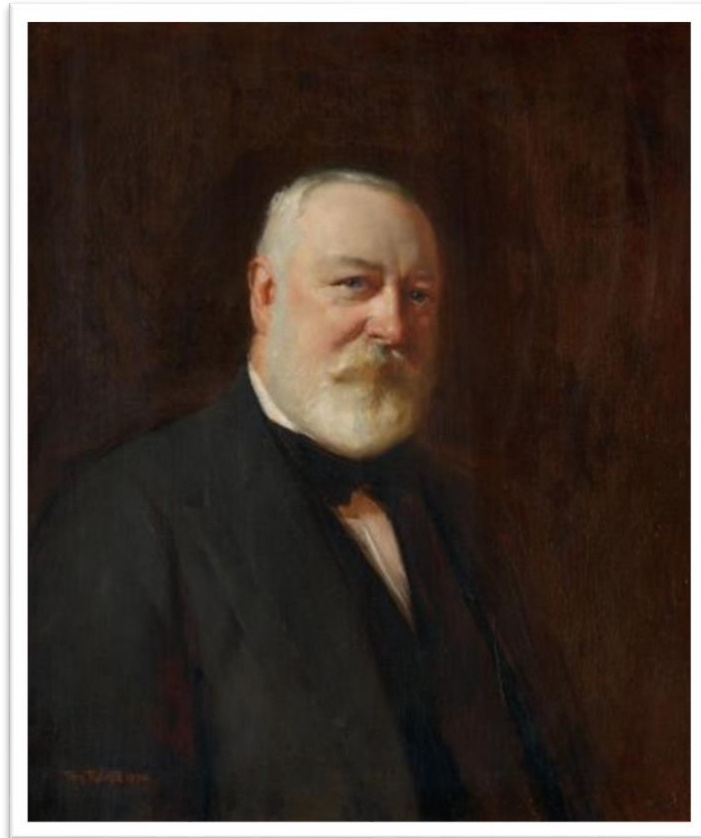




## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

### Commodores of the Squadron By John Maclurcan

**6, 8, 13. James Reading Fairfax (1881-1881) (1884-1889) (1893-1895) (1904-1913)**



#### **Sydney Sails (1881)**

At a meeting of the Squadron on 3rd March 1881 James R. Fairfax was elected commodore in succession to Gilchrist, and Dr. Mackellar continued in the office of vice-commodore. The appointment of J. R. Fairfax was an agreed temporary arrangement during Gilchrist's absence. In fact, when Gilchrist returned, six months later, J. R. Fairfax stood down, and, at the annual meeting in August 1881, Gilchrist was reappointed commodore.

#### ***Friday, 6th May, 1881 – The Sydney Daily Telegraph***

*A general meeting of the members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron was held at the club rooms, Exchange-buildings, Pitt-street, yesterday afternoon, at 4 o'clock. The commodore, Mr. James R. Fairfax, was in the chair. The secretary read a letter received by him from Mr. J. R. Fairfax announcing his intention of giving the committee the sum of £100, to be divided as suitable club prizes at the opening of next season as the committee might see fit. It was given on condition that no entrance fees were to be charged, and that there should be flying starts in the races. Henry C. Dangar proposed, and Dr. Mackellar seconded — "That the secretary be instructed to write to the secretary of the Prince Alfred Club, inviting the co-operation of the committee of that club with that of the R.S.Y.S.*



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*in taking the necessary steps to inaugurate an annual intercolonial yachting contest." The resignation of Mr. Benbow as a member of the club was accepted. The closing day of the present season was announced for next Saturday, when the yachts of the club will assemble in Farm Cove at 1 o'clock and proceed to Chowder Bay, where the commodore will give the members of the club a luncheon.*

### **Sydney Sails (1884)**

In August 1884 James R. Fairfax succeeded E. W. Knox as commodore of the Squadron With the support of Vice-Commodore Alfred Milson, he at once took steps to build up the Squadron's strength and prestige. Within a month of his appointment, J. R. Fairfax announced that he would donate a trophy of £100 (the Commodore's Cup), for a race open to Squadron members only, on two new conditions: the race to begin with a "flying start" (instead of from moorings with sails down, as previously); and there would be no entrance fee.

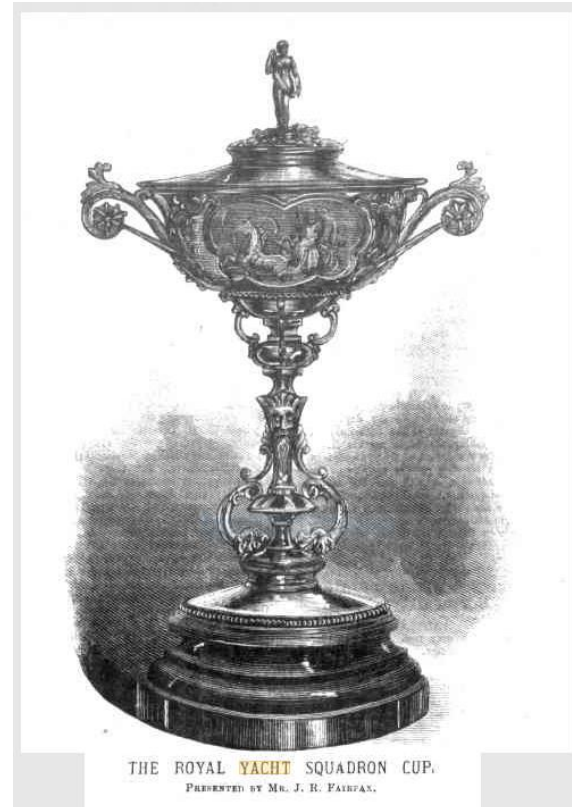
### **Saturday, 20th September, 1884 – The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser**

