



ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

Commodores of the Squadron By John Maclurcan

10 Sir Alexander MacCormick (1897-1900), (1913-1920)



Sydney Sails (1893)

Two notable new members to join the Squadron in September and October 1893 were Doctor Alexander MacCormick and Walter M. Marks. Dr MacCormick was a Scot, born in Argyllshire in 1856, who, after graduating in medicine and surgery at Edinburgh University had been appointed in 1883 as demonstrator in anatomy at the University of Sydney, and in 1885 as surgeon at the Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney. He had rapidly won fame as a surgeon of the highest skill. He was thirty-seven years of age and had been living in Sydney for ten years when in 1893 he purchased the successful yacht *Thelma* from J. F. Hoare and joined the Squadron.

Monday, 4th December, 1893 – The Daily Telegraph

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The Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron sailed a very interesting race on Saturday afternoon for three club prizes of £15, £10, and £5 respectively. The race in question was a general handicap open to all yachts belonging to the squadron or owned by members of the squadron, and the following were the entries: — *Thelma*, cutter, 15 rating (Dr. MacCormick), scratch; *Archina*, yawl, 13 rating (A. A. Griffiths), 14min.; *Isea*, cutter, 9.97 rating (Dr. F. Milford), 17min.; *Assegai*, cutter, 7.4 rating (P. H. Sullivan),



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21min.; Bronzewing, lugger, 2 ½ rating (H. M. Cockshott), 27min.; Lahloo, cutter, 6 rating (W. H. Murrell), 35min. The course was from a flying start between the starter's boat and H.M.S. Orlando's buoy, round R.S.Y.S. buoy at Manly, round Shark Island (outside pile light and buoy), round Fort Denison, thence round the lightship, Sow and Pigs, and Shark Island, and finishing between the flagboat and Fort Denison. The breeze was squally, and at times very heavy from the south to south-east, and although some sharp showers came down at intervals, the rain did not detract materially from the interest in the race, which was well sustained from start to finish. The stiff breeze and rough water exactly suited the scratch boat, Thelma, which eventually won a first-class race by 3min. 41sec. to spare from the saucy little Boomerang, which secured second prize by 6min. 28sec. inside her time from the Archina. Dr. MacCormick's win was certainly very popular, as although his yacht has been sailing splendidly since the opening of the season, this is the first occasion on which he has secured a win. The little Boomerang, as usual, showed her wonderful "wind-jamming" qualities on the work back from Manly, and fairly beat both Isea and Assegai without her time. The Archina, although again running into a place, was unfortunate in losing her topmast in the early part of the race, and but for this mishap she must have been very much closer at the finish.



Before 2 o'clock all the yachts entered were cruising about in Farm Cove, the whole fleet except Bronzewing having topsails aloft, and the Archina having her large top sail set over the ordinary jibheader for the run to Manly. Punctually at 2 p.m. the flag was lowered to a very fair start. Bronzewing was first across 28sec. later. Then came Lahloo and Assegai together at 2h. 0min. 57sec., Archina 2h. 1min. 3sec., Isea 2h. 1min. 23sec., with the Thelma bringing up the rear at 2h. 1min. 35sec. The Archina and Thelma at once set balloon foresails and jibtopsails, the others being content with balloon foresails only. Just after the start Archina caught Assegai and Lahloo, passing very close between the pair. Thelma soon got going and had passed Isea before Fort Denison was abeam, and afterwards ran into third position. Midway to Bradley's a slight luffing match occurred between Archina and Thelma, and the latter passed the yawl to windward. Immediately afterwards Archina's



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topmast came down with a crash, having carried away a couple of feet from the cap. The wreckage was not cleared until abreast of George's Head, and as the loss of the topmast prevented her from twisting most of her extra canvas, a chance of a win was spoilt. Before reaching Bradley's, Thelma passed Bronzewing and took the lead. The order rounding Bradley's was Thelma, Archina, Bronzewing, Assegai, Lahloo, and Isea. Sheets were now eased for the run to Manly, and Thelma commenced to open out from the others. Assegai and Lahloo both attempted to set spinnakers square, but the breeze did not seem far enough aft, and in one of several spiteful squalls that were here experienced the former's spinnaker boom went up the mast, and the sail was ripped through the centre and had to be bestowed. Lahloo also had trouble with her spinnaker, until her skipper wisely had the sail taken in and reset on the bumpkin end. With their lee rails at times submerged, the yachts were now making great pace for Manly. Isea was not long in catching Lahloo, and off Chowder she also passed Assegai to leeward. The Bronzewing could not, of course, hold her own with her larger rivals off the wind, Isea depriving her of third position off Obelisk Bay, and Assegai also passing her when abreast of Middle Head. In the meantime, Thelma was bowling along ahead of Archina, which, in her crippled condition, was doing very well indeed. Before reaching the buoy, everything was made snug for the work back to Shark Island, all, except Thelma, lowering their topsails, and Isea also housed her topmast. At the Manly buoy they were timed Thelma, 2h. 33min. 35sec.; Archina, 2h. 42min. 26sec.; Isea, 2h. 44min. 43sec.; Assegai, 2h. 45m. 40sec.; Bronzewing, 2h. 45min. 55sec.; Lahloo, 2h. 46min. 45sec.

