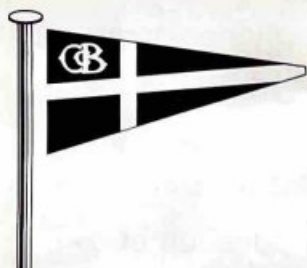




SCOOP

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUTA BOAT CLUB.

DECEMBER 1988



Committee Members 88-89

President	Marcus Burke
Vice President	John Ross
Secretary	Brian Wales
Treasurer	Tim Ryan
Membership Officer	Peter Burke
Safety Officer	Tim Phillips
Chairman, Handicap Com.	Bill Davis
Social Secretary	Jill Hartley
Assistant Social Secretary	Clive Beckingsale
Committee Members	Will Baillieu
	Denis Wilkins
	Ric Lansell

First Ever Lady Skippers Couta Boat Classic

This event is to be held on January 8th 1989 at 2.00 pm. Preceded by a sail past/fashion extravaganza at 1.00 pm.

A race briefing will be held on the Portsea Pier at 12.00 noon prior to the race.

The normal Racing rules will apply, amended to include the following special rules for this race exclusively:

Special Additional Rule A.

The race briefing will be exclusively for the Lady Skippers and Lady crew members only.

Special Additional Rule B.

No Gentlemen are to occupy the area of the boat Aft of the Thwart. (Except in extreme circumstances) Eg. Should the Esky happen to

slide to that end of the boat.

Unless adequate reasons can be given, failure to abide by the above special rules will result in immediate disqualification, without any further correspondence being entered into.

After the race Peter Kubale has generously offered to hold a B.Y.O. barbecue at his home, for those who prefer a 'peaceful' environment to swap stories of the day's events.

The trophies for this event are to be perpetual trophies after having been meticulously and painstakingly prepared over recent months by a team of experts. They are currently somewhere in Melbourne in a deep dark bank vault under 24 hour guard. Awaiting their debut presentation to the winners on the following Saturday at the Couta Boat Club 'Southerly Buster Party'.

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Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH 6953.

Correspondence to: The Editor, Couta Boat Club Inc., P.O. Box 203, Sorrento, Vic. 3943.

Trophies will be awarded as follows:-

*** Line Honours**

- * **1 st on handicap**
- * **2 nd on handicap**
- * **3 rd on handicap**

*** First All Female Crew Over The Line**

(Sex testing may be involved)

*** Best Dressed/Undressed Crew**

(To be determined During the sail past by a judging panel comprising the occupants of the Committee Boat)

Come on all you promising skippers now is your chance.

President's Message

Safety:

I have had numerous contacts from members concerned with the increasingly apparent risks of racing.

Our fleet has expanded vastly, and competitive keenness is very strong. New and old hands with varying degrees of skill are at the helm, or on "lookout" duty - etc. We can see all this combined with the adrenalin associated with a new set of sails and a will to win translating into either overly aggressive sailing, or error born of such enthusiasm. Disastrous accidents eventuate, particularly with port and starboard incidents.

Given that there will always be potential for collision, let us all make a conscious and real attempt to think about our individual roles and capacity as a skipper or a crew member. If you wish to race, and you don't know

the rules, please make a proper attempt to learn them. If you're unsure of the response to different conditions/situations by your boat - get out with an experienced person and simulate the situations you could encounter:- the race track isn't the place to practise learner driving. If you feel you need assistance with critical boat handling, contact the Committee (any Committee member or the Safety Officer) who will gladly assign someone experienced to assist with the numerous essential aspects of safely sailing Couta Boats. Meanwhile be sure you've got someone experienced plus a competent vigilant lookout on duty.

For the experienced and skillful - finessing port and starboard situations with the possibility of an inexperienced skipper on port tack is not on. If bouy room is due - give it and adequately - etc. Finally - not the last word on safety in competition - the Officer of the Day (with the assistance of the Handicap Committee) will be looking at this situation as closely as possible and dangerous sailing will come under critical scrutiny.

We must as individuals all think of our roles in this now crowded racing environment.

Merry Christmas and let's trust an accident free New Year in Couta Boats.

Marcus Burke.

Safety Officer's Report.