#### *The Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron Cup*

*We present our readers this week with an engraving of the handsome cup which Mr. J. R. Fairfax, the Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, has had made for him during his recent visit to England, with the object of handing it over to the club for competition.*

*The cup is about 20 inches high, including a four-inch broadly moulded and ebonised stand, the diameter of the lip (its widest part) being 8½ inches, and the whole width to the extremities of the handles 12 inches. The article is of hammered silver, gilt inside, the style being a chaste adaptation of the elaborate cinque-cento, so identified in metal work with Benvenuto Cellini, who, it will be remembered, designed and executed the Cardinal of Ferrara's splendid cup, the celebrated bronze group of 'Perseus with the Head of Medusa' for Cosmo de Medici, and the magnificent shield in Windsor Castle. The design of Mr. Fairfax's goblet (which is valued at 50 guineas) is appropriate and well-conceived. From the centre of a perfectly plain dead flange, with beaded edging, rises the stem of the beaker in elegantly turned polished work, supported by a pair of dolphins which gracefully strengthen the upholding lines, and further embellished with boldly modelled masks, all frosted. The 'belly' of the cup is shallow, approaching in form that of a tazza, its chief ornamentation consisting of two 'lozenges' in oxidised repousse work. The one bears a twenty-four-oared Grecian trireme, with sea-horse prow, formidable rostrum, and elegantly sheltering aplustre upon the poop; the other, Neptune—or rather, perhaps, Poseidon—and Venus rising among the gathering clouds and foaming breakers in a nautilus shell drawn by a pair of fine sea-horses. On either side of these subjects are the well-shaped handles in dead and polished scroll work, the intervening spaces being filled with repousse arabesques upon a frosted ground, and the remaining surfaces left perfectly plain and polished. The form of the cover is the complement of that of the supporting flange.*

*The apex consists of an oxidised figure of Aphrodite, slightly draped, and standing on the pearly shell that has borne her, in the full lusciousness of female beauty and maturity, from out the generating foam of the deep sea; while around the central figure is a broad and classic band of laurel wreath.*



THE ROYAL YACHT SQUADRON CUP.  
PRESENTED BY MR. J. R. FAIRFAX.



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

*The whole work is tastefully designed, and groups admirably with the stand into an artistic and attractive specimen of the silversmith's art which does equal credit to the designer, the manufacturer, and the donor.*

### **Sydney Sails (1885)**

This muster of Squadron vessels at the beginning of the year 1885 inaugurated a revival of yachting which has developed with increasing momentum ever since. There were many factors which stimulated yachting at Sydney in the 1880s and 1890s and prepared the way for the great extension of the sport in the twentieth century. New yachts were built; new systems of rating yachts and rules of racing were progressively adopted; more and better trophies were offered, and intercolonial competitions became established. The Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, under Commodore James R. Fairfax and Vice-Commodore Alfred Milson, took the initiative in this revival. Their efforts were supported by enthusiastic members, and also by the Prince Alfred Yacht Club — many yachtsmen, then and since, being members of both clubs.

### **Thursday, 21st May, 1885 – The Sydney Morning Herald**

#### **THE ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON.**

*The close of the yachting season was marked by a complimentary dinner tendered by the members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron to Mr. James R. Fairfax (commodore of the club), at the Town Hall, last night. About a hundred gentlemen sat down to an excellent repast, which had been attractively laid out by the Compagnoni Catering Company. The chair was occupied by Mr. Alfred O. Milson, vice-commodore of the club, and the vice-chairs were filled by Messrs. J. H. Love, K. J. Black, and J. Gilchrist. The guest of the evening (Mr. James R. Fairfax), the Hon. W. J. Trickett, his Worship the Mayor, and Dr. Garran, occupied seats on the right of the chairman. The Hon. G. R. Dibbs, Admiral Tryon, Sir John Robertson, and the Hon. George Thornton occupied seats on the left of the chairman. Amongst those present were - Captain Lake, Captain Hamilton, Captain Quinn, and Lieutenant Pakenham, H.M.S. Nelson; Captain Paul, H.M.S. Miranda; Captain Taylor, H.M.C.S. Wolverine; Captain Hixson, president Marine Board; Captain Pullen, H.M.S. Lark; Captain Krokisius, H.I.M.S. Maria; Captain Field, H.M.S. Dart; Lieut.-Commander Cross, H.M.S. Undine; Captain Marx, H.M.S. Swinger; Col. Roberts, acting commandant; Mr. C. Moore, Mr. C. Fairfax, Mr. Critchett Walker, Mr. J. H. Want, and Mr. Henry Cornwell (hon. sec. of the club). The Hon. H. C. Dangar and Mr. Wm. Laidley (hon. treasurer) forwarded letters expressing regret at being unable to attend. The ball was tastefully decorated with coloured draperies and foliage. After the viands had been disposed of, the usual loyal toasts were honoured.*

