

The Rules of Flags (1924)

'From time to time enquiries have been made regarding the rules governing the flying of flags on various occasions, and in a circular issued to the State Governments, the Acting Prime Minister (Dr Earle Page) supplies information on the customs and procedures on this matter for the information of public institutions and other bodies.

'The rules are that on vessels the Union Flag (the Union Jack) must not be flown afloat except by His Majesty's ships, and in certain defined circumstances. The Commonwealth Blue Ensign must not be flown afloat except by a vessel possessing a warrant to do so.

'On State Government vessels the British Blue Ensign, with the badge of the State, is flown. The merchant flag of the Commonwealth (the British Red Ensign, defaced by stars, as in the Commonwealth Blue Ensign) is the flag of the Commonwealth mercantile marine, and is worn by ships of Australian registry. On shore the Commonwealth flag (the British Blue Ensign defaced by the stars of the Southern Cross constellation on the flag and a seven-pointed star in the lower canton; all stars in white) is flown at Commonwealth public buildings and establishments.

The British Blue Ensign with the badge of the State is flown on State Government buildings. The Union flag (the Union Jack) may be flown by any subject of the Empire, but it should be on a mast by itself. It may, however, be flown with a Commonwealth flag on a yardarm — the flags being at opposite ends of the yard. It should never be exhibited in a position inferior to any other flag.

'The flying of the Commonwealth Blue Ensign is reserved for Commonwealth Government use, but there is no reservation in the case of a Commonwealth merchant flag or a Red Ensign. It is pointed out that these rules do not govern the use of flags by the naval, military or air forces, in which cases the question is controlled by their respective regulations.'

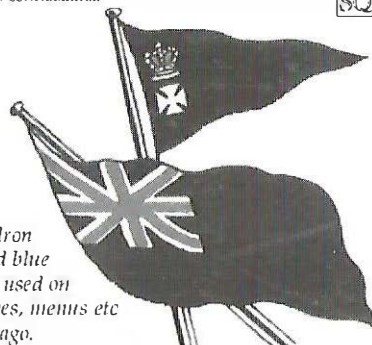
The Rules of Flags promulgated in 1924 were supplanted by the Flags Act 1953, the Shipping Registration Act 1981 and by changed conventions over time. The Australian Civil Ensign (Red Ensign) was formally adopted on 15 April 1954. It is

described by Ausflag as 'simply a red version of the Australian National Flag. It is for use only at sea and officially never on land. At sea it is the only flag allowable for merchant ships registered in Australia under the Navigation and Shipping Act 1912. Pleasure craft, however, may fly either the Red Ensign or the National Flag.'

The (British) Blue and Red Ensigns are blue and red flags having the union flag in the upper inner canton. The Australian national flag is described as a Blue or Red Ensign defaced with the Federation star and the stars of the Southern Cross. Similarly, the South Australian State flag is a Blue Ensign defaced with the piping shrike symbol. The word *defaced* troubles some people, but it is merely the technical term used to describe the addition of a new component to an existing flag.

There remain only two or three vessels on the Squadron register entitled to fly a Blue Ensign. This privilege required the yacht to be registered as a British ship, before there was a separate Act to create an Australian registry. The owner, being a Member of the Squadron, could apply through the Secretary to the Admiralty in London for a warrant for the Blue Ensign, which could be flown only when both the owner and the warrant were aboard. We had one for *Kareelali*, but by the time we acquired *Salyricon* the system had lapsed. It is now a rather quaint anachronism, doomed to inevitable extinction, regardless of what may occur when the November referendum is held to decide whether or not this country relinquishes its last imperial connections.

SQ



The Squadron burgee and blue ensign, as used on programmes, menus etc a century ago.

The Rymill Story (Part 2): Cruising Commodores

Peter Last

Arthur and Ernest Rymill were brought up as gentlemen of wealth and leisure, with the privilege to indulge their sporting inclinations. Arthur was good with his hands and had considerable ability in designing both sailing craft and hydroplanes. In our last issue (page 33) we published a photograph of a dinghy which he built as a lad. In 1897 he designed and built *Geisha*, which he and Ernest took to Auckland for the Great Native Regatta of 1898 (*Sea Spray*, April and May 1992). They won no races, but had the satisfaction that their vessel held together on a heavy day which devastated some of the opposition. Her bulb keel caused considerable interest. She would have resembled Commodore Sanderson's *Matangi*, of which there is a half model in the Clubhouse.