The majority of the Port Melbourne fleet were inspected prior to the race. The only boat 100% right was "The Jessie", other boats failing the inspection were told to rectify the problems before the next race, non compliance matters were entered into the "Red Book". On a further inspection, non-compliance will mean a "Did Not Start". All boats will be looked at during the season, my guess is that this matter will not be looked upon seriously until 8 or 10 boats are put out of the "Portsea Cup".

Non-compliance areas so far have included:

1. Reflective tape on life jackets.
2. Poor location of storing life jackets.
3. No bungs next to sea cocks.
4. More than 3:1 purchase on mainsheet traveller.
5. Out of date flares.
6. Non-complying ground tackle.
7. Boom vang of any description.

LOOK OUT - THE COMMITTEE MEANS BUSINESS.

Tim Phillips

Petersville Series 1st Heat Race Report

Port Phillip Bay on the morning of November 12th to many members of the Couta Boat Club will always resemble the calm before the storm.

Never before have so many boats that are not expected to do well performed brilliantly. The start of the race was to prove the downfall of many an experienced tactician and helmsman.

Hours before the race had been spent, poring over the course, planning how each boat could get the best possible start at the 1st of the Petersville series 1988/89. Bets and possible wagers were made with abandon at the Portsea Hotel, the night before. There was also a noticeable absence of a few of the more notable skippers, believed to be Grand Prixing it in Adelaide. But as only Port Phillip Bay can do, she once again showed part of her multi faceted personality and a beautiful 30 degrees, grass skirts and ukuleles day prevailed.

Preparations went out the window. The race began at 11 am with a small amount of breeze, by 12 noon it was decided that the sea breeze had all but ceased and lunch should be served. By 2 pm the second mark had not even been rounded. This was when the tactical manoeuvres began.

We could see on the horizon the first boats were close to finishing. It was no longer who had the fastest boat. For the rest of the fleet it was how many tacks could

possibly be put in to do well in the race. Ruby Anne was literally seen tail gating Lucy at one stage. It looked as though Lucy had beaten her, but no Ruby slipped past. The Helen sailed beautifully, the old theory light breeze, little boat prevailed.

The race finished for many at around 4 pm, but I did hear that there were still a few boats still sailing to the finish in the twilight hours. No one was sure of the final results until that evening at Morgans Soiree, what better place, as the invitation said to swap stories and race news. The evening was a big success and what a feeling to be included in the winners circle.

Susannah Jackson

The race results were as follows:-

Outright Placings

1. JESSIE
2. RUBY ANNE
3. LUCY

Placings on Handicap

1. LUCY
2. HELEN
3. RUBY ANNE

A Message From The Handicap Committee

The handicap committee of the Couta Boat Club has recently been through a number of changes. This has come about in response to a number of questions and or complaints raised by members since the last racing season. There appear to have been two main issues raised.

(1) A lack of understanding of the methods and criteria

used to formulate our handicaps.

(2) Lack of communication between the handicap committee and members during the racing season.

As always, the handicap committee wishes to act in the best interests of the Couta Boat Club members, and will always consider questions and proposals put to it by any member.

A new handicap committee has been formed consisting of:

Bill Davis
Will Baillieu
Denis Wilkins
Jim Woods

We believe that this committee represents a good cross section of the CBC membership, from the dedicated racing sailor to the once a year racer, to the exclusively cruising orientated sailor.

Aims of The New Committee.

As the number of boats has increased dramatically, the interest in racing has become more intense, but the level of racing attendance now varies more widely amongst the fleet. It has become obvious that the current system needs to be updated.

What the new HCP committee wishes to achieve is a system that is readily understood, is fair to all boats and crews regardless of their skill levels, and will remain flexible enough to continue to evolve with the needs of the members. This is a pretty tall order for two reasons:

(1) The wide variation in

sailing skill and race preparedness amongst our fleet.

(2) The unpredictable level of race attendance (i.e. some boats race every week of the year, while others may only enter one or two races.)

However, despite these difficulties, the HCP committee is determined to pursue its basic aims, to achieve a system where no boat is advantaged or disadvantaged because of their ability or their boat speed potential. To achieve this we want to encourage more communication between the HCP committee and owners/skippers.

Evolution of Our Handicap System

In our very first races, before the formation of the CBC, and generally with no more than 5 to 10 boats competing, a time handicap system was used, where boats had a fixed time in minutes deducted from their elapsed race time. This was obviously unsatisfactory because of the unpredictability of the weather and thus the actual elapsed race time. We then introduced a percentage system, where each boat's elapsed time was multiplied by a percentage to give a corrected time. Obviously these percentages had to be applied in an arbitrary fashion to begin with, until a record of performance for each boat was established.

