

## Chapter 7

# SAILING INTO THE TWENTIES

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At the Annual General Meeting of the Geelong Yacht Club held at the Club House on October 7, 1918, Mr. Wm. Smith stood down as Commodore after seven years of sterling service through a difficult and demanding period. His place was taken by Mr.

J.F.S. Shannon. Mr. H. Bechervaise was elected Vice-Commodore, Brigadier-General W.R. McNicol C.M.G., D.S.O. Rear Commodore and Mr. E. Brockman, Captain.

At this meeting Mr. Wm. Smith was also congratulated on being elected Commodore of the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria. 45 members were present and a recommendation was made to the Committee for a fixed programme of yacht racing to be drawn up for the ensuing season.

A further successful Patriotic Regatta was held on January 25 & 27 in 1919 and at the Annual General Meeting held on October 18 that year, an Honour Roll of the 59 Yacht Club members who had served in the Armed Forces was unveiled by Brigadier-General Robert Smith, C.M.G., D.S.O.. It was pointed out at the time that the number of members who enlisted then proceeded overseas (59) was out of a total of 107 active members which was all the more worthy when it was remembered that the remainder were all over eligible age. Before unveiling the Honour Roll, Brigadier Smith stated, among other things -"The Germans -and they were the best judges -regarded the Australians as the finest fighters in the world. Someone had said that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton -if so then the last war was, in some measure, won in the sports arenas of Australia .It was there that a man learned the value of team work and the blacker things looked he knew that the harder he had to work and that was how the men acted on the other side."

Members who paid the supreme sacrifice were Messrs. N. E. Bechervaise, J. T. Crowle, G. P. Douglass, J. Disney, C. Elwell. S. Richardson, W. P. Woods and G. White.

In presenting the Annual Report Commodore Shannon stated that it had been decided that those members who had been incapacitated on active service should be made life members of the club. There were two to receive this privilege -Messrs. C. Hall and C. Hobday. Mr. Hall was present and received the congratulations of the Commodore on his return.

The Annual Report stated in part "The year closes with 158 members - exclusive of members still on service. During the year 23 have been crossed off the register. The year commenced with Cash at Bank amounting to £5-10-5d, and closed with an overdraft at Bank of £4-16-11d, but allowing for an advance of £15 to the slipway account there is a surplus of £10-3-1d. for the year. The Profit and Loss Account shows a profit of £16-10-2d."

The report went on to cover the results of the club aggregate for the season in which Commodore Shannon was successful in the Gannet with 26 points. Eileen was second with 23 points. Messrs. Bums Bros. Floris, and T. A. Wood's Kiora being equal for third place with 13 points each.

It also regretfully reported the loss of Mr. Wm. Smith's Salacia at Brighton during the year and at the same time congratulated him on his new venture in having secured the Tasmanian "crack" Petrel.

Mr. J.F.S. Shannon was re-elected as Commodore, Mr. T.A. Dickson Vice- Commodore and Dr. A. Sheppard Grimwade, Rear-Commodore with Mr. E. Brockman, Captain.

The annual subscription to the Yacht Club was set at one guinea for senior members and fifteen shillings for those of 18 years or under.

During 1919 two people were elected to membership of the club who were to play active parts in club affairs for many years to come. They were Mr. Dave English, elected on March 12, 1919 and Mr. Reg White, elected on October 27, 1919.

The first race for the season attracted sixteen entries, but only seven boats, all in one class, faced the starter. The event was won by Gannet from scratch.

Contemporary newspaper reports reveal the fact that throughout the season an average of only eight boats competed in club events, indicating that, although the Yacht Club was making steady progress, most people just did not have the money to indulge in what had become quite an expensive pastime. The last race for the season saw only seven starters with Gannet and Sylvia vying for the aggregate. Gaining third placing, with Sylvia unplaced, Gannet once again took out the trophy, with 28 points from Sylvia 27 points.

But the season had one real triumph for the Geelong Yacht Club. Mr. Wm. Smith, representing Geelong in the Petrel, won the prestigious Victorian Yacht Racing Association Challenge Cup. This event was at that time considered being the Championship of Port Phillip Bay and because of the great significance of this victory, the full report of this race is recorded here.

