

C L Jones

L. Herbert Beecroft produced artwork for the RSYS from 1908 to 1933 and the earlier paintings are generally more complex and full of Beecroft's impish humour. His painting of Charles Lloyd Jones is one of a number which are undated but my opinion is that it was done in the 1920s because it is rather straightforward, characteristic of the later caricatures.

When one compares the photo of Mr. Lloyd Jones to the painting, one can see he is much younger in the watercolour. He is hoisting a squadron burgee with 2 red dots on it. Whereas nowadays this is the burgee which the Club Captain can fly from his vessel, at the time of the painting, the Club Captain office did not exist, so I assume it indicates Rear Commodore in which office Mr. Lloyd Jones served the Club from 1906 to 1908. The caption at the bottom says "A Retiring Disposition" and I assume this is a sly reference to Mr. Lloyd Jones' larger-than-life personality. There are many references to him in "**Sydney Sails**", the RSYS Centenary Book so I have used that in this essay to tell his story.



Some Biographical details

At that meeting in 1904, the annual membership fee of the Squadron was raised to four guineas. The additional income not only permitted bigger prizes to be offered for racing, but also enabled improvements to be made to the Squadron's home, and allowed of the employment of a paid secretary in residence.

*The move to "Carabella" had brought, as expected, an increase in the Squadron's membership. Among the new members was one who joined in 1903—**Charles Lloyd Jones**, aged twenty-five years. Born in Sydney, he was the grandson of the founder of David Jones' emporium, which had been established in 1838. Charles Lloyd*

Jones as a young man had spent a few years in England, studying art. While sketching on the Blyth River in Suffolk, he had chartered a small yacht, and had sailed her for two seasons with the aid of one paid hand. He had then bought a North Sea trawler, Five Sisters, and sailed her with the aid of two fishermen, father and son. On returning to Australia early in 1903, he chartered the old deep-keel yacht Meteor, and joined the Squadron. He then, in 1904, bought Actaea (the old-time Sao, renamed), and in course of time was to become the owner and helmsman of far bigger and better yachts, to take his place in the history of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and to be long remembered as one of its members, and eventually, as its commodore.

An exciting event

*In the meantime, **Charles Lloyd Jones** entered a challenge, on behalf of the Squadron, for the Sayonara Cup, with Thelma, which had been refitted and tuned up to racing pitch by her original designer, Walter Reeks, the Squadron's vice-commodore. Thelma sailed from Sydney to Melbourne in January 1909, with her owner on board, and a skilled crew, consisting of Walter Reeks (helmsman), W. J. Creagh, "Sandy" Ross, J. A. Muston, Walter Moore, J. Dawson, and a professional yacht hand. The defender was, as expected, the redoubtable Sayonara herself, W. J. Robb owner. As previously mentioned, Sayonara had a length overall of 58 feet, but a waterline length of only 38 feet, which made her somewhat difficult to classify. She was three feet shorter than Thelma on the waterline, but five feet longer overall. Her sail-area was 2,071 square feet, whereas Thelma's was 2,144 square feet. She was of a few inches lighter draught than Thelma. Both yachts were approximately, but not exactly, of the "12-metre" class, but had been built before that classification was adopted in Australia. By mutual agreement this challenge match was to be sailed "off the mark"—that is, without time allowance, which would have been extremely difficult to compute.*

The match was sailed within the broad waters of Port Phillip, a basin with a landlocked expanse of 720 square miles and a shoreline of 130 miles. It is of almost circular shape with a narrow outlet to the ocean only 1% miles wide at the Heads. Port Phillip is virtually a sunken marsh, resembling the Zuyder Zee of Holland, with no islands, but many sandbanks, channels, and tricky tidal currents. It is of such an expanse that strong winds can heap up running seas within it, though free of ocean swell or other open ocean conditions. This was Sayonara's home ground, but challengers had no complaint to make on that score, since ocean racing outside Port Phillip Heads, in the surge of Bass Strait's waters, and in the proximity of the notorious "Rip", would have provided conditions even more difficult for strangers.

