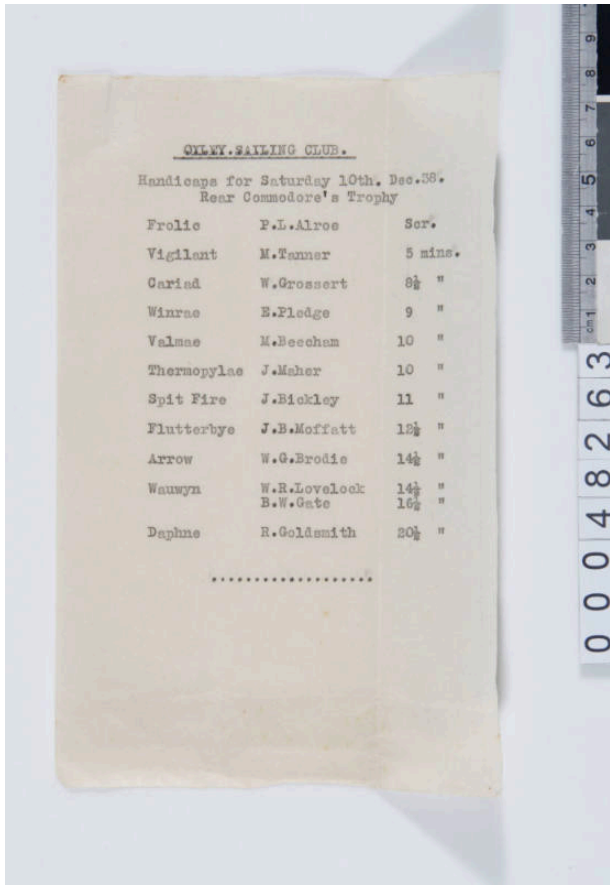


Basic Detail Report



00048263

Title

Oxley Sailing Club list of vessel handicaps and notice to skippers for the Interclub 12 sq Metre Race

Date

1938-1939

Medium

Ink on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 207 x 131 mm

Name

List

History

Eighteen-footers evolved from some of the earliest boats to be raced on Sydney Harbour. Sailors from visiting ships were known to race in open boats that were carried

aboard all large vessels. These races provided training for the men, and sport for the gentlemen in the form of a wager. By the 1890s, open working boats had developed into a type of racing craft unique to Sydney. These shallow-draught open boats were identified as opposite to the more sedate decked-in yachts. Open boats were faster, cheaper, carried large sails and a number of hands to act as human ballast. A 22-foot (6.7-metre) boat could have a bumpkin extending 18 feet (5.4 metres) out in front, a main boom extending 33 feet (10 metres) back, and the highest sail 50 feet (15.2 metres) in the air. Possibly carrying a greater amount of sail in proportion to length than any other type of boat in the world, they needed to be handled with care to avoid the often inevitable capsizes. Open boats were associated with the working-class suburbs of Pyrmont and Balmain. Local clubs held races for boats that ranged in length from eight to 24 feet (2.4 to 7.3 metres). The racing of canvas dinghies and model boats established boat racing as a sport available to Sydney residents of all means. The smaller open-boat classes provided a base of skilled sailors for the more prestigious larger boats. All open-boat racing was popular, and attracted significant spectatorship, with steamers following even the smaller classes. The larger 22- and 24-footers were the most prestigious of the open boats. They were identified with patriotic pride as a 'national type', specific to the waters of Sydney Harbour. The development of the 18-footer as an open boat class can be largely credited to Sydney businessman Mark Foy and his establishment of the Sydney Flying Squadron in 1891. The Flying Squadron revolutionised open boat racing by introducing radical changes to the racing format. Triangular courses, handicap starts and sails carrying colourful insignia instead of numbers combined to increase the spectator appeal of the sport. Soon after the Flying

Squadron was established, Foy began to promote the 18-foot open boats instead of the larger and more common 22-footers. The 18-footers shared the same spectacular spread of sail and exciting racing as their larger cousins, but Foy considered them the more sporting type. The new racing format was commercially successful, and 18-footers gradually replaced the larger open boats as the penultimate 'Sydney-type'. Intercolonial racing was also popular: a competitive fleet of 18-footers regularly raced on the Brisbane River. The 18-footer 'class' was established by the mid-1890s and the term 18-foot 'skiff' was adopted during the 1930s. By this time 18-footer racing was a popular and well established activity on Sydney Harbour with a regular program of club and interclub competitions. It was estimated in 1933 that over 3000 paying spectators would follow Saturday's racing aboard a number of specially chartered steamers. In 1933, a new skiff design emerged with a narrower beam, reduced sail area and no 'heel' underwater - exemplified by the Brisbane built skiff ABERDARE. This design was faster than any traditional Sydney 18-footer and controversial. Fearing that the reduced sail area and reduced crew would lead to the demise of the class's popularity, the Sydney Flying Squadron conservatively banned this new design. As a reaction to the ban, sporting entrepreneur James J Giltinan established a breakaway club called the New South Wales 18-Footers League in 1935. The move was reminiscent of the creation of the rugby league code of football, also initiated by Giltinan. The Sunday races, sailed from the League Club at Double Bay, were almost an instant success, as no other sporting events were held on Sundays. The years between the formation of the League and the beginning of World War II were the busiest and most popular years of 18-footer racing. Gambling was part of the attraction. Anecdotes refer to police raids on the steamers and at popular vantage points on the shore, in an attempt to prevent illegal betting.