*Mr. J. H. WANT proposed "The Army and Navy." He said that in these stirring times the toast was one which came with special commendation, and none was more befitting a gathering of Englishmen such as he saw before him. In their humble way, they tried to emulate those who in reality went down to the seas in ships. There had been a few captious individuals who had spoken of the loss of prestige and of power on the part of England, but they had only to look back a short way to bring to memory the fact that she had cried halt to one of the great Powers of Europe, and to see her dictating her own terms to those who dared to interfere in her quarrels. They must admit that the old lion was an animal which was not yet quite extinct. To those who thought that England had been inattentive to her colonies, last, but certainly not least, had sent here and placed in command of this most important station one of her ablest officers, Admiral Tryon, a gentleman to whom they owed a deep debt of gratitude. While they possessed the "jingo" spirit - and thank God, they did possess it - and while that which was thicker than water - blood - bound them together, her colonies, which had been called her weakness, would be found to be her strength, more especially since the news had been flashed to England that a soldier child had been born in New South Wales. In the days of the old "Brown Bess," the saying was that every bullet had its billet; but now, with the modern improvements in arms, 60*



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*bullets appeared to have the same billet, and this extra danger should be considered when they thought of those who had the courage to go forth to take part in war. Nowadays every aim of the service must be ready to take the place of another. The cavalry had to become artillery, the artillery cavalry. "Tommy Atkins" had to paddle his own canoe up the Nile, while the Jack Tar found himself on the back of a camel; but let them only come to the scratch, and they fought until they were able to shout out victory, which had always distinguished the battles of dear old England. Admiral Tryon, in reply, on behalf of the Navy, said that this toast was particularly gratifying to all of them, more especially to those who arrived in the colony at the particular time when matters of greater moment than the affairs of the station arose. He had not been received as a stranger here, and now he had great pleasure in being present as the representative of the Navy at this magnificent gathering, which was intended to do honour to their Commodore. He was not surprised at the very hearty manner in which those who went to sea for their own pleasure drank to the health of those who went to sea because it was their profession. They had, however, a third section with which the colony was intimately associated - namely, the great mercantile marine. He hoped that their marine force would always act in harmony. That harmony they had shown as regards two sections of it, and he had the honour to make the same assurance for the third simply by referring to the action which the old country had taken in fitting out the Massilia as a cruiser for the colony. There could be nothing more advantageous to the British Empire than the possession of those magnificent ships. They would not, perhaps, take the first place in naval warfare, but they would act their part by driving the vessels of the enemy from the seas, and would represent the frigates to which the immortal Nelson alluded in his despatches. He did not see any loss of prestige or any signs of halting on the part of the mother country, and, in fact, he saw nothing but a continuous growth of power. They had now in New South Wales a military force and a torpedo or rather a submarine mine corps, but it would be better to go a little further and prevent enemies from coming here to attack us. The great object of defence was not to invite attack, and if possible, to prevent it. When he was coming out here the Agents-General filled his cabin with books of reference and statistics, but he did not intend to quote them further than by referring to the fact that the tonnage which entered Sydney at the present time equalled that entering the Thames at the time when her Majesty the Queen came to the throne. He thought they should go a little further than providing for self-defence. The great wealth coming into this port should command somewhat more: he knew that the matter was before the Government and was receiving great consideration. He had heard that there were difficulties connected with it, but he could assure them that there were none at all. The only question to consider was, how could the object be best arrived at? He thanked them for the way in which they had received him, and the patient manner in which they had listened to him. He was sure that not only himself, but also those who were associated with him, would be only too proud if they could assist in the solution of a problem which might make them feel more confident than ever, and help them to feel that they lived as they did live, viz., not in the forbearance of anybody. (Loud applause.)*

*Colonel ROBERTS also responded to the toast. He said he would endeavour to give them roughly, as well as he could, some information respecting their forces. On the 1st of January - long before the "jingo" spirit went forth in New South Wales, and before the birth of their young soldiers - they had 2200 men in the colony. They had sent 760 of them away, and at the present time they had 3600 men, irrespective of those who were away. (Applause.) Green as they might be, the 700 men they had sent away had done their work in a very satisfactory manner. (Applause.) Many members of their sailing clubs were now joining the defences, for which they were earnestly working. Numbers of their officers had already joined the Naval Brigade, and within the last two or three weeks that body had increased from 320 to over 600 men. The sister corps - the Naval Volunteer Artillery - had also been formed, so that, if necessary, they could now muster something like 800 men ready to go afloat when called upon. When the men they had sent away returned, he was sure there would be no portion of the community more ready to go out to welcome them, than those gentlemen who owned those beautiful white sails*



