

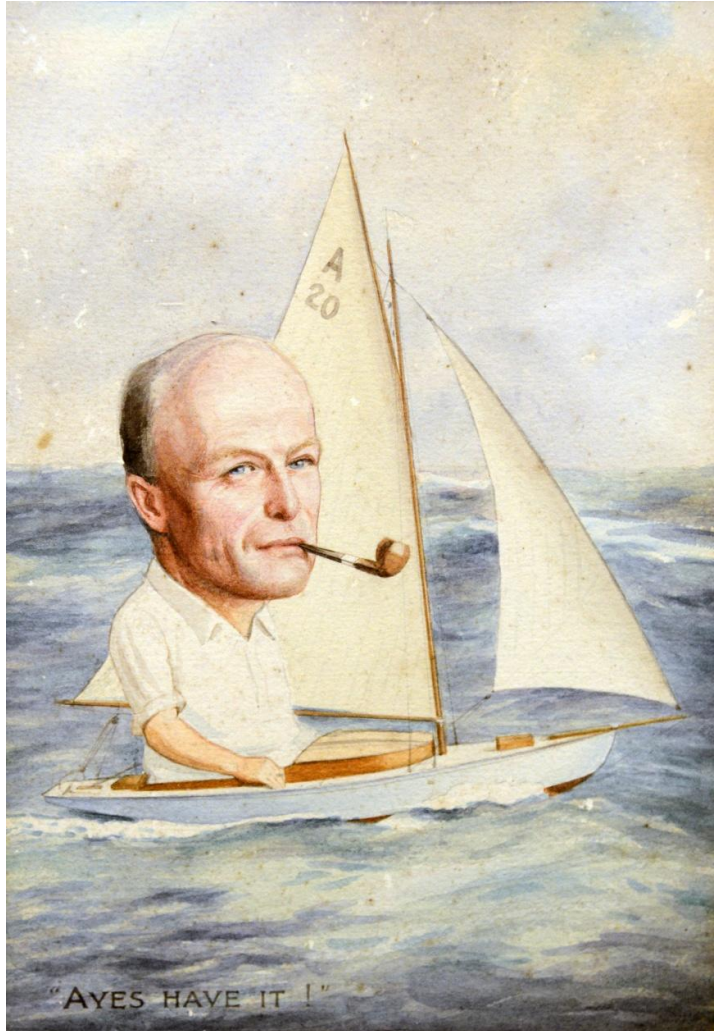
## R H C Down

One of a half a dozen of L. Herbert Beecroft's caricatures which is undated is that of Richard Down. Beecroft's work for the Squadron tailed off with the advent of World War I with a few paintings dated to 1916 then resumed in 1922. Since the twenties were the halcyon days of Mr. Down, I can reasonably assume that Beecroft's painting dates to that period or maybe even the early thirties.

Richard Down was the backbone of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club at this time and Beecroft's painting reflects this. He is at the helm of his gaff rigged yacht "Rana" and the Amateurs sail no. is A20. At the bottom of the painting, it says "Ayes have it" which is a variation on "The I's have it" but with the substitution of "Ayes" to signify the Amateurs. Over many years, there have been many yachties who were members of both the Amateurs and the Squadron, although it is rare that anyone would serve on Committees at both Clubs. I have not been able to find any evidence that Mr. Down was in fact a member of the Squadron but there is no doubt that with his role at the Amateurs over such a long period, he would have been working with the RSYS closely.

The following information has been extracted from "**The Amateurs**", the history book of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club, published in 1972, and reproduced here with the kind permission of that Club.

R. H. C. DOWN (1914-1934). Club rules today provide for three yearly rotation of Flag Rank, thus the twenty-year term of Dick Down is a record. Elected in 1911, Captain 1912-14, Commodore 1914 in lieu of R. G. Smith who stood down. Club activities were suspended during World War I and, apart from War Service, many members resigned as subscriptions were not suspended at first. Dick Down took a leading part in getting the Club going again after the war and he raced "Rana". His main contribution was as an able administrator and a strong chairman who guided the Club to new records in membership and racing during the 1920's, and particularly during the early 30's when, owing to the depression, few starters were coming forward. It was 1921 when the Amateurs were invited to affiliate with the Sydney Yacht Racing Association and the Commodore was appointed a delegate, a position which he retained for thirty years. When he stood down in 1934, the Club was flourishing and representatives of other Clubs attended to express their appreciation of his services to yachting.



## R. H. C. DOWN

Although Richard Henry Charles Down has not been connected in any way with the Olympic Games, he, nevertheless, has something in common with a large number of Olympic champions. Dick Down and the champions referred to all hold records which can never be broken. It is not true of all records that "records are made to be broken".

When the Western World changed over to the metric system the current records for distances measured in miles and yards became records which will stand for all time. Similarly, Dick Down's record of 20 years as Commodore of the Sydney Amateurs became an all-time—and unbeatable—record when the Amateurs' rules were changed to limit the Commodore's term of office to three years.

During his remarkable term as Commodore, Dick Down—it infuriated him to be called Downs—was described as dictatorial, demanding, impatient, domineering and ambitious, and there is little doubt that he was all of these things. He was dictatorial in that he wanted everything done his way. He was demanding in that he required every member of his Committee to support his ideas. Every decision had to be unanimous. He was impatient in that all his ideas had to be put into effect at once. He was domineering in that he had the ability to persuade all his associates to do it "Down's Way" and he was ambitious in wanting, very much, to retain his office for 25 years. He probably would have if his close friend, C. W. Robson, had not pointed out to him that he was killing enthusiasm in his succession of Vice- and Rear-Commodores by making the Commodoreship unavailable to them.

