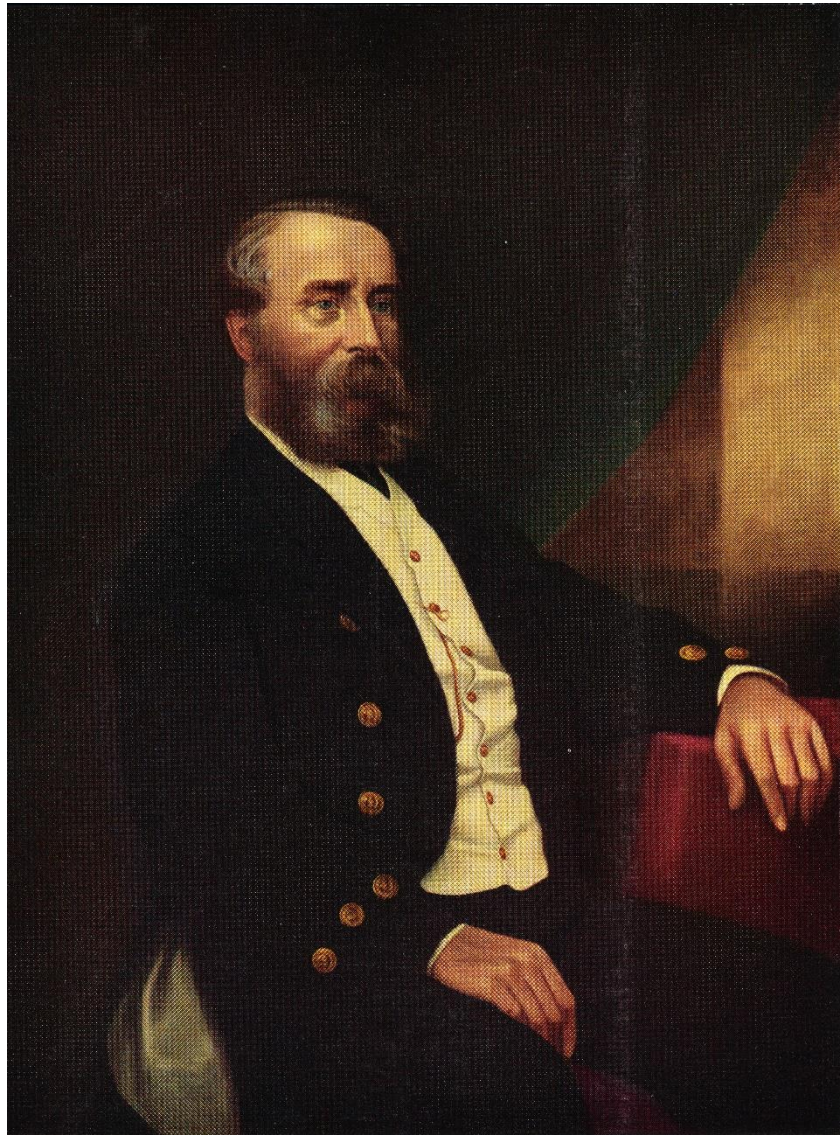




ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

Commodores of the Squadron By John Maclurcan

1. William Walker 1862-1867



THE HON. WILLIAM WALKER, M.L.C.
First Commodore, Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, 1862-7

Members may have noticed the large oil painting in the lounge adjacent to the Main Bar. Did you know that this oil painting is of our first Commodore William Walker who guided the club from 1862 to 1867? The History Committee has been on the case and uncovered some detail about this gentleman and the dynasty of which he was a key component.



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William Walker was the son of a Scotsman also by the name of William Walker (Snr). William Walker Snr was the second son of Archibald Walker, laird of Edenshead, Fife, Scotland. In 1803, at the age of 16, he joined a Scottish Bank and after a few years, joined Fairlie, Ferguson & Co., merchants, whose headquarters were in Calcutta. In July 1813 he arrived in Sydney on the Eliza as agent for his firm with the immediate task of collecting debts from Robert Campbell, of Campbell's Cove fame. After his return to Calcutta, he resigned and eventually returned to Sydney in March 1820 on the Haldane. In fact, he arrived one month before his first son William Benjamin (W.B.) Walker (our man) was born. It seems that in his coming and going to the colony, had had co-habited with Elizabeth Kirby and they did not marry until 1828, after the birth of a number of children.

