



## RSYS Cruising Talks

### Additional Information

#### **Flag Etiquette Afloat - John Vaughan OAM (Vexillographer)**

Flag etiquette afloat can be a test of the knowledge, good taste, and competency of the skipper. There are several "dos" and "don'ts" of flag etiquette for those who want to display correctly as different to merely hanging anything off the mast.

An example of breach of etiquette is for a corporate or company vessel to fly the company flag from the stern on the staff, backstay, or gaff. Likewise, flying a foreign flag (wearing false colours) from this position is a serious breach of protocol, and in some countries would result in being arrested.

The correct flag that should be flown from the stern or the gaff on Australian private vessels is the traditional Australian Red Ensign or the Australian National Flag under special circumstances.

Under the Federal Shipping Registration Act, 1981, the Australian Red Ensign was retained as the national colours of Australia's merchant ships. Private pleasure craft were given the option of using this Red Ensign or the Australian National Flag. It is recommended that private craft wear the Red Ensign in home waters but use The Australian National Flag when sailing overseas.

On national holidays and on special occasions it is suggested that private boats can join in the festive spirit and "dress ship". This is done with the international code of signal flags. On such a day the Red Ensign, or National Flag, should be raised on the stern (ensign) staff or peak of the gaff staff. Another can be flown at the masthead. There are 40 international code flags which can be flown on a dressing line from stem to stern. The code flag dressing lines should be kept taut with the flags evenly spaced and, in the pattern, recommended by the Royal Yachting Association.

Although technically not part of the dress ship procedure, other flags such as the owner's house flag, the Greater Sydney Ensign, the Federation flag etc., may be flown from the spreaders or equivalent positions. It is important that ensigns, racing or private flags (such as the boxing kangaroo) should NOT be included in the dressing lines which are for the code flags only. On the dressing lines triangular code flags and pennants should, as far as possible, be spaced between the rectangular flags. Theoretically, all vessels should be dressed alike.

The code flag order, reading from the bow, should be:

E, Q, p3, G, p8, Z, p4, W, p6, P pl, I, Code, T, Y, B, X, 1st, H, 3rd,

D, F, 2nd, U, A, O, M, R, p2, J p0, N, p9, K, P7, V, p5, L, C, S.

Complying with the above order of code flags avoids the display of unfortunate or improper signal messages.

In a single-masted vessel the line from the bow to the masthead can finish with the 3rd substitute and the line from the masthead to the stern carried on from D.



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### Making Colours

Ideally flags should be raised at 0800 and lowered at sunset. The Australian Red Ensign or Australian National Flag is the first and the last flag to be displayed on an Australian vessel. our flag of "Stars and Crosses" is by law custom and tradition, our chief national symbol and should be treated with respect. The colours should always be kept in good condition and not allowed to fray, badly fade or remain dirty.

### Ensign Sizes

In Australia most flags are made in a range of sizes as follows:

For boats under 6 metres in length 600 mm x 300 mm (2ft x 1ft)

For boats 6 to 8 metres in length 900 mm x 450 mm (3ft x 1.5ft)

For boats 9 to 15 metres in length 1300 mm x 650 mm (4.5ft x 2.25ft)

### Dipping the Ensign

An international courtesy salute in acknowledgement of another vessel, a dignitary or opening of the season sail-by. Take the Ensign Staff out of its bracket and hold the staff parallel to the deck over the stern while your salute is acknowledged. Large vessels with a halyard on the Ensign Staff may dip their ensign to half-mast during the salute and afterwards raise the ensign promptly back to the truck.

### Mourning

Lower the ensign until the foot of the flag is halfway down the length of the Ensign Staff during the period of mourning. If the space is insufficient, an alternative is to attach a black ribbon under the truck at the head of the ensign.

### Racing flag

The Racing Flag is to be tied or fitted with Velcro to the backstay in clear view to observers and racing authorities. The Racing Flag is only flown when sailing in authorised racing competition.

### Courtesy flag

Yachts visiting a foreign port should fly the relevant international flag (of the country concerned) on the starboard spreader. To make a good impression the courtesy flag should be in good condition, accurately made and must be no smaller than 600 x 300 mm.



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#### **How to run a halyard to the spreaders without climbing the mast:**

1. Take a short length (approximately 600 mm) of 4mm braided cord and slide a small block (e.g. Ronstan RF 668) on to it.
2. Tie your cord with block in a loop around the port or starboard and or port spreader stay.
3. Estimate the amount of halyard cord required to reach from the deck to the spreader and down again and allow for extra tie off length to rest just over the top of the spreader.
4. Feed the halyard through the sheave of the block and knot the ends of the halyard together.
5. Weight the tied ends of the halyard.
6. Stand forward (bow side of mast) and sling the weighted halyard over the spreader arm towards the stern.
7. Gently pull the loop using the halyard over the spreader, allowing the knotted loop on the block to slide up the stay and lay over the spreader arm.
8. Remove the weight and adjust the halyard length. Tie off halyard at base of the stay on a rigging turnbuckle.

You are now ready to hoist your flag/s and celebrate!

John Vaughan OAM

**Vexillographer**

# Dressing Ship

by John Vaughan

On national holidays and other special occasions, yacht owners are encouraged to join in the festive spirit and "dress" ship with the international code of signal flags.

On days of national significance, the Australian Red Ensign or National Flag is raised on the stern staff and another at the masthead.

The forty international code flags are displayed from stem to stern.

The code flag dressing lines should be kept taught, with flags evenly spaced and placed in an appropriate order such as the pattern recommended by the Royal Yachting Association.

