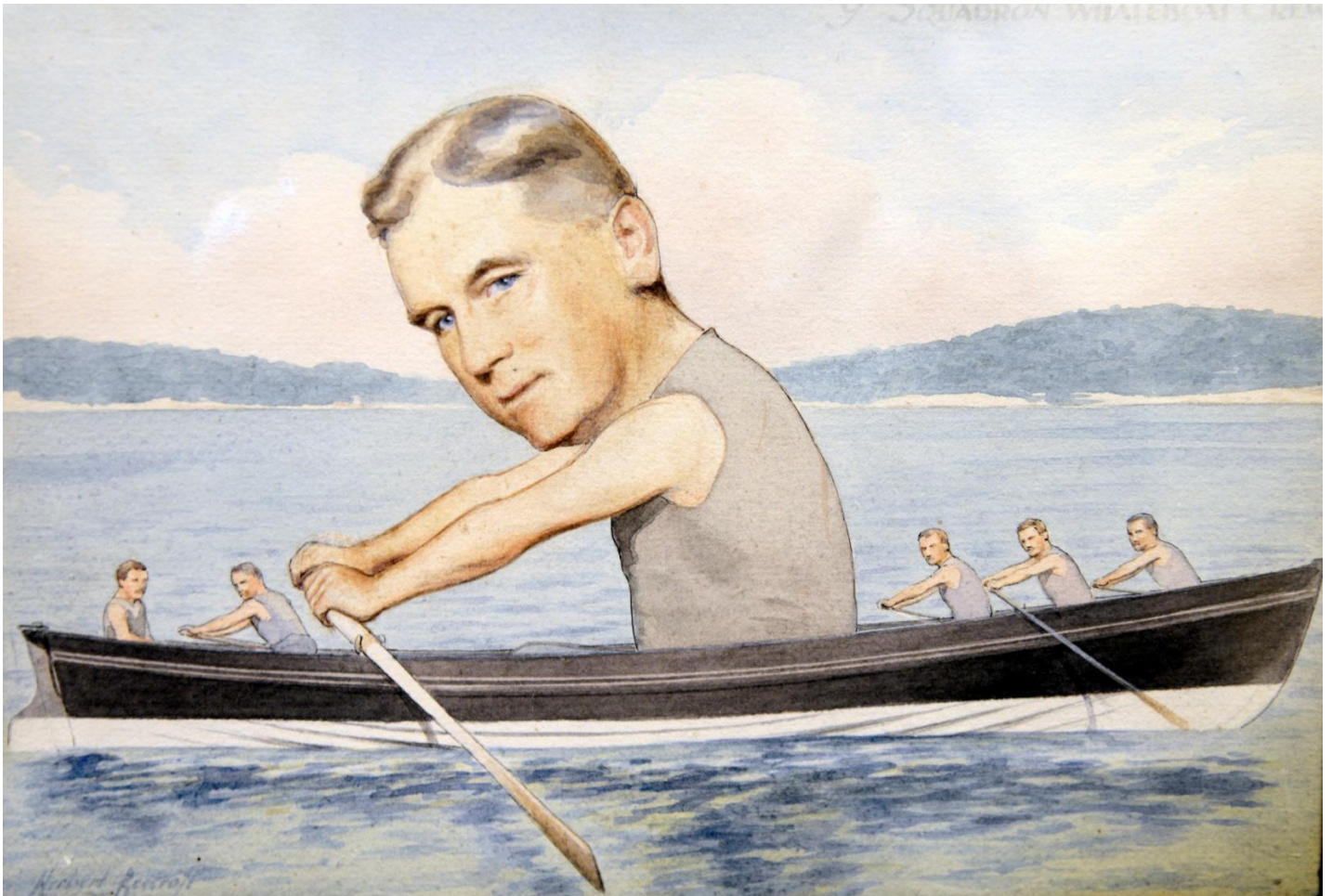


F W Hixson

The caricature of Francis William Hixson by Herbert Beecroft is one of a few which are undated. My guess is that it is one of the last and if so, it would date to about 1930. The title barely visible at the top right hand side says "A Squadron Whale Boat Crew."

The Whale Boats, manned by 6, were an integral part of naval history and I have found evidence of Whale Boat racing in the 1920s on Sydney Harbour. Therefore, I have assumed that Mr. Hixson was a member of an RSYS crew who competed in such an event at this time.