Sheets were now flattened for the work back, and the whole fleet stood across to the baths before coming round on the port tack. Bronzewing, however, did not carry on so far as the others, and went in stays at the same time as the Assegai, although about 50yds. to leeward. On this tack Thelma, Isea, Bronzewing, and Assegai fetched Dobroyd and stood across again to Quarantine, the three latter going much further inshore than the leader. Bronzewing was holding a much better wind than Assegai, which appeared to be very sluggish, and Archina was sailing very well on the wind and cleared Dobroyd, standing right across Middle Harbour before she made a short tack to clear the head. From Middle Head Thelma made for the eastern shore and lay well up in midstream before putting about again for the buoy at Shark Island. Bronzewing was now fast out-sailing Assegai. The latter and Isea being unable to clear Georges Head went in stays and followed Archina over to the eastern shore, from whence they sailed a somewhat similar course to Thelma. The Bronzewing in the meantime lay well along the western shore, clearing George's Head and Chowder Point, and she was half-way across Taylor Bay before throwing round. The leader cut it rather fine and was obliged to luff round the buoy, and Bronzewing easily crossed Isea when making for this mark, both Isea and Assegai having to make a short tack to clear. Lahloo was now a long way astern. At the buoy they were timed: — Thelma, 3h. 24min. 2sec.; Archina, 3h. 32min. 1sec.; Bronzewing, 3h. 37min.; Isea, 3h. 41min. 4sec.; Assegai, 3h. 45min.; Lahloo, 3h. 52min. On squaring away Thelma smartly set jibtopsail and balloon foresail and continued to draw away from the others. Archina now felt the loss of her topmast. As the breeze fell very light for some time, Isea sent her topmast on end, and added a topsail, and balloon foresails were carried by each yacht. Isea gained on Bronzewing, and the positions of the others remained unaltered. The times at the jibe at Fort Denison were: — Thelma, 3h. 33min. 31sec.; Archina, 3h. 48min. 4sec.; Bronzewing, 3h. 53min. 20sec.; Isea, 3h. 55min. 30sec.; Assegai, 4h. 1min. 10sec.; Lahloo, 4h. 7min. 20sec.

The yachts were now able to carry the same canvas on the lead back to the lightship, and Thelma still further improved her position. Isea, with the extra canvas, reduced the gap from Bronzewing, and at the lightship was only about half a minute to the bad, the order rounding being the same. On hauling a wind again for Shark Island, the breeze continued light for some time, and Bronzewing again increased her lead from Isea. The times at Shark Island were — Thelma, 4h. 18min. 5sec.; Archina, 4h. 36min. 15sec.; Bronzewing, 4h. 43min. 20sec.; Isea, 4h. 45min. 40sec.; Assegai, 4h. 52min. 5sec.; and Lahloo, which had carried away her bowsprit, was not timed.

It will be seen the Bronzewing was still 1min. 45sec. inside her time from the scratch boat, which had



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all the others beaten. After clearing the buoy all sail was again crowded on, and Isea again drew upon, but could not catch the little two-and-a-half rater. After Thelma had finished some time, a fierce squall brought the others along at a great rate. The times at the finish were: — Thelma, 4h. 33min. 33sec.; Archina, 4h. 57min. 42sec.; Bronzewing, 5h. 4min. 14sec.; Isea, 5h. 4min. 45sec.; Assegai, 5h. 10min. 56sec.; Lahloo, 5h. 28min. 38sec.

The first prize of £15 therefore goes to the Thelma — which was well sailed by Mr. J. F. Hoare— and the second and third prizes to the Bronzewing and Archina respectively. The two latter yachts were in charge of their respective owners.

The club steamer Leveret followed the race, in charge of Mr. Sid. Wilson (hon. secretary), and despite the unfavourable nature of the weather, she had a very fair number aboard, all of whom were well satisfied with the afternoon's sport. Messrs. O. F. Bauer and F. Woolcott-Waley carried out the duties of starter and timekeeper respectively.

Friday, 15th January, 1897 – The Daily Telegraph

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON.

The monthly meeting of the members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron was held last night, at the club rooms, Post-office-chambers. Rear-commodore W. M. Cameron presided. Messrs. E. L. Samuel and G. A. Mansfield were elected members of the squadron.

The chairman presented the Dunbar Cup to Dr. MacCormick, whose yacht Thelma had won the trophy outright, and in doing so heartily congratulated the winner, and eulogised the performance of the well-known yacht. Dr. MacCormick suitably replied.

Owing to the intercolonial champions' 22ft. race on the 23rd inst., it was decided to postpone that day's yachting fixture until 30th inst. This race is an all yachts event, in which the competitors will be Iduna, Thelma, Oithona, Isea, Iolanthe, Herreshoff, and Bronzewing.

