

An Evening aboard the James Craig
Article by David Salt, photos by John Hancox

On Monday 11th December 44 RSY Members converged on Pyrmont Bay, having mostly travelled on the ferry from Milsons or McMahons Points - a very relaxing way to get to the James Craig. We were welcomed on board by Alan Edenborough who, together with a small volunteer team from the Sydney Heritage Fleet, made us feel very special.



Members had been advised to bring their own drinks but glasses were provided and substantial canapés were served during the evening. Visitors were encouraged to look around the James Craig and go below decks to explore the quarters occupied by the crew on their long voyages around the world. About 18 months ago Alan addressed the Cruising Division at one of our regular monthly meetings. On that occasion, he described the finding of the James Craig (formerly known as Clan Macleod) in Recherche Bay, south of Hobart, and the salvage, recovery and subsequent restoration of the square-rigged ship, which subsequently has become the pride of the Sydney Heritage Fleet.



For the next two and half hours Members enjoyed pre-Christmas drinks whilst being served an excellent and wide variety of hot and cold canapés including prawns, fish and chips, beef fillet mignon, lamb skewers, crumbed chicken, and to finish, a delightful Thai Beef Salad.



Alan remained on hand to talk to Members about what was obviously a very important part of his life and he talked lovingly about the James Craig, the other Sydney Heritage Fleet boats and the hoped-for redevelopment of Pyrmont Bay into a World class tourist attraction set around the James Craig.

History tells us the ship was launched as the Clan Macleod in Sunderland, UK, a three masted barque built in 1874 and her maiden voyage was to Peru. She carried cargo all over the world and was subsequently sold to JJ Craig from New Zealand in 1900, who renamed her James Craig after his son. However the advent of steam slowly forced sailing cargo ships out of business, and the James Craig ended up as a coal hulk in Recherche Bay, Tasmania and was then abandoned when she broke her moorings, ending up on the beach where she was found by Alan in 1972. The story has a happy ending when, off Sydney Heads, she hoisted all 21 sails for the first time in nearly eighty years after an extraordinary restoration. The long and often very difficult task of patching her up in Recherche Bay, moving to Hobart, subsequent repairs and the long tow to Sydney for restoration is covered in an excellent DVD, which should be on every Member's Christmas wish list (see Sydney Heritage Fleet @ \$10 ea).



The night was Sydney at its very best: a balmy evening with the lights of Barangaroo shining overhead as the sun went down. The evening slowly wrapped up, Members said their good nights and caught the ferry back after a wonderful and enlightening evening aboard a grand old lady moored in an ever-changing environment. It was definitely an event not to miss!