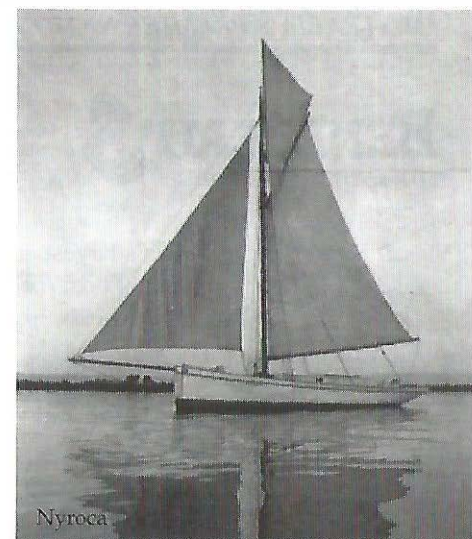
The Rymills continued to race *Geisha* in Squadron and other local events, with Arthur as helmsman, but his ambition turned further afield. In 1889, Josiah Bonnin, Manager of Nalpa Station and ancestor of the medical dynasty, commissioned Fred Potts of Langhorne Creek (AG Rymill's cousin) to build a cutter in red gum wood. She was 26 ft 6 in overall, had a beam of 7 ft, a draft of 4 ft, a bowsprit of 11 ft and total ballast of 2 tons 11 cwt, of which 1 ton 8 cwt was on the keel. He named her *Nyroca*, and in her first race narrowly won the Milang Regatta of 10 April 1889, '...as she rounded the buoy the *Pasquin's* bowsprit almost reached her counter.'

AG Rymill bought *Nyroca* on 23 December 1891, and blithely took her through the Murray Mouth five days later. The log reads, 'Up early this morning, expecting to find a North wind, but it was 'blowing a dead calm', so we decided to drift through the Mouth with the current, and

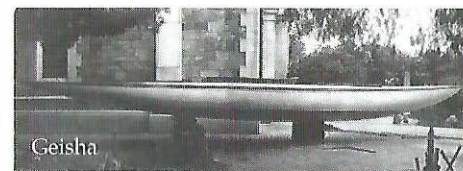
keep her head to the breakers with oars & poles. After a 1/4 of an hour of jumping about in the breakers managed to get through safely & made Port Victor by 11 o'clock.'

The Rymills (especially Arthur, for Ernest seems to have been afflicted with seasickness) took *Nyroca* far afield. When she ran aground entering American River, they rigged shears and went ashore to follow a favourite pastime — shooting any wild life in sight. On their first cruise to Port Lincoln, they paused to eat Christmas dinner with the keeper's family at Althorpe Island. It seems that they usually cooked ashore, for the log has several references to anchorages with 'good firewood' and the small cabin had a pair of bellows beside the hatch.

Inspired by that experience, the seventh cruise was to Moonta in two weeks, sadly with no details in the log. For a casual wager, Arthur took *Nyroca* to Melbourne and back between 21 December 1895 and 20 January 1896. The log is laconic, but contemporary newspaper accounts provide interesting details. The tenth cruise, and the last included in the logbook, was to Coffin Bay, where they anchored, *inter alia*, in Fishery Bay, which seems a bit bouncy for my taste.



Nyroca



Geisha

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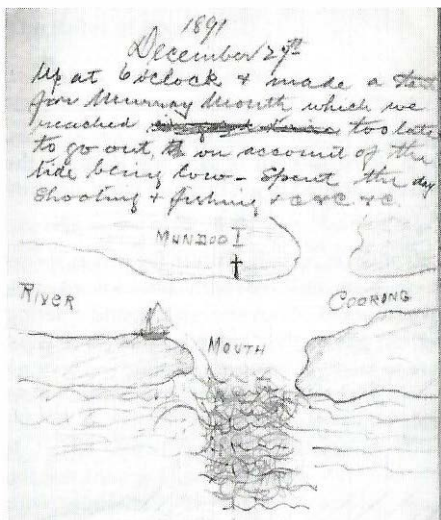
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AG Rymill's log entry for 28 December 1891.

