



# **Ballaarat Yacht Club**

**1877 — 2002**

**One hundred and twenty-five  
years of yacht racing on  
Lake Wendouree**

**By Peter Mansfield**



## **Acknowledgements**

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also .....

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### ***Cover:***

*Ballarat Yacht Club's  
25 footer 'Valdera'  
leads the fleet at the first  
Vintage and Open Classes Regatta,  
November 1991.*

## Preface

The Ballaarat Yacht Club was formed on 29 May 1877 and held its first annual regatta on 30 November 1877. This in itself is not remarkable because Ballarat's pioneers had already formed a number of sporting clubs and were involved in hundreds of other civic, religious and educational pursuits. What was remarkable about the Ballaarat Yacht Club was the confidence and success of its members who raced five- and six-ton yachts on a lake that was notorious for its shallow, swampy conditions.

By the 1880s, the typical yachting season extended over 23 weeks of the year during which the club provided generous prizes, fierce competition and lavish hospitality. Annual regattas attracted huge crowds and the local newspapers provided extensive coverage of each race - in addition to reports of yachting mishaps, modifications and disputed race results. Edward Morey, one of Ballarat's most successful mining speculators and the backbone of the BYC lost none of his competitive edge on the water and regarded it as a compliment when his yachting colleagues once described him 'as fierce as a male rodent en route to a dance'.

Throughout the twentieth century the Ballaarat Yacht Club continued to evolve. Due to lake conditions, the larger yachts eventually gave way to the smaller classes of yachts including Dinghies, Moths, Sharpies, Quickcats and, later again, the Sailboards. For 125 years BYC members have enjoyed considerable success on Lake Wendouree and at other regattas throughout Australia. Another particular feature of the Club's development has been its ability to attract junior sailors who have moved on to pennant racing.

Whilst researching and writing this brief history of the Ballaarat Yacht Club, I have been greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm and knowledge of Jack McLeod and John Dellaca. My research also suggests that the Ballaarat Yacht Club will be celebrating many more victories and anniversaries in the future.

**Peter Mansfield**

May 2002

### Note on Conversions

1 mile	=	1.61 kilometres
1 kilometre	=	0.62 miles
1 yard	=	0.91 metres
3 feet	=	0.91 metres
1 metre	=	3.28 feet
1 acre	=	0.41 hectare
1 hectare	=	2.47 acres
1 sq. mile	=	640 acres
1 pound	=	20 shillings
1 guinea	=	21 shillings
1 pound (in 1880)	=	approx. 250 dollars (in 2000)

### Ballarat / Ballaarat

The use of the 'aa' in Ballarat has a long and inconclusive history. In most instances the decision to adopt the extra 'a' came about because of the whim of a committee. All nineteenth century records, minute books and press reports refer to the Ballarat Yacht Club. It was not until about 1910 that the club began to refer to itself as the Ballaarat yacht Club. Throughout this publication, I have used the modern spelling - the 'aa' - wherever possible.

# Ballaarat Yacht Club

## Yachting before the formation of the BYC

The Ballaarat Yacht Club was formed on 29 May 1877 and held its first annual regatta on 30 November 1877. However nineteenth century newspapers generally included yachting, sailing, sculling and fishing news under the generic heading 'aquatic sports' and it is possible to find references to yacht racing in Ballarat and district prior to the formation of the BYC.

For example, there were a number of regattas at Learmonth and Burrumbeet in the early-1860s. In 1864 a noted yacht designer, builder and self-proclaimed naval architect named Henry Murray transferred his business from Geelong to Ballarat. Another pioneer of yachting in Ballarat was Edward Morey who, in 1866, carted his yacht *Ripple* to Geelong in order to compete at a regatta on Corio Bay.

The transformation of Yuille's Swamp to Lake Wendouree was an on-going process and has been described in detail in Withers' *History of Ballarat* (1887). Between 1868-70 the lake was completely dry and the municipal council made a concerted effort to deepen several channels, build islands and raise the bank on the eastern and southern shores of Wendouree Parade. On 3 January 1871 the lake was the setting for a race between Brown's *Mystery* and an unnamed Chinese sampan skippered by Captain Harvey from Williamstown. During the race both vessels ran aground and suffered a series of mishaps that greatly entertained the crowd. Line honours went to *Mystery* although the sampan was declared the winner on protest.

Several weeks later eighteen yachts competed at a 'huge sailing regatta' held on Lake Wendouree. The first-class yacht race attracted eleven entrants who sailed for prizes with a total value of twenty pounds. Victory went to Murray's *Enigma*, followed by *Leader* and *Courier*. The eighteen-mile race consisted of four laps of the lake and attracted the following entries:

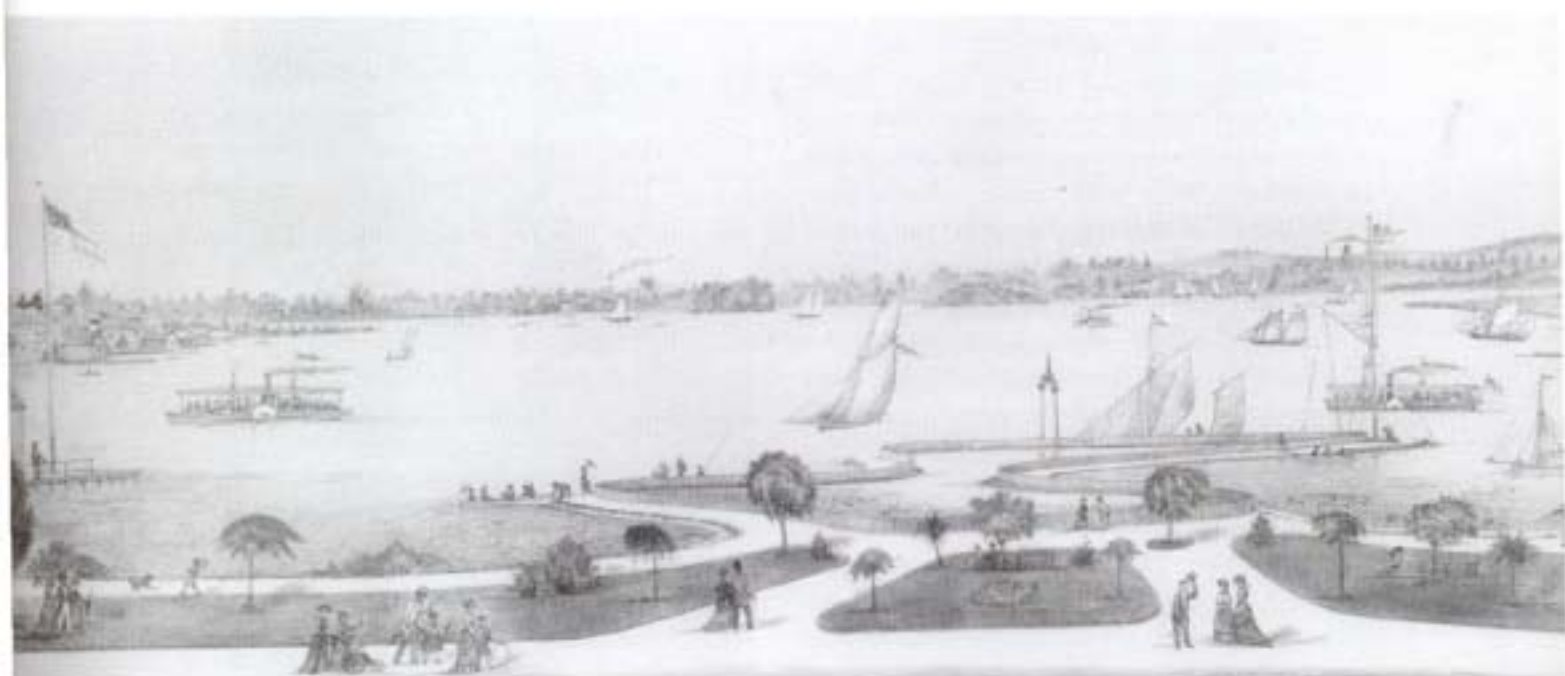
Yacht	Owner/Skipper
<i>Enigma</i>	H. R. Murray
<i>Leader</i>	Edwards and Gill
<i>Courier</i>	Edwards and Gill
<i>Faugh-a-Ballagh</i>	Edwards and Gill
<i>Mystery</i>	D. Stratton
<i>Water Witch</i>	R. Saunders
<i>Paul Pry</i>	A. Gates
<i>Idea</i>	C. Charles
<i>Prima Donna</i>	H. Robinson
<i>Gleam</i>	John Cuthbert
<i>Lady of the Lake</i>	C. Wade

Contestants and spectators agreed that the regatta was highly successful although the two major complaints about the day related to the limited amount of water in the lake and the rough tactics adopted by competing captains and crews. It was to be many years before either problem was resolved!

On 20 December 1875 a newspaper advertisement invited residents to form the Wendouree Yacht Club but those who attended the meeting named the club the Ballaarat Yacht Club and elected Robert Le Poer Trench, Esq. as its president. Other office bearers included Messrs O. Edwards, H. Caselli, A. Wynne, G. Hathorn, Mason, Batten, W. Bailey, R. Thurling and E. Morey. The season started in sensational fashion with the revelation of 'the dastardly act of cutting Wynne's *Surprise* adrift on race eve' but within a month, both the season and the fledgling yacht club floundered because of the low water level in the lake.

## The Formation of the BYC in 1877

A Ballaarat contingent consisting of Messrs Andrew Brown, George Hathorn, Owen Edwards and Edward Morey accepted a challenge to compete on Albert Park in early-1877. They did not compete as a club or win a race but were so competitive that they managed to persuade yachtsmen from Albert Park, St Kilda and Brighton clubs to challenge them to stage a regatta on Lake Wendouree. Two yachts, each weighing three tons, were transported from Melbourne to Ballarat by train and then by



*Lake Wendouree 1878 looking to the west from View Point.*

horsedrawn carriage to the lake. The regatta took place on Queen Victoria's Birthday holiday weekend (24 and 25 May 1877) and attracted a crowd of 3,000 including many ladies. Thomas Saunders' *Surprise* won the major race of the day and collected the prize of twenty pounds and his brother Charles Saunders' *Star* won the minor race.

