

## NYC HISTORICAL OVERVIEW - 50 YEARS

The Nedlands Yacht Club (NYC) started in 1952 as a breakaway from the Mounts Bay Yacht Club under the name of Subiaco Yacht Club. The formation was prompted by a policy decision relating to the VJ class yacht. Mounts Bay decided that sailors over the age of 21 years could not sail VJ's and if the section was not happy with that decision then the fleet could go elsewhere, prompting a revolt that led to the first official meeting of the Subiaco Yacht Club that was held on the verandah of the home of Garnet Rock.<sup>1</sup> Others in attendance were Graham Rock, Ross Eilbeck, Ron Marshall, Brian Kelton, Paul Holland, Jack LeMaistre, Barry Murtha, David Pyke and David Hinchliffe. Garnet was chairman of activities and Paul Holland secretary/treasurer. A membership fee of five shillings was decided to cover cost of postage etc. At this time David Pyke was sitting next to Paul Holland and immediately paid him ten shillings to cover both himself and his crew, David Hinchliffe, thus considering himself to be the first financial member.

At that meeting Jack LeMaistre was elected Commodore, a position he held during the critical formation for 9 years. Other officers elected were C. Walton, Vice Commodore; G.E. Rock, Rear Commodore and Paul Holland, Secretary.



In its first year the club operated from the waterfront on the up river (Subiaco) side of Nedlands Jetty. The Pagoda Tearooms (now demolished) was on the NW corner of what is now the intersection of Broadway and The Esplanade. Steve McHenry of the Nedlands Park Hotel offered this premises for use as temporary boat storage and club rooms. Volunteer labour (pictured) was used to rejuvenate the building of this unused facility.

Races were started with flags hoisted on a staff attached to the end of the Nedlands jetty and a start buoy marked SYC. This was a lengthy walk to carry boats before and after sailing. During the first year of operation the name was changed to Nedlands Subiaco Yacht Club to define the area in which it operated.

Yachts initially raced at the club were mainly two-person VJs and the first racing season 1953-54 was opened by well known yachting identity Bill Lucas. Three races had been held as a trial on Sunday mornings in 1952 while still members of Mounts Bay. In 1954 Steve McHenry advised he needed his premises for expansion of the hotel facilities (which later became La Riviera) and the club looked for a new home. After being offered leasehold land a little down river from the 'Baths', it was decided ask for an acre of land further down in the bamboo patch at the existing site which is gazetted as an 'A' class reserve. This was successfully negotiated with the Subiaco City authorities largely due to Jack LeMaistre a City Councillor and local MLA Charles Court. By removing bamboos and the reclaiming the river frontage behind a lime stone wall that was built in the depression years by sustenance labour, a suitable site for a club house was made. Building operations commenced on June 6, 1955.

<sup>1</sup> 1984 Letter from Garnet Rock page 75

There was no road past Bessell Avenue and 4-wheel drives were uncommon thus equipment and materials had to be carried by hand.

NYC has always been a family self help club with many of its members trade oriented people. As many as four family generations have been members. In the early days of the club the Ladies Committee worked tirelessly fund raising, running the canteen and many social events. Several of the women were honoured with life memberships. It has also been a classless club comprising of all socio-economic groups. When Ann Schug was elected rear commodore, Nedlands became the first club to have a female official when most clubs had a policy that females could only enter the club rooms if invited by a male member.

Like many clubs and organisations the direction they take is largely determined by the controversies and conflicts within. The club started because of them and its future will be guided by them.

These often related to the introduction of classes. Nedlands was formed as a dingy club but its survival hinged on obtaining more members.

In 1963 wooden catamarans had to be accepted as they were becoming popular and needed a home. They all sailed in the 16ft. Cat class. Cruisers were accommodated with a 6.7m limit, then, catamarans made of plastic were admitted much to the disgust of the wooden boat builders in the club. This ended up being a good decision and lifted the profile and membership of the club.

## **Buildings**



Amongst the bamboo the members of Nedlands Subiaco Yacht Club (NSYC) under the leadership of Jack LeMaistre and the many helpers with and without building skills erected a small clubhouse with flag deck on the first floor verandah and storage shed for the VJ dinghies. Credit must go to Barry Murtha an apprentice builder whose every spare moment was spent on the building. After 20 weekends work by the members the building as pictured valued at about £4000 was finished and opened on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1955. This was the season's opening day and the flag pole could not be used as pole was still wet. The building later became popularly known as the 'Junior Clubhouse'.