## **"Yachting Notes by Sail-locker.**

*The first race for the Victorian Yacht Racing Association's Challenge Cup was sailed during the season 1906-7, and was won by Mr. A. Drummond's Fidena for the Port Melbourne Yacht Club. Since then, in the yearly contests which have taken place for this cup -it carries with it the championship on sail area rating of Port Phillip -the representative of the Port Melbourne Yacht Club has year by year been the winner, with the exception of two occasions when Mr. J.W. Atkenson won for the St. Kilda Yacht Club with Siren. Before Siren came upon the scene, S.J.S. was the habitual winner. Thera made her first bid for the cup as a representative of the Brighton Yacht Club, but her skipper on that occasion infringed a rule, and on a protest she was disqualified, the race going to S.J.S. Next season, having been bought by Messrs. White and Cargill, her present owners, Thera was successful, and since then, bar her two defeats by Siren, has had a run of five successive wins. Last Saturday she was once again beaten, this time by Mr. W. Smith's Petrel, and for the first time in the history of the cup the Geelong Yacht Club has scored a victory.*

*Though the system of rating yachts on the sail area basis is a very simple one, the only factors required being length of water-line and sail area, and when it first came into existence some thirty years ago, was a great improvement on the previous rule, in the long run it was not found to be productive of good sea boats. The linear rating rule was then introduced, and, after modifications, developed into the present metre rating rule, of which many people still complain. The V.Y.R.A., however, having started by adopting it as its standard, has kept to it ever since, though the conditions of the cup permit of alteration if agreed upon. In Port Phillip there are very few boats which have been built to any rating rule in particular, so perhaps the V.Y.R.A. has been wise in keeping to its original idea, at any rate till something really definite in the method of measurement is settled upon.*

*This year saw six of the nine associated clubs represented. The challengers were Mr. W. S. Dagg's The Rip, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria; Mr. L. Randerson's Eun-na-Mara, Brighton Yacht Club; Mr. P. Damman's Killara, St. Kilda Yacht Club; Mr. W. Smith's Petrel, Geelong Yacht Club; Mr. E. Digby's Independence, Robson's Bay Yacht Club; and the defender, Messrs. White and Cargill's Thera, Port Melbourne Yacht Club. The course was 3 miles to windward from off the end of the Port Melbourne Town Pier, and back twice, 14 miles, and at the beginning there was a light south-easterly blowing and a smooth sea. At the start, at 3.15 p.m., there was a bit of a mix up between The Rip, Independence, and Eun-na-Mara, for which the former was mainly responsible, and by which the latter mostly suffered, having to take a tum round and crossing 1 min. 11 sec. late. The Rip was across 15 sec. after Gun-fire, and Petrel 2 sec. after her. Then came Killara, Independence and Thera. Once across, all six started out on their own individual courses, mainly working in towards the eastern shore. Eun-na-Mara, going in the smooth water in much better form than she has hitherto shown in Port Phillip, gradually overhauled the others, and at the windward mark, which she rounded at 4 h. 2 min. 36 sec., was 22 sec. ahead of Petrel. Thera rounded at 4 h. 5 min. 35 sec.; Independence at 4 h. 6 min. 10 sec.; Killara at 4 h. 10 min. 35 sec.; and The Rip, which had over stood her mark, 4 h. 11 min. With the exception of The Rip, which had her spinnaker drawing in less than 10 sec. after rounding, the others did not display any noticeable smartness. Thera's spinnaker seemed to have been twisted up for a rope, but Independence was smartest of the others. Eun-na-Mara increased her lead considerably in the run, and was over 4 min. to the good at the end of the round from Petrel. By then on proportionate times the race was between these two. On the beat out to the windward mark the wind freshened somewhat, and Petrel again showed what a smart little boat she is on the wind. At that mark she had gained over a minute, the times being: -Eun-na-Mara, 5 h. 14 min. 50 sec.; Petrel, 5 h. 17 min. 19 sec.; Independence, 5 h. 23 min. 3 sec.; Thera, 5 h. 23 min. 12 sec.; The Rip, 5 h. 36 min. 26 sec.; Killara, 5 h. 38 min. 43 sec. Eun-na-Mara, of course, scored again in the run home, but, from a spectacular point of view, the feature of the race was the battle between Independence and Thera.*

*For the 3Y 1/2 mile run home the two, with everything set, raced side by side, neither being in a position, nor wishing to blanket the other, and, at the finish, Thera crossed the line two or three feet ahead, 1/2 sec. to the good –a great race after 3 1/2 miles going."*

There is evidence that about this time, 1920, that moves were afoot to establish a building fund to enable extensions and alterations to the existing clubhouse to be carried out. This matter was brought up at the Annual General Meeting on October 13, 1920, when the Flag Officers from the previous year were elected unopposed.