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*always to be seen on the waters of the harbour. (Applause.) In conclusion he thanked them for the manner in which the toast had been received.*

*The Hon. W. J. TRICKETT proposed the next toast. He said my duty this evening is one of mixed pleasure and embarrassment - of pleasure in having to propose the toast of the evening, that of "Our Guest" and Commodore, Mr. James Fairfax; and of embarrassment in finding words with which to pay proper tribute and respect to so worthy a man. The name of Fairfax is now, and has been for many years, well known and deservedly respected in our community. Mr. Fairfax's father, and his worthy successor, our guest, by perseverance and energy built up an enterprise which sends forth to the world two daily papers and a weekly journal, all of which, as a means of collecting and disseminating news, of commenting on public affairs, and often of moulding public opinion, this young colony may well be proud; and without making any invidious comparison, the Sydney Morning Herald of Sydney, and the Argus of Melbourne, are as well and favourably known as reliable newspapers as the Times of London. I could, if this were the occasion, dilate on Mr. Fairfax's character for charity and philanthropy - for rarely a subscription list is seen without his name figuring in it for a good round sum - or his anonymous and many unknown acts of charity and kindness, and on his good all-round qualities as the head of a family and a member of society. (Applause.) But I take it that we are not met here for this; that our object in inviting Mr. Fairfax here this evening is to show that we appreciate him as Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and appreciate one who takes an active interest in that sport and pastime that all here admire - the sport of yachting. Mr. Fairfax has filled the post of commodore on several occasions, and has, I need not tell you, filled it well. He owns, without exception, the best cutter yacht in the colonies, combining as she does good speed, large accommodation, and being also a first-class sea boat; and, above all, she has a skipper who, while a thorough gentleman, has always a vacant seat and liberal hospitality for a fellow yachtsman. (Loud applause.) I think all here will admit that the club is singularly lucky in having Mr. Fairfax for its Commodore - (applause) - because yachting, with all its pleasures, is no doubt an expensive luxury, and it is very encouraging to find a man to get a yacht, and take a run down the harbour as often as they can, and I'll guarantee it will do them a great deal more good than rolling about the dusty roads of Sydney in the luxury and laziness of a carriage. I am sure that our Commodore has well performed the duties of his office, and one event in this year's programme - the aquatic fete or procession of yachts - will long be remembered by those who witnessed it as one of the prettiest sights that has yet been seen on the harbour. I hope to see it repeated early next season on even a larger scale, and, while on this subject, I may throw out a suggestion to Mr. Clark, whom I see present - that our pulling men should also turn out in a similar manner. Those who saw our late intercolonial eight-oar race admit that, independently of the race itself (which was a grand struggle), the sight of the boats and crews was very imposing. I am quite sure that, if our rowing clubs would combine and have a procession of boats, with a series of evolutions, such as pulling in line, three or four abreast, and so on, they would not only give a very fine afternoon's entertainment to the public, but it would also tend to cement the ties of friendship amongst themselves and bring about unity of action. On many occasions such as the present we have been honoured by the presence of officers of the navy. We all appreciate the presence here tonight of our distinguished guest, Admiral Tryon, and have listened to his remarks with great pleasure. On former occasions, officers of the navy, in speaking at our gatherings, have in our harbour, and have invariably pointed to the men and youths forming the crews as likely to be of service in any maritime system of defence that might be organised here. All of us have treasured those words, and I am sure no stronger or better proof of their truth could be found than the spontaneous way in which the yachting and boating men of Sydney came together, headed by our worthy Commodore, and offered their services recently when war between Great Britain and Russia seemed imminent. I believe that their services, when properly organised and directed, will be of great service, and I sincerely hope that the recent war scare will have the effect of putting all our defences, and particularly our maritime defences, on a proper footing. When the push*



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*comes, my idea is that the fight will be on the water, and I only hope that a matter too long delayed will now be looked after. It has been my earnest wish to bring it about, and that is that if we go in for naval defence at all, we should have the very best available. Let us have, for the defence of Sydney and the other ports of New South Wales, a system of gun boats and torpedoes that would make our position secure, not only when we get notice, but also should we be taken unawares. I have been a strong advocate for putting our defences in a proper condition. Whenever our small navy is mentioned, it is in the way of ridicule. We are a wealthy country, and we should have the best means of defence available. I have somewhat wandered from the subject of my toast, but I am sure that the guest will appreciate the divergence, even if you do not, for Mr. Fairfax's modesty is proverbial. In conclusion, I ask you to drink health and prosperity to our Commodore, and may he long be spared to fill the position.*

