma was disqualified.

However this did not have much bearing on the final results which were Royal Brighton Yacht Club first, 38 points, with the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron runners up on 36 points. There was a tie for third place between the Sorrento Yacht Club and the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, both on 29 points. The Geelong sloop Caraid skippered by Mr. T. Hawkes took line honours in both heats of the sailing classic. However Cr. F. Moore's yacht missed a place after handicaps had been deducted. Jock Sturrock's crew on the Phantom included John Taylor, a foredeck crewman on Dame Pattie, also D. McConachie, G. Stooke, T. Bridges and B. Bertram who sailed with Sturrock on his ocean racer Julie.

Phantom's owner, Mr. John Attwood said his yacht was built 10 years ago and had won the Queenscliff - Devonport race in 1965.

It was also entered in the last classic Sydney-Hobart race. Sturrock had been at the Phantom helm only once before.

Sturrock's team mate in the trophy contest was Tamera, a diminutive 25 ft. sloop in the Top Hat class.

Three Top Hats raced in the event.

Skippers agreed that sailing conditions were near perfect on Saturday with a variable north-easterly gusting up to 30 Knots, giving all entries a long downwind run to the finishing line off the Cunningham pier.

However about half the fleet was becalmed for about 30 minutes off Werribee.

Yesterday, with a moderate 12 knot easterly blowing the first two yachts in the previous day's trophy heat again took the honours with the Sorrento Yacht Club entry Miranda in third place."

It was also reported that this year's Royal Geelong Yacht Club Australia Day regatta drew a record entry of more than 230 craft, together with 35 International Cadet Dinghies competing in the Corio Bay International Cadet Championships.

Now not only was Tom Hawkes an accomplished yachtsman and skipper, he was also a dedicated member of the Club with great vision as regards to what was necessary to improve the standard of the club facilities; in particular, to improve the provisions for boat safety and storage. In addition to all of this, whilst he possessed no formal qualifications, he was possessed of a brilliant engineering brain.

So it was Tom Hawkes who led an enthusiastic group of hard working members in an effort to develop a boat haven for the club's craft. It was envisaged that this boat haven would extend out

from the end of Stoney Pier to the north east and east thus providing shelter for the yachts from the treacherous northerly winds which, when they blew hard from a certain direction had, over the years, created havoc among the boats and been responsible for many thousands of dollars of damage.

At this time the blue-stone retaining wall at present in existence just outside the club's present eastern boundary and in front of the new Training Centre, extended along the front of the club premises to just outside the front doors of what is now the cadet dinghy shed. Here it stopped and there was a small slipway from which cadets were launched. The wall then continued across to where our existing pier is now, where there was a two line yacht tender ramp. The wall then extended across to where the club's main slipway was and then to where the Harbour Trust slipway was and then on to the Stoney Pier. This meant that there was water nearly right up to the cadet dinghy shed at high tide but when the tide was out the sea bed was exposed.

Now the concept envisaged by Tom Hawkes who, Robin Robbins recalls, was responsible for starting the whole thing, was to reclaim some 30 metres of land to the north so that there would be deep water right up to just outside the clubhouse. Then, in a second stage, to reclaim another large area of land to the eastern side of the present jetty, across to the club's eastern boundary. This was to be an area for the hard standing of some yachts and a rigging area for small craft.

A third stage was to be the construction of a launching ramp on the eastern side of this reclaimed area.

It was considered that it was essential to do this before a boat haven could be developed.

At a General Committee Meeting held on May 18, 1966, Tom Hawkes advised that he was currently constructing a model of the overall development plan.

Now about this time construction of the Alcoa pier was commencing and the required concrete piles were stored in North Geelong. Robin Robbins recalls that a number of these piles were rejected as they failed to come up to the specifications required by the Harbour Trust. Tom Hawkes found out about these rejects and arranged to procure them at very small cost to the club.

And so with Tom Hawkes in the van and Commodore Ray Walter leading a small group of "labourers" the project was commenced.

The first step was to drive the newly acquired concrete piles into the seabed on the line of the northern boundary of the proposed reclamation area. This task was carried out by the Harbour Trust using the barge Robert Purnell at a cost of about \$140 a pile.

The next stage was the laying of a second lot of piles in a horizontal position behind the verticals. Then more piles were driven in at an angle behind these horizontals with large steel cables connecting to the verticals in the front. Tension was applied to these cables and this arrangement prevented any collapse of the front piles to the north.

