

PART TWO: THE SECOND *NYROCA*

Dr AL Tostevin graduated in medicine from Adelaide University in 1923 and obtained a specialist qualification in ophthalmology from the University of Oxford. He was the senior honorary eye specialist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital of his day, with an extensive private practice.

In 1934 George Ross of Woodville completed what was described as a wooden screw yacht of 25.72 gross tonnage for Dr Tostevin. She 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 Russell Newberry engine, and sailed under ketch rig. *Nyroca* was designed by Mr W.D.Bailey, Naval Architect, of Sydney.

Peter Dermott supplied a cutting describing preparations for Opening Day 1934 —

Unfortunately Dr AL Tostevin's new auxiliary yacht will not be completed in time for the Squadron opening on Saturday. It is truly a luxury vessel of beautiful lines, and its owner hopes to launch it next month.

It is to be christened the *Nyroca*, which is the name of a white-billed duck that inhabits the Murray, and which was also the name of a yacht once owned by the late AG Rymill.

Friends of Dr and Mrs Tostevin who are fortunate enough to accompany the *Nyroca* on her maiden trip will find many delightful appointments on her, including a refrigerator and a stainless steel sink, eight nicely equipped berths and modernistic 'strip' lighting, which gives a charmingly subdued effect.



Dr Tostevin on the newly commissioned *Nyroca* (James Cowell, taken by Darian Smith, 1935)

Dr Tostevin cruised in his new vessel in local waters, and became seriously interested in big game fishing.



Dr Tostevin took *Nyroca* to Snug Cove, Kangaroo Island. (Henry Rymill's album)



Dr Tostevin's son Mark chatting to the celebrated one-armed fisherman Horrie Radcliffe at American River, January 1950. The spar at the stern dangles bait to attract sharks. Alf Green leans over the rail to scrub the topsides. (Jack Wood)

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, many Squadron vessels were acquired by the Royal Australian Navy, both through voluntary offers by their owners and by compulsory acquisition. *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. According to a letter (32/52/132 HIST) from the Department of the Navy, dated 18 February 1971, 'She was employed on harbour patrols and as a guardship tender.' She was paid off on 2 July 1945.

Peter Dermott wrote —

[The] vessel was shipped to and from Fremantle as deck cargo. RSAYS Members who served aboard her included Jim Taylor and Doug Jarvis. In Fremantle she was for a time commanded by JS Taylor, twice Commodore and a Life Member of the Squadron. The masts were removed and she was employed in carrying stores to Rottne Island.

The former HMAS *Nyroca* was reconditioned by RT Searles & Son of Port Adelaide, which included Dr Tostevin meeting the costs of replacing her engine with a later Gardiner diesel. She was returned to him on 24 December 1947.

For a time Dr Tostevin resumed cruising and fishing, until early 1955, when he was Rear Commodore of the Squadron. A regular member of his crew was Murray Gowling, who for many years conducted a boat maintenance and repair business at the Squadron premises at Outer Harbor. During a rough passage from Kangaroo Island to Rapid Bay a rubber exhaust line fractured, which filled the aft cabin with foul diesel fumes. Perhaps this experience led to Dr Tostevin selling *Nyroca* to Henry Rymill, who owned a smaller motor-sailer, *Beth*.

Lieutenant-General Sir CWM Norrie GCMG GCVO CB DSO MC was born on 26 September 1893. After service in the Great War, he was appointed to command 1 Armoured Brigade, British Army in 1938, and in 1941 commanded XXX Corps in the North African campaign.

Sir Willoughby Norrie was Governor of South Australia from 19 December 1944 to 19 June 1952. He was popular, energetic and travelled widely throughout the State. On several occasions the Governor was a guest of Dr Tostevin on *Nyroca*, from which he fished for *Carcharodon carcharias*, commonly known as the white-pointer shark. He caught one weighing 1,713 lbs on 24-thread line, and then his best-known, off Winceby Island. This was 15 ft 7 in long, weighed 2,225 lbs and took one hour and 52 min to land. A fisherman 'guide' from Port Lincoln, Jim Green, assisted by adjusting the brake on his reel, which was a small technical infringement of the rules. Nevertheless, Sir Willoughby refused to claim what would otherwise have been a world record.



Sir Willoughby Norrie with the jaws of his largest shark.

Three relevant articles in *Squadron Quarterly* are 'The Governor's Shark' by Jack Wood (September 1995: 43–4); 'The Governor's Shark and Other Tales' by JH Cowell (December 1995: 29–31); and 'Hunting the Great White Shark in South Australian Waters' by GR Cowell (March 1996: 21–23.)

Sir Willoughby Norrie left South Australia to become Governor-General of New Zealand, for which he was raised to the House of Lords.