*The toast was enthusiastically honoured.*

*Mr. FAIRFAX, on rising to respond, was received with hearty applause. He said: - Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I thank you very sincerely for the kind terms in which my hon. friend, Mr. Trickett, has proposed the toast of the Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and for the very hearty response you have given to it. If we review the past season, I fear the Commodore has not much to boast of. I think, however, we can record two important and well-contested races - when the Sirocco carried off the Commodore's Cup, the Waitangi taking second prize, and Sao third; in the race for Vice-Commodore Milson's prize, when by time allowance the Sao carried off the prize binnacle, and the Ione took second place. I am glad of this opportunity, in the presence of so large a number of members of the squadron, to offer the winners very hearty congratulations. I am sorry, however, the Magic was not among the racers; owing to delay in the receipt of an important element of success, that is, new copper, she could not be ready for the early matches, and no one would like to see her sail at a disadvantage. Next season, I hope you may see her as fleet under racing canvas as in her early days. From rumours afloat we are to have some additions to our fleet. I hope there may be truth in the rumours, and that Mr. John Want still intends to wait upon the Magic and Waitangi and other yachts of our squadron, with a vessel about the same tonnage as those named or something bigger. It would be a pleasant thing to see the Mistral in commission, so that next season the old rivals might again cross the starting line together. One of the most important events of the season was the aquatic fete, first suggested by the Hon. Minister for Education, whom we know as a lover of the sport we represent tonight, and whose enthusiasm for training our youth led him to desire to see what progress aspirants to aquatic knowledge were making. On that occasion about one hundred little vessels, varying from nearly 30 tons down to 10-foot dingies, were performing evolutions by signals from the commodores of their squadrons and clubs. Mr. Trickett was unfortunately absent from Sydney on that day, but I am sure the report he had of the performance must have satisfied him that in the aquatic department of education the young men and lads of Sydney were attaining to a high degree in skill in the management of their vessels, more specially in skill and daring in open-boat sailing. In daring, particularly, the canvas dingy crews. This reminds me that when our fleet of 100 sail anchored in Double Bay, the commodores of the various clubs honoured me by visiting the Magic; the owner of the handsome schooner Red Gauntlet, Mr. Miller, was also on board. The brightest officer in the way of buttons was the commodore of the sailing dingies; and a smart little officer he looked, although his nether garments bore evidence of a wet berth on board his craft. Mr. Miller very courteously invited us all to the Red Gauntlet, whereupon our smart little commodore of the dingies returned the compliment, offering Mr. Miller a dry hang-out to windward on board his canvas ship. On our opening day Captain Bridges, of H.M.S. Espiegle, made some very wise remarks in that thoughtful and practical speech he favoured us with. "He was looking straight into the heart of things when he said that all this pleasure sailing was like the fostering-parent of a national taste for aquatics, upon which would be built up the fabric of a naval power - a power so strong in the direction whence it*



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*would have to meet danger if ever it came." This saving of Captain Bridges, though uttered but half a year since, seemed truly prophetic, as testified by the work of the last four months in our Defence department, especially since rumours of war with Russia threatened us. I ask you, too, to remember that assemblage of young men in the large room at the Exchange Hotel not many days ago - young men of the yachting, sailing, and rowing clubs - who passed, not only unanimously, but with exclamation, a resolution to offer their services to the Government in defence of their country. Young men, representing besides the stalwart and muscular element, the discipline and knowledge of drill brings to our mind's eye as smart and as effective a body of volunteer sailors or soldiers as one could expect anywhere to see. I am glad they offered themselves at that meeting, where upwards of 300 assembled. I hope the Hon. Minister in control of the defence of the country will not let pass the opportunity of securing the material for a most useful corps. Though the war clouds seem less dense than a few weeks back, we need to be prepared with our strongest force, for to be thoroughly ready is a good step towards successful defence. The sports of sailing and rowing, I think, deserve all the encouragement we can give them, for we cannot but see the great advantage the exercise and skill are to our youths and young men. Besides muscular development there is discipline and exercise of activity, and that courage so useful in times of difficulty and of danger. What can be a more health-giving recreation, and what other recreation can be taken which ought to be more free from injurious indulgence? We read of the satisfaction expressed by our fellow-subjects in the old land that we in Australia maintain our heritage as British people, that the sons of old England here maintain the qualities of the old stock, as seen in our sports and our institutions, and the readiness to take up arms, if needs be, in defence of our Queen, our country, and that flag which bears the united crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick. We shall look forward now to next season, which it is proposed to inaugurate by an aquatic fete such as Sydney has not yet seen; and in the meantime, let me again thank you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, for the honour you have done me in thus closing the season of 1884-85. (Applause.)*

*Dr. GARRAN, in a brief speech, proposed "Success to the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron." The toast was honoured with enthusiasm.*

*Mr. T. A. DIBBS, one of the oldest members of the Squadron, briefly responded, thanking them for the manner in which the toast was received. He stated that the gathering that evening commemorated the 21st anniversary of the Yacht Squadron.*

*Mr. JOHN ROBERTSON was then called upon, and in the course of a humorous speech said he believed that, with the exception of his friend the Hon. Mr. Thornton, he has been sailing in the waters of Sydney longer than any gentleman present. Sydney Harbour had always meant home to him. They were proud to see her Majesty's ships in these waters, and nowhere were they more welcome than here. He was an old man, but never could he remember the time when their connection with the grand old Empire from which they were all sprung was regarded with feelings of greater loyalty than at present.*

