

## Chapter 11

# THE QUESTION OF A LIQUOR LICENCE

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Mr. Neil McAllister was elected Commodore in August, 1953, a position in which he was to serve with distinction for the next two years.

The Club continued to progress satisfactorily, with increasing membership and more yachts coming on the register. And with this increase came increasing pressure for an improvement and extension of the club premises, together with persistent moves for the club to obtain a liquor licence. It was very apparent that at the conclusion of Saturday afternoon races there would be a mass exodus of members to the nearby hotels where over a few convivial drinks, the race would be re-sailed. Observant members, led by immediate Past-Commodore Alan Taylor, saw this situation as a disadvantage to the Club. "Why" they asked, "should the local hotels benefit when money being spent on after-race conviviality could well be flowing into the coffers of the club?" But the big problem of course, was the club's landlord - the Geelong Harbour Trust, which had always been opposed, no doubt with some justification, to intoxicating liquor being consumed on the club premises.

At a special committee meeting held on November 24, 1953, at Commodore McAllister's request, Mr. Alan Taylor reported on the licence situation as follows :-

*"At present the only methods by which a licence could be obtained are -*

- 1. An Act of Parliament*
- 2. Purchase from another club.*
- 3. New legislation.*

*The purchase of a licence would cost the club about five thousand pounds."*

It was unanimously agreed by the committee that other premises should be sought for a licence and that every possible step be taken to obtain a licence. Vice-Commodore Ken Nall moved that a sub-committee consisting of the Commodore, Rear-Commodore, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Ran McAllister, with the power to co-opt the honorary legal officer, if necessary, be formed and make investigations as to the possibility of obtaining a licence at suitable premises. This motion was carried unanimously. Then at a committee meeting held on June 15, 1954, further discussion took place with regard to the obtaining of a licence and despite what had been agreed at the previous committee meeting on this subject, members of the committee now felt that it would be advisable for the licence, if one was obtained, to be obtained for the present club premises. It was agreed however that it would be necessary to make certain alterations to the club house to enable a bar to be installed. Also at this meeting it was suggested by Vice-Commodore Ken Nall that a letter be sent to the commissioners of the Harbour Trust asking whether they had any objections to the club endeavouring to obtain a licence on club premises. It was resolved that this letter would be sent. But the commissioners stood firm and replied as follows:-

*"In reply to your letter of 16 June, I have been directed by the commissioners to state that as the landlords of the club premises, they unanimously disapprove the idea of the sale or disposal thereof of any intoxicants."*

Following the reading of this letter it was agreed that a deputation consisting of the Commodore, the Rear-Commodore and the Secretary wait upon the Harbour Trust commissioners to enquire further as to the possibility of obtaining a licence and what would be required to achieve this objective. This deputation waited upon the commissioners, who then wrote a letter reporting that the decision of the Harbour Trust Commissioners had not been altered and that they would in no way agree to intoxicating liquor being sold on club premises.

The matter was again raised at the annual general meeting of members held on August 27, 1954, when following some discussion, it was unanimously decided by those members present that a licence, if any, be applied for only on the premises that the club at present occupied. And so the matter appeared to rest. Commodore McAllister reported on this subject to the half-yearly meeting of members held on 25 March, 1955. He informed members of the attitude of the Harbour Trust commissioners and stated that a letter had been sent to the local Minister for Mines, Mr. Ferguson, requesting him to approach the Government to see what could be done in the matter. In due course a letter was received from the Minister for Public Works, Mr. Merrifield, who stated that he had read and studied all of the correspondence submitted by this club to the commissioners and received from the commissioners by this club and in the circumstances he could not see his way clear to intervene in the matter. Commodore McAllister further reported that under these circumstances, the honorary architects had been asked to hold what they were doing for the time being until and if it does become possible to carry out the intentions to obtain a liquor licence.

Following the resignation of Commodore Neil McAllister at a special general committee meeting held on October 8, 1955, because of his imminent move to West Australia, his brother, Mr. Ranald McAllister, was elected as Commodore. The question of improving the area of the clubhouse and facilities in general was still very much in the minds of the committee and at a meeting held shortly after Commodore Ranald McAllister took over, it was resolved that a sub-committee be formed to investigate the possibility of some action in this matter. This sub-committee was to consist of the Commodore, the Vice-Commodore, Mr. Arthur Heggie, the Rear- Commodore, Mr. Eustace Wilson and Messrs. R. White and A. Taylor. In December, 1955, it came to the notice of the club that land to the west of the present club premises owned by the Harbour Trust was shortly to become vacant and it was resolved that the club take immediate action to ensure that the Royal Geelong Yacht Club had the first opportunity to secure this property.

