

Looking Ahead...

A NEW ERA BEGINS

It is the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere. It is older than the Melbourne Cup, attracts more competitors than the 2006 Commonwealth Games, has more attendees than the AFL Grand Final - and has a brand new name.

A recently formed partnership with German luxury carmaker Audi has launched Victoria's oldest sporting event into a new era. "We have seen a few changes over time, but we regard this as the most significant, and the most exciting, in the 165 year history", a delighted Royal Geelong Yacht Club Commodore Graeme Ritchie said.

"Audi is a premium brand and a major partner in Australian sailing. This is a major boost to Victoria and a vote of confidence in the future of our sport. It will enhance global credibility and add momentum to what is already a burgeoning event".

There have only been five name changes spread across three centuries. "Victoria Week best describes where the event is now at in terms of development. Audi Victoria Week, now the largest sailing event in the southern hemisphere, is staged in both Melbourne and Geelong and the event showcases how the waterfront cities are linked by Port Phillip," Ritchie continued.



Since 1844 the regatta has ebbed and flowed with many highlights recorded in history. In 1861, with the regatta increasing in size and stature, organisers commissioned one of England's finest silversmiths to craft a trophy for a fee of 100 guineas, the same value as the America's Cup.

Later in the nineteenth century popularity continued to increase and a special public holiday was declared throughout the Western District. In 1901 the regatta was shifted to January 1 to celebrate the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia and owners were asked to illuminate their yachts and display fireworks.

In 1996 the regatta was successfully transformed into a widely appealing maritime festival when the format was expanded to incorporate a shoreside component. In following years the club further extended the duration of the event and programmed races in Melbourne.

The combination of changes made the event more attractive to the interstate and international audience. "We are expecting interstate and international entries to exceed 100 per annum in the next year or so. That is an amazing statistic when you consider we were lucky to see one prior to 1996," Ritchie added.

Audi Victoria Week is expected to attract more than 500 competing yachts over six days from 21-26 January, 2010.

Racing begins in Melbourne with the Audi Docklands Invitational and the sailing version of 20/20 Cricket - Audi King of the Docklands. Fleets then combine for the annual Melbourne to Geelong race and the program continues in Geelong through to Australia Day on January 26.



WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL 2010

The 2010 Whyte Just & Moore, Geelong Wooden Boat Festival! Labour Weekend, March 2010.

Shiver your timbers and buckle your swashes!! That's if you want to be a 'swashbuckling' seafarer! But even if you only want to be a 'landlubber', the Geelong Wooden Boat Festival will nibble into men's brains until they can get to the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, here on Corio Bay for the incredible assembly of sheer craftsmanship in the realm of boat building and sailing, during the weekend of 6th, 7th, & 8th, of March, 2010. Early indications are that the 2010 event will eclipse all previous festivals held in Geelong.

There's no doubt that this assembly of well loved wooden boats, ranging from clinker built dinghies, large topsail cutters, putt putts, dories, classic speedboats, yachts, fishing boats, old ocean racers, harbour greyhounds and ex-pilot launches will satisfy the most critical connoisseur in the world of wooden boats and even delight the casual viewer.

Should you wish to enter, contact the RGYC by e-mail at: info@rgyc.com.au. Put the dates into your diary NOW!
You will not be disappointed!



by Bob Appleton