

Basic Detail Report

ANMS0200

Title

Inward correspondence of Mark Foy

Date

1895 - 1939

Medium

Paper

Name

Archive series

History

"Who cares who wins when no-one knows? And the kernel of this sport is always wasted, not only to the spectators but to the competitor... who cares what the boats are doing when they sail out of sight?" In 1895, entrepreneur and founding Commodore of the Sydney Flying Squadron Mark Foy (1865-1950) wrote this about the manoeuvres of the big yachts in regattas. He preferred the potential of Sydney's smaller open boats. Open boats, or skiffs, were beamy boats with huge sails - and large crews of waterfront workers for ballast. Based on workboats from six to 24 feet (1.8 - 7.3m) long they were a spectacle on Sydney Harbour. Skiff racing was a tough working-man's sport. Foy introduced rules to make the sport more lively - coloured emblems for the sails, a short triangular course with handicapped start, large prize money and spectator ferries with punters following the races. By the 1920s the open boats were standardised as 18-footers and were racing in Western Australia and Queensland. In 1898 he challenged the Medway Yacht Club in England to a match race series entitled the Anglo Australian shield. Unsuccessful, he challenged again in 1898.