

Alexa. On 19 January 1893 Mr Russell recorded three sets of measurements of *Alexa*, all with a LWL of 31.5 ft. Measured with 1,411.55 sq ft of unspecified sails, she rated 7.4 tons. A total of 1,196.98 sq ft had a note, 'This includes jibheaded topsail & masthead spinnaker, but not jibtopsail, yard or jackyard topsail.' This produced a rating of 6.28 tons. With 'lower sails only, including masthead spinnaker' she rated 5.17 tons.

Alexa was sailed to Melbourne for an Intercolonial Regatta, where she beat all-comers. That led to Mr GF Garrard of Melbourne commissioning Alexander McFarlane to build a larger vessel in order to beat *Alexa*. *The Register* of 1 October 1897 reported —

Mr GF Garrard's vessel was only launched on Friday. She was built by Mr McFarlane to designs supplied by Mr W Fife jun. When finished she ought to look a handsome craft and she should prove herself a first-class racing and sea boat. Her dimensions are 60 ft overall, 38 ft 2 in on the waterline, beam 10 ft 7 in and draught 7 ft 6 in. She is provided with a straight keel, to which is fastened 7 tons 15 cwt of lead. Her foundation timbers are of jarrah and blue gum, the ribs being of the latter timber. She is planked with white kauri. Her deck is of the same wood, whilst the deck fittings etc are of teak wood. She is not unlike the *Alexa* to look at, albeit she has a prettier stem and is a much larger craft, being nearly double her size. The spars have yet to be fitted. They will be of Oregon, and the spar fittings will be of galvanised steel. She will be yawl rigged. Her cabin will be splendidly fitted out, and sleeping apartments will be provided for six persons. The cabin panels will be of polished kauri and cedar.

This was *Sayonara*, which won the Intercolonial Regatta of 1898. [See the 'cover' to the Annual report of 2000-1 included in *Squadron Quarterly* June 2002: 26] She was one of the most notable yachts of her time and for her is named the *Sayonara* Cup, which was actively competed into the 1920s. An enquiry addressed to the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron about *Sayonara* and the fate of the trophy has not elicited a reply.

Between 1889 and 1903 the only Squadron yacht with greater measured sail area than *Alexa* was Commodore Richard Honey's *Ethel*, 35.67 ft LWL, 1,677.75 sq ft with her jib-headed topsail and rating 9.97 tons. It is frustrating that so few measurements were recorded and hardly any photographs have survived of these grand old vessels. Fortunately that cannot be said of *Alexa*, and the dilemma is to restrict ourselves to so few.

By 1919 Len Walter (who built *Norallie* in 1906) achieved a long-standing ambition to own *Alexa*, which he raced regularly as scratch boat in the fleet and unbeaten on handicap until Richard Fisher's *Reverie* won the Kintore Cup of 1920. He was the grandson of her original owner, Commodore William Fisher. [For the expulsion of *Reverie* from the Squadron pool and her sad end, see *Squadron Quarterly* September 1996: 36-7.]

In 1922 *Alexa* changed hands again, and was briefly owned by the partnership of Messrs Angove, Martin & Crompton before they



Mrs Janet Flint

bought *Stormy Petrel* from Napier Birks. In 1927 *Alexa* was owned by Major JM Irwin, and at that time she was much used for racing and social sailing. Thereafter there is a gap in our knowledge, and so far attempts to fill it have not succeeded. All we know is that Mr WF Crook bought her from John Gordon before Easter in 1943, which was as late in April that year as it can get, probably 25 April.

Sad to say, *Alexa* ran aground and on to the beach at North Glenelg in January 1944. In the week that followed, valiant attempts were made to pull her off the beach at high water; but to no avail, as apparently, the six tons of lead in the keel held the hull firmly in the sand. In this way, the yacht *Alexa* became a total loss.

There is a report in *Seacraft* 1946; 1: 51 of a '36-hour storm', in which, 'Of the 26 boats moored off the Glenelg jetty, only three were not wrecked.'

The beach north of Glenelg was strewn with wreckage; one or two hulls were washed up, but in most cases boats were broken up completely. Everything of value was quickly picked up by the public, and the boat owners lost everything, including their craft.

Periodically, these storms occur along the Gulf Coast, and though this last gale was more severe than usual, it is rarely that a year goes by without some toll being taken of the small ships in the gulf. One victim of these storms in recent years was the *Alexa*, an old identity well known on the coast, and noted for her fine lines.

One of the three survivors, a fishing ketch, rode out the storm at her moorings which dragged slightly, however, endangering a second ketch owned by Mr H Tickle who decided to run his craft to Outer Harbor under staysail in order to save her.

The restored watercolour of *Alexa* has recently been hung in the foyer at the turn of the stairs. It was painted by a Member, the noted artist Laurie Howie (1876-1963), who donated it to the Squadron, probably in the 1920s. In one of the moves (probably from the T&G Basement clubrooms in 1967-8) the painting was badly damaged. The artist's daughters, Mary Howie and Janet Flint, together with Keith Flint, paid to have it restored and rehung in the Clubhouse after a long absence. Laurie Howie's story was given in the issue of June 2001: 42.

Alexa was one of the noblest vessels we ever had, and it could be said of her, as Horatio did of Hamlet, 'I shall not look upon her like again.'

SO



Mrs Mary Howie

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