

The Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania History

Messrs F.W. Chalu, J.W. Turner, W.E Taylor and J. Townley may be regarded as the fathers of the Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania (MYCT). It was as a result of their actions that the Club was founded.

The four men organized a long distance motor boat race to New Norfolk on 16 March 1924, and the first Championship Pennant of the Derwent was provided for the boat completing the course in the fastest time. There were twenty competitors, and the function proved an outstanding success. The race was won by Messrs Reading Bros'. "Malunna" with H. Featherstone's "Latura" second and L. Craske's "Lindiford" third. H C Millington's "Aristocrat" won the championship pennant which was donated and presented by Mrs W E Taylor.

Following the race, a preliminary meeting presided over by J G Turner was held on the Esplanade at New Norfolk. The Derwent Motor Boat Club was formed, and thirty three members joined.

The following Officers were elected to prepare a set of rules and a constitution for the new Club: Chairman J G Turner; Hon. Secretary J W Turner; Hon. Treasurer F W Chalu; Committee W E Taylor, E C Fish, H R Clayton, P F Darvell, W G Latham, F Ward and L Potter. The first season was short, activities being confined largely to organization.

A race at Old Beach was held on 17 May 1924, when the first prize was a trophy presented by H C Millington, followed by a camp fire on the banks of the Jordan River. The remaining event of the first season was a harbour race with thirty two competitors. This was held on 12 July, by which time the Club had registered seventy six members and fifty eight boats. The second season began with the first Annual Meeting on 1 October 1924 when a set of rules was adopted.

The increasing interest in speed boats made it possible to hold separate races for that class during 1925-26. The racing and social programs were enlarged for both speedboats and power cruisers. In 1926, strict handicapping rules were enforced and drivers of boats who exceeded their handicapped speed were disqualified.

A special general meeting was held on 19 October 1926, when the name of the Club was altered to the Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania and a revised and more adequate set of rules was adopted.

In the ensuing years as many as sixteen races for speedboats and ten for power cruisers were organized, and each Boxing Day races were held to Old Beach and to New Norfolk.

Social outings and camp fires were part of the boating calendar of the Club as well as the speedboat racing on the Derwent River and at regattas.

Racing was extended to competition in channel regattas, and cruising down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel was becoming increasingly popular.

The first Life Membership was awarded to E C Fish on 12 September 1927. The same year, a ladies social committee was formed and eucree tournaments and social dances were held. During the 1928 season members started the nucleus for a building fund. Grand Balls were held, social evenings continued, and camp fires were held at the Spit.

On 23 March 1929 the first Commemoration Day Race was held to New Norfolk, following which, the competitors and members held a celebration dance.

The first championship races were held by the MYCT on 5 February 1930. This was followed by inboard and outboard championships on the Derwent River.

A highlight of the Club occurred in 1931 when B Self achieved a top speed of 50 miles per hour when driving his speedboat "Ariel" on the Derwent River.

At one time the Club leased land on the Queen's Domain with a view to erecting a Club House. However, this did not eventuate. During 1933, a further milestone was achieved with the opening of Club Rooms upstairs in a building in Collins Street. The social program developed rapidly and in 1934, a branch of the Club was formed in Huonville. Unfortunately, it closed several years later when racing enthusiasts left the district.

At a special general meeting on 19 December 1938, provision was made for trustees and a captain of the Club. A new Club House in Victoria Street was purchased in June 1939 and was duly granted a license.

The new Club House was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Hobart, J Soundy, with 400 members and visitors present. At the gathering, Don Gorringer was warmly welcomed home after gaining second place in the Australian Outboard Championships at Murray Bridge, South Australia.

With the onset of World War II, petrol restrictions prevented the use of power driven craft for personal purposes, so the Annual Commemoration Day Race to New Norfolk was the only race held in 1941. Despite this, the Club provided a valuable place where the servicemen of both the Commonwealth and their allies could gather and enjoy themselves while on leave.

At the end of the war, a slight lifting of the petrol restrictions meant a modified racing program could again take place. During the war, however, many boats had changed hands. Some had been sold away from Hobart while others had fallen into disrepair and were expensive to restore to their former glory. Racing was at a low ebb.

It took a visit from His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Hugh Binney KCB DSO, on 29 November 1946, to spark the Club to new enthusiasm.

By 1950 the Club was forging ahead, and in the 1960s racing was again at a premium with speedboat racing at all regattas. A new property was purchased at Lindisfarne where Cruiser racing gained great popularity.

It was here in Lindisfarne, and despite huge financial setback, the present Club House was built. Since then various improvements have been made which were only possible through the loyalty, support and generosity of members.

By 1971, another property, which had been purchased just below Boyer, boasted some of the best speedboat racing in the state. Launching ramps had been built, a kiosk was operating, small jetties were built, and a control tower was constructed. The exciting racing programs drew enthusiastic spectators. There were, and still are, many exciting finishes and frequent spectacular flips. Power Boat Racing was part of all regatta programs and the Annual Commemoration Day Race to New Norfolk has always remained a highlight of the racing calendar.

Unfortunately, the Annual Hobart to Huonville Race was discontinued, but other races such as the Round Bruny Salute and the Betsey Island Time Trial are part of a varied list of Club events.

Despite a few setbacks over the years, the MYCT sits proudly on the waterfront at Lindisfarne where the members can look out on the view envied by many. It was here in September 2000 that the largest floating Marina in Tasmania was opened. We still have our powerboat races each year as well as the navigation and fun runs, social functions, progressive dinner and our annual prize night.

The MYCT is the largest Cruising Club in Tasmania with over 600 members. It is one of nine boat clubs in Hobart, a city which boasts the largest boat ownership per capita in Australia. MYCT members actively participate in time trials and cruise in company events on the Derwent River and the picturesque D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

Many of the names of the Flag Officers and committee of the Club are synonymous with the business, legal and banking community of Hobart. They not only forged their names in our records but have left behind a legacy of achievements in the history of Tasmania.