



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

**“Read all about it!”**

**The origins and early history of the Squadron – as reported in the Press of the day**

### **Part 17: A major event at the RSYs during the First World War.**

#### **From “Sydney Sails”**

- The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 brought yacht racing almost to a standstill “for the duration”. Membership was then at its highest since the Squadron’s inception, with 306 names on the roll. Few people at the outset realized that the war would be a long and grim struggle. Sir Alexander MacCormick, reappointed as commodore, donated the Morna Cup, as successor to the Squadron Cup (which he had donated in 1897). That trophy had been won outright in 1912 by J. Murray with Magic. Like its predecessor, the Morna Cup was for annual competition, to become the absolute property of any yacht owner who won it three times. The first winner was Culwulla III. Thereafter, Squadron racing was discontinued during the war years.
- With yacht racing and yacht building at a standstill, and the use of the Squadron’s social amenities severely curtailed, the war period was one of holding on until peace returned. To maintain the clubhouse, the annual membership fee was raised in 1915 from four to five guineas.
- Warrants to wear the blue ensign were suspended and Squadron yachts reverted to the red ensign.
- Sir Alexander MacCormick, who had volunteered for service abroad, attained the rank of surgeon-colonel and served with great distinction. During his absence he was re-elected each year as commodore of the Squadron, while Vice-Commodore Arthur J. Milson and Rear-Commodore T. W. Bremner carried on the curtailed activities of flag officers.
- In 1915 T. A. Dibbs presented his fine mansion “Graythwaite” at North Sydney to the State for use as a convalescent hospital for wounded servicemen. The Squadron donated and maintained a bed at the hospital in memory of Captain Stewart Milson, son of Vice-Commodore Arthur Milson, who was killed in action during the year. Wounded servicemen from “Graythwaite” were given special attention by the Squadron during and after the war years. In 1917 T. A. Dibbs was knighted, and at the same time the Squadron made him an honorary life member.

#### **Sunday, 18th July, 1915 – The Sun**

**TO EQUIP GRAYTHWAITE**

**SPLENDIDLY ORGANISED FETE**

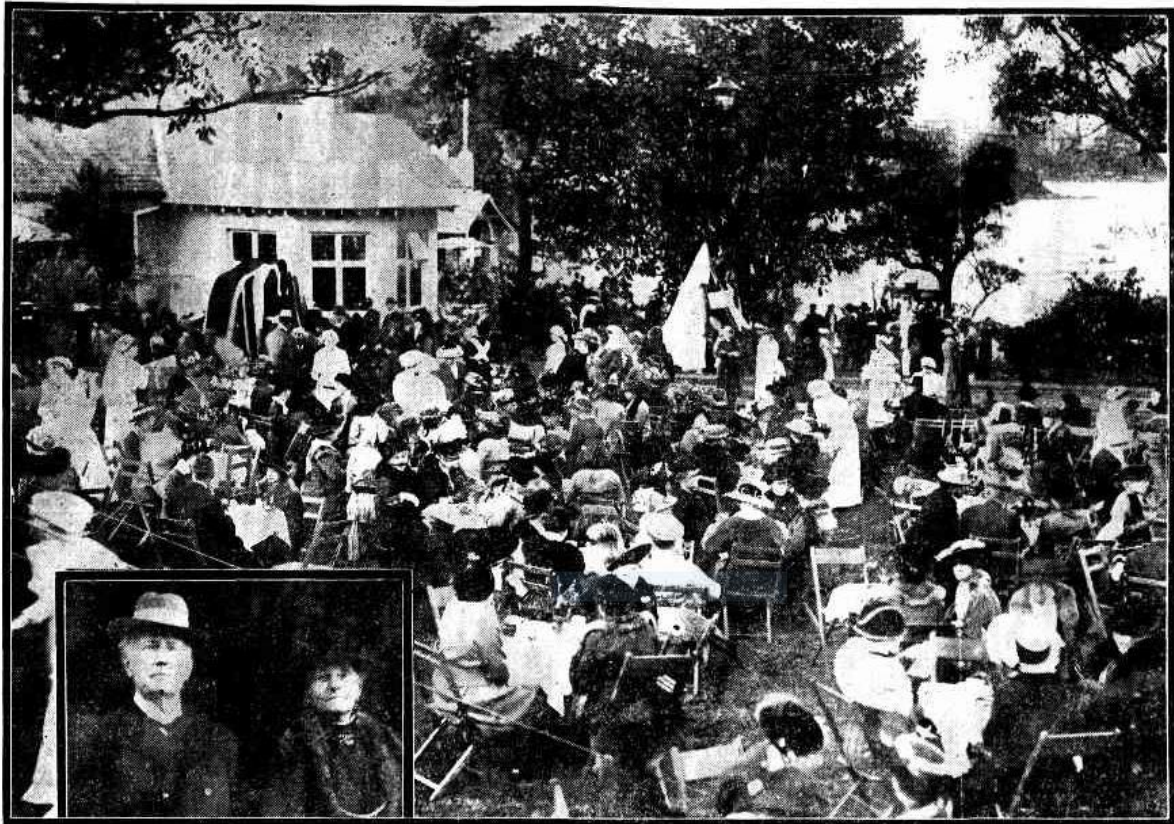
The organisers of the fete at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron grounds, apart from the pleasure of achieving their object of equipping Graythwaite, should have experienced a feeling of gratification at the success of the function, which was complete in every detail. Booths dotted about the lawns were brightly decked, and escaped the tawdriness that is the almost inevitable fate of even the best bazaar stalls. Each booth bore a name that has become familiar to Australians since the outbreak of war. At Cairo, Mrs. Piddington and her assistants sold quaint Eastern things, among which was a delightful little dwarf peach tree in blossom, which was the gift of the Japanese training squadron. Though artificial, the blossoms were wonderfully realistic.