*The Hon. G. THORNTON, President of the Rowing Association, was also called upon to respond. In doing so, he expressed the great pleasure he felt in being present on this occasion and said he had always taken a deep interest in yachting matters; he was sorry, however, that he could not devote more attention than he did to this invigorating and manly sport. He was able to refer in the warmest terms to the name of Fairfax in connection with yachting matters from the earliest times, and he regretted that he did not see present his old friend Mr. Alfred Fairfax, who had formerly been one of the most enthusiastic, able, and courageous supporters of yachting. He considered that their gathering was honoured by the presence of the many naval officers, and he concluded by again returning thanks for the manner in which the toast had been proposed and honoured.*



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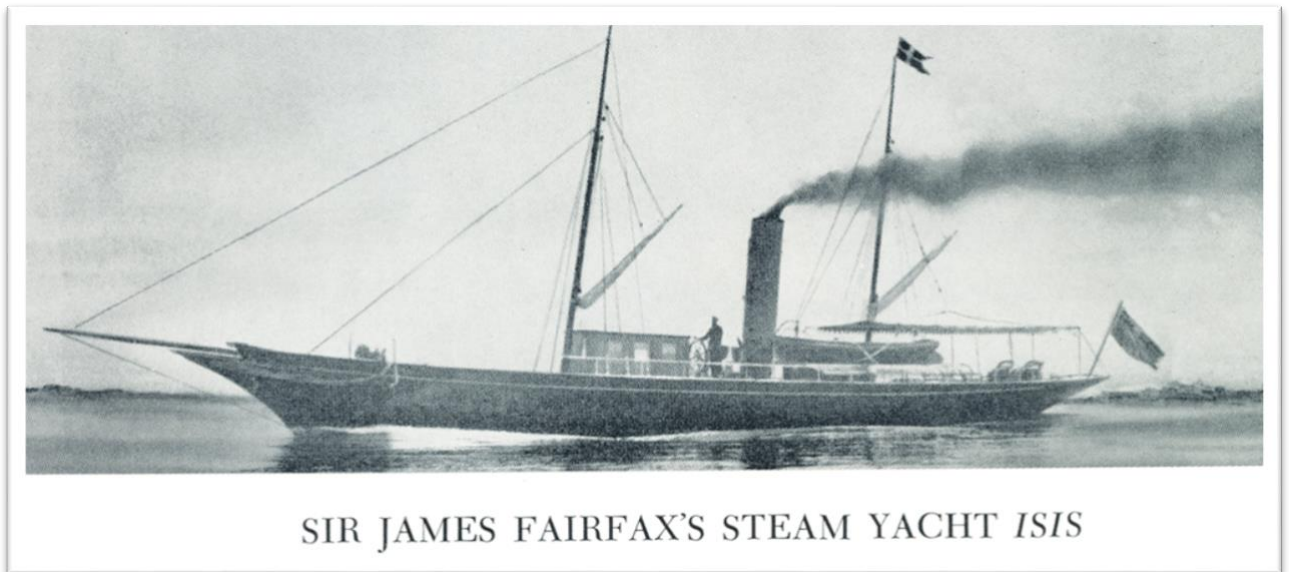
*The company then gave three cheers for the Queen, and the proceedings terminated.*

### **Sydney Sails (1889)**

At the annual meeting of the Squadron, in August 1889, James R. Fairfax retired from the office of commodore, which he had held for five years of great expansion. His racing days with *Magic* were finished, and he stood aside gracefully to allow Alfred G. Milson (who had been vice-commodore for seven years) to be promoted to commodore, a well-earned honour for the owner of *Era*. The new vice-commodore was J. F. Hoare, owner of *Thelma*, then nearing completion.

### **Sydney Sails (1892)**

During the year 1892, a steam schooner-yacht was built for James R. Fairfax, who, at fifty-eight years of age, preferred this more comfortable form of pleasure cruising. She was named *Isis* and had a prettily-designed extreme clipper bow and counter stern, with two masts carrying gaff-sails perhaps more for ornament than for good use, and a well-proportioned smokestack abaft the bridge amidships. For many years thereafter S.Y. *Isis* was to be prominent on Squadron occasions, following sailing races inside and outside the harbour.



### **Sydney Sails (1893)**

In August 1893 the commodore's report to the annual meeting stated that, in spite of bad times, the Squadron had a membership of 156, and thirty-nine yachts on its register. At this meeting, Alfred G. Milson retired from the office of commodore, and was succeeded by James R. Fairfax (who had been commodore previously in 1881, and again from 1884 to 1889). The Hon. R. H. D. White was re-elected vice-commodore, and a new post of rear-commodore was established, to which Dr J. F. Elliott (who had purchased the veteran *Magic* from J. R. Fairfax two years previously) was appointed.

