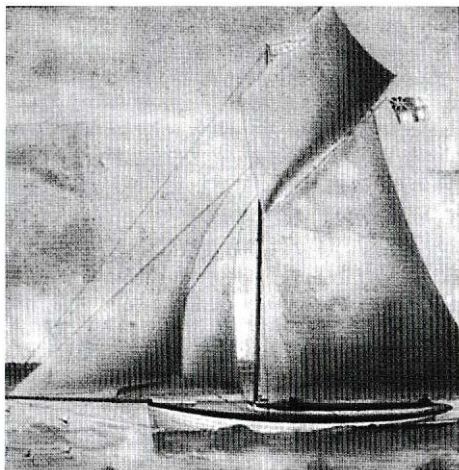


Squadron Symbols

Peter Last

The activity dominating the first few weeks of the newly formed South Australian Yacht Club was the first race, which was held on 1 January 1870 'above the bridge' over a course of 'about eight miles' for prizes of £4 for the winner and £1 for the second yacht. This course was chosen to enhance the number of patrons at Mr Bucknall's Clubhouse Hotel, but in the shallow water of the area between the Port River and the Reedbeds, of the four yachts who slipped the moorings laid for the purpose by William Russell, only two completed the course. The others ran aground, and since their waterline length was only between 13 and 19 feet, they must all have been of shoal draft. The event was a fiasco.

The second race on 12 March 1870 was held downstream in adequate water and attracted five 'Second Class' yachts. It was won by Mr John Sinclair's *Jane*, which did not participate in the previous race. Her length was 20 ft, depth 3 ft 11 in (which is not the same as draft), beam 6 ft 6 1/2 in, and she rated 2 tons 55/100. She is portrayed in a watercolour at the entrance to the Dining Room, in which she illicitly flies the White Ensign of the British Admiralty. This annoyed the Collector of Customs, Captain



Jane, winner of our second race in 1870, illicitly flew the white ensign.

Bloomfield Douglas, who was the inaugural commodore, but there is no record that he attended any meetings.

For several months each meeting of the SAYC recorded that consideration was given to formulating and revising rules, but we have no account of what they were. At a special meeting held on 16 December 1871, 'Mr Christie gave notice that a white flag with St George cross with Southern Cross be adopted as the Ensign of the Club in lieu of that used at present. Mr Russell produced specimen flag. Resolved that the flag be presented to the Collector of Customs for his approval.'

On 10 February 1872, 'The Secretary reported that the flag proposed by Mr Russell as the Club Ensign had not received the sanction of the Collector of Customs. Mr De Mole proposed that the Club Ensign be that known as the White Ensign with crown & the letters SAYC on the fly.'

Apparently this was also rejected. On 20 April 1872 Mr HD O'Halloran gave notice to alter Rules 19 & 20 to make the distinguishing flag of the Club the burgee. He proposed that the Club Ensign be the Red Ensign.

The minutes of 11 May 1872 record, 'In the absence of Mr O'Halloran, Mr Turton proposed that from this time, the Rules be: "No 19. The Club Flag shall be the Red Ensign; and the Burgee a red pendant with a white Maltese Cross." And Rule 20: "The Commodore's Flag shall be the Club Burgee with swallow tail; the Vice-Commodore's the same with one white ball; the Rear Commodore's the same with two white balls at the head of the flag." Mr Russell seconded. Carried.'

On 2 November 1872, 'In the absence of Mr O'Halloran, Secretary moved alteration of Rule 21, "That the Club Button be a Guilt [sic] Button with the Club Burgee and South Australian Yacht Club round." I have never seen or heard of such a button, so perhaps they were never made. The matter of symbols continued to concern some members, especially Mr HD O'Halloran, who by now was Vice Commodore. In 1873 the printed rules included —

Uniform Rule 21 – The Club uniform shall be blue or white jacket and trowsers [sic], white straw hat or blue cap, gilt buttons with foul anchor.

To this Mr Webb successfully proposed extending Rule 21: 'Flag Officers' Full Dress Uniform – A blue frock coat with Club buttons. Trowsers with 3/4 inch gold lace down the seam. Commodore's Coat to have 3/4 inch Gold Lace round the cuffs. Vice-Commodore's Coat: 2 Gold Cords round Cuffs. Rear Commodore's or Captain's Coat – 2 buttons on each cuff. Caps to have two double rows of Gold Cord round them & Badge the respective Burgees. Officers' Uniform. Blue reefing [sic] jacket with 2 Gold Cords round Cap and Cuffs. Members. Blue reefing jacket with 8 Club Buttons. Flag Officers Undress Uniform. The same as Officers', but with Commodore Caps'.

A few years ago somebody suggested an historical re-enactment, but the allusion to frock coats was misinterpreted by a senior Member, who exclaimed, 'There's no way I'm going to wear a [expletive deleted] dress!' When the time came, nobody wore a frock coat, which was a pity as they can be elegant garments. Towards



The statue of Sir Thomas Elder outside his eponymous Hall well displays a classical frock coat.

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