

Chapter 13

A MAJOR CLUBHOUSE REDEVELOPMENT

As stated in the last chapter there was now a strong feeling that whilst the new clubhouse was a major step forward, it was already felt to be inadequate and the Club's Honorary Architect, Mr. Alex Chomley, was asked to draw up plans for a major rearrangement of the existing facility and an extension to the west.

These plans were inspected by the General Committee at a meeting held on March 19, 1970. And it was resolved that with some minor alterations they be accepted in principle.

Then in July a master plan of the property was prepared for presentation to members at the Annual General Meeting on August 20, 1970. The Honorary Architect was also asked to prepare the necessary specifications and working drawings for stage 1 of the project.

There was a change in Flag Officers at the Annual Meeting with Commodore John Collins being elected for a further term but with Murray McAllister being elected Vice Commodore and Ron Earney Rear Commodore.

In order to finance the proposed development it was considered necessary to re-examine the current debenture issue and seek authority from members for a further issue. To accomplish this, in September 1970, a Debenture Follow-up Sub-Committee was appointed from the General Committee. The sub-committee was made up of Vice Commodore Murray McAllister, Messrs. C.R. Brunton, B.L. Saunders, M. Donald and E. Hill. Eventually members' approval was obtained to raise the interest rate on the current debenture issue from 6% to 10% per annum and develop a further issue at 10% redeemable in 10 years.

In January 1971, following the presentation of a financial report prepared by Messrs. Marshman, Saunders & Co., it was agreed that the Committee was of the opinion that the club could service \$53,000 for the purpose of constructing Stage 1.

At this time the bar in the club was of an "island" nature, running in an east-west direction. The front portion serviced the north or front lounge while the rear portion serviced the "members only" bar to the south, which also housed the billiard table.

Another "entrant" into the financial situation at this time was Carlton United Breweries who, after negotiation and being consulted on the most desirable re-design for the bar, agreed to loan the club \$10,000 at 8 1/4% over a period of ten years.

And so, despite considerable opposition from some members, it was finally agreed that the island bar would be removed and that the new bar would run mainly in a north-south direction, curving like an inverted letter "L" to the east into the main lounge, and that the members bar, as such, would cease to exist.

This whole plan was conveyed to members by means of a letter sent out by Vice-Commodore McAllister on July 25, 1971. The context of this letter which clearly explains the entire redevelopment was as follows:-

"ROYAL GEELONG YACHT CLUB

29th July, 1971

Dear Member,

Re: Club House Development.

Since reporting to you at the last Half-yearly Meeting of Members, many matters associated with the building programme have undergone review by your General Committee.

The opportunity to make this review was brought about by the disappointing response to the original Debenture Issue, leaving the Club short of the funds necessary to proceed, and the fact that tender prices received were in excess of the budget estimates. A re-look, therefore, has been taken, covering matters such as finance, refinements to design, reassessment of priorities and construction methods.

Accordingly your General Committee has directed that Members be re- informed on the current state of affairs and particularly that Debenture holders are made aware of the manner in which it is proposed that Club Building Funds are being put to use. Firstly, the proposal to seek additional funds by the issue of Debentures at an interest bearing rate of 10% has not been proceeded with. This decision was arrived at in view of the fact that our Bankers agreed to provide an extension of \$15,000 to our overdraft and negotiations with the Carlton and United Breweries for a \$10,000 loan at bank interest has been successful. This gave a total availability of \$41,000 for rebuilding, which was considered to be adequate to complete the revised Stage 1 programme (which is detailed hereunder), but not to carpet or furnish the lounges.

Secondly, a fresh look was taken at the overall plan and it became evident that by making a revision of priorities, many additional amenities could be made available to Members. Therefore it was decided to defer Stage 1 (Wardroom) and proceed with Stage II (Lounge extension to the West). This method will provide the following amenities all to be incorporated in Stage I.

- a) A new drop ceiling west extension to the main lounge covering 11 squares (approx.) with aluminium windows to the north and east faces of the extension.*
- b) A new modern bar with latest equipment and re-sited to serve an extended Members' bar area as well as the General Lounge. The new bar layout provides for opening up both bar areas as one. The new facilities will include a built in Cool Room with doors to bar and enlarged liquor storage.*
- c) Enlarged and re-equipped kitchen, including Staff cloak room and increased storage facilities.*
- d) Folding doors at the new lounge extension and between Members' and Main lounge to provide flexibility of Club areas.*
- e) Panelled Honour Wall and Trophy Case in new lounge extension.*
- f) A new Committee room adjacent to the new lounge extension and Secretary's office.*
- g) Increased toilet facilities for ladies, including a shower; larger general cloak room and an increase in Senior Members' locker room.*
- h) A new section of mezzanine floor running along East wall of main lounge. It is envisaged that the area beneath this extension will be used as a Wardroom pending the construction of the ultimate Wardroom as part of Stage II.*

- i) A new Billiard Room located in the area previously shown for the new Committee room.

STAGE II

- a) A new Wardroom to the East of the existing lounge.
- b) A new balcony extension North from the mezzanine floor.

Incorporated in the above re-planning are many minor refinements too numerous to elaborate on here, but which may be examined in the plans being exhibited in the Club Rooms.

