

A Brief History of Yarra Bay 16ft Sailing Club

Yarra Bay Sailing Club was formed in January 1928, when a lack of numbers in the racing fleet of the Botany Flying Squadron caused it to be disbanded. Our first headquarters was Howes boatshed on Yarra Bay and in the first season seven boats raced in what has been described as a "picnic atmosphere". The club was officially formed in February 1928 and a social committee was elected in March to generate funds to expand the club.

The club made steady progress through the 1930's when a number of 16ft skiffs were purchased. A lease of crown land for a club house was obtained around 1940. Using voluntary labour (including some St. George members) a clubhouse was erected and opened in 1941. Later in that year the club affiliated with the N.S.W. Skiff Association and has maintained a close liaison with it and in particular the Southern Zone clubs ever since. The club was incorporated as a company in 1967 and was then able to legally enjoy the wide range of social activities it practised illegally for so long.

Over the nearly seventy years of the club's existence it has enjoyed the open water sailing of historic Botany Bay. It has had to contend with the major changes to the bay, such as Mascot Airport runways, oil refineries and more recently the Container Complex which carved a massive chunk out of the bay and changed forever the wave and tidal patterns of the area.

The club has hosted many 16ft skiff and other class carnivals as well as conducting National and International regattas. One of the most memorable was the Bi-Centennial Regatta conducted in conjunction with the First Fleet Re-enactment in January 1988.

Interest in the 16ft class peaked in the 70's and has declined ever since due mainly to the increased costs, lack of International competition and the proliferation of small dinghy classes. The club unfortunately does not race 16 footers any longer.

The sailing club is now divided into two divisions - the senior and junior. The Senior Division sails multi-hulls, Lasers or Cherubs on Sunday afternoons. The Junior Division is involved in training and mixed class junior racing on Sunday mornings. The Junior Division uses Sabots, Sky-Riders and Bics as training and racing boats.

As stated earlier, the club started its activities in a "picnic atmosphere" and this is still reflected today in the warm welcome extended to all visitors.