Sydney Sails (1897)

At the annual meeting of the Squadron, in August 1897, Dr MacCormick (Thelma) was appointed Commodore; W. McPherson Cameron (Iduna) vice-commodore; and Alexander Oliver (Antidote) rear-commodore. These three flag officers, all enthusiastic helmsmen of their own sailing yachts—though Antidote was a pleasure cruiser and not a racer—remained in those offices for three years, until the close of the century.

Wednesday, 8th September, 1897 – The Daily Telegraph

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON.

The monthly meeting of members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron was held at the clubrooms, Post-office Chambers, on Monday night. Dr. A. MacCormick, the newly elected commodore of the squadron, occupied the chair, and there was a representative attendance of members. Messrs. Hugh Pollock and J. Lindley were elected members, and seven nominations were received for membership. The commodore presented the squadron with a cheque for £50 for a race to replace the Dunbar Challenge Cup event, which had been finally won last season by Thelma, the conditions of which will be arranged by the committee.

The hon. secretary (Mr. S. T. Wilson) reports that some good racing may be expected this season under the Royal's flag. Especially should this be the case between Mr. W. M. Marks' recent purchase, Isea, and Mr. F. Woolcott-Waley's Actaea (late Sao), which is to make her re-appearance as an up-to-date racer.

Sydney Sails (1897)

At the Squadron's "opening of the season" evolutions in October 1897 fourteen sailing yachts turned out in two divisions. The port division was led by the commodore in Thelma, and the starboard division (in the absence of Iduna) by Rear-Commodore Oliver in Antidote. The other yachts



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participating included some elderly vessels with new owners, and some new yachts. They were: Electra (Carleton Kelly), Archina (N. M. Cohen), Oithona (Dr Mackellar), Meteor (Dr Williamson), Isea (W. M. Marks), Herreschoff (James Cox), Mabel (C. E. Newman), Akarana (J. S. Abrahams), Lahloo (W. H. Murrell), Bronzewing (H. M. Cockshott), Freda (E. Hungerford) and Louelle (A. Blix). This was by no means the Squadron's full strength, since, apart from steam yachts—which were standing by only as observers—there were always some sailing yachtsmen who did not like flag-signal manoeuvres. However, the occasion drew an eloquent comment from J. R. Fairfax's Sydney Morning Herald.

The newspaper stated that the manoeuvres organized by Dr MacCormick had enabled the spectators to realize in some measure the fascination of the pastime, and added, somewhat grandiloquently, "It not only suggests to the reflective mind the supremacy of England on the sea, but to some extent records evidence of the why and wherefore of that greatness. If one looks at the way in which yachts are handled, even in these waters, one soon realises that many forces are at work which tend to the growth of patriotism, the development of physique, the stimulating of judgment and promptitude in emergency—four of the main factors which have contributed so largely to the British nation's becoming the power on the seas."

Wednesday, 9th February, 1898 – The Referee

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON.

GASCOIGNE CUP. IDUNA A WINNER.

Thelma Ashore

(By 'WEATHER-EYE.')

On Saturday there were the usual number of races down for decision, but, unlike the previous Saturday, there was so little wind on hand that late starts and late finishes were the order of the day. Had it not been for the friendly breath of a southerly breeze coming just in the nick of time many of the events would probably not have finished until late in the evening if they finished at all.

The race most effected by the weather conditions was that of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, which had no less an item down on its card than that of the annual contest for the Gascoigne Cup. But, as matters turned out, the Royals would no doubt have gladly put off the little jaunt outside could they have foretold what kind of a day it was going to be.

This event always provides an ocean race, and as ocean racing of late years has been insufficient—by far too insufficient—Saturday's race had been looked forward to with no small amount of interest in yachting circles. Although to most sailing men here the history of the Gascoigne Cup and the conditions under which it is raced for, are as well-known as Fort Denison is, it might be as well to recapitulate them for the benefit of the uninitiated.

Some ten years ago this cup, valued at £50, was presented to the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron by Colonel Gascoigne on the understanding that it would have to be won three times in succession by the same yacht before it could be permanently held by a yacht owner, and should be sailed for by amateur crews with the exception of the yacht's regular working hands. Unlike the Dunbar Cup (a trophy which was competed for under similar conditions as those attached to this cup, and won finally by Thelma last year) this, cup, although raced for annually since its presentation, has not, so far been won twice in succession.

Saturday's race was not only robbed of its interest through the reasons already stated, but also on account of the early retirement of Dr. MacCormick's Thelma. Just when close to South Reef Thelma ran aground, and, although her crew quickly got her off into deep water again, she had lost so much ground through the occurrence and in having to re-set her top sail that her skipper evidently thought it wiser after going some little distance to throw up the sponge.