At the banquet that evening it was recommended that another attempt be made to form a yacht club. The Ballarat *Star* newspaper claimed that the visit by the commodore and members of the Albert Park Yacht Club 'in their well-chosen dress of jaunty blue awakened a latent aquatic spirit in certain Ballarat residents'. True or not, those present made a firm commitment to establish the Ballarat Yacht Club. Once again the Hon. Robert Trench was nominated president and the office bearers consisted of Owen Edwards (Commodore), George Hathorn (Captain), Andrew Brown (Treasurer) and David Stratton (Secretary). The committee included Messrs Claxton, Menzies, Sleep, Bath, Whitcombe, Gates, Ward, Matthews, Pritchard and Summers. The eight yachts that formed the nucleus of the club were *Ballarat*, *Viola*, *Darlie Bay*, *Flying Scud*, *Wendouree*, *Pinafore*, *Reporter* and *Victoria*.

The BYC immediately commenced planning its First Annual Regatta to be held on 30 November 1877. The regatta consisted of three races for total prizemoney of 125 pounds - equivalent to about a year's wages. The first class yacht race attracted seven entrants from the BYC and five entrants from the APYC. Victory in the eleven-mile race (four laps of a shortened course) went to Ward's *Endeavour* in a time of 117.5 minutes. This occasion was described as 'the finest regatta held in the colony' and the 'Australasian' newspaper said that it was 'the most exciting yacht race ever witnessed in Victoria'. The visiting yachtsmen stayed at the Lake View hotel and for three days they raced on the lake before their boats were lifted from Lake Wendouree and transported to the railway station prior to the return journey to Melbourne.

Fifty club members attended the BYC's first annual meeting on 3 September 1878. Commodore Edwards' report was a glowing testament to the sailing prowess of the members and reflected his confidence in the future of the club when he stated that:

the interest felt in yachting had increased to a surprising extent and now the time-honoured and healthy recreation enjoys a popularity scarcely surpassed by any other indulged in Ballarat. The season has been much more successful than your committee had reason to expect and the Club has established itself in a premier position in Victorian aquatic circles. The fleet now comprises some of the best yachts in the colony. (*Star*, 4 September 1878)

The financial report was more sombre. Total expenditure for the season was 220 pounds - of which the inaugural regatta amounted to an outlay 180 pounds. Total income was 215 pounds, leaving a deficit of five pounds. However the election of two vice-presidents, Edward Morey and Hon. Henry Cuthbert, and the unanimous re-election of the other office bearers for the forthcoming year suggested that the Ballarat Yacht Club was in safe hands.

### Yachting in the 1870-80s

Throughout the 1880s the stalwarts of the club included Commodore Edward Morey, Captain William Bailey and Messrs Caselli, Sleep, Millard and Saunders. These men had been attracted to Ballarat in the gold rush era of the 1850s and were renowned for their risk-taking and their entrepreneurial skills. They were also the founders of a number of Ballarat's most important sporting and cultural institutions. Morey was acknowledged as the 'father of the club' and the driving force in terms of soliciting donations, assisting with the transportation of yachts and crews to regattas in Geelong, Colac and Melbourne, and in lobbying the city council. Whenever Morey travelled overseas or to another colony the BYC operated at a less frenetic pace and as soon as he returned to Ballarat the pace resumed because of his enthusiasm for the Club and his willingness to race against all comers. (Edward Morey was said to be the biggest mining speculator in the colony and later became the mayor of the City of Ballarat and a Member of Parliament.)



*Commodore Edward Morey, was acknowledged as the 'Father of the Club'.*

Yachts racing on the lake at this time ranged in length from 20 to 35 feet in length. The addition of a simple bowsprit of 10 feet and a boom extending many feet beyond the transom meant that some of the yachts were almost 50 feet in length and about as high. A huge mainsail was often supplemented by a jib flown from the bowsprit and some boats even sported a gaff topsail. One commentator said that it looked as if the town's washing was hung out to dry on Lake Wendouree. A number of the gaff-rigged and clinker built yachts had fixed lead keels. Several yachts had crews of ten and it must have been a difficult task for owners to recruit and retain skilled sailors.

BYC members and prominent Ballarat residents practically fought each other for the honour of donating lavish prizes and in many instances a trophy was displayed in a shop window before being handed over to the winning skipper. On other occasions the prize was in the form of cash and when skippers such as Bailey and Morey won their own prizes they distributed the money to their crewmembers. Many of the races were intended

to be the best of three heats but the level of competition was such that more heats were required to determine a winner. For example, in October 1879 racing for the Morey Trophy resulted in six different winners in the first six heats. The *Flying Scud* won the fifth heat 'like a streak of light' and was expected to clinch the series but *Victoria* then won three heats in a row to claim the trophy. In March 1880 the fifth and deciding heat of the Goodall Trophy series was so eagerly anticipated that all lake steamers were chartered for the benefit of spectators. Betting on races was commonplace.

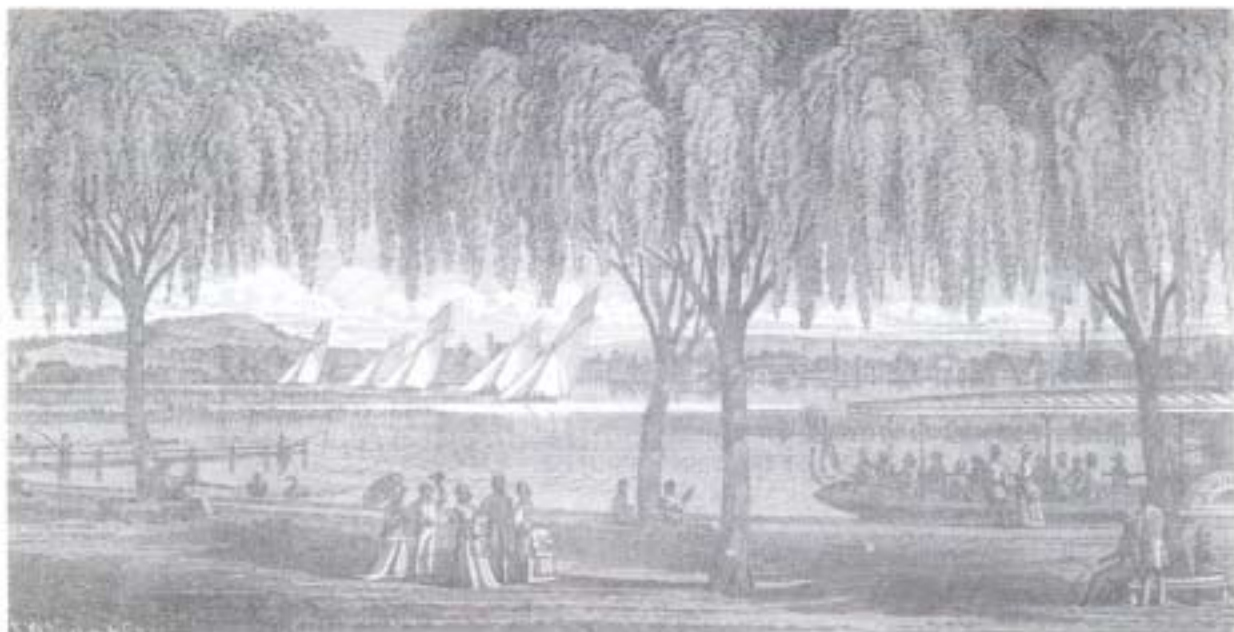
The presentation of a trophy invariably resulted in a banquet at a local hotel and there are numerous references to members settling bets and 'drinking champagne to the bumpers'. In 1881 Edward Millard, the owner of *Victoria*, donated a prize to the value of ten pounds and this was applauded as an especially generous offer given that his yacht had not won a single heat in the preceding twelve months. The Millard Cup consisted of seven heats between 2 April 1881 and 21 May 1881. Millard's yacht was skippered by Lt Thurling, R.N.R. but he had no more luck than its owner. Other yachts in this series included *Grand Flaneur* (E. Morey), *Viola* (Wm Bailey), *Pinafore* (T. Bailey and T. Saunders), *Reporter* (G. Hathorn, 'resplendent in mackintosh, sea-boots and cigarettes'), *Kathleen* (T. Gill), and *Argyle*. The first race resulted in a dead heat between the *Reporter* and *Kathleen*. In the third heat, *Grand Flaneur* ran aground and a crewman jumped over the side and pushed the yacht back into the race and later, in the same race, *Reporter* was 'temporarily grounded near the deer park'. The seventh and final heat was something of an anti-climax in that Hathorn's *Reporter* led all the way to secure the trophy. The Ballarat *Star* newspaper agreed that the final heat was a straightforward victory and devoted little attention to the race but, as something of a consolation, the journalist described every toast and speech presented that night. (Ballarat *Evening Post*, 28 March - 23 May 1881)

The competition for trophies, cash and kudos

invariably resulted in fiercely contested races. Protests were common as yachts collided and skippers used every tactic to gain an advantage. At the start of one particular race it was claimed that the competition was so fierce that 'there was concern that vacancies would be created in several of Ballarat's respectable families'. Subsequently the club introduced a rule to the effect that a race could be restarted in the event of a life being endangered. In the mid-1880s it was claimed that Melbourne crews did not compete at Ballarat regattas because the local yachtsmen were 'known to be too good'. This may have been bravado but other reports certainly attest to the ferocity of our ancestors once they took to the water. One crew had such a 'fierce countenance that it was speculated that they had lunched off a meat-axe blade' whereas Mr Gill was teased because he sailed like 'a bumbling woman at a christening'. The start of the final heat of the Millard Cup saw skippers kiss their wives farewell before taking to the water with shouts of 'Death or Glory'. Captain Edward Morey appears to have regarded it as a compliment when he was described 'as fierce as a male rodent en route to a dance'. (BYC Minute Book, 1880-81 p21-23)

Throughout the 1880s the Ballarat Yacht Club and Lake Wendouree attracted considerable public recognition and the club basked in the praise of visiting dignitaries. One South Australian visitor expressed his 'astonishment and pleasure at the perfection of local aquatics' and a British visitor said that Ballarat had the 'best yachts on any lake in the world'. (BYC Minute Book, Dec. 1882) Elsewhere it was claimed that the BYC was the most active yacht club in Australia with racing every week over an eight-month season, no expense spared by owners and the 'importation' of professional crew members from Melbourne.