With the formation of the CBC, and our affiliation with the VYC, it was decided to approximate these percentages with the VYC handicaps (as applied to JOG craft) so that we could compete in yacht club

regattas other than those controlled by the CBC. This system has basically operated until this year, and to a large extent been subjective and arbitrary, to take into account the wide range of sailing skill and race attendance. It has been a performance based system originating from a benchmark for differing boat lengths.

The Following System Has Been Adopted.

(1) From November 1988, boats will be given an arbitrary handicap by the committee until they have completed 5 races in one season. This HCP will take into account the length and condition of the boat, the perceived ability of the skipper and crew and any other relevant information that can be provided about that boat.

(2) Once a boat has completed 5 races in one season, its handicap shall be calculated by taking into account the average performance in the last 5 races sailed, excluding the best and the worst performance. These handicaps shall be calculated by this method prior to each race.

(3) Should a boat complete less than 5 races in a season, then the Arbitrary HCP shall apply. Written submissions regarding Arbitrary HCPs will be considered. (Please note, the onus is on the Owner/Skipper to provide as much information as possible to the HCP committee.)

(4) Should a boat fail to complete any races in a season, the Arbitrary HCP

shall be withdrawn. A boat in this situation must apply in writing to the HCP committee for an Arbitrary HCP, should it wish to compete. (Please note, boats are ineligible to compete without an official HCP.)

(5) Should there be any new sails carried on a boat, or a new skipper or any material change in the composition of the crew, the owner is required to notify the HCP committee in writing prior to the race. That boat's handicap may be altered based on the information before the committee.

It should be noted that this is a PERFORMANCE BASED system. It should mean that the race winning boat will not necessarily be the best sailed boat, but rather the boat which improves most upon its past performance. It may be likened to a golf handicap system.

Of course the HCP committee cannot work miracles, and it is important that members understand that the more information we have about a boat, its crew and its performance, the more accurate that boat's handicap should be.

There will be, in effect, 3 categories of boat on the CBC register:

(1) NON RACING. These boats will receive no official HCP unless applied for in writing to the HCP committee.

(2) OCCASIONAL RACING. These boats will carry the Arbitrary HCP. If you fall into this category, then it is in your best interest to provide the HCP committee with as much information about your boat, sails crew

and performance as you can to aid us in the calculation of your HCP.

(3) **REGULAR RACING.** These boats shall carry a performance based HCP as outlined above.

(Note that new boats shall generally start with the benchmark HCP for their length, until their performance can be judged.)

An alternative system, where each boat is measured, and the measurement applied to a formula to obtain a rating for that particular craft, has been rejected as inappropriate at this stage, because it is heavily biased in favour of the more skilled crews. It also favours the evolution of performance based boat design, which is contrary to the basic aims of the club. We do not wish to see the Couta Boat as an evolutionary craft, but rather as a faithful representation of the original Queenscliff craft with some limited concessions to modern technology that may make them safer and more easily maintained. Improvement in our sailing skills, however, will always be welcomed and encouraged.

Finally, the Handicap Committee intends to report regularly to the members through the SCOOP newsletter, and the CBC noticeboard outside Stringer's Store in Sorrento. All correspondence will be considered provided it is received in writing.

Correspondence should be addressed to:-

The Chairman,
CBC Handicap Committee

P.O. Box 203
Sorrento, VIC. 3943.

Or alternatively:-

Telefax No. (03) 882 6980

If you have questions, objections or suggestions, please let us know.

We wish all boats and crews the very best of luck and good, safe sailing over the coming months, and look forward to your constructive criticism in order to achieve a fair system of race handicapping for everyone in our fleet.

Fishing at Port Fairy Home of the 'Thistle'

The following stories of the Port Fairy Couta boats have been prepared by Rob Haldane giving some background to the previous home of the Thistle. They begin with the arrival of the Haldane family in 1929, from Newport, Williamstown, to take up residence at the lighthouse quarters on Griffith Is., after Mr. Hugh Haldane Snr. was appointed Harbour Master. He was accompanied by his wife Rebecca, and five children, William, Allan, Hugh, Agnes and Margaret.