Saturday, 16th August, 1902 – Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser

The Old Naval Brigade.

The B Company of the old Naval Brigade, by the invitation of their late lieutenant, Mr. F. W. Hixson, assembled at his place, Tinteni, Elizabeth Bay, on Saturday and instant. Elaborate preparations made for the comfort of the men, were well appreciated by them. The gathering was in every sense a success, and marked another notch in the stick of favour and popularity of the genial host, Mr. F. W. Hixson. The father of the Brigade, Captain Francis Hixson, its founder, and commander for over 40 years was present, and made the gathering even more successful. A number of toasts were submitted and responded to, the one, 'Our Host,' coupled with the name of Mrs. Hixson, being received with marked enthusiasm by the men, who one and all endorsed the proposer's (Mr. P. O. Kempton) remarks in reference to their late lieutenant. Lieutenant Hixson responded at some length. A photo of the company was then taken, and a programme of songs and recitations, the items of which were rendered by P.O.'s White, Knapton, and A.B.'s Keene, Denis, Goodall, and Troke. Lieutenant F. W. Hixson joined the Naval Brigade in June 1877, as a cadet, and by dint of hard study and

practice attained the position of lieutenant. He was the first Naval Brigade officer to pass the necessary examination to qualify him for the position. He had charge of B Company for a period of 12 years, and during that time proved himself an efficient, energetic, and popular officer. He volunteered for active service in China, but received orders to return from Hong Kong. Lieut. Hixson took a keen interest in every branch of the Brigade, and was instrumental in getting together two boats' crews, who beat all-comers, even the cracks of H.M. Navy. He was an ardent supporter of the rifle Club, and did his utmost in every way to encourage the men in doing their duty. He leaves the Brigade as the result of the late sweeping retrenchment movement, just at a time when officers of his stamp are most needed.

Friday, 12th February, 1904 - Sydney Morning Herald
SHIPWRECK RELIEF AND HUMANE SOCIETY.

*The monthly meeting of the committee of the Royal Shipwreck Relief and Humane Society of New South Wales was held in the Royal Exchange, Pitt and Bridge streets, yesterday afternoon. There were present Mr. J. H. Storey (chairman), Mr. J. Russell French, Mr. A. F. Robinson, Mr. C. J. Henty, Mr. W. S. Buzacott, Mr. J. O. Fairfax, Captain J. Edie, Captain J. M. Banks, Captain G. S. Lindeman, R.N., and the secretary (Captain A. W. Webber). The first business before the committee was the consideration of some cases of relief, and accounts were passed. Many cases of saving life were discussed, but the final decision was deferred until the next meeting in March. It was with regret that the committee received the resignation of one of their number – Captain Francis W. Hixson, R.N. – who had occupied the position since the foundation of the society 20 years ago. Captain Hixson has always taken a great interest in the work, and his efforts have contributed largely to the successful position of the society. It was unanimously resolved to elect **Mr. F. W. Hixson** (son of Captain Hixson) to the vacant seat.*



The next article is one of the most interesting I have unearthed among all the research undertaken to write these essays. In 2015, I can reach to an article written in 1934 which takes recollections back to 1870. We thereby bridge 170 years of marine history in Sydney.

Wednesday, 24th January, 1934 - Sydney Mail

The First Sydney Regatta:

How the Anniversary Day Festival Developed

THE first Anniversary Day Regatta took place in 1837. There had been boat races before that, of course; the proud owner of a smart sailing boat or a man of prowess at the oar will race at any time anywhere. The first Sydney regatta, on the occasion of which 'one of the most numerous and select parties ever assembled in the Colony met at Macquarie Fort,' has been noted in the interesting weekly account in the 'Mail' of what happened here a hundred years ago. The ladies sat down to 'a magnificent luncheon' at 3 o'clock, the gentlemen 'succeeding to the tables' when they had finished, and then they danced a set of quadrilles. That was in 1834. DOES it not bring up a picture of the courtliness of the times a hundred years ago — the times when gentlemen had to stand some distance off from the ladies on account of the width of the crinoline, and could not

sit at lunch with them for the same reason? It would be a gay scene. The ladies surmounted their crinoline dresses with big hats shaped like the old coalscuttle, and decorated with a bright plume, while the gentlemen were likely to be in frock coats of mulberry or French brown, with black stocks wound around the neck — most uncomfortable in January in Sydney—and tight trousers held by straps beneath the boots. Then, too, there would be some military uniforms, and in those days the soldier was a picturesque object indeed. The guests at this 'numerous and select party' danced the quadrille to the music of the band of the 4th Regiment. And it must have been a fine sight. It would be at night, when the regatta was finished, and probably on the grass by the light of numerous lamps and perhaps the moon, when they tripped the stately measure, the ladies in their billowy crinolines, the gentlemen in their mulberry-coloured coats, in which they would no doubt perspire profusely on that night in January a hundred years ago.