William Walker Snr's eldest brother James, a half-pay naval officer, arrived in Sydney in September 1823. He had already formed William Walker & Co., with James and two nephews, Thomas and Archibald Walker, who were in the colony, as shareholders. The firm had a wharf and warehouse at Dawes Point and engaged in coastal shipping and whaling. He received a grant of 1,000 acres from Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1821 and in 1825 another 1,000 from Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane at Lue, near Mudgee. James received 2,000 acres at Wallerawang and settled there in 1824.

In May 1826 William Snr sailed in the Mangles for London. On his return to Australia in the Numain July 1828 he brought 160 Saxon merino ewes from Stettin. While in England he had applied for an increased grant as he now had capital of approximately £25,000 invested in the colony. He was given another 1,000 acres and later obtained more land in the central district and at Twofold Bay. In February 1831 both brothers chartered the Forth and returned to London to establish the firm of Walker Bros. & Co., which during the late 1830s exported large quantities of wool to London. Their men moved stock to the upper Castlereagh River and squatted on several runs. David, William and Thomas Archer, sons of William Archer and Julia Walker, daughter of William's half-brother Archibald, had arrived at Wallerawang in 1834-38 and David Archer began managing the Walkers' properties. News of losses in the depression and drought brought William Walker to Australia again in 1843, but until he died on 8 July 1854 his permanent residence was in England. On 20 October, 1828 in Sydney he had married Elizabeth Kirby; they had nine sons and two daughters.

William Walker Snr played an active part in public life during his long residence in New South Wales. He was a director of the Bank of New South Wales in 1820-24, a member of committees appointed to examine the bank's affairs in 1844 and 1845 and was on its first London board in 1853-54. He was president of the Chamber of Commerce and treasurer of the Agricultural Society, a strong supporter of the Scots Church and a subscriber to charitable institutions.

It is worth noting that the nephew Thomas Walker referred to above as joining his uncle in 1822 was an early politician and banker; he and his daughter Dame Eadith Walker were important Australian Philanthropists but that is another story.

Now back to our William Walker (W.B). Wikipedia records the following:

William Walker was an Australian politician and yachtsman. He was originally a pastoralist, operating a series of stations in the Bega region, based out of the Kamarooka Estate. He was later a merchant in Sydney, operating the firm of William Walker & Co. He built and lived in the Redleaf mansion at



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Double Bay, which he named after his parents' house in England. The property survives, and now serves as the council chambers for the Municipality of Woollahra. He served in the New South Wales Legislative Council from 1863 until his resignation in 1867. He was involved in the establishment of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron in 1863, and served as its Commodore until resigning in 1867; he was reportedly departing permanently for England. In 1870, he was reported to have been cruising the Mediterranean and to be preparing for the racing season in England. He had also been president of the Anniversary Regatta Committee.

He was married on 28th August, 1845 to Elizabeth Corientia (née Browne), sister of Rolf Boldrewood. His first son, William Sylvester Walker was born on 16th May, 1846. In Melbourne. Their second son, Cecil Edward, born on 1st July, 1849, died in the shipwreck of the *Avalanche* off Portland, Maine in 1877.

Saturday, 26th August, 1865 – Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle

The New English Yachts
SHIPPING.

ARRIVALS. - MARCH 24. Vivid, cutter, R. S. Y. S., 25 tons, Captain J. Davis, from Liver pool, 31st October.

August 24th Alerte, cutter, 57 tons, Captain Campbell, from Falmouth 6th May, and Cape of Good Hope, 8th July.

Brief announcements, but how expressive of British pluck and hardihood. Is there another country in the world that would furnish crews to undertake such a voyage.