The Port Fairy Couta boat fleet was made up of boats ranging from 21-30 ft., mainly lug-rigged boats. It was quite a mixed lot of boats, shapewise, some with sheer, some with straight decks. Others with rounded bilge and some very cut away. Some of the boat builders recalled were Blunt, Lacco and Locke. The methods of construction used in these boats were clinker and carvel, or carvel

with clinker topsides. They numbered about 42, and often were double-banked along the wharf and during the season the whole fleet would put to sea and return together. The 21ft. Globe was a very old boat and was fished by Adam Turnbull at least until the late 1950's.

Not all the boats were fitted with motors in the late 1920's early 1930's. The Rugby and 3 h.p. Ferro were very popular. All Couta Boats kept aboard a paddle of 15-16ft. in length, with some of the skippers preferring to have the boy row rather than use fuel, until the wind picked up. A common sight in the cold months of the year was a glow in the sails before dawn as the spark plugs were heated in buckets by metho. Nail sickness in boats seemed to be prevalent, and it was remarkable how they held together in seagoing conditions. Sails were made by Morwick and Barron of Melbourne.

The fishermen wore navy blue jumpers and pants, the jumpers being of double thickness across the chest. Oilskins made of light canvas, reinforced under the arms and the chest, to take the wear and tear of catching the couta under the arm to unhook it. The oilskins were treated with a mixture of half boiled and half raw oil.

Dogs were taken fishing, mainly Cockerspaniels. The dogs would take up their positions on the foredeck when leaving and entering port. Whilst at sea they would go under the foredeck and camp on the spare sails. Chris Tyson's dog, Bosun, on entering the port

on the way home, would jump over the side, swim ashore and run along the sea wall to meet the boat at the wharf.

On doubtful weather days the fishermen would climb to the top of the Old Mill and from the attic windows they could see the sea conditions to the south of Port Fairy, and they would discuss whether it was worth going out or not.

Bun Presnell would sneak away on daylight with the creak of blocks, and with double reef put in, make his way down the river. At the back of the Island he would be observed tacking back and forth, as if he were catching fish. These actions would cause the other fishermen to get going. On making their way to what they thought was the fishing area, Bun would square away for home. This activity turning out to be a big tease. He was never ignored, because he had been known to come in with fish, and being the only one, would get a good price for them. He later had his boat crushed by the S.S. Casino, resulting in a court case.

When the fish went off the bite, the tail end of the mainsheet was held up and reefs shaken out, and the race for home was on. With the wind N.W. to W. a close cut around the lighthouse reef would result in the plate hitting the kelp, or at worse, the reef itself. Close hauled to the river mouth on one occasion, Smacker Jackson's, (in the Joan) lacing along the yard was carrying away, only being held at the throat and peak, but there was no stopping to fix it, while the race was on! Entering the breakwaters,

the tacking duels would get underway. The result of this was boats going ashore on the river bank when the tougher members of the fleet would not give way, despite much yelling and shouting.

After the fishing/racing was over and the fish cleaned and put ashore, the fishermen would go home for lunch, later returning to the wharf dressed in their "better" outfits, to have a yarn about the morning's events, clean boats, dry sails and renew cowhides on jigs.

Terang day was a big day for the couta boats, with racing for wood, bags of flour and taking trippers for a sail down the river. The Piolota came from Portland specifically to take paying passengers. She was owned by Alf Fredericks.

On one occasion the two brothers Morris and Ginger Denny were passing by the back of the rifle range butts, and were frightened into sheltering behind the plate and case, as the overshots from the shooters passed around them.

Bill Kerney's boat "Ian" went ashore to the east of Port Fairy. It was thought that he became tangled in craypot lines and went overboard. A tragedy occurred when local fishermen organised a salvage party to recover the couta boat, to enable his widow to sell it. A shore party went by land and the sea party by the fishing vessel, "Bluenose" towing a 23ft. rowing boat. The recovery plan was for the row boat to take a tow-off line ashore. As the open row boat approached the outside line of surf, the shore party tried to signal to

them to turn back in stern first, through the first lines of surf, playing out line as it proceeded. This resulted in the boat being pitch-poled and the crew tossed out, tangling in tow-off line, much to the horror of the crowd assembled on the beach. Hugh Haldane Jnr. a member of the shore party, was subsequently awarded the Royal Humane Society Award for his part in the rescue of three survivors. Unfortunately, a further three men lost their lives.