A typical example of the generosity of spirit of the members of the Ballarat Yacht Club can be demonstrated by briefly outlining the Club's association with its Queenscliff compatriots. In July 1887 an iron barque sank off Point Lonsdale



*'The Lawn' Lake Wendouree 1887*

and the Queenscliff lifesavers managed to save all the crew. In recognition of this heroic feat, the Ballarat Yacht Club raised a public subscription, travelled to Queenscliff and presented an illustrated testimonial to the citizens of Queenscliff and a cash reward to the lifesavers. This was handled in a flamboyant fashion that was typical of Ballarat's pioneers. On this occasion, thirty of Ballarat's most prominent citizens chartered a train for the journey to the coast, provided a banquet for one hundred and fifty Queenscliff dignitaries and guests and distributed eighty pounds in cash to the lifeboat crew.

### **Turmoil in the 1890s**

On 25 March 1888 members of the Ballarat Yacht Club competed in the first heat of the Bloustein Trophy series of races and every indication suggested that the remainder of the season would follow its usual course. However a number of factors threw the club into disarray with the result that the BYC's season collapsed, the club failed to hold its annual meeting, to elect office bearers or to plan a calendar of events for the 1889/90 season. After a lapse of two years, club members met and elected the same group of office bearers for the 1891/92 season but in this vacuum another sailing club had been formed in Ballarat.

The problems facing the Ballarat Yacht Club had been near the surface for some time and continued to affect yacht racing on Lake Wendouree for another decade. In broad terms it can be shown that in the late-1880s the economy was booming and an elite group of local residents were enjoying remarkable prosperity whereas the lake was adversely affected by low water levels, making it unsuitable for most aquatic sports. Conversely in the 1890s - when the water level in the lake was unusually high - all Ballarat's residents (and the rest of Australia) were in the grip of the worst economic depression in fifty years. The problems confronting the BYC in the late-1880s and throughout the 1890s included the following:

- lake beautification works were hampered by drought and floods.
- weeds in the lake.
- the retirement or death of a number of pioneers who founded the BYC and other Ballarat institutions.
- the economic crisis of the 1890s.
- the inability of the six, and seven-ton yachts, such as *Viola*, *Flying Scud*, *Darlie Bay* and *Ballarat* to sail in the shallow lake.
- the formation of the Ballarat Amateur Sailing Club.



Yachting is inextricably tied to the amount of water in the lake and newspaper and mayoral reports indicate that the city council struggled to maintain the water level or control the growth of weeds in this era. There were droughts in 1889, 1895-1900 and 1902-04 interspersed with floods in 1892-94 and again in 1900. During the drought of 1898 the city council took advantage of the low water level to convert Gill's Island into View Point and renewed efforts were made to control the growth of weeds. Each year a new mayor confidently reported that the problem was under control although Mayor William Little made a solitary confession that the weed problem 'baffled the best minds of Ballarat'. In one drought year the BYC managed to persuade a mining company to pump four million litres of water per day for a month into the lake and on several occasions the BYC persuaded the Ballarat Water Commission to divert water from the Gong Gong reservoir to the lake. An unforeseen side effect of this generosity was the imposition of water restrictions throughout the Township of Ballarat East on certain afternoons of the week! The economic crisis in the late-1880s and early-1890s culminated in the forced closure of all Ballarat banks for several days in May 1893. This crisis had a severe impact on the local stock market, commerce and industry and, not surprisingly, members of the Ballarat Yacht Club also suffered. Thus the combination of poor yachting conditions, economic hardship and the retirement from public life of a number of Ballarat's aging pioneers meant that the six and seven ton giants of the 1880s such as *Viola*, *Flying Scud*, *Darlie Bay* and *Ballarat* were removed from Lake Wendouree. None of these founding members of the BYC squadron have survived the rigors of time.

In this vacuum a new yacht club named the Ballarat Amateur Sailing Club came into existence. The principal office-bearers included Messrs William Bailey, C.C. Shoppee, Arthur Shoppee, C. Retallick, and C. Retallick jnr, and Messrs Gall, Monsborough, Book, Pinkerton, Marsden, Hammond and Alexander White. Soon after it



*'White Squall' 1901*

was formed on 12 November 1888, the new club organised a number of regattas on Friday and Saturday afternoons and regular competitors included the following skiffs: *Lord Nelson*, *Foam*, *Acrospire*, *Vision*, *White Squall*, *Faugh-a-Ballagh*, *Star*, *Red White and Blue*, *Did*, *Rover*, *Ermine* and *Wyuna*. Prize money was usually two or three pounds and the club stipulated that if a Ballarat yacht won a race, half the prize had to be donated to the club. The BASC continued to operate until about 1910.

The Ballarat Yacht Club reformed in November 1890 under the presidency of Thomas Bath and thus the lake supported two yacht clubs for almost 20 years. The reformed BYC's season commenced with a five-heat competition for a trophy donated by the president. Williams' *Achievement* won the trophy but the low water level prevented any more racing that summer. At the annual meeting on 28 September 1891 it was evident that the pioneers who had formed the club in 1877 still managed the business of the club but yachting on Lake Wendouree was now the domain of the smaller 16, 18 and 25 footers.



*Vice Commodore 'Brown', March 1906*

The formation of two yacht clubs also provided an opportunity for our ancestors to participate in that unique practice of adopting alternative forms of spelling 'Ballarat'. The original yacht club and the amateur club used 'Ballarat' whereas the reformed club used the extra 'a', viz the Ballaarat Yacht Club. However various club secretary's and newspaper reporters failed to observe the change and the spelling appears to have alternated on a weekly basis thereafter.


### Yachting, 1900-1914

The new century promised so much with the federation of the Australian colonies and the continuing growth of the British Empire. However Bate's *Life After Gold* demonstrates that Ballarat was going through difficult times. The decline of mining, the loss of heavy industry such as the Phoenix Foundry and H. V. McKay's Sunshine Harvester factory, growing family poverty, drought, prolonged heatwave conditions and a number of other factors dampened the economy and the spirit of Ballarat residents. In spite of these problems, Ballarat continued to promote its sporting and cultural activities and huge carnivals, sporting events and new forms of entertainment took on a more prominent role. Within this context, the yachting fraternity organised a calendar of events that was less flamboyant than in the 1880s but which demonstrated that the lake and aquatic sports were still vitally important to the on-going development of the city.

In 1902 the Ballarat Amateur Yacht Club's racing calendar included the following yachts:

<i>Erminie</i>	R. Taylor	scratch
<i>Vera</i>	B. Creighton	scratch
<i>Chance</i>	A. Surry	scratch
<i>Shamrock</i>	T. Saunders	scratch
<i>Humming Bird</i>	H. Adair	45 seconds
<i>Acrospire</i>	J. White	50 seconds
<i>Bronzewing</i>	J. Lowther	60 seconds
<i>Spendrift</i>	W. England	120 seconds
<i>Petral</i>	P. Barnard	130 seconds
<i>Viking</i>	E. Rogers	200 seconds

*Ballarat Amateur Yacht Club.*



ANNUAL  
**SAILING REGATTA**

HOLD ON FIELD OF  
LAKE WENDOURE, Ballarat,  
*Monday, November 10th, 1902.*

Starts—Two Commodore J. P. Murray  
Judges—Commodore W. J. Ogilby, Rear-Commodore E. Shaw, and  
Thos. Bailey  
Timekeeper—Mr. J. H. Jones

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**PROGRAMME.**

**FIRST-CLASS OPEN HANDICAP YACHT RACE** for yachts 20 ft. w.l. and under. Entrance by club length over all, length on water line, and sail area (exclusive of spinnakers). Prizes—1st, £7; 2nd, £5; 3rd, £3; and £2 by trophy, gift of Harat Yacht Club, M.L.A. Entrance fee, 7s. 6d.; starting fee, 6d. Distance, 20 miles. Start 11 a.m. sharp.

The £2 by trophy given by Harat Yacht Club, M.L.A. is to be won three times in 1902. Entrants for this race must declare their yacht's accurate property. The winner for each year shall retain the trophy for that year.

**CONSOLATION RACE**, for boats competing in No. 1 Race (1st and second prize winners of that race deferred); 2nd prize winner may compete if finishing his yacht. Same conditions. Prizes—1st, entrance fee (except start); 2nd, 50s. entrance fee; 3rd, entry, 5s. Distance, 7 miles. First boat or no race. Start 1.30 p.m.

**SKIFF RACE**, for boats 15 ft. w.l. and under. Three vessel race. To one skill sailor. Prizes—1st, entrance fees (except start); 2nd, 50s. entrance fee. Entrance, 2s. 6d. Starts 1.30 p.m. Post copy.

**ROWING EVENTS**, by the Ballarat, Wendouree, and Ballarat City Rowing Clubs, to consist of Pair and Single Oared Races, to start from 10 a.m. sharp past year's prize.

All Entries for First Race to be in the hands of Secretary by Monday 2nd November. Arrangements close on Thursday, November 6th.

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**HANDICAPS, &c., FOR BOATS.**

No.	Yacht	Captain	Handicap
1	Erminie	R. Taylor	scratch
2	Vera	B. Creighton	scratch
3	Chance	A. Surry	scratch
4	Shamrock	T. Saunders	scratch
5	Humming Bird	H. Adair	0 min. 45 sec.
6	Acrospire	J. White	0 min. 50 sec.
7	Bronzewing	J. J. Lowther	1 min.
8	Spendrift	W. England	2 min.
9	Petral	P. Barnard	2 min. 30 sec.
10	Viking	E. Rogers	3 min. 20 sec.
11	Boat		5 min.

J. H. PATTERSON, Secy, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200.

Locker's Hotel, Ballarat.

The sailing committee introduced new rules and enforced a number of existing rules. From this distance it is not always possible to say whether the changes came about because of the good sense of the committee or as a result of a need to respond to breaches of previously understood rules of racing. For example, the committee strictly enforced a rule that any yacht that failed to follow the prescribed course had to immediately withdraw

from a race without causing interference. It also stated that the 10/- protest fee would be forfeited if a protest was deemed frivolous.