However in 1983 Management resolved that it be known as the Training Centre. The original club house is on the City of Nedlands heritage inventory.

In 1959 following the establishment of the City of Nedlands as the local authority, the club changed its name to Nedlands Yacht Club.

Further boat storage sheds were built in 1958-59 and a third storey added to the original clubhouse as the starting platform for races.

In 1960 at their cost Laurie Chivers and his father built a shed at the back of the club rooms and used it for boat building activities, particularly VJ and Skates, this included a shop selling boat fittings.

*Picture shows Laurie making a VJ.*

This was vacated after 10 years and leased from early 1981 to the Yachting Association.



On additional land west of existing premises and courtesy of a loan of £12000 from the Nedlands City Council, a new brick clubhouse with room and facilities for social activities and additional change rooms was opened in 1962 and shortly after the bosun's quarters were added, and later upgraded in 1978.

The Nedlands council has been very supportive of the club and on several occasions provided loan funds so that important projects can get underway. The club has enjoyed a very good relationship and strong tangible support from the Council and many mayors have been elected as club vice patrons. This policy started in 1979 when Mr Charles Smith retired and was recognised for the help he had given the club whilst Mayor of Nedlands.

As pictured, the opening ceremony of this new building was performed by the then Governor

of Western Australia, Sir Charles Gairdner, who presented the club with a Compass that remains a treasured and much used item of club equipment today.



The J3 1916 bell (pictured) was donated to NYC by A.E. Bartlett Esq on the opening of the new club house on 18 October 1962.



Extensions to this clubhouse in 1973 increased its original size. Additional bar, change room and associated facilities were

installed to increase the accommodation for

a growing membership and to cater for larger social functions.

The Junior Clubhouse Ablution Block earthworks were done at a busy bee in August, 1976. This was where the original canteen had been. Further additions to the clubhouse were made in 1984.

Members of the Yvonne section built rescue boat shed as their storage area 1961 and re-roofed in 1997 under the 5 year development plan.

The Yachting Association offices were doubled in area in 1992 when an extension was added to the eastern side of the building. This extension was completed by club members who gave their time and labour voluntarily. Pictured right is YAWA HQ.



### *Start Box*

During winter 1965 club members spent £500 (\$1000) on a flag deck upgrade incorporating a start box, giving officials a fuller view of more than 90% of courses sailed for all races. The clock used for starting in the early 1970's was a 12" diameter electric clock with a sweep second hand and was subsequently replaced in July 1975 with a mechanical digital clock made in two sections, one a conventional clock thus resulting in far less starting complaints. Later this was replaced by electronic timing devices.



### *Architect*

The authorship of the original plans to council for the inaugural clubhouse belongs to Syd Musto. Peter Grigg was the architect for the first clubhouse built in brick.

The architectural plans for the new clubhouse extensions and the extensions to the YAWA offices were done by the firm Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown, where club members Sid Musto and later Neil Gardiner worked. The Australian Yachting Federation and the Ron Tough Foundation also operate from there. Ron Tough was the secretary of the Yachting Association of Western Australia for 20 years as well as being president twice of the Australian Yachting Federation. In those years, he was the only WA yachtsman to possess a gold medal.

The original clubhouse became the Junior Clubhouse and later known as the Nedlands Training Centre for a large number of youth who learned to sail from the club.

### *Busy bees*



These are a vital part of the club. They bring members together from the various sections and this activity has allowed the club to progress with minimal fees. Junior members are often seen on these occasions helping out with varying tasks.

The progress of the club is directly related to the goodwill of the members.

In the August 1968 Mainsheet it was noted that 80 members attended a pre-season opening busy bee and there was a lengthy list of works completed during the non sailing season.

### **Later Developments**

In the 1994/5 season a 5 year development plan was devised under the stewardship of David Nuttall. This resulted in a new physical image of the club grounds, security fencing and the modernising of the existing club room. Alterations were made to the ground layout, parking areas and storage.

With the assistance of a progressive grant totalling \$38000 from the Government's Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Funding concluding in 1997, a larger veranda, porch and barbecue were added and a dome roof was built onto the storage compound for secure storage of rescue boats and members yachts.

In 2000 the second 5 year plan was put in motion by Chris Waldie.

Computerisation was introduced in 1986 and the web site went on line in 1997.