The yachts entered, together with their respective handicaps, were: Iduna (Mr. W. M. Cameron), rating 22, scratch; Thelma (Dr. A. MacCormick), rating 15, 5min; Electra (Mr. Carleton Kelly), rating 16.5, 29min; Actaea (Mr. F. Woolcott-Waley), rating 8, 40min; and Herreshoff (Mr. James Cox),



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rating 5.5, 43min.

The prescribed course was from a line between starter's and H.M.S. Royal Arthur's buoy, round buoy off Long Reef, round Shark Island, round Fort Denison, thence round Shark Island a second time, and to a finish between Fort Denison and a boat moored off southern end. Owing, however, to the lateness of the hour in returning to port the race was stopped at Fort Denison the first time up.

With the exception of Herreshoff and Iduna, all got away fairly well to their respective flags. There was just a little air from the westward, and consequently all carried jack yarders, and spinnakers were at once requisitioned for the run down to Bradley's Head. From here the wind came in patches almost from the opposite quarter, about E.N.E. By slow degrees they worked down the Harbour, but in hugging the weather shore too closely Thelma threw away her chance by, as I have already said, striking bottom. At the time of the mishap Iduna, notwithstanding a late start of close on 2min, had pulled up on the 15-rater in remarkable fashion, but unfortunately just when matters were beginning to wax warm Thelma was knocked out of it.

In passing the club steamer later on Mr. Cameron expressed regret at not having his old opponent to battle with, and for a time, while the light air lasted, Iduna looked from the way she was sailing as if she would soon have nothing to contend against. However, shortly after opening up Blue Fish all lay more or less becalmed, with the exception of Herreshoff, which had made a long board out to sea and picked up a light wind from the N.E. This helped her to draw well ahead of the others until just before 6 o'clock, when her opponents brought the southerly wind up with them. Iduna, Electra, and Actaea were all three well together when the wind sprang up.

The two former immediately set spinnakers, but with the wind freshening those were taken in and topsails were stowed, Actaea running in under Manly to reef. Mr. Waley, seeing nothing in a hopeless chase round the course, retired and joined the others on the beat back. The times rounding the Flagboat off Long Reef were as follows: - Herreshoff 6h 9m 12s, Iduna 6h 17m 11s, and Electra 6h 21m 35s.

After hauling a wind Electra housed her top mast, but neither of the others troubled about theirs. All made a long stretch out to sea, Iduna fast gaining on the limit boat, while Electra under her snug rig did likewise. After throwing round they fetched South Reef, and the wind having veered slightly to the eastward, it was only a close haul to Shark Island.

On entering the Harbour, Iduna had a good big lead from Electra, while Herreshoff was about 5min behind the latter. At this point Herreshoff retired and sailed in company with Actaea as far as Bradley's. The times at Shark Island were: — Iduna 7h 38m, and Electra 7h 47m. It was an easy reach to the Fort, where the finishing times were: — Iduna 7h 51m, Electra 8h 1m.

The prizes of £10 and £5 added by the Squadron therefore go to Iduna and Electra respectively.

During the race the southerly attained a velocity of 26 miles an hour. The absence of Jess and Isea in the race was much to be regretted, although their respective owners might fancy they were well out of it as things turned out.

Saturday, 14th May, 1898 – The Sydney Morning Herald

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON.

The season of 1897 and 1898 was closed last evening by the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron with a "mess dinner" at Baumann's Cafe, at which the commodore, Dr. A. MacCormick, presided. About 50 gentlemen sat down to dinner, amongst them being Mr. W. M. Cameron, vice commodore; Mr. W. Mort, Mr. A. G. Milson, Mr. H. M. Cockshott, Mr. Kelly, Mr. W. M. Marks, Mr. W. J. Murrell, Dr. Eames, R.N., Mr. Walter Reeks, Mr. F. S. Adams, and the hon. secretary, Mr. S. T. Milson.

After dinner an adjournment was made to the music hall, where a couple of hours were pleasantly spent, Mr. J. E. Sykes accompanying. During an interval the prizes won during the latter portion of the season were presented by the chairman, the principal winner being Iduna, then came Thelma, Isea, Electra, and Bronzewing. The Iduna, owned by Mr. W. M. Cameron, holds the Gascoigne Cup and also the Commodore's Cup for the present season, or until beaten, and also another prize. The



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Commodore's trophy is in lieu of the Dunbar Cup, which, after many hard races was won by the Thelma.

To keep up the interest in outside racing Dr. A. MacCormick has secured a very handsome cup, to be sailed for annually over the Cape Banks course. The conditions, however, are not so severe as in the Dunbar Cup, which had to be won three times in succession, and was limited to yachts under 15 tons. Dr. MacCormick has been more liberal with regard to his prize which on being won three times by the same yacht - not necessarily in succession - shall become the property of the owner of that craft. So far it has only been raced for on one occasion, viz., this season, and after a splendid contest was won by the Iduna, sailed by her owner, the commodore's craft Thelma being second.