In September 1905 a sub-committee consisting of Messrs Coghlan, Paterson and White designed a uniform that consisted of a dark green blazer edged with red cord and with the club flag on the pocket. The rest of the uniform consisted of white pants and shoes and a straw boater with the club badge. (In 1949 the blazers were black with red trimmings and the design changed again in 1953.)

In October 1905 Cr Charles Shoppee was elected a life member in recognition of his long and valued contribution to the BYC and the Shoppee Trophy remained the highlight of the season. On 11 November 1907 Lowther's *Bronzewing* won the trophy and second place was a tie between three yachts, *Acrospire*, *Reliance* and *Challenger*. Throughout this era about ten yachts regularly competed on the lake and most races were over a ten or fourteen mile course

In January 1907 a dispute of unknown origin surfaced when the treasurer, R. Radcliffe, protested about the way in which 'the affairs of the club were being carried out'. He resigned as treasurer and a few weeks later the president, Dr S. Zichy-Woinaski, also resigned. In November 1908 Radcliffe subsequently resigned as captain of the club but a year later he was appointed the Club's auditor.

The BYC took a number of steps to widen its membership base and to improve its bank balance.



'Federal City'  
35 Footer  
1903

Its annual fee was set at one guinea for senior members and five shillings for college and SMB students. The club initiated monthly smoke nights at the Lake View hotel and members were encouraged to bring guests at a cost of one shilling per visit and women were allowed to attend social functions at half price. By now the Club's financial position was parlous but manageable. At various annual meetings it was reported that the club had about sixty members and yet members subscriptions amounted to only twenty-four pounds per annum. The club relied on donations to the value of fourteen pounds and the only other source of income was eight pounds from regatta entry fees. The major items of expenditure were trophies, club badges and regatta expenses.

In September 1907 the club appointed Messrs Coghlan, Lowther and White as its delegates to the Lake Yachting Association of Victoria. On 14 December 1908 the club invited His Excellency, The Governor-General of Australia to be the Honorary Commodore for the day and he enjoyed a days sailing on the lake.

Like other organisations, the BYC struggled to improve its clubhouse, shed and equipment. In January 1907 Mr Adeney successfully moved that the BYC acquire the Garden City Steamboat Company's shed and Messrs Coghlan, White, Fleming and Taylor provided a bank guarantee of 150 pounds for the purchase of this 'commodious building' on which the Club's burgee and initials were painted. In return the BYC leased the shed for the sum of five guineas per annum. The cost of housing a yacht or dinghy in the shed was thirty shillings and twenty-one shillings respectively and the building and its contents were insured to the value of 300 pounds. In November 1910 the BYC stipulated that no yacht exceeding 25 feet long or 8 feet across the beam would be permitted to sail in a club race and all BYC yachts were to be registered with the prefix 'B'. *Bronzewing*, *Shamrock*, *Chance*, *Ermine*, *Acrospire*, *Cynthia*, *Humming Bird*, *Briton* and *Corona* were regular competitors at this time.

By now the club made a regular feature of its racing calendar which spread over two days per week. Thus the Coghlan trophy series was held over five Fridays and the Miller and Co. trophy series was held over five Saturdays in November 1907. Fourteen local businessmen donated trophies and Mr Berry donated a starter's pistol. It appears that rivalry between the two competing groups was such that they agreed to hold another series of races on the Tuesdays as well. Simultaneously club officials joined others in lobbying the state government to have 'the Saturday afternoon holiday made an established fact'.

The office bearers in 1909/10 were as follows:

President:	F. Brawn
Vice Pres:	Cr. J. Hill
Commodore:	W.J.Coghlan
Rear Comm:	Admiral Bridges
Vice Comm's:	R. Taylor
	R. Fleming
	E. Skew
Captain:	E. Maylon
Vice Cap:	E. Elston
Treasurer:	J. White
Hon Architect:	B. Smith
Auditors:	Radcliffe,
Secretary:	D. Paterson
Committee:	J. Lowther
	H. Adair
	W. Rehfisch
	A. White

Possibly due to water conditions, sailing on Lake Colac was a regular event in the first decade of the century. On New Year's Day in 1908, the club took five yachts, *Humming Bird*, *Bronzewing*, *Briton*, *Chance* and *Shamrock* to Colac and the first three named yachts won all the major places in the race. A year later the BYC hosted a regatta that attracted competitors from St Kilda, Albert Park and Colac but due to low water levels in January 1911 the Ballarat, Albert Park and Colac yacht clubs staged their annual regattas on consecutive days at Colac.



18 Footers 'Acrospire I' and 'Chance' early 1900s.

This was also the time when another *Acrospire* entered the fray. *Acrospire* sailed on Lake Wendouree in the late-1880s and was one of a number of smaller 16-foot yachts that competed in races organized by the Ballarat Amateur Yacht Club. The yacht was built for Joe White and, rather appropriately for the Ballarat maltster, the name derives from a Greek work meaning something twisted and also refers to the 'first shoot of the malt seed'.

In 1911 Joe White commissioned the construction of *Acrospire II*, a 25-footer built by Peel Brothers of Williamstown. When it first took to the waters on Albert Park and Colac in 1911, the yacht caused a sensation because of her sleek lines and rumors that the yacht was longer than the permitted length. A certificate was presented to show that the yacht was 24'11" in length and had a total sail area of 503 square feet but still the Albert Park Yacht Club officials were unsatisfied and for several years there was an uneasy stalemate. In 1914 Joe White moved to Melbourne and from



Commodores and Life Members of the B.Y.C.  
Left: T. Maylon, H. Stafford and R. Hammond,  
1930s.

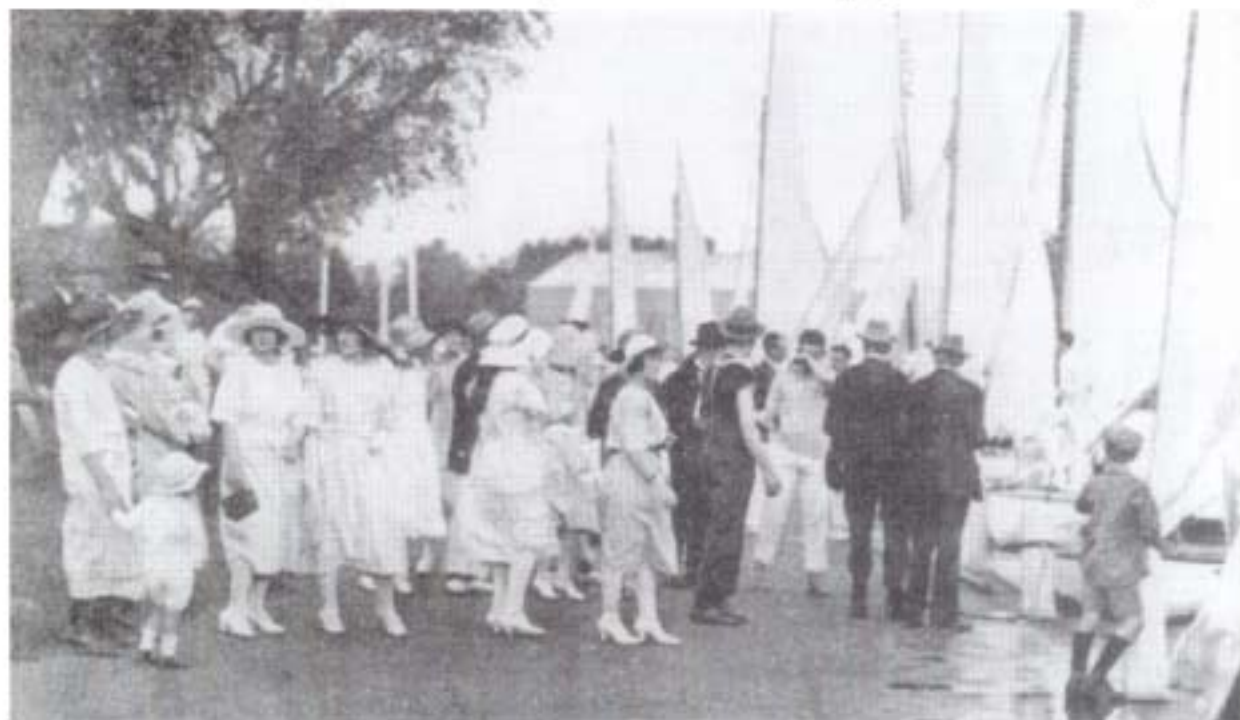
then *Acrospire II* regularly sailed at Albert Park before its return to Ballarat in the 1920s. Both *Acrospire I* and *Acrospire II* changed hands on a number of occasions and in spite of its size, *Acrospire II*, sailed competitively on Lake Wendouree. In 1942, sailing off the 'dignified scratch position' *Acrospire II* won the annual pennant. The captain was W. B. Wheeler, and the crew consisted of Max Jeffs, E.R. Willians, Stan Leviston, Allan Scott, Ron Wheeler and Bob Chambers. Eventually the yacht fell into a state of disrepair and in the early-1970s club members approached the White family in order restore the yacht to her former glory. [In a lengthy sailing career, Joe White also commissioned *Acrospire III, IV and V*]

Other interesting yachts: *Valkyrie* was named after the mythical 'war maiden who took soldiers killed on a battlefield to Valhalla', or 'the chooser of the slain'. This yacht was originally 32 feet in length before the transom was reduced by seven feet. Rumour has it that the yacht was stolen in the USA before its appearance in Australian waters. A yacht named *Swastika* raced off a handicap of fifteen minutes in 1912. (The word means good

luck or good fortune.) *Faugh-a-Ballagh* was an ancient Irish battle cry that meant 'clear the way'. *Ostara* was so fast that it once won a race off a 25-minute handicap. Unfortunately her last years were on the bottom of Lake Learmonth. *Dixie II* was destroyed when a boat shed caught fire.

The Club continued to arrange regattas throughout World War One but on a limited scale. In most instances, yachtsmen had to pay a fee to compete and all prizes were in the form of war bonds.

After a number of debates, the Club resolved that in the future, the maximum size of yachts being proposed for club membership was not to exceed 18 feet. A few members argued unsuccessfully that larger yachts be permitted so that they could compete with their Melbourne rivals but in making its decision, the club argued that the lake was best suited to smaller yachts and that smaller yachts also meant that more residents could afford to compete. The Club did not prevent larger yachts from sailing (and there were still six big yachts competing in the 1950s) but it resolved that no new big yachts would be registered.