'1st Jan 98. Rolled down 3 reefs in mainsail, put dingy on house, and made a start [from Fishery Bay] at 8 am up the coast. Lumpy water outside. Abt midday wind fell light & came into NW.

Tried for an anchorage under an Island off Avoid P, but the sea was too rough & got into a little bay formed by the reef (not shown on chart) running off Avoid Pt. This is a perfect anchorage for small boats — from west round by S to north (only open to NW). [Spelling as in the original, with modified punctuation.]

'3rd [January 1897] Made a start at 8 am, & by the aid of chart & compass & a sharp lookout from the mast head were able to work up the channel without once taking the ground. Arrived off Mr Mortlock's Station at 2 pm, which is about 25 miles from Pt Sir Isaac. Here we struck a real good pal in Bill Mortlock MP, who did everything in his power to make our stay most enjoyable.'

This was WAT Mortlock, father of JT Mortlock, sometime Commodore of Port Adelaide Sailing Club and benefactor of many organisations, including the University of Adelaide and the State Library. For the story of the Mortlock dynasty and of Martindale Hall and the yachts named for it, see *Squadron Quarterly* September 1994: 24–29.

The Rymills retained *Geisha* as a racing vessel, and won the Kintore Cup of 1899. The following year she participated in one of the races for the Tennyson Cup, and the last reference to her was in 1901.

A cutting of 1 October 1897 records two important new vessels, one being Commodore W Fisher's *Reverie*. 'The *Valeria* is a three-rater with a bulb keel. She is an imported craft, Mr CH Angas having purchased her of the Earl of Albemarle. In a dismantled state she was brought to South Australia by the Blue Anchor liner *Culgoa* about three months ago, and Mr McFarlane [well known Port Adelaide boatbuilder] has fitted her out for service. She is expected to take part in the manoeuvres connected with the opening demonstration [of RSAYS] on November 6. Many yachtsmen regard the bulb keels with disfavour. They are boats which can be said to have a maximum of speed in the water and a minimum of comfort to their occupants. The *Valeria* is nearly 40 ft overall, and she draws about 6 ft 6 in of water. Her bulb weighs one ton 15 cwt and it runs to a depth of five feet from her bottom. She has been tried on the Port River, and she is said to possess good sea-going qualities.' Very quickly she became scratch boat in the small racing fleet of the day.

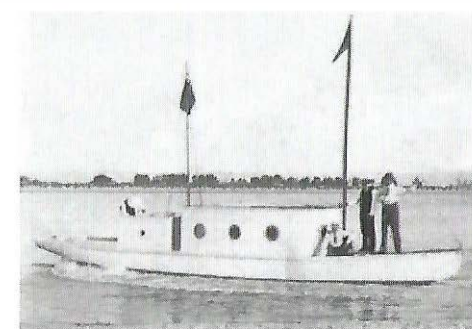
A cutting of 8 November 1902 records that '*Valeria* was converted by her new owner (Mr AG Rymill) into an oil launch. "The comparatively new motive power for small boats seems to be increasing in popularity." Aesthetically this was a dreadful mutilation, imposing a box-like cabin on a lovely hull.

On 17 October 1903 the yachting correspondent reported, 'Messrs AG and E Rymill will today leave Port Adelaide for Well's Creek in the *Valeria*. They hope there to have a few days shag shooting, and anticipate getting a bag of 3,000 (sic). Shags, as the fishermen can certify, do an immense amount of damage by devouring young fish. The Messrs Rymill are armed with Winchester repeating shotguns.'

In 1909 the Rymill brothers launched *Avocet*, which appeared on the cover of *Squadron Quarterly*, June 1999. They cruised her in both gulfs and took her through the Murray Mouth to participate in events at Goolwa and Milang, including hydroplane racing. After the death of AG Rymill in 1934, she passed to his son, Sir Arthur Rymill, who sold her interstate in 1961.