Several appropriate toasts were proposed during the evening, and the squadron parted company shortly after 10 o'clock. The Commodore's Cup came from Messrs. Flavelle and Roberts, and was greatly admired as a work of art.

The yachts of the squadron will assemble today at 3 o'clock in Farm Cove when probably a few evolutions will be carried out under the direction of the commodore.

Saturday, 29th April, 1899 – The Daily Telegraph

ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER TO THE COMMODORE.

In order to fittingly celebrate the close of the yachting season, the members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron entertained their commodore (Dr. A. MacCormick) at dinner at Pfahlert's Hotel last evening. Mr. W. M. Cameron (vice-commodore of the squadron) occupied the chair, having on his right the guest of the evening, and amongst those present were Mr. T. H. Kelly (commodore of the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club), Alex. Oliver (rear-commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron), F. J. Jackson, H. M. Cockshott, Otto Bauer, Alfred G. Milson, Dr. Scheidel, Dr. Elliott, Dr. Eames (R.N.) Mr. W. M. Marks (rear-commodore Prince Alfred Yacht Club), Mr. A. J. Soutar, Mr. F. J. Waley, Mr. Walter Reeks, Mr. T. W. Bremner, Mr. S. Hordern, jun., and Mr. S. T. Wilson (hon. secretary of the squadron).

The banquet-hall was appropriately decorated with flags and there were conspicuously displayed some handsome trophies, including the squadron's intercolonial challenge cup held by Mr. Milson, and won some years ago by the famous Era; the handsome squadron challenge cup, presented for competition by Dr. MacCormick, and at present held by the donor himself, by virtue of the Thelma's victory last season; and the Gascoigne cup, presented to the squadron by Colonel Gascoigne, and held for the next twelve months by Mr. James Cox, as a result of Herreshoff's victory last season.

A sumptuous dinner had been provided by Mr. J. Lichtscheindl, to which was done full justice, to the strains of Truda Brother's Band.

The Chairman having proposed "The Queen" and "The Lieutenant-Governor," called upon Mr. Alex. Oliver to give "Our Patrons." The patrons of the club are his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Admiral Pearson. The former, Mr. Oliver described as an enthusiastic yachtsman, and in apology of the Admiral, mentioned that at present the ship he commanded was altogether too large to try conclusions with the commodore's Thelma, or with the local 8ft. dingy so well handled by her lady skipper. (Laughter.)

The Chairman next gave the toast of the evening, "The Commodore of the Royals." Dr. MacCormick, he stated, had first joined the Royals in 1893. In the following year he had been elected rear-commodore, he was vice-commodore in the seasons 1896-7, and during the past two years he had held office as the club's senior officer. A better commodore the members never wish to have. (Cheers.) Yachting and boat-sailing had made great strides in Port Jackson during the past two or three years, and to his mind there could be nothing more beautiful than a Saturday afternoon on the water, when racing was in full swing. ("Hear hear.") The speaker referred to what their guest had done for yachting, and thereupon called upon Mr. Oliver to support the toast. The rear-commodore did so in a few jocular remarks, and gently touched on their joint experiences in Salamander Day. The toast



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was drunk with musical honours, and cheers for the commodore.

Dr. MacCormick, in reply, thanked those present for the enthusiastic manner in which they had received the toast. He was only a young yachtsman, having been only six years connected with the sport. He predicted that in a few years a great change would come over the sport in local waters. The present unwieldy open boats, he thought, would sooner or later give way to the more wholesome lineal-rating craft under the English rule and the larger type of deep-keelers would go out of vogue in favour of much smaller craft, say, of the 30-footer class, which would be more easily handled and more inexpensively raced in the clubs. He again thanked those present for the manner in which they had responded to the toast. (Cheers.)

The health of the vice-commodore was also drunk, and Mr. Cameron suitably responded.

Mr. A. G. Milson mentioned that that evening was presumed to be the anniversary of the landing of Captain Cook at Botany, and, by a strange coincidence, it was also the birthday of Mr. John M'Donald, a very old yachtsman, who was present that evening. In response to the invitation of those present, Mr. M'Donald made a few remarks appropriate to the occasion. A musical programme concluded the evening's entertainment.

Sydney Sails (1900)

In August 1900 Dr MacCormick stood down from the office of commodore which he had held for three years. He had enlisted as a surgeon for the war in South Africa.

Wednesday, 14th August, 1912 – Referee

SAILING.

(By 'WEATHER-EYE'.)

Dr. MacCormick, the well-known Sydney surgeon, has placed on order with Messrs. Morrison and Sinclair, the Balmain ship and boat builders, for a large cruising yacht, designed by Fife, of Fairleigh, which is to cost, in round figures, something like £4000. The doctor at one time, it will be remembered, owned Thelma, the deep-keeler. which last season held her own in a remarkable manner with the modern raters.