Ballarat Yacht Club Opening Day 1922



*Ballarat Yacht Club Opening Day 1934*

### **Yachting, 1925-1950**

In 1927/28 the BYC adopted an 'automatic handicapping system' due to the number of disputed race results that culminated in the threatened resignation of several club stalwarts and a Life Member. Handicaps ranged from scratch to twenty minutes and varied according to the sailing prowess of various skippers. Later there was provision for the handicaps to be modified if race officials were formally approached by more than three skippers prior to a race. The yachts that won the seventeen trophies during the 1927/28 season were as follows:

<b>Yacht</b>	<b>Prize</b>	<b>Skipper</b>
<i>Dixie 3</i>	Paterson Trophy	B. John
	Stafford Trophy	W. Wheeler
	Foundation Day Club Trophy	B. John
	Oates Cup	B. John
	Hadley Trophy	B. John

<i>Ostara</i>	President's Trophy	G. Milne
	Paul Trophy	G. Milne
<i>Valkyrie</i>	Tunbridge Cup	L. Fraser
	Berry Trophy	D. Tunbridge
<i>Dixie 2</i>	Palmer Trophy	N. Whiteside
	John Trophy	N. Whiteside
<i>Arawa</i>	Davies Trophy (juniors)	R. Richmond
	Anglers Club Trophy	T. Gingell
	Tunbridge Trophy	W. Richmond
	Arawa Cup	W. Richmond
	Auburn Heights Trophy	W. Richmond
<i>Heather</i>	Roy Greer Memorial Trophy	A. McRae

Other yachts to join the fleet in this period included *Ardiva* and *Nevada* (1927), *Zara*, named in honour of Miss Zara Taylor, *Elenor* and *Vanessa* (1932/33). W. Wheeler purchased *Acrospire* for 64 pounds and agreed that if he were to ever resell the yacht the BYC would be given the first option to buy. In April 1949 the club purchased *Dixie 3* for 150 pounds and *Heather* for 110 pounds.

Eight-foot dinghies made their first appearance in the 1930s although some older club members regarded this form of yachting as frivolous and reckless. Dinghies evolved into yachts with small, shallow cockpits and a mast mounted perilously close to the bow. By 1947 dinghies were not to exceed 8'6" in length, 4'0" across the beam or to have a sail in excess of 80 square feet. Some of the dinghies competing on the lake in the late-1940s included *Jolly Roger*, *Scotia*, *Volant*, *Dixie Lee*, *Typhoon*, *Falcon*, *Pristies*, *Albert*, *Rapier*, *Dolphin* and *Mohawk*.

In February 1947 Snipe class boats were admitted to the Club register and included *Ski-Heil*, *Koorallo*, *Pegasus*, *Mercury*, *Orpheus*, *Nautilus*, *Marglyn*, *Blue Bird*, *Alarm*, *Eileen*, *Dart* and

*Neptune*. In January 1949, the Victorian Moth Class Association held its annual regatta on Lake Wendouree and thereafter the BYC added Moths to the Club register. Early Moths included *Aurora* (R. Grant), *Flying Cloud* (A. Vinegrad), *Tootle Too* (C. Bilston), *Scotty* (G. McLeod) and *Satire* (J. Balfour).

The president and officers of the club continued to invite guests to attend the Official Opening of the Season and Ladies Day, and on most occasions the club chartered a steamboat to enable 'guests to view the sail past, the saluting of the Commodore and to watch a short Spectacular Race'. Throughout this period an average of eighteen trophies were presented each season but still the greatest impediment to a successful yachting season was the weather and the amount of water in the lake. The water level was low in the early-1930s and again in 1938/39. Only three races took place in the summer of 1941 and the season was abandoned in February 1945 whereas 1946/47 provided excellent sailing conditions.

*Opening Day, Season 1947-1948. Christening of new Snipes. Mrs. Clogan christening 'Pegasus'.*





*Eight Foot Dinghies (1940s). This class first appeared at the B.Y.C in the 1930s.*

There was the usual amount of club business to be managed and this included the revision of a number of rules. Junior members who were non-swimmers were not permitted to sail and 'lady friends of members' were permitted to sail provided that the maximum number of people in any yacht was not excessive. Club officials became increasingly frustrated with the behaviour of 'non-financial members' and there were disapproving references to individuals who competed for part of the season but - when faced with the prospect of defeat - withdrew without paying any fees. Eventually the club banned a number of people from sailing and removed several boats from the shed. Later again, the committee ruled that no card games were to be played and no intoxicating liquor was to be consumed in the clubhouse or on yachts. Another amendment to the rules stipulated that no committee member could be an office bearer of the Learmonth Yacht Club or any other sailing club in the district.

The BYC maintained a strong relationship with the Albert Park Yacht Club and on numerous occasions the BYC subsidised the costs of its sister club's regattas. In November 1928 the BYC donated five guineas to the Ballarat Anglers Club to offset the cost of cutting two channels in the lake and club delegates later attended the ceremony to mark the opening of the 'Vin Allen Channel'.

In March 1933 the BYC formed a baseball team to compete in the Ballarat Baseball Association's league as a way of keeping BYC members together in the winter months. Competitors were supplied

with an appropriate uniform and the team made solid progress, winning the 'C' grade pennant in 1950. The BYC also entered teams in the local cricket, women's softball and basketball competitions.

In spite of the dire world circumstances, the club held annual meetings throughout the 1930-40s and on one occasion the president stated that 'the thrill and hazards of close sailing meant that there were few more beautiful sights than that of the tall-masted white-sailed yachts sailing gracefully on Lake Wendouree'. A number of interesting features emerged in this period. AGM's were held in cafes or private residences and there was a general move away from the lavish hotel functions of the 1880s. Suppers were now described as 'dainty' or 'welcoming' and several uniquely Ballarat yachting expressions such as 'drinking to the bumpers' disappeared from the minute books. An average of forty members plus representatives from kindred clubs attended each AGM. Club members paid a shilling to attend these annual meetings.

Ballarat Yacht Club presidents during this period were Messrs Malyon, Vickery, Whiteside, Davis, John, Hutchinson and Davis. The BYC acknowledged the contributions of those members who provided many years of service. One remarkable achievement was that of W. B. Wheeler who took up the position of club secretary in October

1929. Twenty years later was awarded a life membership in recognition of his service as secretary of BYC. Wheeler continued in this position until November 1956. R. Hammond was



*Eight Foot Dinghies  
Typhoon - L. Moss,  
Jolly Roger - P.  
Chatham.*





*Inside Yacht Club 1948.*

presented with a gift on the occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday and special recognition was given to Messrs Davis, Finlayson and Kopke for setting the course and laying the buoys. The Life Members between 1930-48 were Messrs H. Adair, J. White, F. Speed, D. Patterson, R. Hammond, C. Stafford, E. Malyon, W.B. Wheeler and H. Sutherland.

Members subscriptions and shed and locker rental generated most of the income and the main expenses were associated with staging regattas and the purchase of trophies. On one occasion, the club hosted a formal ball but it was a financial disaster and resulted in a loss of 24 pounds. Soon after that unfortunate event, a social committee was formed and given the responsibility of raising funds for a new clubhouse. The stalwarts of the social committee were Messrs Kopke, Hadley, Wheeler, Crouch, Stanley, Opie and Speed. In spite of the effects of the Great Depression, the BYC gradually accumulated a respectable bank balance. By 1943 the club was able to invest twenty pounds



*Old Yacht Club 1950*

in the 4<sup>th</sup> Liberty Loan and the sale of *Acrospire* to Wheeler doubled the Club's bank balance to 135 pounds.

The most significant and still unresolved issue was the construction of a permanent clubhouse and boat shed. Most buildings on the lake were in a poor state of repair and the Ballarat City Council constantly badgered the yacht club, other aquatic clubs and individuals to remove or refurbish their boatsheds. In January 1927 the BYC investigated the feasibility of disposing of its shed but a few months later the club advised the council that it had received no offers to buy the shed. Nor did



*Old Yacht Club 1950*

it have enough cash to pay for damage caused by age, weather and vandalism. The council tried to cajole the yacht, rowing clubs and angling clubs to share one building but this was opposed by all concerned. The committee of the BYC conceded that some sheds were 'an eyesore' but still the club wanted a home of its own and did not succumb to pressure from the council. In July 1934 the BYC resolved to build a new shed as part of the Centenary of Victoria celebrations but this came to nothing. Four years later, at the Club's 60th annual meeting (10 October 1938), the President, R. Hutchinson, advised members of yet another scheme to raise the necessary funds. Plans were forwarded to the City Council but no action took place, either because of a lack of funds or uncertainty about the tenure of the site. Finally, in August 1949 the city council granted 'a waste area near Durham Point' to the BYC for the purpose of erecting a clubhouse on the site but once again there were delays.



*Start of building of the current Club House in 1957. Old Club House in background.*

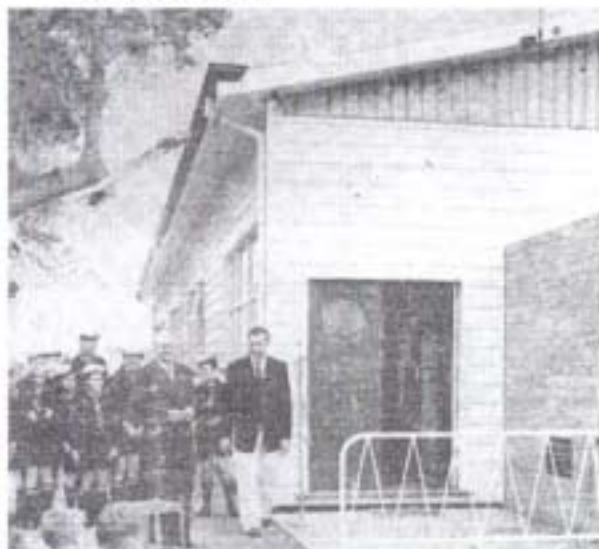
### **Yachting, 1950-80**

It was not until 1956 – the year the Olympic Games came to Ballarat – that real progress was achieved. After more than half a century of inaction, the club voted to commit 3,500 pounds toward the purchase of building materials and members agreed to provide more than twice that amount of voluntary labour in order to build the clubhouse. As in the past, the successful completion of such a project was due to the efforts of club members because this was not an era of government grants or ‘executive’ committees. Rather, it was a time when clubs and societies realised that if a job was to be completed then it was up to the members to do the work themselves. Working-bees, bottle-drives, raffles and sweeps were used to provide the necessary funding and when it came to the actual construction of the clubhouse, scores of members were enlisted to provide voluntary manpower.