Henry Rymill at once took *Nyroca* across the Gulf for the traditional Squadron racing and cruising excursion to Port Vincent. During the winter of 1955 he altered the cabin to resemble that of *Beth*. The toilet and hand basin were moved aft, bunks were moved forward, the engine silencer was removed, reduced in size and mounted on the after end of the main engine. There was a terrible tragedy in the Squadron pool, in which a vessel burst into flames soon after refuelling, with at least one death from burns. Deeply impressed by this event, Henry Rymill removed the petrol auxiliary engine used for battery charging, and installed a 'free-light' generator beneath the floor boards, which was driven by the main engine.

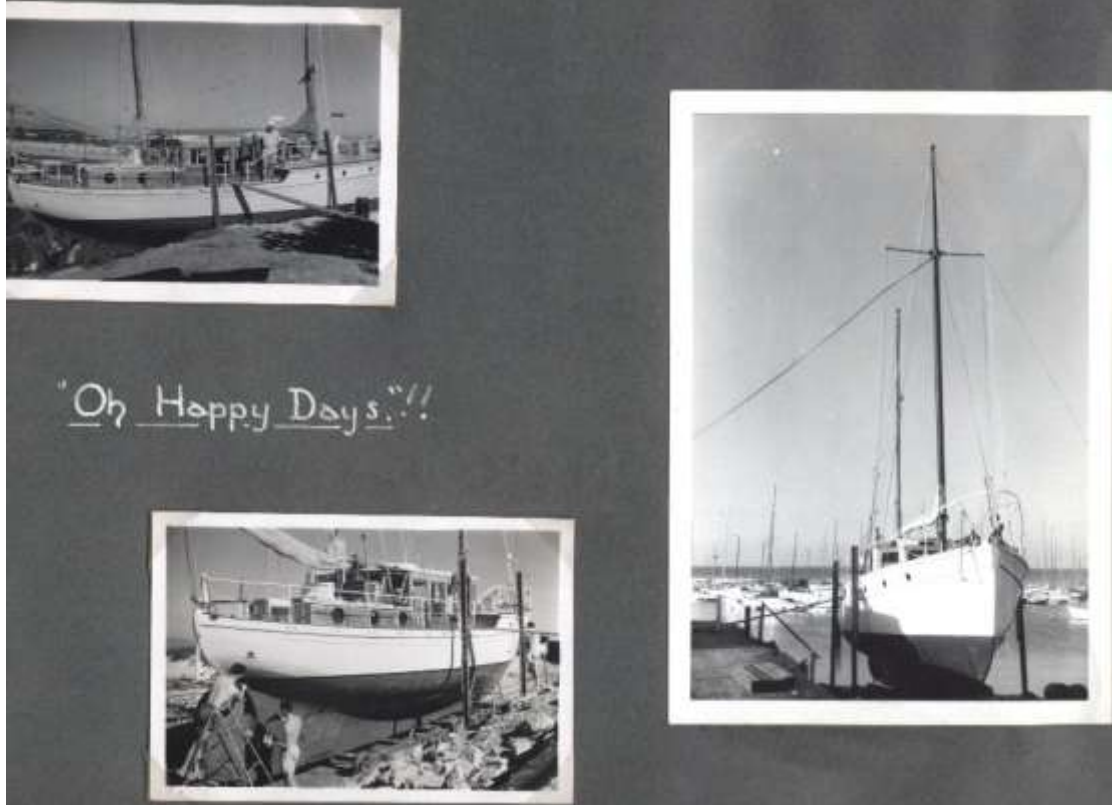


Opening Day 1954, with McGregor's *Suzelle* (Rupert Murdoch's *Ilina*) prominent in the front row. (Henry Rymill's album)

The rig was altered. The mainmast was removed, and the mizzen was stepped as a main. A new mizzen was stepped on the cabin top against the wheelhouse. This increased room below and allowed the dinghy to be stowed on the aft cabin top. A large icebox was fitted to the after deck.

Under Henry Rymill, *Nyroca* was used extensively in local waters, including Sea Scout activities, as well as cruising Saint Vincent Gulf, Kangaroo Island and Port Lincoln. Henry died in Sydney in January 1971, and in September of that year the vessel was bought by Jim Stump.

He did not have her long before selling her to Bill Harniman, who was Commodore 1978–80. Bill in turn sold her to Tony Flint, who took her with him when he moved to Tasmania in 1988. So far as we know, he still has her there.



Nyroca on the old Number One slip. (Henry Rymill's album)



Past Commodore Henry Rymill leads the cheers for his successor, 1967.
(Henry Rymill's album)



Henry Rymill hoisting his burgee for Opening Day, with AG Rymill's *Tortoise* (by now a workboat) in the background, 1938. (Henry Rymill's album)



Henry Rymill on *Nyroca* off Snug Cove (Henry Rymill's album)



Nyroca under sail



Bay of Shoals (well named!) 1957



Henry Rymill, as we best remember him (from his album)