Chris Tyson's Sunbeam was wrecked while he was entering the river mouth when he was caught by a roll and pushed upon the breakwater wall.

Fishing for Trumpeter was a dangerous business, and a few boats were lost this way.

In 1931 Bill, Allan and Hugh Haldane started couta fishing. Allan and Hugh with Peter Peterson in "Aurora" and Bill with Tag Brett in the "Escort". After about six months, they purchased the "Petrel" from Tom O'Shannesy for the sum of seventy five pounds. The deposit was supplied by their father in the form of a cow, and the balance was paid off at one pound per week. She was a 24ft. x 8ft. lug rigged couta boat painted Azure Blue. They fished the Petrel as far as Julia Percy Island for sharks. Hugh later fished the boat by himself at the age of 14, while his brothers built the Amaryllis, their first 39 footer. Sammy Mott, one of the older hands of the fleet, would sail up to him outside the entrance on days of doubtful weather, and call out advice, "Don't go leeward today, keep to

windward of the fleet son!" They had the Petrel for about two years. She was sold to Backler in the S.E. of South Australia. According to Allan and Hugh, to the best of their knowledge, no couta boats were built in Port Fairy between 1929-52 when they and their families left in the M.F.V. Tacoma for Port Lincoln.

According to the book "Sail Traders" (G. Kerr) the Thistle was built by Jones in 1903, length 28ft. In his book "Craft and Craftsmen of Australian Fishing" he describes her as being a 30ft. deep, wedgy model. Owned by George Darley, then by George Dusting, the original owner was not known. The Thistle was moored at the Butter Factory at Port Fairy while owned by G. Darley.

Allan and Bill Haldane went on a shark fishing trip with G. Dusting and Bert Perry about 1931-2 in the Thistle, to Julia Percy Island. The shark lines were set to the S.W. of the Island. While waiting for shark lines, they lay in close to the Island to catch Trumps. A rattle on the plate drew their attention to a 15 - 16' shark under the boat and passing by the rudder. The big paddle was used to prod the shark, which went away without further ado. A frightening experience, as the Thistle is a low wooded boat aft. After a long working life the Thistle stayed on to become the last working couta boat to leave Port Fairy. A loss to Port Fairy's Maritime History.

Rob Haldane

Sorrento Pier

A permit has had to be obtained for the use of a motor vehicle on the Sorrento Public Wharf. The permit holder is Tim Phillips. His truck is allowed on the pier for the purpose of maintenance of boats subject to many stringent conditions. The permit is yearly and has to be applied for on that basis. Members are asked not to misuse this facility as it is important for the on-going maintenance of the fleet to keep the pier open.

Dispensations So Far Applied For & Granted

The Committee has considered the following requests for dispensation pursuant to the vessel by-laws 1988.

HERO - A. Meredith-smith.

The measured length of the Jibboom on the above boat was notified to the committee as 6" over length. Dispensation was requested on the basis that a taped mark would be placed at the correct extremity.

Dispensation was duly granted by the committee without the requirement to comply with the marked extremity.

The handicap committee has reported that Hero has not been flying her foresail beyond that marked extremity in races so far.

MINERVA - R. Buxton

Has applied for dispensation for the existing window in her mainsail. - Granted.

Social

A reminder that the next Club social function is the '**Southerly Buster Party**' to be held after the Portsea Fishing Boat Regatta on Saturday 14th January 1988. At Tim Phillips's Boat Factory. Tickets will be for sale shortly. Be sure not to miss this action packed night.

New Members

The Couta Boat Club welcomes the following new members.-

David & Libby Douglass
Tom Buxton & Family
Peter Hannemann
Leisa Alabaster
D. Rossbach
David Walters
David Brownell & Family
Robert Cole & Family
Garry Crittenden & Family
Anthony Wilson

For Membership enquiries please contact.- Mr. Peter Bourke -
(03) 240 1282.

Boats For Sale

'Ronrico'

23' Savage Built Couta Boat type with cabin, Gaff rigged, Hooper Tan Sails, Yanmar Diesel

Contact:-

Tim Phillips

'Fiona'

23' Couta Boat, built by Higgs brothers, Geelong, fully restored, Yanmar Diesel motor.

Contact:-

Tim Phillips