In May 1957 a pile driver commenced work on the construction of the jetty and building foundations. Thereafter working-bees became a regular occurrence and it appears that most weekends were devoted to work on the building. The project was delayed due to vandalism (broken windows and theft of equipment were common) but toward the end of the project the more pressing problem was a lack of money to purchase building materials. This was solved in two ways: in September 1958 two trustees, E. Davis and R. Hutchinson, provided a loan of 780 pounds and the Social Club and the Ladies Auxiliary increased their efforts to raise money to support the project.

The gala opening ceremony took place on Saturday, 18 October 1958.

Watched by a representative gathering of more than 200 citizens, the Mayor of Ballarat, Cr G. Scott, MLA, smashed a bottle of champagne against the Ballarat Yacht Club's new building at Lake Wendouree to mark its official opening. Before launching the new building in traditional fashion, the Mayor cut a ribbon at the doors of the building and unveiled a commemorative plaque inside. Commodore W. Dunstan was congratulated for his vision and after the opening ceremony, he was presented with a painting as a tribute to his leadership during the building project. Dunstan was acknowledged as the driving force behind the project and it was agreed that the building would never have been completed were it not for tireless effort. In reply Dunstan said it was the greatest achievement of his sporting life. (*Courier*, 20 October 1958)



*The Mayor Cr. G. Scott and Commodore Bill Dunstan, officially open the new Club House, October 18th, 1958.*

On the same day, Mrs Bevan John was made a Life Member. Her late husband was a former president and Life Member and Mrs John has the honour of being the Club's first and only female life member. Her brother, W. Wheeler (also a Life Member) responded on Mrs John's behalf.



*Metis, Acrospire and Dixie. The 25 Footers raced competitively on Lake Wendouree until the 1950s.*

Long after the opening ceremony the Social Club and the Ladies Auxiliary continued to raise funds for fittings and equipment. For example, in 1959 the Social Club contributed 160 pounds toward the cost of lockers and the extension of the jetty. The Ladies Auxiliary was formed in April 1957 and its first president was Mrs R. Kerr. Like the Social Club, the Auxiliary took up the challenge to raise money for club purposes. Over the next forty-two years, the Auxiliary donated money to purchase a range of things including a rescue boat named *Help-mate*, an outboard motor and a loud hailer, and also purchased curtains, a radiogram and filing cabinets for the clubhouse. The ladies even paid half the cost of erecting the cyclone fence around the boat-yard. In 1988, the Ladies Auxiliary made a substantial donation to assist with the restoration of *Valdera*. The Ladies Auxiliary received generous praise from successive club presidents and in June 1960 the secretary of the Auxiliary was issued a key to the clubhouse. But there were clear limits to the role of women in the operation of the BYC. Club rules were revised on several occasions in the 1950s and 1960s but no member felt the need to remove or even amend rule six that stated that 'lady members shall have no voice in the management of the club'.

By now the clubhouse and its contents were insured for 5,000 pounds and this and the normal costs of staging regattas meant that fundraising was an essential part of the life of the club. A novel method of generating income was the sale of sweepstake tickets and the weekly betting on the outcome of the 'A' class race which netted

the club 180 pounds per season in the late-1950s. By judiciously ignoring an earlier club rule about gambling, considerable income was generated and by September 1960 an important milestone was reached when the club repaid all debentures associated with the erection of the clubhouse.

Rather ironically, in the years immediately preceding the decision to build the clubhouse the commodore claimed that there was a general lack of interest in yachting in Ballarat because of the perennial problem of weeds in the lake, not enough yachts entering races and too many disputed race results. But in spite of these problems the minute books indicate that there was still considerable activity taking place on the lake during each yachting season.



*Snipe Fleet 1952*

At the commencement of the 1950/51 season handicaps were assigned to the following yachts.

#### A Class

(The maximum size to be L.O.A. 25 feet, L.W.L. 20 feet, extreme beam 8 feet. The maximum crew was seven.)

<i>Metis</i>	E. Davis	Scratch
<i>Acrospire</i>	W. Wheeler	2 minutes
<i>Valdera</i>	R.Hutchinson	6
<i>Dixie</i>	R. Clogan	6
<i>Comet</i>	S. Birt	12
<i>Ostara</i>	C. Gill	12
<i>Heather</i>	R. McRae	12

#### B Class

(Consisting of Gwen 12 Class yachts with a crew of 2, Port Phillip 12 Class yachts with a crew of 2 and Snipe Class yachts with a crew of 3.)

<i>La Rene</i>	G. Troon	Scratch
<i>Kooraloo</i>	F. Stapleton	Scratch
<i>Marlin</i>	K. Rizzoli	13 minutes
<i>Defiance</i>	S. Pollard	15
<i>Racene</i>	J. Cummins	15
<i>Awatea II</i>	P. Richards	15
<i>Warana</i>	W. Hicks	15
<i>Mercury</i>	M. Jeffs	15
<i>Clipper</i>	J. John	16
<i>Nautilus</i>	L. Henley	16
<i>Dolphin</i>	R. Christie	21
<i>Firefly</i>	N. Campagli	21
<i>Pegasus</i>	B. Nunn	21

#### C Class

(8 foot Dinghy Class yachts. All competitors must wear life jackets.)

<i>Typhoon</i>	P. Hayes	Scratch
<i>Albert</i>	D. Metz	2 minutes
<i>Jolly Roger</i>		2
<i>Scotia</i>		4
<i>Triad</i>		4
<i>Volant</i>	P. Nicholson	6
<i>Dixie Lee</i>	G. Wearn	6

#### D Class

(Moth Class yachts. All competitors must wear life jackets.)

<i>Hornet II</i>	H. Troon	Scratch
<i>Hornet I</i>	A. Hughes	3 minutes
<i>Scamp</i>	J. Mitchell	5
<i>Tootle Too</i>	C. Bilston	7
<i>Demon</i>	J. Nice	8
<i>Flutterby</i>	E. Stevenson	10

In the meanwhile, the usual number of yachts were bought and sold and sundry mishaps occurred. In May 1950 *Heather* sunk at her moorings and several months later the yacht was offered for sale to the Geelong Yacht Club for 150 pounds. This sale did not eventuate but *Heather* was later sold to another buyer for 120 pounds. In August 1959 *Acrospire* was donated to the BYC and three years later the yacht was withdrawn from sailing and used as the starter's boat. Sharpie class yachts were admitted to the club in May 1953 and some early

yachts of this class included *Phantom*, *Alama* and *Tyrie*. In 1957 the club ruled that no yachtsman or crewman could be paid to compete. On the same day as the opening of the new clubhouse, Mrs Jessie Scott, the mayoress of the city, launched two yachts. The first was *Altair*, a Gwen 12 class yacht, owned by Messrs A. Linklater and B. Salgram and the other yacht was *Diana*, a Moth class boat constructed by 16-year-old Ian Baker. In April 1962, the club purchased six Sabots for competition purposes.

Throughout the 1950-60s the club organised a series of lectures on race tactics and sailing rules. The lectures were probably for the benefit of younger sailors but, given the number of disputed race results and attempts to redraft club rules, the lectures may have been intended for a wider audience. (Let's not forget that the BYC was founded by a small group of men who had lived and prospered on the Ballarat goldfields in the 1850's. These men maintained a dignified mien in photographs but under those stern, unsmiling veneers, there was a strong hint that, in their minds, the rules of gentle society didn't always apply to them!)

The BYC continued to host a number of Melbourne club and Victorian Yachting Association regattas on Lake Wendouree. In order to participate in the celebrations to mark the centenary of gold discoveries in Ballarat, the Victorian Snipe and Moth Association's held their annual regattas



*Moths replaced the 8 foot Dinghies in 1949.*

in Ballarat in 1951. In 1958 the Frankston Yacht Club staged its regatta for Sabot and Port Phillip Class 12 yachts on Lake Wendouree, joined both the Victorian Yachting Council and the Ballarat Sporting Association. The BYC developed stronger affiliations with country clubs and attended a number of meetings to form the Inland Country Lakes Association. Throughout the 1950s there are numerous references to local yachtsmen competing at Stawell, Derrinallum, Horsham, Geelong, Learmonth and Colac. Following the opening of the new club house it seems that Lake Wendouree was becoming too popular for its own good because there were veiled references to an on-going dispute between the yacht club and the rowing clubs with regard to the use of the lake on Saturday afternoons. The city council was asked to intervene but eventually the calming affect of the lake and gardens had the desired affect and all clubs agreed to work in 'closer harmony' in the future.

The Troon family was dominant both on Lake Wendouree and at other regattas in this era. In 1954 H. Troon gained selection as the Victorian representative at the National Moth Championships in Sydney, in 1956 G. Troon won the Victorian Snipe Championship and in September 1957 two local Snipes, Troon's *La Rene* and Linklater's *Kelpie* won first and second place at the Victorian Snipe Championships on Lake Learmonth.

Annual General meetings continued to attract about sixty members and guests and the long-serving office bearers in this period included Messrs Davis, Wheeler and his son Ron, Weeks, Troon, Williams, Dunstan, Gill, Kerr, Rizzoli, McLeod, Hutchinson and Nunn.

Past president and trustee, Edward Davis was made a life member in October 1952 having served twenty years as club president. Tragically, less than one month after the opening of the new clubhouse Davis suddenly died. During the 1914-1918 war Davis had been a member of the Australian Flying Corp, 1<sup>st</sup> AIF and later became the sales manager at Ronaldson Bros. and Tippett. In addition he

had a lifelong association with numerous bodies including the Ballarat Travellers' Club, the Ballarat Orphanage, the Ballarat Badminton Association and the Buninyong Masonic Lodge.

