

Yachts to Race Across Bass Strait

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By H. C. BROOKE

REVIVED after a lapse of 22 years the Ocean Yacht Race from Port Phillip to Tamar Heads, Tasmania, will be sailed this week, starting on Thursday (Boxing Day). Seven boats, including Wanderer, from New South Wales, will compete. The fleet includes T. A. Dickson's Shamrock, which finished second in the event in 1907.

The revival will put deep-sea racing in Australia on the map again, and, it is hoped, will result in the race becoming an annual event.

There are few active yachtsmen who sailed in the first race, Mr W. T. ("Wally") Wiggs, the popular secretary of the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, was a member of the Shamrock's crew on that occasion. The Shamrock got within 10 miles of Low Head and was blown 50 miles to sea by terrific gales. Tossed about under bare poles, she finally made Tamar after a hectic 10 hours at the mercy of the waves and 70 hours out from Queenscliff.

"Wally" was very keen to take part in the event this year, but his duties as secretary prevented him from accepting the invitation of Mr E. B. Slater to sail on the Shamrock again. He also had to decline the offer of a Bass Strait cruise with Dr. A. Sheppard Grimwade on the motor yacht Stradbroke.

One of the most amusing incidents associated with the Shamrock's race was the appointment by Mr Dickson of a "deep sea yachtsman" to the crew. He impressed everyone with his "knowledge" in deep sea navigation.

Sailing down to the starting point at Queenscliff, he was in high glee and kept the crew in good spirits with rollicking sea songs.

In the Rip, Wiggs and he were adjusting a block, when he was struck on the head. At least, he complained to Mr Dickson that he had been bit by the block. From that time he would not leave his bunk. When tossed in the worst 10 hours of the trip, "Wally", who was cook, smoked him out of his cabin. It was the end of the "deep sea yachtsmen." As soon as he saw them "green" his actions were very different from those of a deep-sea yachtsman.

Some time ago the Royal St. Kilda Yacht Club decided on an effort to revive the race, and by dint of hard work Mr D. Brumby, the secretary, has organised so that the entrants can make an early start Thursday.

Ocean racing is a vastly different proposition from sailing an ordinary 12-mile course in a bay. The length of the journey keeps the boats out in the open for one or two days. Good weather may prevail in the early stages, but it is probable that strong breezes will be encountered on some part of the voyage.

Many are of the opinion that, for ocean racing, only very small sails should be used. This is entirely wrong. The sail area should be such that it will enable the boat to be fairly fast in light to moderate breezes, so that good distances may be covered while conditions are favourable. I do not mean that the yachts should carry large areas with huge spars that would be almost impossible to handle in strong breezes but moderate sails, under which a boat could do her best in moderate weather.

T. A. Dixon, Skipper of Shamrock in the last race in 1907, stated in his log that had he not reefed his boat down so much in the early stages, when the weather, though threatening, was comparatively good, he would have completed the journey in about 40 hours, instead of 70 hours.

The Royal St. Kilda Yacht Club has set stringent conditions to ensure the safety of the boats. All boats will carry amateur crews and Corinthian helmsmen. Boats under 12 tons (gross measurement) may carry two paid hands, and over 12 tons, three paid hands. Each yacht must carry a navigator, who shall be in possession of a recognised certificate or approved by the committee.

Before starting, the skipper of each yacht must satisfy the committee that he has on board charts, compasses, lead-line, requisite lights, a fire extinguisher and a log-book, which must be kept with hourly entries during the race. The handicaps and ratings of the competitors are:—

Boat. Rating Handicap

Worane	46	Scratch
Wanderer	40.5	1hr. 20min.
Saguenay	29.	4hr 15min
Shamrock	28	4hr 30min
Maysie	27	4hr 45min
Oimara	24.5	5hr 20min
Phillis	26.5	6hr 20min

The lengths and sail area of the boats are: —

Worane: length 38ft. 8in., Sail Area 954 sq ft

Wanderer: 46ft 6in, 1087 sq ft.

Saguenay: 48ft 6in, 900 sq ft.

Shamrock: 38ft 6in, 800sq ft.

Maysie: 35ft, 928 sq ft.

Oimara: 43ft, 655 sq ft,

Phillis 45 ft, 584sq ft



Maysie is one of the Victorian representatives in the race across Bass Strait.

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