The discussion at this meeting centred on the distribution of the proceeds of the forthcoming 1921 Geelong Regatta. Mr. Shannon stated that a delegation had waited on the civic authorities and had discussed the question. They went to the meeting with the idea of following the action of last year and dividing the profits between the Yacht Club and the Beach Beautification Scheme. The delegates were surprised when the Mayor indicated that it would be necessary to continue the Kitchener Memorial Hospital Appeal next year. Alderman Hitchcock suggested that the Yacht Club should give the entire proceeds of the Regatta to the Hospital. As the delegates were not empowered to commit themselves to this they promised to bring the matter before the next General Meeting. Mr. Dickson moved that half of the nett proceeds of the regatta should be given to the Hospital fund and the other half to the Club's building fund. This motion was carried.

Discussion then took place on the matter of a new clubhouse. The idea was to bring the present structure up to date. Mr. Dickson said that the premises would have to be attended to in order to

conform to the beach improvement scheme. Several suggestions were made as to the best means of raising the money required. Mr. Humble suggested that members should agree to voluntarily raise their yearly subscription for a number of years, the extra amount to be devoted to the building fund. This seemed to meet with general approval, several members intimating their willingness to comply. It was decided to bring the matter more directly under notice when subscriptions were due.

Before the meeting closed six of the members present promised to voluntarily increase their subscriptions for a set period. They were led by Commodore Shannon with a promise of £4-4-0d. (Instead of £1-1-0d) for the next five years.

During the year membership had increased from 155 to 185 and the cash at bank increased from £4.16.11d to £11.11.9d indicating a healthy, satisfactory state of affairs.

A Geelong newspaper report published late in 1920 stated –

*"It will be of interest to yachtsmen that Petrel owned by Commodore Smith of the Royal Yacht Club is coming to Geelong tomorrow. While here the boat will be overhauled and will remain over the holidays."*

The same report indicated that preparations were well in hand for the Geelong regatta to be held on January 29-31. 1921.

Great interest was centred on the forthcoming Association Challenge Cup and it was reported in January that the big yachts racing to Geelong from Williamstown would remain in Geelong to contest the Cup. Another contemporary report stated:-

*"A welcome addition to the G.Y.C. fleet is the S.J.S. which won the Association Cup for a number of years and was successful in other important events. The S.J.S. has been purchased by Mr. Wilfred Libby and will compete in the next Club event on February 12 (1921)."*