Thirdly, in view of the fact that tender prices were in excess of our expectations, your General Committee decided to become its own Prime Contractor. The services of an experienced Master Builder were sought, and the Club is indeed fortunate that a former member and a well-known Geelong identity, Mr. Harold Leach, has agreed to be our building Organiser. Mr. Leach will provide his services on an honorary basis and we fully anticipate that the building will proceed at a financial saving to the Club and with a minimum of inconvenience to Members. In addition, your General Committee has appointed a building Administrative Committee comprising the following Members:-

<i>Vice-Commodore</i>	<i>M. McAllister -Chairman</i>
<i>Rear Commodore</i>	<i>Mr. R .J. Earney</i>
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	<i>Mr. C. R. Brunton</i>
	<i>Mr. M. Donald</i>
	<i>Mr. E. Hill.</i>

The Building Organiser is responsible to the Administrative Committee, which in turn answers to the General Committee.

The main issue at stake, no doubt, is the question "When do we start?", and in this respect I am pleased to advise that most of the detailed plans and specifications have been worked out and subject to Consultants' opinions on foundations, the construction of the West Lounge extension and Committee Room will commence within a week of the receipt of this letter. The General Committee wishes to thank all those Debenture Holders who have contributed generously to this project. These funds have been provided by a comparatively small number of Members. The Committee, therefore, appeals to all Members to give further consideration to the taking of Debentures at this stage. The issue has not closed and there is no doubt that additional funds will have to be raised to provide the carpets and furnishings necessary to establish our Club as the best in the surrounds of Port Phillip.

Yours faithfully,

*(signed.) Murray McAllister Vice Commodore
Chairman, Building Administrative Committee."*

And so, with Mr. Harold Leach in control the development got under way and proceeded apace with few hitches and only minor delays. Having been associated with the building industry for many years Mr. Leach had ready access to the necessary materials and was able to engage suitable tradesmen for all areas.

So whilst the club itself, through Murray McAllister's Committee, was its own Prime Contractor, Mr. Leach performed the actual supervision and co-ordination, reporting regularly to the Committee. During the four months which it took to complete the development, Harold Leach spent many hours at the club and there is no doubt that his substantial contribution saved the Club many thousands of dollars.

As the southern end of the new west lounge was to be used as an area for dancing on club social occasions and a popular dance at that time was the Kangaroo Hop, some concern was evinced by some members that the floor in that area may not stand up to the strain of this energetic activity, special reinforcing was therefore carried out in this area and everyone's fears were allayed!

Another matter which arose at that time concerned the famous or infamous black mat. The black mat was a strip of rubber about five feet wide which covered the floor in front of the bar in the north lounge. When the new clubhouse had first been opened, Associates and other females were required to be seated at all times in the lounge and had to rely on steward service to obtain drinks. Later this rule was relaxed and they were allowed to stand. But they were NOT permitted to encroach on the "black mat" and, so therefore, could still not obtain bar service. Although this was an unwritten rule it was rigidly enforced, much to the chagrin of a number of associates who were regular frequenters of the club and valued customers of the bar.

So when the time came for the demolition of the bar in preparation for the development of the new layout, the "black mat" had to be removed. Led by Murray McAllister, a group of members and associates gathered at the club for the Ceremony of the removal of the "Black Mat". Amidst much hilarity and cheering, the ceremony was duly carried out and the black mat and all it stood for became a thing of the past.

At the August Annual General Meeting Murray McAllister was elected Commodore with Ron Earney Vice Commodore and Barry Burke Rear Commodore. Murray McAllister therefore became the third of three brothers to be elected to this high position. This would be a unique record for any yacht club.

The final task in putting the finishing touches to the new West Lounge was the panelling of the west wall. Commodore McAllister's committee selected a 3/16" ply which Harold Leach was able to obtain in Melbourne. The full length sheets of this timber about four feet wide were then attached to the studs and battens of the wall with a very strong adhesive. This work was personally performed by Harold Leach and the result was a fine wall running the entire length of the room. This was then polished and a sign writer called in to record in gold lettering, the historical data relating to the club. This includes Past Commodores, Championship and Aggregate winners etc. in all classes.

The next thing was the acquisition and erection of a beautiful large trophy cabinet in which are housed the numerous valuable perpetual trophies of the Club. This Cabinet was generously donated by the Club's Honorary Architect, Mr. Alex Chomley.

On November 13, 1971, the new lounge was officially opened by Commodore Murray McAllister and a small bronze plate fixed to the central pillar dividing the West lounge from the main lounge commemorates the occasion. The fact that Commodore McAllister performed the Opening Ceremony was a fitting tribute to the person who, according to Harold Leach, was the main driving force behind the whole re-development programme. In recognition of his untiring efforts in supervising and co-ordinating the building of the re-developed clubhouse over a period of some six months, during which time he spent many hours of nearly every day at the club, the General Committee, at a meeting on November 25, 1971, resolved to recommend to the next Annual

General Meeting that Mr. Harold Leach be made an Honorary Life Member of the Club. In due course this recommendation was adopted.

A further important acquisition by the club during Murray McAllister's term of office was the club flagpole. At that time Cr. Frank Moore, who owned the lovely ocean racing yacht "Caraid" decided to replace the mast. At the suggestion of Commodore McAllister, Cr. Moore donated the old mast to the Club to be converted into a flagpole which the club did not have at that time. Not only did he give the mast but he also made a donation of \$250 towards the cost of the conversion as well as physically participating in the necessary work involved. The result was a grand new flagpole situated near the water at the north-west corner of the lawn which has served and will serve the club for many years.

At the Annual General Meeting in August 1972, Commodore McAllister and Vice Commodore Ron Earney were elected for a further term, but Barry Burke stood down as Rear Commodore, his place being taken by Mr. Brian Marshman.

In August 1973, Murray McAllister completed his two year term as Commodore, during which time the club had made significant progress. His place was taken by Ron Earney, with Brian Marshman becoming Vice Commodore and Ron Moody Rear Commodore.