The Alerte is the property of the Hon. W. Walker and was purchased by him in England to supply the place of the fine schooner Chance. The Alerte was built last year, by Ratsey, of Cowes, expressly to compete with the crack fiftys of the day; but although spoken highly of, her performances were not so promising as expected; but as yachtsmen know the first season is full of difficulties, new sails, want of trim, and a host of other matters have to be got over; and by the time the Alerte began to show her powers the season was over. She is evidently a remarkably fine vessel, with all the advantages of modern construction and improvement. At first sight she does not present so handsome an appearance as the Vivid, but when on deck you are struck with her magnificent proportions. Her spars and sails are on the way out, and will, from their huge dimensions, be rather a caution to our Colonial crews, not yet accustomed to the racing kites of Old England's 50-ton clippers. She is very roomy below, and although plainly fitted, possesses every appliance for comfort and all that a true yachtsman wants.

The Vivid is a Scottish lass, built by the celebrated Will Fife in 1859, at Fairlee, on the Clyde. She is a remarkably handsome vessel, and when her big spars are in and all a taut, will present to the eye the beau ideal of a clipper. The Vivid raced only one season and competed with the cracks of the day with varying success; but proved herself on all occasions a fast, easy vessel. Her spurs were afterwards reduced for cruising by her owner, Mr Howard Elkington, who disposed of her in 1864 to make way for a new schooner, The Dream, of 70 tons, launched early in the present year. We



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append the Herald's report of the voyages of the *Alerte* and *Vivid*, by which it will be seen that the *Alerte* started from Falmouth, the *Vivid* from the Dee; the former having an advantage of 800 miles. The *Alerte* made the Cape in 60 days, the *Vivid* in 72 days. From the Cape to Sydney the big fellow was 45 days, the *Vivid* 58. Altogether the latter was 130 days, the *Alerte* 105. Considering that she is 30 tons larger than the *Vivid*, the two performances may be reckoned equal; more especially when we remember that the *Vivid* bore the brunt of several gales - one off the Leuwin, in which several big ships lost their spars.

The arrival of those yachts prove that British seamen have not degenerated; that the naval sons of the old country still retain their pluck and daring, and that even the smaller vessels of the British Yacht Fleet are equal to voyages which many persons encounter with fear in the largest ships of the mercantile marine. To our Yacht Fleet they are a magnificent addition; to our yachtsmen they present a specimen of the skill of the most celebrated yacht-builders of England. We trust that colonial enterprise will afford the builders here a chance of successful rivalry.

The *Vivid* yacht, belonging to the R.S.Y.S., purchased in England by one of the members, arrived softly yesterday morning; was clean and perfectly in condition, as though she had only just left dock. She sailed from the Dee on the 30th October, had very light N.E. trades, and crossed the Equator on the 3rd December. She had fine strong S.E. trades to latitude 25 S, and fresh westerly winds to the Cape of Good Hope, where she arrived on the 12th January, having been compelled to put in for water, her tanks having leaked out. She sailed again on the 23rd January, ran down her easting in latitude 10.30 S., carrying strong W. and S.W. winds, and entered Bass's Straits on the 15th instant. When off Cape Leuwin she encountered a very violent gale from the N. W. round S.W., which lasted four days, the yacht being hove-to three days, and again off Cape Howe she was compelled to heave-to in a S.W. gale, it being considered dangerous to run in such a heavy sea. On the 7th instant, in latitude 39 S., longitude 124 E., spoke the *Centaur*, from Melbourne to Mauritius, fifteen days out, and on leaving the Cape of Good Hope was in company for 3000 miles with an American pilot boat bound for Shanghai; parted company on the 5th February. The *Vivid* had proved all that could be wished as a sea boat and reflects great credit on Captain Davis for the manner in which she has arrived in port. The muster, mate, and two seamen composed her crew when leaving England, but unfortunately Mr. J. Phillips, the mate, died from natural causes on the 16th November, but afresh hand was shipped at the Cape.

ARRIVAL OF THE YACHT ALERTE - This celebrated vessel, the property of the Hon. W. Walker, Commodore of the R.S.Y.S., arrived last night, having made the passage in 108 days. She left Falmouth on the 6th May, passing the Lizard the same day at 8 p.m. Crossed the Equator on the 30th May, in longitude 26. 30 W., and anchored in Table Bay, Cape of Good Hope, on 3rd July. She left again on the 8th, ran down her easting in latitude 37. S., and carried northerly winds to Cape Leuwin, and sighted Cape Otway on the 16th instant. The *Alerte* has arrived in most beautiful order and although she has to contend with very heavy weather, is in as fine a trim and condition as when starting for a race. Captain Campbell describes her as a first-rate sea boat, more especially when running in a heavy gale. She is a powerful cutter, with a first-class reputation, and will doubtless prove a formidable competitor, and a valuable addition to our colonial squadron. Captain Campbell deserves every credit for the masterly manner in which he has navigated the *Alerte* into the harbour



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of Port Jackson; he has not only made an excellent passage for so small a vessel, particularly under Jury rig, but he anchored her off Farm Cove without having sustained any damage, after prosecuting a voyage of 16,000 miles.