The first race of the match was held on 5th February 1909. Sayonara led to windward and rounded the mark 48 seconds ahead, but on the run to leeward Thelma passed her and crossed the finishing-line to win by 45 seconds.

Next day, on the triangular course of 21 miles, the Victorian champion outsailed the Sydney challenger and had a long lead on rounding the second mark. Though Thelma gained on the home run, Sayonara was the winner by the handsome margin of 9 minutes 57 seconds. One all!

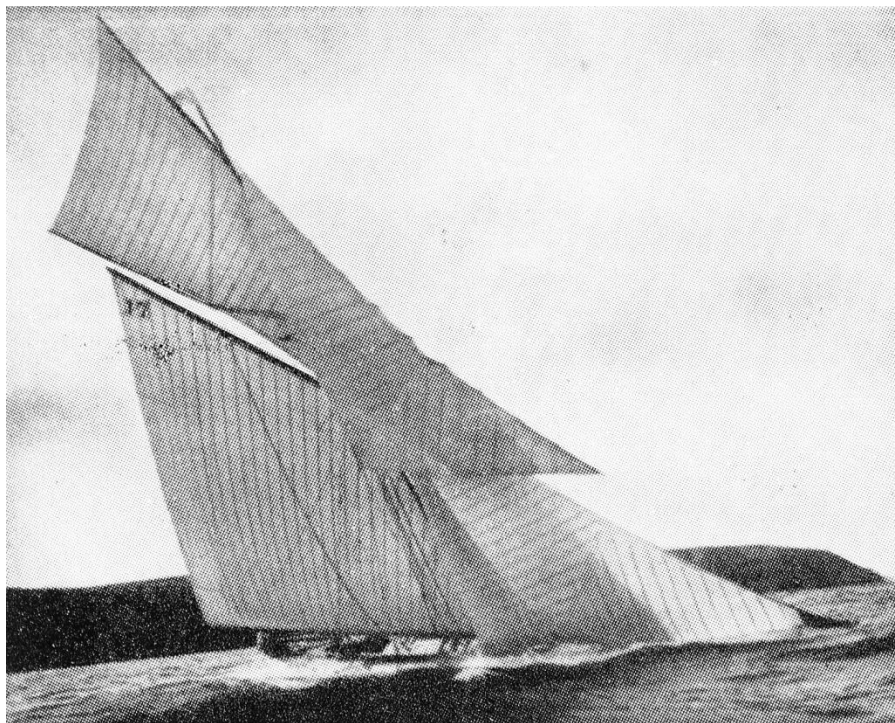
The third and deciding race, with a beat of 5 miles to windward and a run of 5 miles return to leeward, proved intensely exciting. The yachts were together at the rounding-mark, but Thelma lost time when the buoy was not found where her crew expected it to be. Sayonara found it easily, rounded it closely, took the lead, and sailed home the winner by 56 seconds. Charles Lloyd Jones made no excuses or complaints about the placing of the buoy, and, in a spirit of true sportsmanship, regarded the mistake as "one of the chances of the game."

A tragic event

*At the end of the season, **Charles Lloyd Jones** and Paul Ross agreed to sail a private match race between Thelma and Sayonara on a course within the harbour from Neutral Bay, round a buoy at Manly Cove, and return. On the day of the race, 8th March 1913, a south-easterly was blowing at whole gale force of up to 60 mph, with heavy driving rain. Nevertheless the yachtsmen decided to start. Thelma set three jibs and reefed mainsail, but Sayonara, with a whole mainsail, was well in the lead on rounding the mark at Manly.*

Thelma on this day had a crew of nine: Charles Lloyd Jones (owner and helmsman), Walter Moore, Jack Evans, Oscar Meyer, Sandy Ross, C. W. Henty, Ray Diamond, T. Diamond-Colman, and Jack Mulgannon. All were wearing heavy oilskin coats. After rounding the buoy, Thelma began to overtake her rival on the beat to windward. Between the Heads, in the water open from seaward, the seas were heaped up twelve feet from trough to crest.