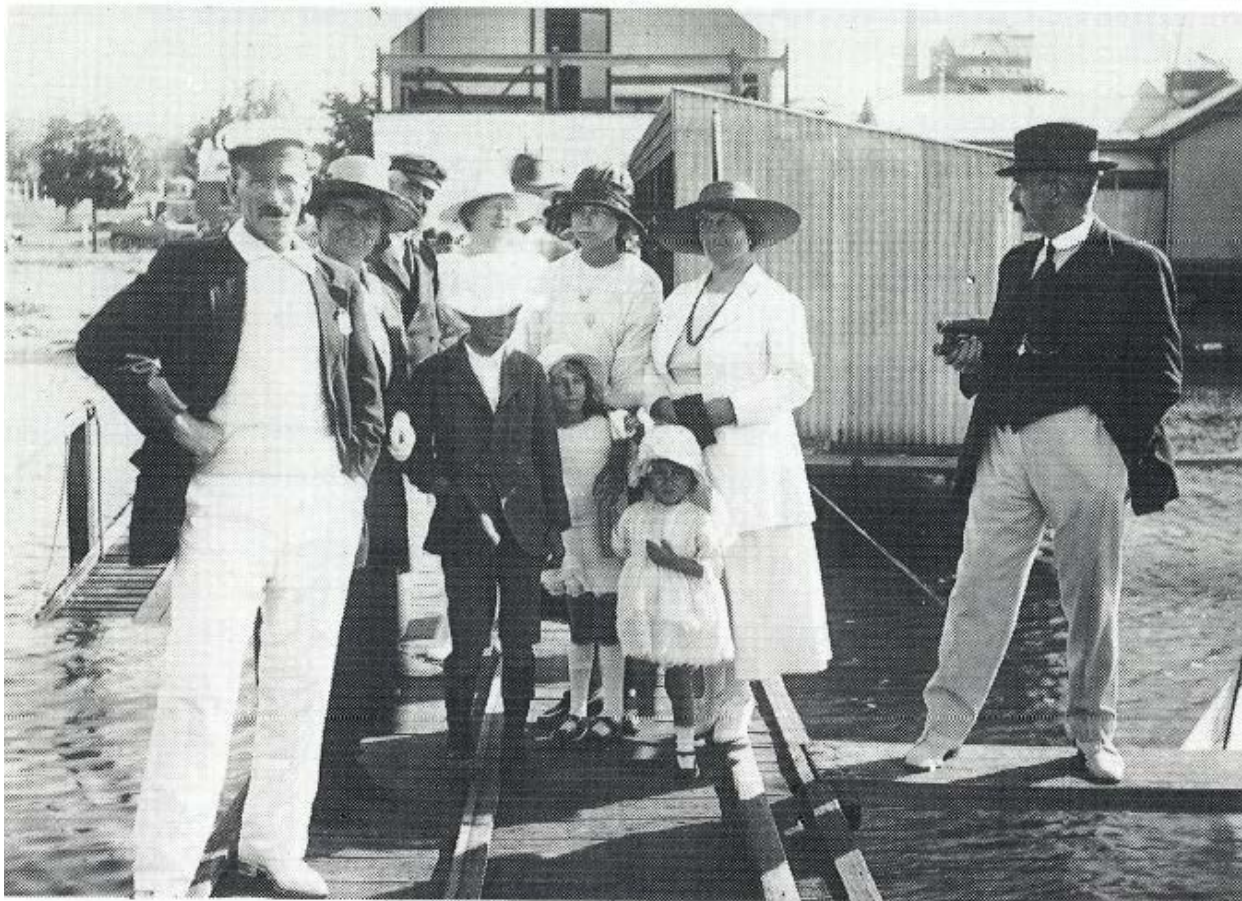
The Association Cup was sailed on Corio Bay on February 5, over a 12mile course, 6 miles to windward and 6 miles running. The event was won by Petrel. Results were as follows:-

Petrel	2hr. 4min. 58sec.	1
Eun-na-Mara	2hr. 5min. 47sec.	2
Heather	2hr. 8min. 34sec	3
Independence	2hr. 12min. 21sec	4
Yeulba	2hr. 14min. 29sec	5

At the Annual Meeting of the Club held on October 17, 1921, Mr. J.F.S. Shannon retired as Commodore. His place was taken by Dr. A. Sheppard Grimwade. Mr. W. Libby became Vice-Commodore, Mr. T.G. Woods, Rear Commodore, and Mr. E. Brockman, Captain.

Much interest at the meeting centred around the proposed extension and renovation of the existing clubhouse. It was revealed that plans were in the course of preparation to provide a modern serviceable structure appointed with every convenience which, when completed, would be a great improvement to the Eastern Beach.

Financial details presented to the meeting showed that the building fund had increased to £259.2.9d, an increase of £149.7 .2d. over the past 12 months.



Gathered on the Geelong Yacht Club jetty, about 1922 are from left to right, (adults only) Ted Powell, Mrs. H. Anderson (sister of Wilfred Libby), Dr. S. Grimwade (head only), Mrs. Grimwade, ?, Mrs. A. Anderson, W. Curnow (owner of "Caress").



Opening Day: circa 1921.

Further evidence of the interest of members in the project was furnished by the fact that more than £100 had been promised in weekly contributions. It was calculated that this, with other monies in view would still further augment the fund by the end of the season. Officials were depending upon the annual regatta and carnival for a large sum for the building fund.

At the General Committee meeting on October 24, 1921, it was agreed that the amount of trophy money promised by the Mayor, Alderman H. Hitchcock, be earmarked for the purchase of a Perpetual Shield to be held by the season's aggregate winning yacht owner for 12 months. This would be known as the "H. Hitchcock Perpetual Shield." This renowned trophy is still in existence today.