Saturday, 13th January, 1866 – Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle

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Thursday next is the day fixed for the Grand Complimentary Pic-nic to the Commodore of this Squadron, (the Honorable William Walker Esq.,) and family, previous to their immediate departure for England by the mail, on which occasion all the Squadron yachts will turn out in holiday attire to do honour to their worthy Commodore. The Squadron will no doubt feel a loss not to be easily replaced, as it will be very difficult to find a gentleman whose position, tastes, and means are so happily combined as in the present one. Mr Walker goes to England as the still present Commodore, and will have the distinguished honour of flying the Commodore's burgee of the first Royal Y. Squadron of New South Wales; well he deserves to be so honored, for no gentleman in the colony is more esteemed and respected, not alone by the members of the club and the yachting community in general, but by all persons with whom he has come in contact. We believe that the Governor and Lady Young will honour the pic-nic with their presence, his Excellency being one of the patrons of the Squadron.

Saturday, 13th April, 1867 – Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle

AQUATICS

Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron

NOTES BY THE SKIPPER

I regret much to hear that the worthy Commodore, Mr William Walker, who only returned from England by the last inward mail, leaves the colony again by the same steamer on the 21th inst., and I am afraid for a permanency, as I hear that Redleaf has been let to a well-known member of the Squadron, and that the whole of the furniture, &c., goes to auction at the end of the month. We can ill afford to lose such men as Mr William Walker, a native of the soil, a man of mark and great wealth, of unblemished reputation, and in every sense of the word a gentleman; his withdrawal from our community will create a void not easily filled. Under his auspices the R.S.Y.S. was established in 1863 and has now attained a position second to no club out of the United Kingdom and possesses a fleet of cutters that will compare most favorably with vessels of equal tonnage in any of the crack English clubs. Mr. Walker by his judicious management, and the introduction here of those famous vessels, the Chance and Alerte, gave a great impetus to yacht building, and Port Jackson in her palmyest day could never boast of such a fleet of marine beauties as will deck her bosom to-day in the Squadron of Evolutions, the last I am afraid which will take place under the command of Commodore Walker. The members of the Squadron will long regret him and remember



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his ever courteous demeanour, his genial hospitality, and that he bears within his jacket the heart of a true British Yachtsman.

Sydney Sails, the RSYS Centenary book published in 1862 states the following but there is an error:

William Walker was born in 1828 at Glasgow, Scotland. In 1837, at the age of nine, he arrived with his parents in Sydney. Before he was much over thirty, he had established himself in New South Wales as a prosperous merchant, had acquired the rich estate of Kameruka on the south coast, and had been elected a member of the Legislative Council.

The extract from Sydney Sails is incorrect. The William Walker referred to is a different William Walker. Our William Walker was not born in Glasgow, coming to Australia in 1837. That William Walker was a politician who resided in the Windsor district and died in 1908. Our William Walker returned to UK in 1867 and died in 1889.

In April 1867 the Hon. William Walker, in view of his intention to leave Australia and reside in Britain, resigned the office of commodore. A resolution was carried with acclamation thanking him "particularly for the valuable services he had rendered the Squadron in assisting at its formation, and by his high-spirited example in fostering and promoting the true interest of yachting during his term of office". The Squadron's appreciation was further shown in commissioning an artist to paint his portrait in oils. This portrait is hung in the Squadron's clubhouse.