At the half-yearly meeting of members in March, 1956, Commodore McAllister made mention of and gave brief details of the master development plan in course of preparation. At the request of members present, Mr. Alan Taylor spoke briefly on this matter and warned members that the expenditure likely to be incurred would be very considerable. He also warned members that much higher subscriptions would probably be necessary. This matter was further ventilated at the April general committee meeting, when Mr. Taylor gave a comprehensive report on the proposed development and building plan. The matter of procuring an extended lease from the Harbour Trust was discussed as well as the possibility of procuring a liquor licence.

At the May 1956 committee meeting, Mr. Alan Taylor gave further details of the building programme. With the aid of drawings he explained the three stages costing first £5,000, second £3,500 and thirdly, £2,500, totalling £11,000, plus a further £1,000 for furnishing. He stated that in interview with the A.N.Z. Bank they had intimated that they were agreeable to finance the scheme on a £1 for £1 basis with the club repayable at £1,000 per annum. Mr. Taylor said he thought that the bank would be agreeable to a 20 to 25-year lease. Commodore McAllister then gave details of an interview he had had with Mr. Spencer Nall of the Harbour Trust and the possibility of the securing of a lease of possibly 20 to 25 years. The Commodore stated that he was of the opinion that an

application for such a lease would be favourably received. Following further discussion, members of the finance committee stated that it would be necessary to increase the subscription for members to a minimum of ten pounds per annum if such a scheme as had been presented by Mr. Taylor was to be financed. The problem facing the committee resolved itself into whether the proposed raise in subscriptions should be put before a general meeting without enough indication from the Harbour Trust that they would not object to a liquor licence of the club if granted. Rear-Commodore Wilson finally suggested that some form of unofficial deputation might be made to the Harbour Trust and/or Mr. Spencer Nall. Finally, it was resolved that Mr. Smith and Mr. Taylor should interview Mr. Nall and explain the problem. Mr. Smith duly reported back to the committee and gave details of his interview with Mr. Nall, in company with Mr. Alan Taylor. He said that they were very pleased with the impressions they got from Mr. Nall, who naturally would not commit himself personally.

Mr. Smith suggested that a letter applying for a lease of 25 years, together with all plans of drawings of the proposed alterations be submitted to the Harbour trust as quickly as possible. It was agreed that Mr. Eustace Wilson would draft such a letter. The letter would also indicate that in the course of time a liquor licence would be applied for only after making proper application to the Trust for approval.

A special general meeting of members was called for Friday, June 29, 1956, seeking approval to raise the subscription for senior members to ten guineas and other classifications accordingly. After lengthy discussion the motion was put to the meeting. Of the 87 members who voted, there were 57 who voted "Yes" and 30 who voted "No ". As it was necessary for two-thirds majority, the motion was lost by 1 vote: The matter was brought up again at a further special general meeting held prior to the Annual General meeting on August 17, 1956, but again the motion to increase the subscription to ten guineas per member was defeated, this time by 5 votes. But it was finally agreed by a further Special General Meeting held on September 28, 1956, that the subscriptions would be raised to eight guineas per year.

In the meantime, it was becoming apparent that the land to the west of the present club premises would be available very shortly, and a letter was written to the commissioners seeking their approval for a lease of this land to be granted to the club.

At the annual general meeting of members held on August 15, 1958, Mr. Howard Glover was elected as Commodore, with Mr. Robin Robins Vice-Commodore and Mr. R. Sanderson Rear, Commodore. At this meeting Commodore Glover gave details of suggestions and preliminary planning done by the building committee. He mentioned that it was expected to have £5,000 in the building fund this year and at this stage, around £4,000 had been promised by members in debentures. Mr. Glover made particular mention that tenders would be called for the new clubhouse. At about this same time a letter was received from the Geelong Harbour Trust advising the club that the Trust was prepared to lease them the land becoming vacant to the west of the present premises. And so the matter of the erection of a new clubhouse was proceeding satisfactorily, and at the half-yearly meeting of members held on March 20, 1959, Mr. Dick Gibson, the club's honorary architect, gave a very detailed explanation of the building plans. Commodore Glover then gave the estimated cost of the proposed clubhouse at around about £25 ,000. He went on to explain how it was proposed to raise the necessary finance by way of debenture issue and overdraft. He further pointed out that the furnishings of the new clubhouse were not included in the estimate, but that the associates were endeavouring to raise money for the furnishings. Commodore Glover further indicated that the club was in a position whereby it would be able to proceed with the actual building of the new premises within a few weeks. And at this meeting, on the motion of Messrs. J. Collins and J. Fisher, approval was given to the general committee to proceed immediately with the building of the new clubhouse.