The new yacht, which, it is expected, will be in commission at the end of the year, is to be cutter rigged. She will be 58ft overall, with a water-line of 44ft 8in, 13ft beam, and a draught of 8ft 2in. She will be of the auxiliary type and carry a powerful oil engine. Her fittings are to be of the best and latest design, her planking and decks of teak, and her cabin accommodation ample and up-to-date. Her sails and gear are to be imported from the Old Country. Dr. MacCormick has been a yachting enthusiast for many years and was Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron from 1897 till 1900.

Tuesday, 10th September, 1912 – The Daily Telegraph

PERSONAL.

At last night's meeting of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, Dr. MacCormick was elected commodore, in succession to Sir Jas. R. Fairfax, whose resignation, after continuous office since 1904, was announced at the previous meeting.

The present commodore was the senior flag officer of the squadron from 1897 to 1900 and filled the Vice-commodore's chair from 1895 to 1897. Three of the original members of the squadron, viz., Mr. H. C. Dangar, M.L.C., and Messrs. F. J. Jackson and Chas. Parbury, were last night made life members of the squadron, and a similar honour was conferred on Mr. Alfred Milson, and the retiring commodore, Sir James R. Fairfax.

Sydney Sails (1912)

Sir James Fairfax's successor as commodore was Dr Alexander MacCormick, who had held that office previously for three years, 1897-1900, when he had been the owner of Thelma. After returning to Sydney from service in the South African War, Dr MacCormick had built up an extensive hospital



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and private practice as a surgeon. Soon after his reappointment as commodore, at the age of fifty-six, he was knighted (in 1913). His new yacht, Morna, named after his daughter, was used by him for cruising, and as the Squadron's flagship, and was not fitted for racing until many years later. Morna was built by Morrison and Sinclair of Long Nose Point. She was 65 ft L.O.A., 45 ft L.W.L., 15 ft 3 in. beam, 9 ft draught, and 23.6 registered tons, and was the largest yacht at that time on the Squadron's register.



Saturday, 7th June, 1913 – Saturday Referee and the Arrow

A MODERN CRUISER.

A FINE CRAFT AND HER OWNER, SIR ALEXANDER MACCORMICK.

(By 'TOM CRINGLE'.)

Among the latest recipients of birthday honours is Alexander MacCormick, M.D., M.R.C.S. Sir Alexander MacCormick is a celebrity in the medical world. And in the sporting world he is probably best known as an ardent supporter of yachting, being Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and formerly owner of the ill-fated Thelma.

That the worthy doctor's sailing interest is not on the wane is evidenced by a fine example of marine architecture now approaching completion to his order at Messrs. T. F. Morrison and Sinclair's yards, Balmain. This excellent type of modern cruiser is from the board of Fife, of Fairlie, well known the world over as a designer of small craft. Her dimensions are: Length, between perpendiculars, 55ft 6in; l.w.l., 41ft 8in; beam extreme, 13ft; draft, 8ft 2in. Lead moulded on keel, 13 tons. The framing is of ti-tree and spotted gum and planking and deck of Indian teak. All spars, with the exception of mainmast, are hollow. The mast is of Oregon; all deck fittings are also of teak. The interior fittings of this beautiful vessel are of Queensland maple. The saloon is amidships and provided with sleeping accommodation. The forecabin, situated forward of the saloon, provides accommodation for the crew, and is fitted with the necessary cooking apparatus. On the after side of the saloon is the ladies' cabin, with a well-fitted lavatory adjoining. Aft of this is an insulated engine room, in which a 14-16 h.p.



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Kelvin motor is to be installed, fitted with a unique propeller which shuts up fanlike when not required, and presents a minimum of resistance when the yacht is under weigh. It is estimated that it will develop a speed of about 15 knots. Ample room for stowing sails is allowed on each side of the cockpit. A device is fitted to the heel of the jib boom which allows of its being brought in-board when it is necessary to reduce sail. The sails are to be made locally.

The vessel is now planked up and deck-laying has been completed. An inspection of the hull shows a vessel of graceful appearance, with plenty of power and weatherly withal, there being sufficient sheer to give a most speedy and yacht-like appearance. The manner in which the work is being carried on is a tribute to local enterprise; and though it may be necessary to go abroad for a designer, we are still able to boast of having the necessary craftsmen among us to carry out the designer's ideas.

The name Morna has been chosen for the new craft, and it is expected that she will be ready to take the water late in July. The members of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron are to be congratulated on having such a splendid addition to their fleet, and one also that will be worthy to carry their burgee.

Friday, 26th March, 1915 – The Daily Telegraph

Yachtsmen on Service.

The commodores of the two principal yachting bodies of Sydney are now in the service of the Empire. Sir Alexander MacCormick, commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, is with the Australian voluntary field hospital in France, and Mr. Walter M. Marks, commodore of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club is lieutenant-commander (R.N.V.R.) of H.M.M.B, May Queen, in the North Sea.

Sydney Sails (1915)

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.