But he had three qualities which even his most outspoken critics had to recognise. He was a hard worker, he was a wonderful organiser and he was a born leader.

The following article previews the launch of "Rana."

### Wednesday, 11th June, 1913 - The Referee

#### SAILING

By 'CORINTHIAN.'

*MR. DOWN'S NEW CRUISER.* During the week, I had the opportunity to view the plans of a cruiser that Mr. W. Holmes, of McMahan's Point, will shortly put in frame for **Mr. R. H. C. Down**, of Middle Harbor. Although not of large proportions, she will be a staunch and weatherly little ship, just such a one that will fight her way home at all times. The dimensions are: L.O.A., 32ft; L.W.L. 24ft; beam, 9ft; draft, 5ft; timbers of yellow wood, deck and planking of kauri. The sail plan allows of mainsail and jib, which will be supplied by Mowatt, of Williamstown. Thirty hundredweight of lead, moulded on the keel, furnishes the necessary ballast. An aperture is to be left so that an engine can be fitted later. This yacht will probably set others building, as she will be most suitable both for inside or outside use. She will have good accommodation for her passengers, and in addition will be economical to maintain.

In the next article it sounds like the southerly set off the coast had taken over and moved the mark. It still happens today.

### Wednesday, 18th February, 1920 - The Referee

#### SAILING

#### RANA'S SUCCESS IN THE OCEAN RACE

(By WEATHER-EYE)

*Saturday in Sydney turned out a perfect day for sailing, the wind coming in steadily throughout the entire afternoon. The Sydney Amateurs could not have struck a better day for their ocean race. Unfortunately this, however, proved a bit disappointing, in as much that the ocean mark was not placed according to the Club's rules — that is, three miles to windward; and as it was not more than a mile and a quarter outside, and drifting at that, the competitors had occasion for considerable dissatisfaction. As a matter of fact, at the conclusion of the racing a complaint was lodged by a number of those who had taken part. Eleven boats entered, these, together with their respective handicaps, being: — Triton, scr; Gumleaf II, 2min; Waitangi, 2 ½ min; Rana, 3min; Dawn, 4min; Mischief, 5min; Burraneer and Wirri Winna, 10min; Winji Winji, Athene, and Sundowner, 12min. Of the three latter Athene did best on the work down the harbor and out to the ocean mark, Mr. Carment's boat showing fine weatherly qualities in the prevailing breeze. However, on the run home she was not fast enough to prevent **Commodore R. H. C. Down's** Rana from overtaking her just at the finish, where*

*Rana had but 13sec to spare from her. Mr. Carter's Waitangi sailed the best of the others, and overhauled the long starters, excepting Athene, in fine style, the latter having 2min 48sec to spare from her at the finish. Sundowner and Wirri Winna were hopelessly out of it before the finish, whilst Dawn and Winji Winji did not complete the course. The finishing times were: — Rana, 5h 18min 41sec; Athene, 5h 18min 54sec; Waitangi, 5h 21min 42sec; Burraneer, 5h 22min 25sec; Triton, 5h 23min 5sec; Gumleaf II, 5h 23min 40sec; Mischief, 5h 24min; Wirri Winna, 5h 34min; and Sundowner, 5h 34min 12sec.*

#### **Thursday, 12th July, 1934 - Sydney Morning Herald**

##### **YACHTING.**

*Commodore R. H. C. Down to Retire.*

*At the meeting of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club, at the Royal Empire Society rooms last night, Mr. R. H. C. Down announced that he would not seek re-election as commodore at the annual meeting on August 29. Having held office for 21 years, Mr. Down said he felt that he had earned a rest. Mr. Down's service as a flag officer of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club has extended over a quarter of a century for, prior to becoming commodore in 1913, he had been a junior flag officer. In 1913 the Club did not play a very important part in the sailing activities of Sydney, and its efforts were further curtailed during the war years, but since then it has gone on from strength to strength. In no small degree this is due to Mr. Down's interest. He has never missed a meeting held when he was in Sydney.*

After Mr. Down finally relinquished his hold on the Amateurs, he continued racing until the start of the Second World War. He died in 1963.

**September, 2015**

#### **Postscript**

In March, 2016, "Rana" was relaunched after an extensive restoration by Peter Langman. The photo here was taken by Dale Wahren at the time on the day. Here is a description attached to a promotion for Noakes Boat and Shipyards, owned by Sean Langman, Peter's father:

*"Around 1995, Bill Gale suggested to Sean Langman that he should have a look at a boat sitting in a back yard in Windsor. Despite having no deck, some missing planks and a broken horn timber, it was love at first sight. Soon after, "Rana" was trucked to Noakes at Berry's Bay and the first stages of restoration was undertaken by waterfront identity and Noakes shipwright, Jack Boyle. The project was put on hold when Jack died in 1999. One of Jack's great legacies was the knowledge he had shared over decades with many*



*apprentices. It was therefore fitting that the project was resurrected by Pete Langman in 2014 in his last year as an apprentice shipwright. "Rana" was designed by A.C. Barber and built in 1913 by Holmes of Lavender Bay for Mr. Dick Down, Commodore of the SASC for over two decades. Dick introduced the "A" prefix for all SASC registered yachts and at that time "Rana" had the highest sail number – A20. "Rana" is a Persian word meaning beautiful, eye-catching and classically elegant. This was proved to be true at her relaunch in late March, sailing again in home waters after almost half a century."*