A vote of thanks was also passed to Messrs. R. Gibson and Alan Taylor for the very good job of hard work they had done in drawing up the plans and estimates for the new clubhouse. On May 6, 1959, the Geelong Harbour Trust wrote a letter indicating that they would vacate the site to the west of the present premises by the end of that month, and in July, authorisation was given by the members to go ahead and call tenders for the new building. The successful tenderer was J.C. Taylor & Sons Pty. Ltd.

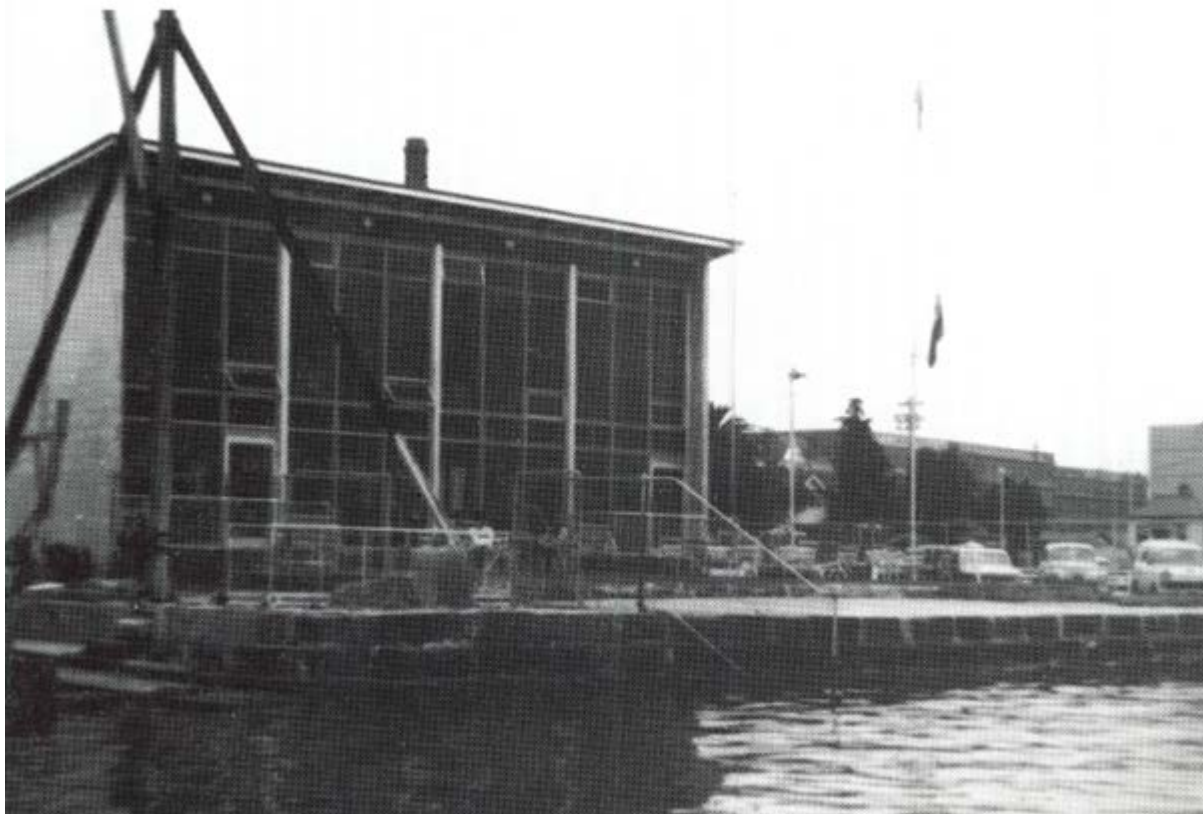
At the annual general meeting of the club on August 14, 1959, authorisation was given to the committee by the members to raise £10,000 by the issue of 2,000 debentures at £5 each. The debentures were to bear an interest rate of 5 per cent. Also at this meeting, at the request of Commodore Glover, Mr. Alan Taylor made brief mention of the preparatory work which had gone into the planning of the clubhouse. He said that he felt fairly confident that it would be ready for occupation by Christmas.