Monday, 30th July, 1917 – The Sun (Sydney)

MEN AND WOMEN

Personal Paragraphs

Sir Alexander MacCormick, the well-known Sydney surgeon, will reach his 61st year tomorrow. He was born at Argyllshire, Scotland, in 1856. As far back as 1830 he graduated in medicine at the Edinburgh University, and for some time he was Demonstrator of Physiology there. Three years later he arrived in Australia, and subsequently was lecturer on surgery at the Sydney University. During the South African war Sir Alexander MacCormick was consulting surgeon with the British Army, with the honorary rank of major, and was specially mentioned in despatches. Prior to the war he took a keen interest in yachting and was commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron. In 1905 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, and in 1913 received the honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, England. He is the author of several important medical publications.

Sydney Sails (1920)

Commodore Sir Alexander MacCormick returned to Australia in 1920, with high distinctions for his military service. In August 1920 he retired from the office of commodore. This unexpected development was due to his decision to take a leading part in the formation of a new yacht club at Sydney, the Royal Prince Edward, so named in honour of its patron, Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) who visited Australia in 1920. Sir Alexander MacCormick became the first commodore of the Royal Prince Edward Yacht Club, which established its clubhouse at Point Piper, on the southern side of the harbour. In 1931 it was granted an Admiralty warrant.



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Monday, 27th October, 1947 – Sydney Morning Herald

World-famous Surgeon,

Sir Alexander MacCormick, Dies At 91

Sir Alexander MacCormick, a giant figure in Australian surgery for more than half a century and a notable yachtsman, died at his home in Jersey, Channel Islands, last Saturday. He was 91 on July 31.

"Sir Alexander was the most outstanding operating surgeon, I ever saw," said Dr. H. R. G. Poate, past president of the Australasian College of Surgeons, last night. "His intimate knowledge of anatomy was allied with an extraordinary gift in diagnosis. He was at home in operations in any part of the body. Men who specialise in one particular operation may have become more skilled in it than MacCormick, but I never saw another surgeon so diversely skilled. "He had a dominating influence on surgery which extended beyond New South Wales to other States. "A distinguished contemporary said of him that he had the sixth sense that animals possess to such a high degree."

WORK IN SYDNEY

Born in Argyllshire, Sir Alexander MacCormick graduated in Medicine at Edinburgh. He came to Australia and was appointed demonstrator of anatomy and physiology at the University of Sydney. He was lecturer in surgery from 1890 until 1914, a position which would correspond with the present professorship. He held many honorary hospital appointments.

He rapidly built up a distinguished reputation for surgical skill, and the high standard of Australian surgery was largely due to his influence, which continued until his retirement about 1931.

Dr. Douglas Miller, who knew him well, said last night: "Up to the time of Sir Alexander's retirement from practice he was the unchallenged leader of the profession. "He travelled regularly, kept abreast of all developments in surgery, kept his mind fresh and young. "He never followed in the wake of his own reputation." ' Men who studied under him have said that from the point of view of the student Sir Alexander was not a good teacher, because he was so rapid and advanced in his work that he left everyone else plodding miles behind. He would take great pains, however, with anyone who had a grasp of his subject. Senior surgeons from other States would come to Sydney' to watch him work and to learn from him. He was a man of tremendous physical energy. He would travel to a case in the country, be up all night, and on his return to the city go straight to hospital and begin operating. "He exhausted everybody else," said one doctor who had worked with him, and who described him as "one of the greatest surgeons Australia has been blessed with."

Sir Alexander played a foremost part in the introduction in Australia of the Listerian method of antiseptics, which led to the aseptic method which made possible the development of modern surgery. Those who knew him well say that though he made a large fortune from his tremendous practice he never charged a fee which a patient could not afford. He had a big free list; both for his private hospital and as a surgeon.

LOVE OF THE SEA

He had a deep love of the sea. Always a keen yachtsman, he was at different times commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and the Royal Prince Edward Yacht Squadron. His most notable yachting exploit was to sail his 58-ton schooner Ada from England to Australia via Panama, at the age of 71. Morna, now owned by Mr. Claude Plowman, was originally owned by Sir Alexander, for whom she was built by William Fife, of Fairlie, who also built Ada. In the South African War, Sir



SIR ALEX. MacCORMICK



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Alexander served as a consulting surgeon with the British Army, was mentioned in despatches, and, was awarded the Queen's Medal with clasps. In 1913 he was made a Knight Bachelor.

He was also mentioned in despatches in the First World War. He served as a surgeon at Lemnos, and later in France, where he was consulting surgeon to the A.I.F.

His eldest son, Alexander Campbell MacCormick was killed in action in 1916, at Loos while serving as a lieutenant in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

GIFT TO CHURCH

In 1926 Sir Alexander presented to the Presbyterian Church his 40 bed hospital. The Terraces, Paddington, which was renamed the Scottish Hospital. It was given as a memorial to Lieutenant MacCormick. In that year Sir Alexander was created a K.C.M.G. Sir Alexander and Lady MacCormick were in London on holiday from their home in Jersey just before the Germans occupied the Channel Islands, so they spent the remainder of the war years in England.