### **Sydney Sails (1894)**

At a complimentary end-of-the-season dinner given by members of the Squadron to Commodore James R. Fairfax on 5th May 1894, the commodore made two suggestions for improving the situation—that the Squadron and the “Prince Alfreds” should combine in a search for a clubhouse on the waterfront; and that the Australian Jockey Club should leave Anniversary Day to the yachtsmen!





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### **Sydney Sails (1898)**

During that year (1898) James R. Fairfax was knighted in recognition of his many services to journalism, charity, the arts, and sport. He was then sixty-four years of age and continued for many years thereafter to take a keen and leading interest in the Squadron's activities and development.

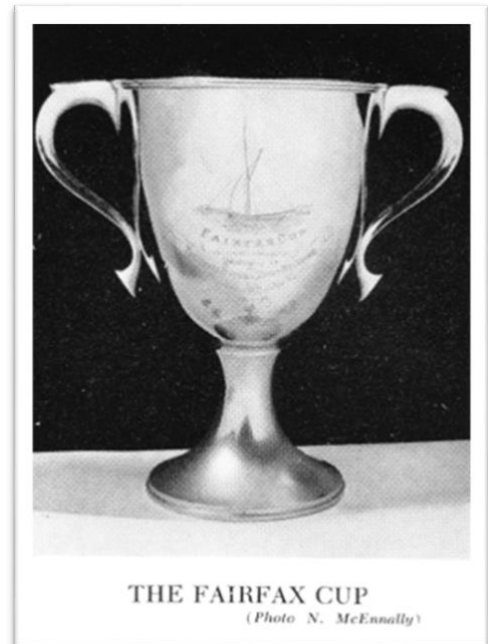
### **Sydney Sails (1904)**

At the Squadron's annual meeting, in August 1904, Sir James Fairfax was elected commodore, T. H. Kelly as vice-commodore, and F. W. Waley as rear-commodore. This was the fourth occasion on which Sir James Fairfax had been elected commodore, and he was to officiate in that capacity for a further eight years. During this period of great and continued expansion of the Squadron, much credit is due to his enthusiasm and support. His steam yacht Isis was a familiar sight on the harbour, flying the commodore's pennant and acting as flagship on many a memorable racing day.

At that meeting in 1904, the annual membership fee of the Squadron was raised to four guineas. The additional income not only permitted bigger prizes to be offered for racing, but also enabled improvements to be made to the Squadron's home and allowed of the employment of a paid secretary in residence.

### **Sydney Sails (1912)**

At the annual meeting of the Squadron in its Jubilee Year (1912), Sir James Fairfax retired from the office of commodore, which he had held since 1904. With his previous terms of office added, he had been commodore for fifteen of the Squadron's first fifty years. On his retirement he presented for perpetual competition a silver trophy, which was accordingly named the Fairfax Cup. On it is engraved a representation of his famous old-timer, Magic, which had made her maiden appearance thirty-seven years previously.



### ***Saturday, 29th March, 1919 – The Register (Adelaide)***

#### ***DEATH OF SIR JAMES FAIRFAX.***

*Notable Newspaper Proprietor.*

*SYDNEY, March 28.*

*Sir James Fairfax, who has been in ill-health for a long time, died this afternoon.*

*James Reading Fairfax was born at Leamington, Warwickshire, England, on October 17, 1834. His father, the late Hon. John Fairfax, M.L.C., was a newspaper proprietor, and, ruined by a libel action, came to Australia with his young family in 1841. The Fairfax family was a notable one in Warwickshire for centuries, and one of them was a supporter of Cromwell and of the cause of religious independence. James Reading Fairfax owed much to the qualities of his ancestors, who were sturdy folk, clean living, and of a spirit that brooked no tyranny.*

#### ***Early Journalism.***

*Soon after the arrival of the family in Sydney, there began that connection with The Sydney Morning Herald which has continued ever since—and which has so interwoven the history of the paper with the biography of James Reading Fairfax that they cannot be separated. The Herald was established in*



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

1831 by *Stephens and Stokes*—a four-page weekly, at 7d. In 1833 it became a bi-weekly, at 6d.; in 1837, a tri-weekly; and in 1840 a daily. The late John Fairfax, with Mr. Edward Kemp, bought the paper in 1851. The latter soon retired, and James Reading Fairfax, then aged 17 years, started work in the office. In 1857 John Fairfax took into partnership his two sons, Charles and James Reading, and a few years later Charles died, and Edward Ross Fairfax became junior partner. On the death of the Hon. John Fairfax in 1877, James Reading became senior proprietor; Edward Ross Fairfax subsequently retired and died in England a few years ago. On his retirement, the proprietors were Sir James and three sons — Charles Burton, Geoffrey Evan, and James Oswald. Charles Burton retired a few years ago, and recently the partnership was merged into a proprietary company, with Sir James Fairfax and his sons—the third generation—as directors. Notwithstanding the wide range of his social and business activities, Sir James Fairfax was first and foremost a newspaper man, and to the last he maintained a keen and zealous interest in all that concerned the papers (*The Herald* and *The Sydney Mail*) and their duty to the public. No interest, no influence, was allowed to interfere with what he conceived to be this duty. Whatever attitude *The Herald* took up (Sir James was too human to claim that the attitude was necessarily or always right), it was honestly assumed, and the policy fairly, and justly pursued. When the honour of knighthood was bestowed upon James Reading Fairfax on July 29, 1898, it was widely regarded as a recognition of the manner in which the recipient had upheld the best traditions of British journalism in this country, although his other public services richly merited the honour.