It is apparent that up to this period the club had been in a "catch 22" situation. A liquor licence could not be obtained until such time as premises suitable to requirements of the Liquor Control Board were available. But at the same time the sale of liquor by the club was needed to fund the cost of construction of new premises.

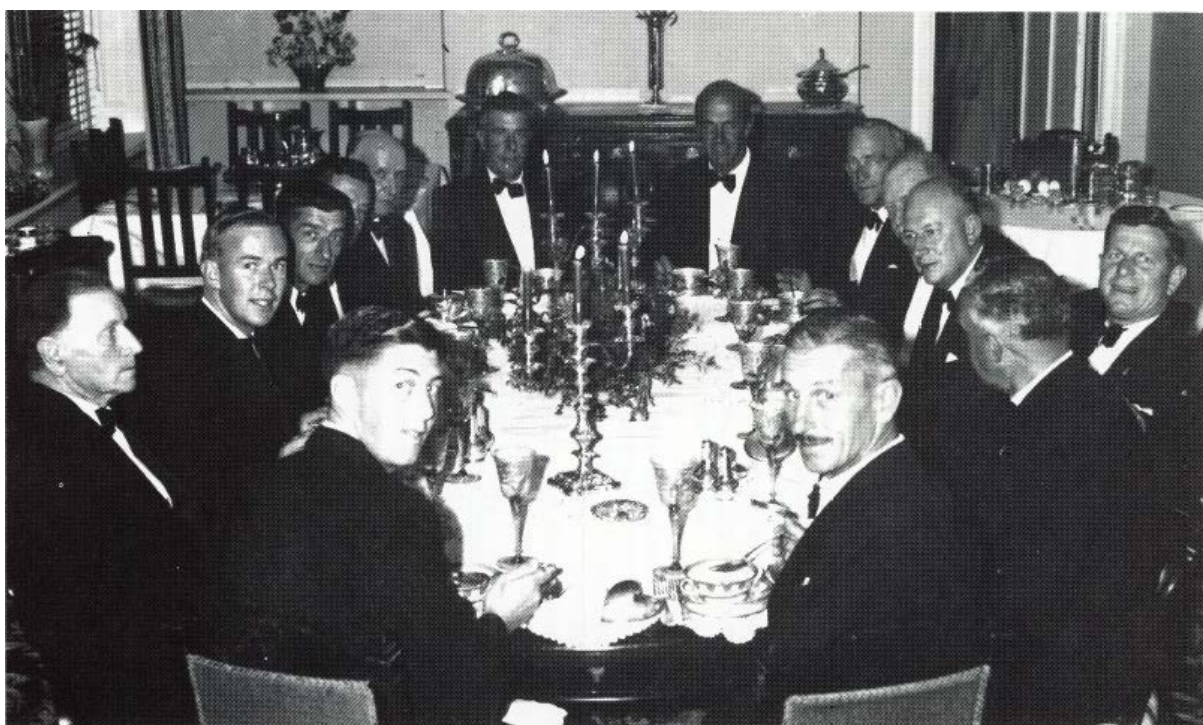
As stated, the problem was overcome by borrowing the necessary money by means of bank overdraft and debentures and trusting that the licence would be granted when the premises were completed. It was, it would seem, a calculated risk, but one which eventually reached a successful conclusion.

The foresight and courage of their convictions of the club officials of that time is to be admired. Howard Glover is high in his praise of the great amount of work and planning carried out by the late Eustace Wilson in the negotiations to obtain a licence. It certainly must be very gratifying to these gentlemen to see the great fruits of their work and planning which is so evident in our club today.

The new clubhouse was occupied in the early months of 1960 and the liquor licence was obtained in October in the same year. The saga of the new clubhouse and the liquor licence reached a gratifying conclusion.



New Clubhouse: Stage 1. Circa 1961



In 1959, a dinner was held at the Terminus Hotel in the same room as the meeting held on March 4, 1859, to commemorate the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Club.

Clockwise from the bottom of the table (closest to the camera)

Robin Robins, Ernie Brockman, Russell Smith, Frank Heyward, Jim Searle (partly obscured), William Smith, Cr Les Backwell (Mayor of Geelong), Commodore Howard Glover, Reg White, Lyle Macready, Norm Whitelaw, Jack Fitzgerald, Arthur Heggie and Roy Sanderson.