Lady MacCormick, who was Miss Ada Cropper, daughter of the late Charles Cropper, of Louth.

Lincolnshire, survives Sir Alexander. Their second son, Mr. Charles Malcolm Campbell

MacCormick, a consulting electrical engineer, is at present in Jersey. There are two daughters. Mrs. John Martin and Mrs. Colin Anderson.

MacCormick, Sir Alexander (1856–1947)

By Douglas Miller

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Sir Alexander MacCormick (1856-1947), surgeon, was born on 31 July 1856 at North Knapdale, Argyleshire, Scotland, son of Archibald MacCormick, farmer and coastal trader, and his wife Mary, née Campbell. He was educated at Lochgilphead School and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh (M.B., Ch.M., 1880) with (Sir) Thomas Anderson Stuart, Robert Scott Skirving and (Sir) Arthur Conan Doyle. He spent a year at Liverpool, England, as house surgeon to E. R. Bickersteth, one of the first surgeons to adopt Lister's methods.

When Anderson Stuart came to Sydney to found the medical school at the university in 1883, MacCormick joined him in July as demonstrator in anatomy and physiology. In 1885 he was awarded an M.D. and gold medal by the University of Edinburgh for his thesis on the musculature of the native cat. That year he was appointed an honorary assistant surgeon at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and in 1890 senior surgeon and lecturer at the university in the principles and practice of surgery. His skills as a surgeon and outstanding diagnostician, as well as his introduction of Listerian antiseptic methods, led to rapid success and wide recognition. Reputedly the first man in Sydney to wear a white coat while operating, he was dubbed by his colleagues 'The Hokey Pokey Man'. Taciturn by nature, he did not enjoy lecturing and was not good at it but taught by example and was always ready to answer questions. Physically very strong and apparently tireless, he worked through long lists.

At All Saints Church, Woollahra, MacCormick married Ada Fanny Hare, sister of C. W. Cropper, on 26 February 1895. He served in the South African War as an honorary major with the New South Wales Medical Corps from January 1900 and was mentioned in despatches in September 1901. He was president of the New South Wales branch of the British Medical Association in 1905, and between 1884 and 1915 published over thirty articles in the *Australasian Medical Gazette* and other journals. He was elected an honorary fellow of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons, England, in 1900 and Edinburgh in 1905, and was knighted in 1913. That year he retired from Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and was appointed honorary surgeon to St Vincent's Hospital, which he remained until 1931.

On the outbreak of war in 1914 MacCormick went to England and joined the British Expeditionary Force in November. As a colonel and consulting surgeon he served in France at the Boulogne base. He took with him a supply of Thomas knee splints and in vain urged their use by field ambulances. Also commissioned in the Australian Army Medical Corps, he was sent to Lemnos where he was



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'unable to do any operating at all'. Frustrated, he returned to Sydney in February 1916 but after the death in action in October of his eldest son he rejoined the A.I.F. in May 1917: in France his talents were again largely wasted. Back in Sydney in February 1918, he had become a consultant at Prince Henry Hospital and the Military Hospital, Randwick.

From 1903 MacCormick had owned a private hospital, The Terraces, at Paddington; he also built a seven-storey block of flats and consulting rooms in Macquarie Street and in 1912 a house, Kilmory, on Point Piper, where he lived quietly. He was a director of the Australian Mutual Provident Society in 1919-31 and the Bank of New South Wales in 1930-31, president of the Central District Ambulance Committee and an executive-member of the Navy League. In 1926 he gave The Terraces with an endowment of £25,000 to the Presbyterian Church in memory of his son; it became known as the Scottish Hospital. He was appointed K.C.M.G. that year and in 1927 was a foundation vice-president of the College of Surgeons of Australasia.

Sailing was MacCormick's great pleasure. He bought the yacht, *Thelma*, and successfully raced her in the 1890s. Joining the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron in 1893, he was commodore in 1897-1900 and in 1913-20. In 1913 he had built a cutter, *Morna*, for cruising. He was a founder and first commodore of the Prince Edward Yacht Club in 1920. In 1927 he visited Scotland to supervise the building of a schooner, *Ada*. With four others he sailed her through the Panama Canal reaching Sydney after a four-month voyage. He was made a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes and became the only yachtsman on Sydney Harbour privileged to fly the white ensign.

Rugged and sunburned, with a bristling moustache, MacCormick had 'a heavy physique without anything soft in it ... large square hands and keen bright blue eyes'. With a Scot's 'canny sense of humour he smiled more with his eyes than his mouth'. He never spared himself in the case of the sick and even in old age would rarely delegate responsibility.

MacCormick retired to the Channel Islands in 1931 and sailed in Scotland in the summers. He dramatically escaped from Jersey in his yacht crammed with refugees only hours before the Nazis arrived. He lived in London for the rest of the war but died at St Brelade, Jersey, on 25 October 1947, survived by his wife, son and two daughters. His portrait by John Longstaff is held by the University of Sydney.