### ***Shrewd and Active.***

Perhaps not so combative as his father, James Reading Fairfax inherited his fine qualities of independence, shrewdness, business capacity, and zeal for the public welfare. He was solid and sure rather than imaginative. In his long career he had known many politicians, but politics had little attraction for him. He preferred the ideals of social service, of religion, and philanthropy. To these he brought business-like methods, sound common sense, and a generous purse—the whole making, in the course of a long life, a tremendous contribution to the public good. It would take a great deal of space to do justice to Sir James Fairfax's business and social activities. As a newspaper proprietor, and like his father before him, he was naturally associated with most public movements, which took shape in the community. Their joint lives covered a period of about 80 years of continuous public service. John Fairfax was among the founders of the Australian Mutual Provident Society, and for years a director. His son took out one of the first policies of insurance and was also a director; and so was a grandson. John Fairfax was one of the promoters of the company that erected the Pyrmont bridge; the son helped the work till the bridge was taken over by the Government. It seems a small matter in these days, but the bridge was an immense public service at the time.

Father and son were for many years directors of the Bank of New South Wales. Sir James was one of the founders of the Perpetual Trustee Company, and was a director till shortly before his death, and many other enterprises necessary to the progress and prosperity of the State benefited by his advice and assistance.

### ***Public Service.***

But he found his greatest field of endeavour, outside the newspaper office, in religious and philanthropic work. His first care, of course, was for the Congregational Church, of which he was one of the chief supporters—in this again he followed in the footsteps of his father. He was one of the founders of Camden College. He was a prominent worker in and office-bearer of the Y.M.C.A., the London Missionary Society, the Boys' Brigade, and the Ragged School. His association with Prince Alfred Hospital is worthy of special mention. He had been a generous giver to that institution, and for many years occupied a seat on the board.



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

### ***Sports Ashore and Afloat.***

*Sir James took a lively interest in military matters and did a great deal for the encouragement of rifle shooting in pre-federation days. Yachting was his special hobby. As a member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, of which he was many times commodore, he did much for the sport that is the peculiar grace of Sydney Harbour. For a lifetime he was a supporter of the famous anniversary regatta. In late years he had been known as the owner of the beautiful steam yacht Isis, which was recently broken up and sold. During the last 20 years his pleasant afternoons on the Isis, entertaining friends or notable visitors, have given great pleasure to all who were privileged to enjoy them, and he will be remembered as the commodore of the yacht squadron, receiving its guests on such notable occasions as the opening of the sailing season. There are still alive a few enthusiasts who can tell us of the days when James R. Fairfax's Magic (during recent years so well known in South Australia) fairly swept the seas of all competitors, and under handicap conditions won 23 races out of 73 starts. Sir Edmund Barton, Hon. R. J. Black, M.L.C., and Mr. A. G. Milson still remain of the goodly company of those days. As is natural in one so fond of the salt water, Sir James took an interest in sailors, and was one of the Chief supporters of the Royal Naval House, the Sailors' Home, the Mission to Seamen, and the Royal Humane Society.*

### ***Domestic and Personal.***

*Length of days was granted Sir James Fairfax, with a happy and well-ordered domestic life. He was married on March 21, 1857, to Lucy, daughter of the late John Armstrong, of Sydney, who survives him. There were six sons and one daughter—Messrs. Charles Burton, Geoffrey Evan, James Oswald, Harold (who died a few years ago), Wilfred (a major in the A.M.C., who served in France), and Miss Mary Fairfax. Sir James's elder brother Charles died many years ago, and his younger brother, Edward Ross, about four years ago. His sister-in-law, Miss Armstrong, died in Sydney last year, aged 88.*

*Sir James was much the same in his private and domestic relations as in his business life. Methodical, painstaking, and conscientious, he managed to do his duty as well as to see it, notwithstanding that the work involved would have been impossible to less orderly minds. A love of art found expression in the collection of pictures and rare coins, the loan of which has at times enriched the National Art Gallery on Sydney, which he helped to establish and to govern for many years.*

*Sir James's mind was peculiarly well stored in personal anecdotes of the many famous people he had met. He loved to collect old pictures and other historical evidences, and talked in a fascinating way when he hit upon a vein of reminiscence. He was induced a little while ago to gather up some of this interesting material, and it was read before the Australian Historical Society. Extracts, with illustrations, were printed in *The Sydney Mail*, and were eagerly read not only by students of early Australian history, but by the ordinary reader. A great music lover, he gave generously to such institutions, as the Liedertafel, the Amateur Orchestral Society, and the Philharmonic Society, and many famous works were made available to concert goers through his liberality.*