

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

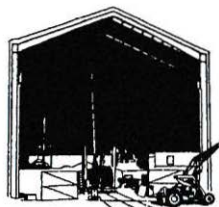
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Ian's precious ration of Scotch being blasted to the galley ceiling by a burping water pump — twice!

First e-mail from Di's 88 year old mum on hearing we had arrived, 'Atlasthell Happy days.'

Great delight in meeting expat. Squadron members John *Midnight Sun* and David *Polaris* Taylor. Had hilarious happening on *Crusader* with the star turn being a genuine 'pie floater', created by Ian Wishart, a friend on *Polaris*.

Crusader won the 'best dressed' international yacht prize, and the subsequent race for visiting boats.

★ ★ ★

We express our thanks to Neil Cormack for restoring the submarine plaque, which was damaged and has now been replaced on the wall in the Dining Room.

★ ★ ★

Members saw with pleasure the delayed commencement of the marina development, but were disconcerted when piles had to be removed and relocated. There was an error of 4.64 m,



Remarkable agility and strength were required to place piles for the marina development. Peter and Helen White managed to capture a worker in midair. When the job was repeated, a conventional pile driver was used.

which was emphatically not the fault of the Squadron. We were intrigued to see the fashion whereby one aspect of the work was done.

★ ★ ★

Our first experience of a working bee to move a fence was in about 1961, when the old eastern fence was moved east of the slip, roughly to where the eastern dinghy shed was placed after yet another fence-moving working bee. Another took the line to its present eastern limit. Now it has been the turn of the southern fence, expanded to the edge of Oliver Rogers Road, and it was gratifying that the work was done so quickly and so well. Presumably that is the limit, so it is the end of a long Squadron tradition. Denis Winterbottom told us how, as a schoolboy at Saint Peter's College, he took part in the working bee that set up the wooden paling fence between the Squadron and the railway line in 1924 or 1925. We have grown a lot since then, but now all we can do is consolidate what we have.

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The working bee moving a boundary fence — for the last time?

Ralph Crook, who helped with material for the article on *Alexa*, wrote a postscript, 'With the demise of *Alexa*, Dad bought the *Carina*, and then in 1947 he invited Harry Perry to sail it in the first Forster Cup after the war (1947). Harry himself went on to buy the *Nerana* and to sail it to win three Forster and Albert Cups in succession in 1953, 1954 and 1955. I sailed with Harry in all (six) Forster and Albert cups that Harry contested and all invitation races. So a lot came of our short time with *Alexa*, the best sailing yacht of all!'

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John Woollatt of Yachting SA sent an E-mail to tell us that AYF Gold Membership has been withdrawn from 30 June 2002 and only Silver or Youth Membership will now be available. Most Members who upgraded to Gold did so to obtain access to the Personal Marine 3rd Party Insurance cover which was included. The option of Personal Marine 3rd Party Insurance is available to all AYF/YSA Silver and Youth Members. The policy insures you (as an individual) for personal legal liability while aboard or in charge of any boat covered by the insurance. At a cost of only \$75 it look like good value.

You can obtain full details on the AYF Website <http://www.yachting.org.au/> or call John at the YSA Office on 8232 6032

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Please note that the next Quarterly Meeting has been postponed to Wednesday 16 October. This will also be the Annual General Meeting of RSAYS Limited. As usual, the Dining Room will be open, which will allow many of us to meet the new caterers.



Geoff Wallbridge, Chairman of the Works Committee.