In 1956 the BYC organised a lottery of members to select a delegate to participate in the Olympic torch relay and the honour went A. Hughes. Two years later the BYC agreed to impose a levy of one shilling per member to assist the Australian yachting fraternity in sending the Australian team to the Rome Olympics.

In June 1961 Mr Linklater donated the honour boards naming the Club's and commodores and in 1965 Mr J. Bell donated a perpetual trophy in honour of his late son, David. The award was to be presented to the 'Best Clubman of the Year'. Two years later the BYC benefited from a donation of \$2000 from the estate of the late G. Rattray. Apparently the family had no formal connection with the club other than the enjoyment of the spectacle of yachts racing on the lake and this had prompted the decision to donate the money.

In September 1966 W. Dunstan announced his decision to leave Ballarat in order to take up the position of Secretary of the Footscray Football Club. Prior to his departure, Dunstan was made a Life Member of the BYC.

In July 1967, the Club published 'Mainsheet', a regular newsletter that provided members with a great deal of information about the progress of each class, the victories of individual club members and also considerable information about sailing rules and the techniques of successful racing.

The history of the BYC contains many references to women as guests of the club and as fundraisers but there are few references to women competing in sailing events. Therefore it is interesting to note that in April 1970 Miss Sue Rowe was the first girl to win a BYC pennant when she won the Sabot class and in 1971 Diane Gough and Jane Shannon won the Attunga class in *Raven II*.



*Lightweight Sharpies launching at the old ramp in the 1970s.*

### **Yachting, 1980-2002**

In August 1977 planning commenced for the celebration of one hundred years of organised yacht racing on Lake Wendouree. The Commodore was J. McLeod and the senior office bearers included Vice Commodore M. Kitchen, Rear Commodore J. Curwen-Walker and Secretary B. Halsall. The 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting took place at the clubhouse on 3 August 1979 and the retiring Commodore reported on the success of the club and the increased membership before handing over the position of commodore to M. Kitchen

The following classes were on the Club's register in 1978.

Lightweight Sharpie	12 yachts
Quickcat	11
Attunga	8
Lazy E	11
Arafura (2 divisions)	18
Sabot and Minnow	13
Sailfish	7
Other	6

Twenty race meetings were held during the centenary season but the highlight was the special race between Hutchinson's *Valdera*, representing the Ballarat Yacht Club and *Acrospire II* which represented the Albert Park Yacht Club. On this occasion, the Ballarat crew was victorious but in the following year *Acrospire II* won. (In the

same year the Hutchinson family allowed *Valdera* to be displayed at the 'Sailboat '79' Expo). The centenary celebrations brought new life to the *Acrospire-Valdera* challenge series. By the late-1980s the eagerly awaited challenge consisted of three heats over the Opening Day Weekend. In 1987/88 victory went to *Acrospire* (APYC) but the BYC was successful in the year of the Bicentennial Veteran Yacht Regatta held at Albert Park when



*Accepting the challenge between 'Valdera' and 'Acrospire' for the Centenary Regatta, Albert Park Yacht Club Commodore Kevin Greenwood (left) and Ballarat Yacht Club Commodore John McLeod.*

*Valdera* won the challenge and came second in the national veterans yacht race. In 1990 *Valdera* was transported to Goolwa in South Australia and came second at the veteran and vintage yachting regatta. In the following year the regatta for vintage



*The challenge between 'Valdera' and 'Acrospire' was a highlight of Opening Day Weekend.*



*Sailing in the 1980s. Attunga Cats, Sabres, Sharpies, Lazy E, Quickcat, Arafura Cats and Solo Class Yachts.*

boats was held on Lake Wendouree and *Valdera* made a clean sweep - winning the Regatta Trophy, the *Acrospire-Valdera* Challenge Trophy and the Wooden Boats Trophy. Throughout this period, the BYC enjoyed considerable success at Ballarat, Goolwa and Albert Park and successive commodores made reference to the sterling efforts of Brian Canny and his crew in mastering the logistics of competing and winning.

The fortunes of the Ballarat Yacht Club can be measured in terms of its success both on and off the water. The appendices show that since the 1950s club members have won nine national championships and twenty-seven State Championships with multiple wins to Messrs Webb (6), Phillips (3), Giddy (3), Stapleton (2), Morrow (2) and Menzies (2). At the 1978 State Championships, BYC yachtsmen won three classes, viz Alan Webb won the Quickcat Championship, Peter Coburn the Sailfish Championship, and Martin Giddy the Attunga 15 Championship. At the 1980 National Sailfish Championship, Ballarat skippers dominated the Class with Chris Drury, David Spiers and Dan Flynn winning first, third

and fourth places respectively. In 1994 Ballarat dominated the Sabre Class with three youngsters, Anthony Grant, Andrew Dellaca and Chris Peile selected for the elite Sabre State Squad and Cameron Webb selected for the National Squad. At the same regatta the Ballarat teams won first, second and sixth places.

Obviously the overall level of success enjoyed by club members was dependent on the skills of individual sailors but it also relied on the smooth



*Visiting Sharpies enjoy the racing on Lake Wendouree for the 'Ballarat Bertie' Cup*

operation of the BYC itself. Club membership throughout the 1980s was steady with about 180 senior and intermediates, 100 associates, 22 junior members, and about 30 social or retired members. In 2002 the club had a membership register made up of 157 Seniors, 96 Juniors, 8 Students, 36 Associates and 6 Honorary Life members, making a total of 303 members. The recruitment of whole families became a regular feature of club activity in the 1990s.

Throughout the 1980/90s the BYC maintained a register of about eighty yachts with about forty sailing in any one season. Club officials experimented with various means of attracting more yachts onto the lake by staging social races, Sunday races and evening races but the nucleus of participating yachts remained fairly constant. The type of yachts competing also fluctuated and there was a marked decline in the OK Dinghy, Arafura and 125 Classes in the late-1980s. Ironically 'Miscellaneous' was a growing class and other new classes in the 1990s included Paper Tigers, Lasers, 145's and Minnows.

The biggest single change in yachting was probably the introduction of the Sailboard Class which brought a whole new dimension to yachting to the lake. The BYC scored a major coup in



*A Junior Sail Training Programme started in the 1990s has introduced many youngsters to the B.Y.C and sailing.*

May 1982 when it hosted the Victorian Inland Waters Sailboard Championship. Sixty-two entries were received with victory going to the reigning Australian champion. Unfortunately the Club was unable to capitalise on this promotional opportunity because drought conditions the following year forced the Ballarat Yacht Club to move most of its pennant races to Lake Burrumbeet. Sailboards have been a feature of yachting on Lake Wendouree since that time but is it interesting to note that in



*The Jubilee Class started in 1992, and has brought many retired sailors back to the B.Y.C.*

the early days there were a number of references to the need for some sailboarders to fully appreciate yachting etiquette and club rules.

A Jubilee class was introduced in 1992 and enabled many 'retired' sailors to once again enjoy the excitement of the wind in their hair and the splash of water in their face. This class often produced some of the most exciting races of the series. At the other end of the spectrum, the club placed considerable emphasis on its Junior Development Program. Records refer to the pride that the Club took in the maturity and success of its juniors, and acknowledged the enormous effort made by club members such as John Dellaca, John Allen and Mal Willis in assisting junior sailors reach their potential.

The weed problem worsened in the early 1980s and again in the late 1990s due to heatwave conditions, low water levels and drought conditions. There were references to 'floating cows' - large clumps of weed growth that would break away from





*Highlight of the 1992 Season Presentation Night was the unveiling of a new Past Presidents-Commodores Honour Board and the presentation of Past Commodores Badges. (Pictured from Left): W. Dunstan, G. Troon, B. Nunn, J. McLeod, G. Hawkes, M. Kitchen, B. Halsall, L. Webb, B. Matthews.*

the floor of the lake and eerily floated to the surface. In spite of these difficulties the task of weed control was ably managed by the contractor, Ivan Greenbank, working on behalf of the City Council and lake users at large. In reports that were reminiscent of the 1890s, a number of imaginative suggestions were put forward regarding the control of lake weeds.

Droughts affected the club in terms of sailing opportunities, recruitment and receipts from its clubhouse and catering facilities but, on a broader scale, it did not prevent Ballarat's sailors from making their mark elsewhere and 'Mainsheet' provides many references to BYC members competing at other regattas. Thus the Webbs journeyed to Sorrento, Graeme Hawkes won the Victorian Inland Championship at Lake Burrumbeet, the Garner family attained third place in the Queenscliff- Sorrento race, the Baker's competed at Blackrock. In 1984/85 the Webbs' competed in the 125 National Championships at Bunbury in Western Australia. The dedication of club members is perhaps epitomised by a photograph in 'Mainsheet' which shows a trailer-sailer en route to a distant regatta. The unusual feature is that

the intrepid sailors are travelling through snow to get to the regatta.

On land the BYC was involved in major expenditure on building renovations and the sewerage and rescue boat projects. In 1983/84 the committee extended the clubhouse and a number of fundraising activities saw the debt of \$30,000 repaid within three years. The BYC entered the computer age in 1984 and as a result, all corrected times, handicaps and places were quickly calculated. In 1987 the club purchased a new rescue boat and motor because of the support of the Byrne Family Trust and the BYC's ever-reliable Ladies Auxiliary. Club records provide an interesting record of the activities of the Club as it relied on the efforts of club officials to arrange a challenging racing program whilst at the same time, ensuring that it remained a viable entity.

## Conclusion

Since its formation in 1877, the Ballarat Yacht Club's fortunes have generally fluctuated in accordance with condition of the lake, the broader social and economic forces at work in society and, of course, the efforts of those office bearers and members who have been prepared to contribute expertise, time, money and enthusiasm to ensure the Club's success. A brief history such as this always names the most significant figures and runs the great risk of inadvertently overlooking other individuals who had helped the Ballarat Yacht Club reach its 125 anniversary milestone. But just as line honours or a spectacular capsizes are there for all to see, the following is this author's overview of some of the club's most important personalities.

Throughout the 1870/80s the inspirational leaders were Morey, Edwards and Caselli and Bailey.

The men who held the club together in the difficult 1890s and who formed the amateur club included Shoppee and Bailey.

Those who financially underwrote the club in those difficult war-depression-war decades were Paterson, Coghlan, White and Malyon

The long-awaited clubhouse came about because of the efforts of men such as Dunstan, Wheeler and Davis.