Although technically not part of dress ship procedure, other flags including the owner's house flag and the Greater Sydney Ensign, may be flown from the crossrees or equivalent positions. It is important that ensigns, racing or other private flags, should not be incorporated in the dressing lines which are reserved for the code flags only.

In arranging the flags on the dressing lines, triangular flags and pennants should, as far as possible, be placed between rectangular flags. All vessels should be dressed alike.

In general the order, reading from the bow, should be:

E, Q, p3, G, p8, Z, p4, W, p6, P, p1, I, Code, T, Y, B, X, 1st, H, 3rd, D, F, 2nd, U, A, O, M, R, p2, J, p8, N, p9, K, p7, V, p5, L, C, S.

## Australian Red Ensign

In December, 1908, it was gazetted that the Commonwealth Star be altered from six to seven points to represent the six states and all Australian territories. By 1903 the number of points on the stars of the Southern Cross was standardized to four seven pointed stars and one five pointed star.

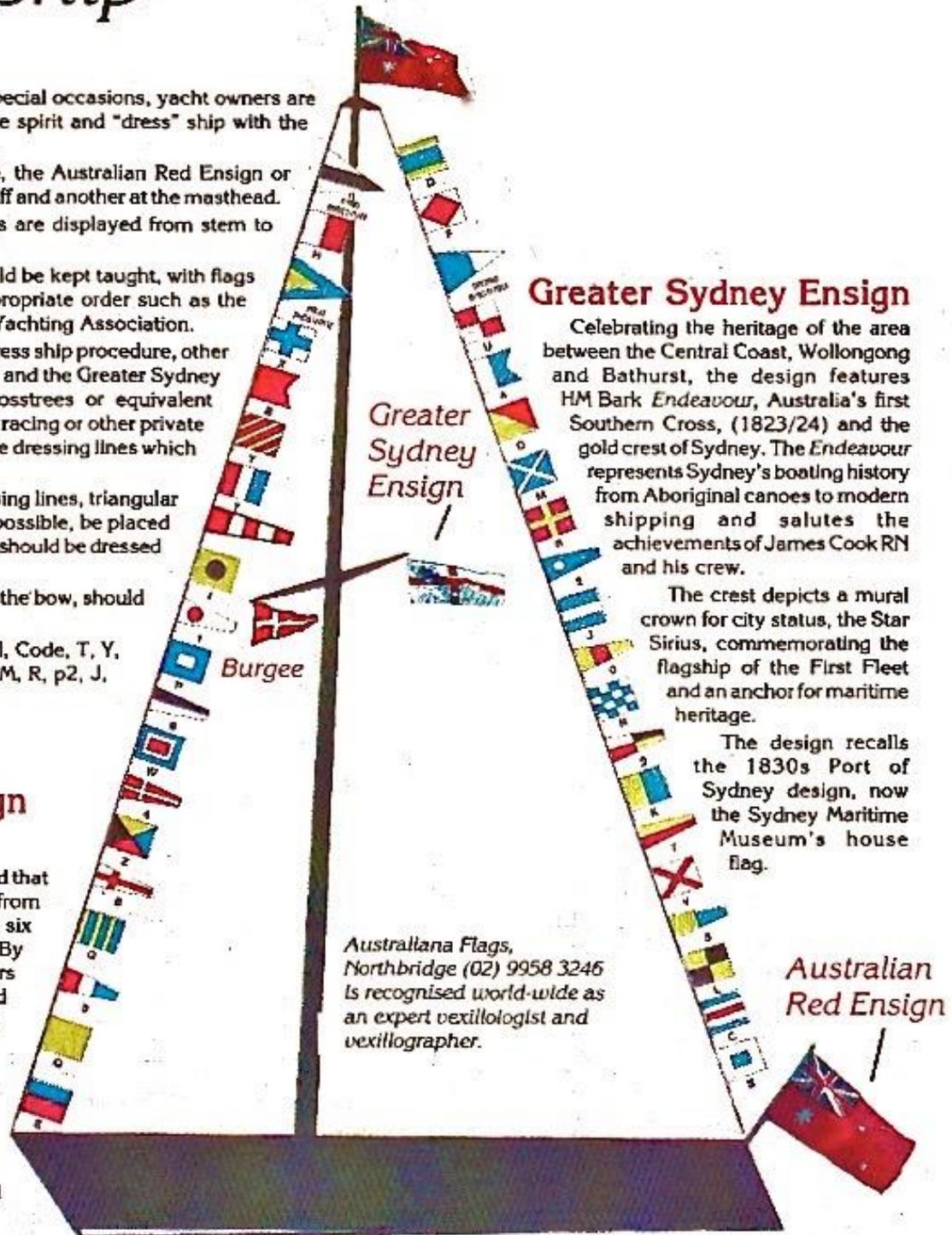
The Australian Red Ensign was reaffirmed as the proper Colours for Australian registered ships in the Shipping Registration Act 1981. Pleasure craft have the privilege of flying either the Australian National Flag or the Australian Red Ensign.

## Greater Sydney Ensign

Celebrating the heritage of the area between the Central Coast, Wollongong and Bathurst, the design features HM Bark *Endeavour*, Australia's first Southern Cross, (1823/24) and the gold crest of Sydney. The *Endeavour* represents Sydney's boating history from Aboriginal canoes to modern shipping and salutes the achievements of James Cook RN and his crew.

The crest depicts a mural crown for city status, the Star Sirius, commemorating the flagship of the First Fleet and an anchor for maritime heritage.

The design recalls the 1830s Port of Sydney design, now the Sydney Maritime Museum's house flag.



*Australiana Flags, Northbridge (02) 9958 3246 is recognised world-wide as an expert vexillologist and vexillographer.*

Sydney AFLOAT