IN earlier times the racing on the water generally took the form of matches between the crews of vessels. Judge T'herry, who wrote of Sydney of 1831, when the town contained about 15,000 inhabitants, says the regatta, races, and the cricket match provided the more 'genteel' circles with their enjoyments. Following the Anniversary Regatta of 1837, the newspaper files record that the next one was got up in the following year, but the newspaper men seemed singularly unenthusiastic, and reported, too, that the public were apathetic. In 1839 'the great press of other matter prevented' the 'Sydney Herald' from giving any report of the proceedings. In 1840 rainy weather caused the festival to be postponed until the following day, when it was a success, and the term 'The Anniversary Regatta' appeared to become fixed in that year.

THIS was the first official event of the name, and it continued year after year ever since. Sydney in 1837 was a very small place. The Tank Stream wound its way down across Pitt-street under the bridge at Bridge-street and into the bay which we now know as Circular Quay. There was another small bridge across it near where the 'Herald' and 'Mail' offices stand, where there was also a pump. A post and rail fence of countrified appearance ran along that side of the road down to Bridge-street.

Recollections of the Seventies - JUDGE BACKHOUSE was connected with the Anniversary Day Regatta either as a competitor or spectator since 1869 until recent years, and for a long time was chairman of the executive committee. 'It is really one of the great regattas of the world,' he said in recalling the early years. 'It stands very high indeed, and we are nearing its century. There are older aquatic events. Oxford and Cambridge boat race is older, but it has not been continuous. So far as I know, we are the oldest continuing water festival of the kind held within the Empire. It was with the express wish and consent of the Governor that it was kept going during the war. We asked for no subscriptions from the public at that time. Sir Gerald Strickland was here, and he said that there were instructions that things of that kind should be kept going if possible.

IT is a wonderful sight from the flagship when you look across to Bradley's Head in the afternoon. Dawes Point was a favoured vantage place for the crowds in the early days, and the flagship used to be moored somewhere thereabouts. Later I think they had it in Farm Cove. There were regattas held in the twenties, I believe. Captain Piper used to have races for whale boats with all gear in place exactly as used in whaling. We used to have races on Anniversary Day for the coasting ketches, a boat that has almost disappeared. Some of them I remember were almost yacht-like in their lines—beautiful craft. One named the White Cloud was a beautiful model. There used to be races for 24-foot fishing boats. The 18-footers have taken their place. They were a very useful craft that would come through any weather. We also had 24-foot skiffs, and there were, of course, the yachts. We always had rowing races, in which scullers like Beach and Trickett and those fine oarsmen of the times took part. Q. L. Deloitte and Alfred Milson were two men who were the mainstay of the Anniversary Regatta for many years.

IN the old days the harbour would be filled with square-rigged sailing clippers — beautiful vessels of a thousand tons or thereabouts. Vessels such as the Cutty Sark, the Sophocles and the Thermopylae would be at anchor decorated with bunting. The Anniversary Regatta was the one thing in those times. It had the monopoly of Anniversary Day. No cricket or races. For a time the Balmain regatta became a little more prominent, and I

can remember the sailing ship Macquarie being the flagship. During the war we had a North Shore ferry steamer as flagship.'

COMMANDER F. W. HIXSON remembers the Anniversary Regatta from 1870, when the flagship was moored between Dawes Point and Milson's Point. It was the year in which his father, Captain Hixson, went to live in a stone house that stood on Dawes Point. 'In those days,' said Commander Hixson, 'most of the races for rowing boats were around the two islands — Goat Island and Fort Denison. They had good crews — the Fitzhardinges and the Clarks and men of that caliber. After a while, as the traffic grew heavier, one or two of the regattas were held from Lavender Bay; they had to put the flagship in out of the way. Then later on they went to the north of Kirribilli, where they have been held for a good number of years. I remember the racing for coasters, fishermen, and watermen. The 'Herald' gave a prize, I recollect, of a new skiff for the watermen to race for. We used to wind up with a gig and dinghy race around the flagship. That gave the people lots of fun. It's a wonderful part of our life, this sailing, that people don't realise. Take those races on Saturday. About 450 men are engaged in them, and I should say from 2,000 to 2,500 are sailing on the harbour every Saturday. It all calls for expenditure and enthusiasm, and it means a lot to the business community. Now we have boats coming from other States to race, and, altogether, it is a branch of sport and usefulness that is not fully realised.'