In 1934, Dr AI. Tostevin, Adelaide's most prominent ophthalmologist of the day, commissioned George Ross of Woodville to build a motor-sailer to the design of WD Bailey. She was described as a wooden screw yacht of 25.72 gross tonnage, and was 44 ft long, with a beam of 12 ft 6 in, a maximum draft of 5 ft 6 in and a depth of 8 ft. She was capable of a speed of 7–8 knots from a 36 hp Gardner engine, and sailed under ketch rig.

Dr Tostevin had enjoyed the hospitality of AG Rymill aboard *Avocet* during a period of prolonged convalescence. This association is probably why he named his new vessel *Nyroca*, in which he cruised in local waters, where he became seriously interested in big game fishing.



Left: *Valeria* under sail.

Above: *Valeria* converted to an oil launch. No longer a thing of beauty.

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State Governor Sir Willoughby Norrie with the jaws of his largest shark, caught from Dr Tostevin's *Nyroca*.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, many Squadron vessels were acquired by the Royal Australian Navy. *Nyroca* was requisitioned on 28 August 1942 and was formally commissioned on 29 September. She served as a unit of the Naval Auxiliary Patrol at Adelaide, Whyalla and Fremantle until she was paid off on 2 July 1945.



Dr Tostevin stands beside the cabin of *Nyroca* under sail (JH Cowell)

Before being returned to her owner, he paid for a replacement Gardiner diesel engine. Sir Willoughby Norrie, popular State Governor from 1944 to 1952, was several times a guest on *Nyroca*, from which he twice landed white pointer sharks of large size. One would have been a world record but for the inadvertent action of a hand in adjusting the brake on the reel, which was a technical infringement of the rules. (See *Squadron Quarterly* September 1995: 43-4 and March 1996: 21-3.)

Henry Way Rymill, nephew of AG Rymill, first acquired a decrepit old yacht *Sea Hawk* for £7 in 1936. (*Squadron Quarterly* March 1996: 24-27 and March 1999: 53.) She also served in the Naval Auxiliary Patrol as N6, until in 1950 Henry acquired *Beth*, a motor-sailer, in which he carried his flag as Commodore, including the Royal Visit of 1954.

In April 1955 Dr Tostevin sold his *Nyroca* to Henry Rymill, who used her very actively until his death in 1971. He frequently cruised to Kangaroo Island and occasionally to Port Lincoln. She passed through several hands, including former Commodore Bill Harniman before Tony Flint took her to Tasmania.

It is a nice coincidence that both Rymill Commodores should have cruised in vessels



Beth dressed overall, probably when HW Rymill was Commodore. (Henry Rymill's album)

called *Nyroca*. That name interested me. Dr Tostevin's son Mark understood that *Nyroca* is a generic name for a duck, one being *Nyroca australis*. 'Long ago someone must have caught one, had it mounted and presented it to my father. It was a brown bird with distinctive white eyes.' This description fits the Hardhead (white-eyed duck) *Aythya australis*. In the same spirit, Henry Rymill's crew once presented him with a photograph of such a duck, taken by the celebrated Darian Smith. It remained on the bullhead when his estate sold her, and perhaps it is still there.

I could not find *Nyroca* as a modern generic or specific name in Cayley, Pizzoy or Simpson & Day, together with Teddale's *Birds of New Guinea*. I did no better with my quite extensive collection of dictionaries and encyclopedias. A search on the Internet turned up Schedule 2A of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982*. The list included *Aythya* (*Nyroca*) *nyroca*, the white-eyed pochard of Ghana.

Aythya (formerly *Nyroca*) *australis*, the hardhead or white-eyed duck.



In turn, pochard solved a minor detail in AG Rymill's log of the original *Nyroca*. In an entry of 6 February 1897 he referred to his boat as 'the Poker' and on 14 April 1892 as 'the Powder'. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a pochard as a European diving bird, also called the red-eyed poker or widgeon. Being keen shooting and fishing sportsmen in the English tradition, the Rymills would have known this usage, which was new to me. No doubt Josiah Bonnin did so also when he gave his little cutter that name. SQ

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