As a sign of the times the following comments were made by the Geelong Advertiser yachting writer of the time, "Freeboard", in an article published just prior to the opening of the 1921-22 season:-

*"Owing to the prohibitive costs there have been no new boats built of late but now that the market is a little easier several members are contemplating building in the near future. This being so I think that it is time that a type of boat should be adopted for a class suitable to the bay. Already we have two boats which could be selected as the standard for two classes and might be termed A & B Class boats. The boats I refer to are the Gannet and E.W.M.. The first-named has proved herself a worthy craft, a fine cruiser with a good tum of speed. Although the E.W.M. is new to these waters, her class is known as belonging to the restricted class and was established several years back by the Victorian Yacht Racing Association. This class of boat is going to prove most popular amongst yachtsmen, as they are known to be speedy and safe boats for the younger member. The cost of building a boat of this class is not out of the way. There are at least six new boats of this class under construction in different States, and it is expected ere long to have Inter-State races for this class. By the adoption of class racing the Geelong Club would be making a step in the right direction and if only one boat was added for the first year it would not be long before the class was firmly established. It would provide more interesting racing and keener rivalry amongst the owners. The handicaps would require little adjusting and the general public would be able to follow the racing as they would know that there was little difference in time allowance, the first boat home being the winner."*

This was indeed a prophetic statement by "Freeboard". For although it was to be some years before class racing would take place in Geelong there was already moves afoot in Melbourne and in other States to establish this type of competition with the 21- 25 foot restricted class as the chosen yacht. The E.W.M. was one of the first of this class and several more of these twenty-one footers, as they were known, were to grace the waters of Corio Bay as time went on.

The first of this class was the historic "Idler" designed and built by Charles Peel at his Port Melbourne boat yard in 1909. The restrictions placed on the class were for regulation hulls of 25 feet overall with a waterline of 21 feet. Beam was restricted to a minimum of seven feet and a maximum of eight feet. Draft at the keel was to be twenty inches. The centreplate of not more than 3/8 of an inch thickness was to project below the hull not more than three feet six inches. At first the sail area specified was 375 square feet but this was later increased to 450 square feet.

The class proved to be immensely popular around Australia, due, in no small measure to the fillip given to the class by Vice-Regal patronage. For it was Lord Forster, then Governor-General of Australia, who initiated the Forster Cup for Annual Interstate competition for the twenty-one

footers. The Cup was to be sailed in the States in rotation irrespective of the home state of the holder of the Cup.

The first of the Forster Cups was contested in 1922 in Sydney in which Victoria was represented by Lord Forster's Corella since Lord Forster, as Governor-General, was residing then in Government House, Melbourne.

The twenty-ones were never raced as a class in the Geelong Club events, but did race as a class in many Williamstown to Geelong events and at Geelong regattas.

However class racing has since become very popular in Geelong with such notable designs as the Dragon, Thunderbird, International Cadet Dinghy, Fireball, Laser, Flying Fifteen and Flying Dutchmen now were competing regularly.

The 1921-22 Season saw the last race sailed in early March. It was reported that an average of 10 boats faced the starter throughout the season with an average of eight finishers. Four boats dominated the season's racing and the twenty-one footer, E.W.M. won the aggregate with 29 points out of a possible 40. She thus became the first boat to have her name inscribed on the Harold Hitchcock Perpetual Shield. The other three boats who performed well were Kia Ora 23 points, S.J.S. 20 points and Gannet 17 points.

At a Special Meeting of the Committee held at the club house on March 5, 1922, two matters of considerable importance were discussed.

First a report was tabled from a special sub-committee appointed to wait on the Mayor asking for a site on the Eastern foreshore for the erection of a new clubhouse. After hearing the report and exhaustive discussion, it was decided to ask for a deputation to be received at the next monthly meeting of the Council. It was also decided to write to Mr. Arthur Peck asking him to come to Geelong, inspect the site and prepare plans to present to the Council.

Secondly, at the close of the meeting Mr. Wiggs moved and Mr. Bechervaise seconded –

"That the Club apply to the Admiralty for a warrant to fly the Blue Ensign and Crown on the burgee and adopt the name of The Royal Geelong Yacht Club, the whole application be left to the Commodore, Dr. A. Sheppard Grimwade." This motion was carried unanimously.



Gathering at the Yacht Club: Circa 1924.

In front are, left to right: Harry Bechervaise, E. Brockman, Wilfred Libby, Dr. S. Grimwade ,  
Commodore, Tom Woods, Walter Wiggs, Hon. Secretary, H. McGuiness, Handicapper , Reg White,  
Len Johnston