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At Gallipoli soldiers' comforts were in evidence, socks and mufflers, Balaclava caps, and cholera belts in abundance, and a plentiful supply of tobacco, given by the Australian Tobacco Company. Mesdames Tom, Trevor-Jones, and Faithfull were in charge here.

Gabatepe was transformed into a veritable market-place with its barrows laden with vegetables, and its cases of oranges and other fruit. Jam, butter, and eggs were also obtainable here, and a roaring trade was done in legs of mutton and rounds of beef, that the stallholders handled with remarkable nonchalance. Mesdames Kethel, Studdy, and Roberts, were busy here, and with assistants raffled a set of silver tableware, a pewter jewel case, and a dozen other things.



YESTERDAY'S BIG FETE AT THE ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON'S GROUNDS.  
The inset shows Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Dibbs, who gave Graythwaite, to equip which the fete was held.

Lotus Grove was quite appropriately a flower market, from which Lady Gordon, Mesdames J. Q. Wood, and P. Wood dispensed bunches of golden wattle, lilly-pillies, and garden blooms. Lemnos Isle was rich in cakes, served by Mesdames Trebeck, Fraser, and Marshall, and their assistants. A boat hull rigged on wheels held innumerable fancy goods, many of which were raffled by Mesdames Vaughan and Bremner, and Misses Palmer, Willis, and Crossman. Mrs. Retallack managed the spinning jenny, and Mr. W. Hordern invited the patriotic to have a shot at the Kaiser. Mr. Miller Stokes read hands remarkably well under cover of a Moreton Bay fig, and Miss King, wearing the orthodox witch's garb, adorned with black cats and a high peaked hat, told fortunes down on the lower lawn. Mrs. Cecil Hordern, who acted as treasurer for the fete, had the Graythwaite stall, with Mrs. B. F. Parker, and sold alluring knitting bags, camisoles, blouses, and other handmade articles.



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Lollies were sold from a pretty booth decked with chrysanthemums, fruit blossom, and roses, by Misses Vera and Enid Hordern. The refreshment lawn, set with little tables, was under the supervision of Mesdames Boyd, Tyson, and Fred Colwell while Mrs. T. Brown sat behind a buffet of soft drinks. Mrs. Cotterel did well with a lucky dip. Among the interesting things raffled were, the pioneer Gothwig favour brought to Sydney on March 1, 1915, a water colour by Mrs. Tom Marshall. Mr. and Mrs. John Mackay (secretary) received guests of honour, who included Sir Gerald Strickland, attended by Captain d'Apice, the Misses Strickland, Mr. T. A. Dibbs, who with Mrs. Dibbs made the generous gift of Graythwaite to our wounded, Mr. Hanbury Davies, Mr. Dugald Thomson, and Mrs. Gordon Wesche. The Lord and Lady Mayoress were also present. Mr. Dugald Thomson read the apologies received from those unable to be present at the function, and remarked that though Sir Alexander M'Cormick was the Commodore of the Yacht Squadron, no apology was needed from him, since he was doing his bit over the other side. Sir Gerald Strickland, after a short speech, declared the fete open, and spoke gratefully of the gift of Graythwaite. Mr. T. A. Dibbs, in acknowledging the eulogistic references made by the speakers to himself and his wife, gave some interesting reminiscences of old Sydney. Mr. Hanbury Davies also spoke.

Naval trainees gave a display during the afternoon, and also caused excitement by racing in the ship's boats. The club house circular balcony was a good vantage ground for watching this. At night electric lights and Japanese lanterns kept up the festive air of the afternoon, and a great Red Cross illuminated was set on the flagpole at the front of the lawn. The function should bring in a splendid sum.

### Notes

- “Graythwaite” is now the Administration Building of Shore School. It was extensively restored some years ago and if you visit the historic building, you will find the original plaque on the wall at the entrance to one room titled “Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron Ward” .
- A cholera belt was a flat strip of (usually red) flannel or knitted wool about six feet long and six inches wide which was twisted around the abdomen before wearing a shirt and purported to be a preventive measure against cholera.
- Gapatete is a headland overlooking the northern Aegean Sea on the Gallipoli peninsula in northwestern Turkey.
- Lemnos is a Greek island in the northern part of the Aegean Sea.
- The Spinning jenny is an early multiple-spindle machine for spinning wool or cotton.
- The reference to “alluring knitting bags, camisoles, blouses and handmade articles” is amusing. The mind boggles at the thought of an alluring knitting bag! Maybe simply “a variety of” would have been more appropriate. Looks like journalist hype to me.
- Does anyone know what “the pioneer Gothwig favour” is? Anyone who knows the answer is eligible for a free mug of hot milo from the History Committee.