### **Foreshore**

When the club took over the land, there was no sandy beach and the yachts were lowered over the sea wall direct into the water, a far cry from the excellent beach backed by a large expanse of reticulated lawn that now makes NYC one of the prime sites in Australia for off-the-beach yachts. In the late 1950s the Government was concerned about deterioration of the original sea walls on the Swan and after consultation with the club decided it would be beneficial to dredge the river and place the spoil against the seawall in this area. Through the intervention of the member for Nedlands, a dredge on its way to work on the Narrows Bridge spent a few days back filling the wall.

Brian LeMaistre had access to sand from swimming pools being built in the area and also dumped many loads to use as good quality fill for the rigging area. The old sea wall can often be seen through the lawn in summer that was grown from runners brought from many houses in the district. A well was dug by the members in order to reticulate the growing lawn.

In the late 1980's a member of the cruiser section was involved in beach erosion projects and made arrangements for the club to trial a new form of erosion preventative which consisted of a sausage like bag about 1 metre in diameter and about 10 m long made of a substance similar to shade cloth and laid on the river bed and filled with sand. This was done on a working bee during winter. It was placed with the centre of the bag roughly opposite the down stream end of the club house and parallel to the beach in water about armpit deep. It appeared to be singularly un-successful in terms of arresting beach erosion. Another attempt was to place logs parallel to the high watermark chained to poles, which was equally unsuccessful.

The problem overcoming erosion of the pristine beach area caused largely by consistent strong easterly winds is still a problem today.



Foreshore Aerial View 1973

### *Ramps*

The original ramp was built prior to 1956 of a monolithic concrete slab and sited downstream of the rescue boat compound in line with the current entrance gate.

Boats were launched by running the trailers off the end of the ramp and into the water as far as possible, without dropping the car wheels off the end, so that the boat could be launched into deep enough water.

As a result of continuing difficulties in retrieving the clubs rescue boats for maintenance and the congestion on the existing ramp created by an increasing number of swing keel trailer sailers, and members' small cruisers then housed on the hard at Perth Flying Squadron it was decided to build a deep water ramp. However the cost of \$29,000 was not affordable and the project shelved.

A ramp was built by club members with the help of Telfer Bowman who supplied some discarded concrete panels. The installation was carried out with some trepidation as it was uncertain how these panels would stand up to their unintended use, but they are still there. Don Mullaley was heavily involved in design and preliminary work, including obtaining soundings of the river bed in the general vicinity to ascertain the best location; the present location gave the best access to a reasonable depth of water. This work was completed in 1979 at a final cost of around \$4000 and Bret Pescod's boat 'Chrysalis' was the first to use it. This ramp was replaced by a new one in 1991

### *Groynes*

Sand build-up on the ramp, silting of the first pens and foreshore erosion has always been a problem. Following a trial tyre groyne built in 1980, discussions continued over many years with the Swan River Management and the first permanent groyne was built in 1987. Nedlands Council also placed a small rock groyne around their outfall to stop it being blocked.

In 1990 a small test stone groyne was built to the south end of the clubhouse.