Saturday, 3rd February, 1866 – Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle

R. S. Y. S. INTELLIGENCE

THE IDA - We learn that Mr Josephson, with a view of going ahead by adding a larger yacht to the R.S.Y.S. fleet, has determined upon raffling his well-known little Ida. The performances of this boat are too well known to need that we should puff her up. As a pleasure boat she is unrivalled, and her sailing qualities under clouds of canvass have over and over again proved to be first rate. She is excellently well found; her rigging is in capital order; and she is furnished with two suits of sails, so as to be available at an hour's notice either for a pleasure trip or a race. Nothing remains for us to add beyond informing aquatic amateurs who may desire to have a throw, that they can learn full particulars at the office of Messrs Bradley and Newton, and that they may do worse than go in for a chance of winning the Ida.

THE ALERTE - We are glad to have news of the worthy Commodore's celebrated yacht, which sailed from Sydney for England a fortnight since, carrying with her the good wishes, not only of the members of the Squadron, but of the general public, among whom Mr. Walker is so justly popular. So far her voyage seems to have been propitious, as we hope it will continue until she reaches her destination. By a telegram from Melbourne we learn that the "Norman," from Launceston to that port, spoke the Alerte at 10 a.m. on Monday last, and as nothing further is said, we infer that the



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report was "all well."

Saturday, 27th April, 1867 – Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Chronicle

Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron

The officers and yacht owners of the R.S.Y.S. gave a return dinner at Tattersall's on Tuesday, the 23rd inst., to their Commodore, Mr William Walker, previous to his departure for Europe. The Governor-Sir John Young, as a patron of the club, presided. Covers were laid for six and twenty, and the style and character of the dinner, if possible added to the well-earned reputation of Mr O'Brien's establishment.

After disposing of the toasts, "The Queen," "The Prince of Wales," "Our Patron," and "The Army and Navy," the toast of the evening, Mr William Walker, the Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, was heartily received.

Mr Walker, on rising, said he gladly embraced this opportunity of acknowledging the high honor his brother yachtsmen had conferred upon him, by selecting him in July last, once more to fill the office of Commodore of the R.S.Y.S., and this at a time when he was absent from the colony. The highly satisfactory position this club had attained in the short space of some five years, was, he thought, cause for congratulation, and particularly when it was solely attributable to the individual influence and exertions of its members. He now begged to thank his brother yachtsmen, individually and collectively, for the valuable assistance he had invariably received from them during his tenure of office. His resignation of that office he had placed in the hands of their Secretary, and in doing this he wished it to be clearly understood, that although no longer their Commodore, he was still a member, and intended ever to remain one of themselves. He now took his leave, thanking them again for their kindly feeling evinced towards himself, wishing them every happiness and success, and prosperity to the "Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron."

William Walker lived the rest of his life in England. His wife died in 1875 and he remarried.

Saturday, 25th October, 1884 – The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser

It will be pleasant for old yachtsmen to learn that the Hon. W. Walker, a late -commodore of the R. S. Y. S., who is now enjoying himself on the Clyde in his splendid new steam-yacht, the Lady Aline, has written out to have his vessel entered in the books of the squadron. The Lady Aline is a screw-yacht of 410 tons, launched in July last. She is a full-powered boat, her engines propelling her at an average rate of 12 knots. "Coelum non animain, &c." Mr. Walker, who is remembered here as the man who brought out the *Alerte* and *Chance*, evidently does not forget his old days in Port Jackson.

He died on the 9th of January, 1889, of dilation of the heart in Hove, Brighton in 1889. He left an enormous estate.



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Saturday, 30th March 1889 – Illustrated London News

WILLS AND BEQUESTS

The Will (dated Nov. 2, 1888) of Mr. William Benjamin Walker, late of No. 13, Second-avenue, Hove, Brighton, and Holmleigh, Chiselhurst, and formerly of Sydney, New South Wales, who died on Jan. 9, was proved on March 16 by Thomas Walker, the brother. Evelyn Sydney Forest Walker, the son, and David George, the executors, the value of the personal estate amounting to upwards of £266,000. The testator gives £500 and his household furniture, pictures, plate, carriages, horses, and wines to his wife, Mrs. Eliza Walker, and £500 to his executor, David George. The residue of his real and personal estate he leaves, as to one moiety thereof to his wife, and one fourth each, upon trust, for his two sons, William Sylvester Walker, and Evelyn Sydney Forest Walker, for life, and then, upon further trusts, for their respective wives and children.

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