Monday, 17th April, 1944 - Sydney Morning Herald

SAILORS' HOME TOO SMALL

Many Turned Away

Since the war, demands on the Sailors' Home in George Street North have increased so much that accommodation cannot be found for those who seek it, and 30 to 40 seamen a week have to be turned away.

The Sailors' Home is the only home for sailors in New South Wales. At present it holds 100 sailors, but plans have been completed for another wing of 30 rooms. All that delays the building of the wing are the necessary funds.

SECOND OLDEST

In 1863 the Home, now in its 80th year, was built by public subscription. It is the second oldest Sailors' Home in the world, coming next after that at Well Street, London, founded 130 years ago. The original building in George Street North accommodated 50 men, but a wing added in 1926 doubled its capacity. Sailors come to the home when their ships are in port, and they have been paid off. They remain until they sign articles again. Others from hospital live there until repatriated, and there are also survivors from wrecked ships and ships sunk by enemy action. They pay 8/ a week for a room and a shilling a meal. Special quarters, with showers, and a dining-room, are provided for coloured seamen. Last year the home took more than 5,000 guests, and provided for 356 seamen who had exhausted their funds through illness or prolonged unemployment. Also 46 survivors from two ships sunk by enemy action lived there for varying periods. In 1941, 38 survivors of sinkings were received, and, by sinking three ships in 1942, the enemy added a further 74 guests to the home.

AIDING SURVIVORS

When shipwrecked sailors are brought in from the sea by destroyers, Rear-Admiral Muirhead-Gould personally brings them to the home. Those who come from other ports are met at the railway station. With the assistance of the King George's Fund for Sailors, survivors of wrecks are fitted out with clothes, and stay until repatriated to their home ports. Some of the injured stay to be cared for. Among the survivors were Island French, Poles, Yugoslavs, Norwegians, Danes, Indians, and Malays. So many Asiatics have been arriving recently that the shipping companies have rented Harbour Trust property to accommodate the overflow. They have taken three houses opposite to the home to which the men come for hot showers. Mohammedan seamen are especially grateful for this amenity. Many of the Asiatics call the superintendent and his wife "father" and "mother."

*The home is run by Commander R. G. Hart, as superintendent, and an honorary council of six, of which **Commander F. W. Hixson**, son of the late Captain Francis Hixson, one of the founders of the home, is chairman. In the grounds of the home the oldest occupied cottage in Australia, built of natural stone 127 years*

ago, houses six Merchant Navy officers. Frequently they are foreigners, many Norwegians and Danes having lived there. Commander Hart is convinced, from bearings he has taken, that the cottage marks the spot at which Governor Phillip landed.

Wednesday, 26th September, 1951 - Daily Commercial News and Shipping List

DEATH OF COMMANDER F. W. HIXSON, O.B.E.

*It is with regret we report the death of **Commander F. W. Hixson, O.B.E.**, at the age of 89 years, following a short illness. He was a director of the Permanent Trustee Company, the United Insurance Company, the Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Company Ltd., and the Newcastle Wallsend Coal Company. He was a son of the late Captain Francis Hixson, R.N., who was stationed in Sydney in the fifties and afterwards took charge of the Sydney shore establishment of the Navy. Commander Hixson became a commander in the Naval Brigade, which was a volunteer naval reserve raised and commanded by his father. He always took a keen interest in naval affairs. He was honorary secretary of the Naval League, chairman of the Royal shipwreck Relief and Humane Society, chairman of the council of the Sydney Sailors' Home for many years, and a member of the Board of Royal Naval House, being largely instrumental in the success of this body. He was a member of the Council of the Sydney Church of England Grammar School. In 1920 he was made a member of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of his work for the Australian Comforts Fund. Commander Hixson was a brother of Lady Fairfax and the late Mrs. Geoffrey Fairfax. He is survived by his son, Mr. F. D. Hixson.*

August, 2015