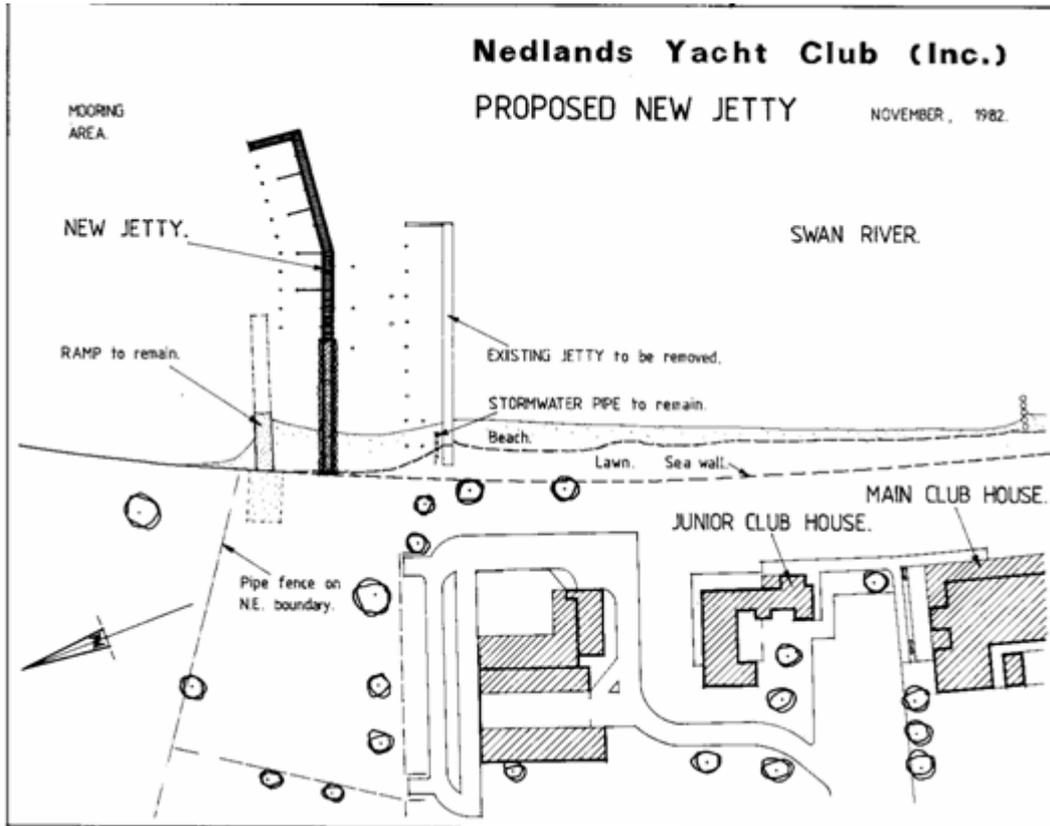
Under Don Mullaley's direction, 1991 to 1993 a further groyne based on weighted and bound tractor tyres was constructed by volunteer labour in a further effort to reduce the beach sand erosion caused during winter months. Progress was slow and the foreshore was further eroded, but gradually with the help of Broomhall's hire, Eric Fennell's tyres and Rod Hodgkin's labour and machinery, the restoration was completed and the beach extended to the south boundary.

### *Jetties*

The original jetty was built in the early 1960's under the guidance of Jim Carroll who ensured it was at no cost to the club. The piles were sunk with help from the Harbour and Lights Department. A lot of the physical work was carried out in busy bees, particularly by Jack Le Maistre and Alan McKechnie. Jim had been previously responsible for the establishment of the lawn area in front of the club house. This was reticulated in 1964.



Lighting and power was purchased and installed for cruisers in March 1976 on the old jetty.



The original one was replaced by a new jetty in 1984 at a cost of \$35000 that was funded by club revenue and advance rentals. This project included the supply of water, electricity, lighting, a security fence and an additional pen and took two years to complete.



Michael Seal checking work in progress

In 1986 Harbours and Marine took control of the leases for the Jetty and Mooring areas. Limestone was placed on the beach end of the jetty to protect the ramp from silting. This was lengthened beyond the kink and a finger jetty added upstream in 1991. Due to decking deterioration the Jetty was re-planked over the 3 year period 1999 to 2001. This was done using members volunteering their services under the guidance of John Stickle and utilising top quality timber with boron anti-rot plugs and high quality stainless steel fixings.

## Recollections from Don Mullaley

### *Ramps*

The ramp that was in use when I joined the Club in the late sixties (? 1968) was located opposite and joined the roadway between what is currently the Manly Junior shed and Training shed. From memory, it was constructed of a monolithic concrete slab approximately 8'0" (2.4m) wide by 12'0" (3.7m) long, laid from the low tide level up the beach and joined 2'0" (600mm) square pre-cast concrete paving slabs which led up to and joined the roadway. This ramp was used by the small trailer sailers with swing keels such as the Hartley 14s, 16s and the Capri 17.

At the time, cruisers and trailer sailers were limited in overall size to 22'0" (6.7m) apart from those larger boats, mainly cruising catamarans and trimarans, which were in the Club before the overall size restriction\* was introduced. The larger boats were kept on moorings or in pens on the old jetty or, as in my case when I bought my first Red Witch later on, at the Perth Flying Squadron (now the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club) on their hard standing as reciprocal members.

After the Cruising Section was granted "full racing status" and changed its name to the Cruiser Section, numbers of trailer sailers started to increase as a result of some of the Club's older dinghy sailers changing over to more accommodating type boats to take their young families out for a sail and this in turn led to them becoming involved in the racing side of sailing again in the Cruiser Section. Because of the increased numbers this led to great congestion on a not very serviceable ramp. Boats were launched by running the trailers off the end of the ramp and into the water as far as possible, with out dropping the car wheels off the end, so that the boat could be launched into deep enough water. Many delays occurred in retrieving boats and trailers and the call for better launching facilities became louder.