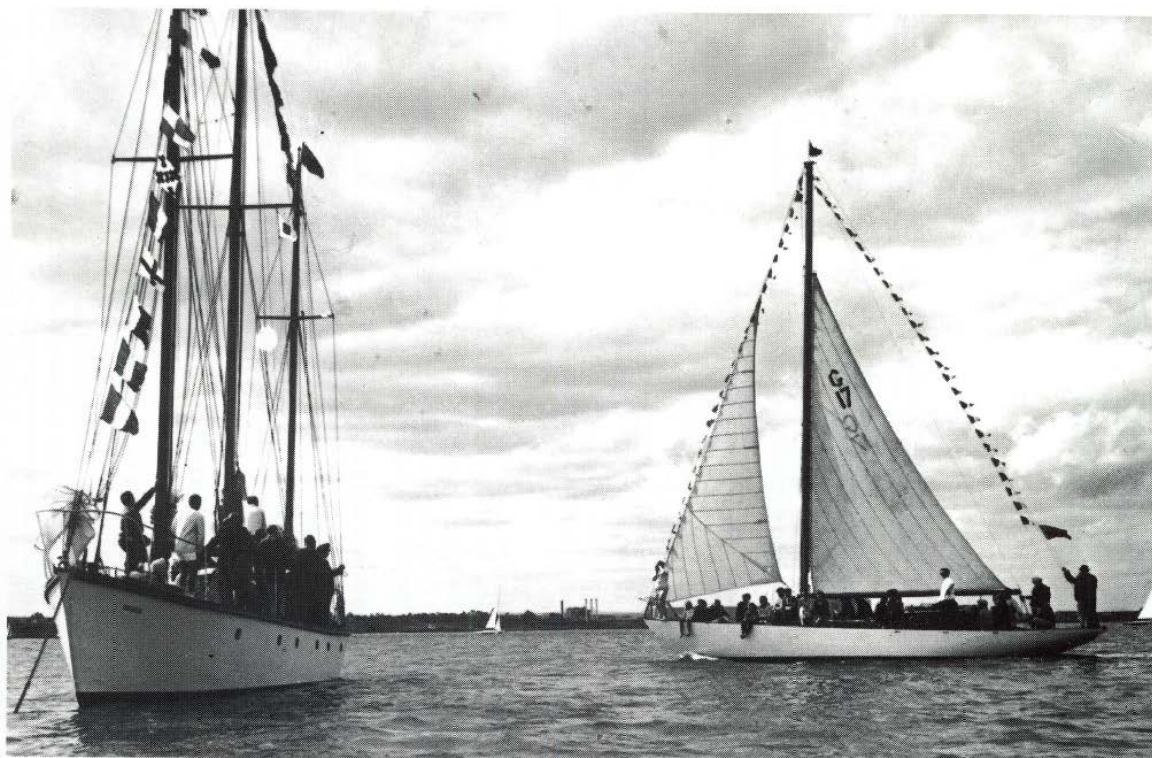
Next came the filling and many truckloads of rubble were tipped into the area with Ray Walter working, as Robin Robbins says, like a navvy with his tractor to do the levelling.

This first part of the reclamation project was completed and lawn sown to provide the attractive area now in existence in front of the clubhouse.

Stage two followed on almost immediately and the large hard standing area now in existence to the north of the present dinghy shed was finally developed.

The third stage of the construction of a ramp on the eastern boundary was then gone ahead with and finally completed. A look at the photograph of the club taken from the Bay before all of this came about will give some idea of what the club looked like before the new clubhouse was built and the reclamation project carried out. And it must be realised that this reclamation was completed mainly with volunteer labour and virtually on a shoe string budget. It was a great achievement by Tom Hawkes, Ray Walter and their small band of workers.

The development of a boat haven outside of this new reclaimed area which had been envisaged as going out from the end of the Stoney Pier never eventuated. This was probably because the Harbour Trust were not prepared to restrict access to the eastern side of the Stoney Pier, which was being used and still is being used as a berthing area for commercial scallop boats. Also, in the view of Robin Robbins it was probable that the failure of the Yacht Club to submit a proposal whereby the club would provide funds for such a development would have had a detrimental effect on the Harbour Trust commissioner's decision.



Opening Day of the Season, circa 1965.

Commodore Geoff Wood takes the salute on 'Ile-Ola' as Randal McAllister's 'Sea Mist' sails past.