Walter Moore, the mainsheet hand, was stationed beside Lloyd Jones when suddenly the yacht gave an unexpected lurch and Moore fell overboard. In an instant he was out of sight astern, no doubt hindered from swimming by his oilskin.



Charles Lloyd Jones pulled the tiller hard over, and attempted to jibe all standing. It was a courageous but dangerous manoeuvre in the conditions prevailing, but one demanded by the urgency of the occasion. The rigging carried away under the sudden strain, and, with a crash, the mast went over the side. Thelma lay almost on her beam ends with her sails in the water, with the eight men on hoard clinging precariously to anything they could lay hands on. Moore was nowhere to be seen.

A pilot steamer, s.s. Burranda, in charge of an acting master, sighted the disabled yacht. It was not realized, however, that a man was overboard. The acting master, being at the time short-handed, decided not to attempt immediately to drift a towline to the yacht or to launch a boat. Instead, he

THELMA (Built 1889)

headed at full speed for Watson's Bay pilot station, to embark the master of the Burranda, Captain Sweet, and additional crew for the rescue operations.

Walter Moore was not sighted again. In the meantime, Thelma was drifting helplessly towards the "bombora" (hidden rock-reef) close inshore off Dobroyd Point. The Burranda hove in sight when the yacht was perilously near the cliffs. A lifeboat was launched, manned by three men, with a line aboard from the steamer. The boat ranged alongside Thelma, and the eight men on board the yacht were rescued. A few minutes later the yacht went ashore and broke up, becoming a total wreck.

A search was made for Walter Moore, but his body was never found. He left a widow and big family, but Sydney yachtsmen subscribed generously to a trust fund, which assisted materially in the family's support and in the education of the children. The Squadron officially expressed its appreciation of the skilful seamanship and personal bravery of the captain and crew of the pilot steamer in the rescue operations, and added a monetary reward for the three men who had manned the lifeboat.

In memory of this tragic occurrence, Charles Lloyd Jones presented to the Squadron for annual competition a trophy known as the Thelma Plate.

In 2015, my own yacht "Morag Bheag" won the Thelma Plate awarded to the yacht in Division 2 of the Gascoigne Cup event with the lowest corrected time.

A new yacht

*In that year (1928), **Charles Lloyd Jones** purchased in Melbourne the 80-ft schooner *Bona*, and brought her to Sydney, where she had been built in 1903. She had been sailed at Melbourne as a cruiser, owned until 1915 by C. D. Wallace, and afterwards by Harry Howard Smith, and was then 25 years of age. In later years, Charles Lloyd Jones reminiscently stated, "I watched her being built by Holmes of Lavender Bay, and always loved her. I did not see her for many a long day after that, until, one day, I saw her moored in the Yarra. There she was, just as beautiful and delicate as ever; the passing years had made no ravages on her, and she was as lovely as the day she was launched."*

The final chapter

*At the annual meeting in August 1949 J. M. Hardie retired from the office of commodore. He was (and is) a yachtsman of great experience; in earlier days he had cruised extensively in his numerous yachts; and, in his last love, *Windward II*, raced wherever a race was to be found. In his more active days he would make or could meet, with relish, any challenge that had to do with sailing, proving a tough opponent, a modest winner and a sporting loser. He had filled the Squadron's highest post with distinction and upon his retirement from the office of commodore he was elected to life membership. He was succeeded by **Charles Lloyd Jones**, artist, business man, philanthropist and veteran yachtsman, aged seventy-one, who had joined the Squadron in 1903, and had at various times owned the *Actaea* (the old *Sao*), the ill-fated *Thelma*, and the 80-foot schooner *Bona* (later sold to M. F. Albert and renamed *Boomerang*). Charles Lloyd Jones was knighted soon after his appointment, and remained at the Squadron's helm for the next six years, during which the Squadron made rapid headway under his wise leadership. He was elected a life member in 1953.*

Sir Charles Lloyd Jones, who served as Commodore from 1950 to 1955, died on the 30th July, 1958.

April, 2015