The champion yachtsmen who between them won 12 state and national titles were Alan Webb, Phillips and Giddy.

The able administrators since the 1980s include R. Troon, J. McLeod, B. Canny and B. Halsall. In addition the invaluable work of the Ladies Auxiliary must also be noted.

The highly successful Junior Development Program was managed by J. Allen, M. Willis and J. Dellaca.

More than a century ago, Commodore Edwards returned from an inter-colonial tour and told fellow club members that Lake Wendouree was 'the finest sheet of water for yachting anywhere in Australia'. (Ballarat Evening Post, 13 March 1880) As the BYC enters the twentieth-first century, members are still acutely aware of how remarkable the lake and surrounding gardens are to the city and to the Ballarat Yacht Club.

Members of the BYC have never lost their competitive edge. The Club provides numerous opportunities for gentle sailing but at its heart, its activities revolve around racing for trophies and honour. The type of racing has changed – from six-ton yachts with huge sails and professional crews, to one-person dinghies – but competitive racing has been the key to the club's development. This competitiveness has also extended well beyond Lake Wendouree because, over the past 125 years, the BYC has hosted numerous inter-club and state championships and BYC members have travelled throughout the country to demonstrate their sailing prowess.

Finally, the club has shown a willingness to change with the times. In the 1880s yachting in Ballarat was the domain of those wealthy businessman who could afford big yachts, big crews and big bets. Today the Ballarat Yacht Club continues to prosper because its committee and members sail yachts that best suit conditions on the lake. The big six-tonners represent a glorious past but it is the modern technology in yacht design and rigging that represents the future and provide clear proof that the club has been able to change its sailing and membership profile in order to attract whole families of yachting enthusiasts. This is the stuff that ensures that the Ballarat Yacht Club will be celebrating more victories and anniversaries in the future.



*The Ballarat Yacht Club today  
with Jubilees in their mooring pen.*



*Driving the piles, 1982.  
For the new deck and the start of the  
renovations in 1983/84 for the Club House  
to what it is today*



## Appendices

### BYC's winners of National Championship

	<b>Yacht</b>	<b>Skipper</b>	<b>Class</b>
1979	<i>Mud Shoveller</i>	P. Coburn	Sailfish
1980	<i>Muffin</i>	C. Drury	Sailfish
1986	<i>Invader</i>	S. Hayden	Minnow
1988	<i>Top Gun</i>	P. Phillips	Minnow
1992	<i>Infidel</i>	P. Phillips	Sabre
2000	<i>Aquila</i>	C. Weatherly	Access Dinghy
2001	<i>Balcombe Bay</i>	M. Morrow	Jubilee
2001	<i>Sunshine</i>	C. Weatherly	Access Dinghy
2001	<i>The Boys</i>	J. Willis	145 Class

### BYC's winners of State Championships

	<b>Yacht</b>	<b>Skipper</b>	<b>Class</b>
1950	<i>Kooraloo</i>	F. Stapleton	Snipe
1951	<i>Kooraloo</i>	F. Stapleton	Snipe
1955	<i>Kelpie</i>	A. Linklater	Snipe
1956	<i>La Rene</i>	G. Troon	Snipe
1968	<i>Sandpiper</i>	B. Menzies	Attunga
1969	<i>Sandpiper</i>	B. Menzies	Attunga
1970	<i>Kaye</i>	A. Webb	Quickcat
1970	<i>Guppy</i>	M. Runnalls	Arafura Cadet
1975	<i>Katari</i>	M. Brooke	Attunga
1976	<i>Curare II</i>	M. Giddy	Attunga
1977	<i>Curare II</i>	M. Giddy	Attunga
1978	<i>Kaye</i>	A. Webb	Quickcat
1978	<i>Stanley Crocodile</i>	P. Coburn	Failfish
1978	<i>Curare II</i>	P. Giddy	Attunga
1980	<i>Will-Go</i>	M. Willis	Attunga
1980	<i>Cheetah</i>	M. Evans	Arafura Cadet
1987	<i>Farouche</i>	A. Webb	Farr 7500
1988	<i>Farouche</i>	A. Webb	Farr 7500
1989	<i>Farouche</i>	A. Webb	Farr 7500
1989	<i>Drastic Action</i>	P. Phillips	Sabre
1993	<i>Farouche</i>	A. Webb	Farr 7500
1993	<i>Farnomenal</i>	I. Baker	Farr 6000
1997	<i>Taj</i>	S. Wright	Jubilee
1998	<i>Balcombe Bay</i>	M. Morrow	Jubilee
2000	<i>Farrocious</i>	B. Menzies	Farr 7500
2002	<i>Wild Card</i>	M. Tolhurst	Minnow
2002	<i>Balcombe Bay</i>	M. Morrow	Jubilee

**BYC Club Champions**

	<b>Yacht</b>	<b>Skipper</b>
1992/92	<i>Extremities</i>	R. Allen
1992/93	<i>Wildcard</i>	A. Dellaca
1993/94	<i>Drastic Action</i>	A. Grant
1994/95	<i>Alley Cat</i>	C. Dellaca
1995/96	<i>Nothing Too Serious</i>	C. Dellaca
1996/97	<i>Taj</i>	S. Wright
1997/98	<i>Living on the Edge</i>	R. Allen
1998/99	<i>Kanga Crusher</i>	N. Bilney
1999/2000	<i>Ballarat Yacht Fittings</i>	A. Dellaca
2000/01	<i>The Boys</i>	J. Willis
2001/02	<i>Wildcard</i>	M. Tolhurst

**BYC – Junior Clubperson Award**

1993/94	P. Cheater
1994/95	D. Kors
1995/96	J. Millere
1996/97	P. Rock
1997/98	—
1998/99	P. Arber
1999/2000	P. Healy
2000/01	{B. Youlden {J. Heget
2001/02	A. Crosbie

**BYC – David Bell Memorial Trophy  
Best Club Person Award**

1965/66	J. McLeod
1966/67	B. Menzies
1967/68	G. Hawkes
1968/69	{G. Troon {G. Matthews
1969/70	J. Ferrier
1970/71	J. Malpass
1971/72	A. Hughes
1972/93	W. Fox
1973/74	J. Spiers
1974/75	M. Kitchen
1975/76	P. Kopke
1976/77	Mrs B. Hawkes
1977/78	B. Halsall
1978/79	{Mrs D. McLeod {G. King
1979/80	B. Halsall
1980/81	K. Bowden
1981/82	Mrs H. Spiers
1982/83	R. Troon
1983/84	B. Canny
1984/85	{Mrs Y. Troon {R. Troon
1985/86	L. Webb
1986/87	M. Willis
1987/88	J. McLeod
1988/89	Mrs J. Watkins
1989/90	R. Stead
1990/91	B. Canny
1991/92	M. Willis
1992/93	R. Stead
1993/94	{Mrs G. Murphy {B. Murphy
1994/95	{Mrs P. Dellaca {J. Dellaca
1995/96	J. Allen
1996/97	Mrs P. Dellaca
1997/98	R. Stead
1998/99	L. Davies
1999/2000	{R. Gregory {Mrs F. Gregory
2000/01	M. Healy
2001/02	{Mrs L. Crosbie {P. Crosbie

**Life Members**

1905	C. C. Shoppee
1924	D. M. Patterson
1924	H. Adair
1924	F. Speed
1924	J. White
1924	R. D. Hammond
1930	C. Greer
1930	H. C. Stafford
1936	E. E. Malyon
1948	H. A. Sutherland
1949	W. B. Wheeler
1952	E. H. Davis
1958	Mrs B. A. John
1966	W. D. Dunstan
1974	G. H. Troon
1974	A. L. Hughes
1974	J. N. McLeod
1984	G. L. Hawkes
1997	B. J. Halsall

**Ladies Auxiliary & Auxiliary  
Past Presidents**

1957-1959	Mrs. R. Kerr
1959-1961	Mrs. R. Barrett
1961-1964	Mrs. W. Dow
1964-1965	Mrs. R. Barrett
1965-1967	Mrs. B. Rizzoli
1967-1968	Mrs. N Knott
1968-1969	Mrs. M. Menzies
1969-1970	Mrs. C. Rice
1970-1971	Mrs. J. Gough
1971-1973	Mrs. J. Hughes
1973-1975	Mrs. H. Spiers
1975-1977	Mrs. B. Hawkes
1977-1979	Mrs. H. Spiers
1979-1982	Mrs. E. McLean
1982-1984	Mrs. E. McLean Mrs. H. Spiers
1984-1987	Mrs. L. Curwen-Walker
1987-1988	Mrs. M. Berry
1988-1990	Mrs. K. Webb
1990-1993	Mrs. P. Allen
1993-1999	Mrs. P. Dellaca

**Club Presidents**

1887/88	R. Trench
1880/81	S. Wilson
1881/87	P. Russell
1889/90	C. B. Bailey
1890/96	T. Bath
1896/1901	J. Heinz
1903/04	C.C. Shoppee
1905/07	S. Woinarski
1907/13	F. Brawn
1913/14	G. Radcliffe
1914/16	H. Adair
1916/17	D. Patterson
1919/20	H. Berry
1920/21	E. Pascoe
1921/22	D. Tunbridge
1922/23	H. Berry
1924/25	E. Malyon
1925/25	R. Vickery
1926/27	N. Whiteside
1927/30	E. Davis
1930/37	B. John
1927/39	R. Hutchinson
1939/52	E. Davis
1952/54	W. Dunstan
1954/56	R. Kerr
1956/58	W. Dunstan

**Club Commodores**

1958/60	W. Dunstan
1960/63	G. Troon
1963/65	B. Nunn
1965/67	K. Rizzoli
1967/69	R. Gough
1969/71	A. Hughes
1971/74	A. K. Webb
1974/76	G. Hawkes
1976/77	G. Matthews
1977/79	J. McLeod
1979/81	M. Kitchen
1981/83	J. Curwen-Walker
1983/85	B. Halsall
1985/87	R. Troon
1987/89	L. Webb
1989/91	B. Halsall
1991/93	D. Stuchbery
1993/95	R. Stead
1995/97	L. Webb
1997/99	J. Dellaca
1999/2001	I. Taylor
2001 -	S. Wright