At around 1977 the PFS started to insist that reciprocal members should participate in that Club's racing and a number of NYC members who kept their boats at PFS were given the option of racing at PFS or loosing their reciprocal membership. Because these NYC members had fixed keel boats kept on hard standing, they also call for better launching facilities at NYC.

As a result of continuing difficulties in retrieving the Club's two rescue boats for maintenance and the congestion on the existing ramp created by the increased numbers of swing keel trailer sailers a new location was selected and in 1977/78 a design prepared for a new launching ramp to be installed at the upstream end of the Club's land lease, the location of the current ramp.

This area was selected as being the most suitable location as far as depth of water was concerned and as it reduced the impact on the dinghy rigging areas. As a result of obtaining quotes for the professional installation of a ramp suitable for fixed keel cruisers, the Club Management committee resolved that the cost of around \$29,000.00 was not affordable and shelved the project.

However, as the PFS had given an ultimatum to race at their club or leave, I made further investigations with regards to alternative construction methods for installing a new ramp in the proposed location. In the process, discussions were held with Ernie Evans, a Club member and a partner in one of Perth's leading structural engineering firms. As luck would have it Ernie had heard of some pre-cast wall slabs that had become available as the project that they were made for was cancelled. He advised that there were 12 slabs available and being 3.0m long by 2.4m high and 150mm thick they could be laid flat on a suitably prepared limestone sub-base and would be wide enough to use as a launching ramp for swing keel boats.

After several presentations and meetings of Club members, the Club Management committee agreed to allocate around \$3,500.00 for the purchase of 10 wall slabs and construction of a shallow water ramp only for the swing keel boats and rescue boats.

The necessary approvals were obtained from the Nedlands City Council and the Swan River Trust. With the assistance of Ernie Evans and Jim Elliot from the Nedlands City Council, I arranged for the work to commence in 1978 so that the ramp would be operational for the 1978/79 sailing season.

Being the owner of a Red Witch yacht with a fixed keel and having to move my boat from the PFS it was apparent that the new shallow water ramp would not enable me to keep my boat at NYC and launch it on the proposed shallow water ramp. This situation not only affected me but there were a number of other NYC members who would not be able to use the proposed ramp and as a result some drastic measure needed to be taken.

As I was managing the construction of the ramp, I had further discussions with the Club Management committee and they were persuaded to purchase an additional slab to allow for the ramp to commence at the sea wall level instead of closer to the water as originally planned. Two slabs were purchased, I was prepared to pay for one if absolutely necessary, and these two were laid at the bottom of the ramp and not at the top at the sea wall. In addition, the original slabs were positioned further away from the sea wall than originally planned so that the end of the ramp ended up in deep water suitable for launching all the fixed keel boats in the Club at the time. I was never asked to pay for the extra wall slab or explain how the fixed keel boats were able to use the new "shallow water" ramp.

The ramp was not completed in time for the start of the 1978/79 sailing season but the fixed keel Red Witch yacht called CHRYSALIS, owned and sailed by Bret Pescod, was the first boat to be launched on the new ramp, I think it was early in January 1979 and the final cost was around \$4,000.00.

The overall size restriction for cruisers sailed at NYC was changed from time to time. It went from 22'0" to 24'0" then to 8.5m (28'0") before being abolished at the 2003 AGM.

The reason for these restrictions was because of the concern by the dinghy members of the Club that the Club would be over taken by cruisers. This was hardly likely to be the case as the depth of water off the Club and around the mooring and jetty areas was only about 2.0m which was too shallow for large cruisers to use the Club.

### *Jetty*

The original jetty for the Club was located approximately 25.0m down stream of its current location. A concrete slab is still visible in the grassed area between the beach and the road between the rescue boat compound and shed and the cruiser rigging area.

I think this jetty had about 8 pens of which the outer pen was used by Wargardo (skipped by Jack Le Maistre) the larger ply rescue boat and the second pen from the shore was used by the smaller timber rescue boat (skipped by Frank Sugars). The inshore pen had a stormwater drainage pipe discharging into it and it regularly silted up. This jetty was funded by pre-leasing the pens for 10 years to Club members who paid for the lease up front. I think Brian Pearcey was one of the original lease holders.