



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

**“Read all about it!”**

**The origins and early history of the Squadron – as reported in the Press of the day**

**Part 15:** A Royal visit.

**Saturday, 1st February, 1868 – The Sydney Morning Herald**

**THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH IN NEW SOUTH WALES.**



HM Prince Alfred

The Maritime greatness of the English, and of the sister nationalities of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales all long and happily associated together as a grand, prosperous, and "United Kingdom" - has, for ages past, been a theme of just pride to the whole British race, and either of admiration or of envy to the world at large. In the terrific and sanguinary strife of naval engagements, in the spirited and daring enterprises of international commerce, and in the yet nobler achievements of maritime discovery, it is not too much to say that British Fleets have, for centuries, borne upward and onward a Flag endeared to every man and woman of British origin, as the emblem of progress and of civilization, as the ensign of liberty and of truth, and as the banner of order and of religion. Specks, like the spots on the face of the sun, detected by such as are disposed, perhaps too curiously, to inquire into everything, may, at distant intervals, during a long career of glory, have been observed upon that conspicuous object - the flag that has floated triumphantly for a thousand years - but they have all proved to be but small, shifting, and evanescent, passing away without leaving a single stain behind them upon its broad and luminous expanse. Our naval and mercantile marine is, and ever must be, indissolubly associated with the elevated position gained and occupied by the realm to which



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

we all belong - with the immense development of our many rising colonies, with the freedom of the entire State, and with the welfare of the commonwealth at large. In the mother country, as well as here in the antipodes - where there is "a New Britannia in the Southern World" - even those comparatively indifferent to the historical record of our countless naval victories, and to the glorious catalogue of our maritime discoveries, cannot possibly be uninterested in the maintenance and well-being of our mercantile marine; for to the agency of our ships it must be felt by all that we do most unquestionably owe the colonies and the commerce by which the "British," in the largest and best sense of that word, are so honourably distinguished. And here, too, as in the "United Kingdom" - where we have a free community composed of all creeds, parties, and shades of religious and political opinion, amicably fused or fusing together - we can-not help recalling with pleasure that it was to that frank and kind-hearted old sailor King (who was her Majesty's immediate predecessor and near relative) that we owe so much of the civil and religious liberty which has proved to be an impregnable barrier to the British throne. We cannot forget that the righteous emancipation of some of our fellow-countrymen from restrictions and disabilities, which were either obsolete or unjust, or both, and the judicious extension of the elective franchise to a broader and more comprehensive basis, were all matters owing, in the main, to that monarch, who (like our present Royal guest) was himself, in early life, an officer in the British navy; - there learning habits of cheerful subordination in his youth, which tended to enlarge and ennoble his ideas, and to fit him for his future position - a position, which he never sullied or disgraced. Like King William the Fourth (whose memory all men must now agree to speak of with cordial esteem and respect) the name of his Royal nephew Alfred, who has come to us direct from our beloved Sovereign, his illustrious mother, will ever be recalled with affection as that of our Sailor Prince, and, as such, be justly endeared to us all. Her Most Gracious Majesty, we do not hesitate to say it, never did a more wise or more popular thing than when she placed her brave son on the quarter-deck of one of her vessels, or issued a more judicious or acceptable mandate than when she sent him across the water to visit her loyal subjects in Australia.

That his Royal Highness should have thus been welcome to the younger colonies in this part of the world, as the embodiment of traditional ideas to which we all tenaciously adhere, was, in truth, a matter of course; that they should have feted his Royal Highness with a will, and even have occasionally bored him by the somewhat intrusive liveliness of their courtesies, was no more than might have been anticipated; but that his arrival here should have been long and eagerly expected, and all due preparations have been made to do him honour, was something that could not fail of becoming an accomplished fact.

In this, the mother colony of all the Australias, in which society has, of necessity, been longer constituted than in the rest, a depth of loyal devotion has naturally existed, ready to flow upwards on any such occasion. In the vast and unrivalled harbour of this city (the only real entrepôt of the Western Pacific) in our magnificent steam fleet, and in the unquestioned possession of arsenals and dockyards, such as can only be effectually established by the presence of peculiar local advantages, the chief port of New South Wales seems particularly adapted to be the chief welcome of the Queen's Sailor Son, the Captain of the Galatea; and it must be a matter of pride to old colonists, and to all who are heartily identified with the



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

interests of New South Wales, that we on 21st January brought in our Visitor from the Pacific with a retinue that was both appropriate and worthy of the event. We think we have shown the Prince, in a perfectly unexceptional manner, that he is indeed right welcome amongst us.



HMS Galatea

As a Naval Officer his Royal Highness is understood to have highly appreciated the reception prepared for him in our colonial fleet of sea-going steamers, which in their appointed order formed a grand double line, through which the Galatea passed onward to her destination. The vessels having been so passed, then followed two and two in the wake of the long-expected ship - thus forming a most beautiful, imposing, and unprecedented sight. At a convenient distance from our rugged, rock-bound coast, her Majesty's ship Galatea, with her glorious train and watched by thousands from the adjacent heights, swept onward, in nearly a straight line, until she came abreast of the Old Lighthouse, when, altering her course, but partially at first, she gradually swung round to the south of that bleak and forbidding promontory, which is known as the Outer North Head, and to the south also of the dreary rocks of the Middle Head, and of George's Head, thus gaining an entrance into the waters of Port Jackson. Having reached that "coign of vantage," by making a grand semicircle round the Inner South Head, the Royal ship then swept onwards past the Lightship, past the Second Division of the expectant shipping, past the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron (between Shark Point and Shark Island), past the Prince Alfred Yacht Squadron (between Shark Island and the opposite headland, to the south-westward); and so eventually and gracefully did the whole fleet, with a vast accession of numbers, enter that wide and extensive space of water, reserved for the



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

occasion, between a line from Knife and Fork Point and Kirribilli Point on the north, and between the western extremity of Shark Island and Macquarie Fort on the south. Continuing her course westerly the Galatea at length came proudly to her temporary resting place, taking up her position (as many thousands of good ships have done before her) between Fort Denison and Fort Macquarie - whilst thousands of her Majesty's lieges, both ashore and afloat, testified to the soundness of their lungs and to the excellence of their sentiments by saluting the Royal Duke with enthusiastic cheers.

We subjoin full particulars of the reception of his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, an account which will doubtless be read not only throughout these colonies, but also "at home," with undissembled pleasure. It is not the least cause for satisfaction to think that the preparations for the whole affair were carried into effect with great ability and entire success, though the weather was misty and wet, and that no accident or contretemps of any kind occurred to mar the general joy.

As night closed in, the rain fell in torrents, and this, of course, militated against the marine illumination, which otherwise would have been magnificent; with this great disadvantage, however, the illumination was a sight worth beholding. The fort and batteries were well lit up, the ships at anchor in Neutral Bay and round the Circular Quay were well outlined with lamps, a succession of blue and red lights sending their rays far into the darkness, while rockets darted upwards in dozens.

### Notes:

- The article is pregnant with reference to Britain's Naval history. It was in this context that the RSYS was formed, a proud outpost in the Antipodes and at the time, very conscious of British Naval Traditions. 160 years later, it seems like from another planet.
- I think Knife and Fork Point is Bradley's Head. Maybe someone can clarify this.

Stay tuned for next week when you will learn of an assassination attempt on the Duke.