

## History of the Rudder Cup

Early in 1907 Mr Thomas Fleming Day the editor of the American magazine "Rudder", wrote to his friend Mr. T.A. Dickson, Commodore of the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, suggesting that, to promote the sport of Yachting, the club should hold a race across Bass Strait to Tasmania. Thomas Day offered a trophy for the event the "Rudder Cup"

It was decided that the race should be from Port Phillip Heads to Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar River, 198 nautical miles, and the Tamar Yacht Club joined with Royal Geelong to organise the race finish. The race took place with four starters in December 1907.

Conditions were very rough and one yacht, Ellida, retired. The race was won by Mr. Edgar Newland in his 14.6m yawl Thistle, the crew of which included his wife and daughter.

The trophy was intended to be an annual challenge cup, but Mrs. Newland thought that yachtsmen should never again be tempted into so dangerous a race and she refused to relinquish the cup.

In 1929 Melbourne yachtsman Dr Frank Bennell conceived the idea of resurrecting the trophy and the race. Failing to find the original trophy he approached his club, the Royal St. Kilda Yacht Club (now the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron) which agreed to donate a silver cup for a race from Queenscliff to Low Head. The next Bass Strait Race was held in 1934 to coincide with the Centenary of Melbourne. The Royal Yacht Club of Victoria again revived the race in 1946, from 1950 the Bass Strait race course changed from Queenscliff to Devonport.

This trophy was competed for in Bass Strait races until the 1960's when the original Rudder Cup came to light and was presented to the Cruising Yacht Club of Victoria (now the Ocean racing Club of Victoria) by Mr. Edgar Newland's son, to be used as the principal trophy for a race across Bass Strait.

Since 1968 the Rudder Cup has been presented to yachts competing in the Queenscliff to Stanley Race and subsequently the series based around the Melbourne to Devonport Race.

The race to the Tamar was again revived in Easter 1984, Tasmanian yacht Supertramp skippered by Neville Pickett taking line honours.

In November 2001 the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria and the Tamar Yacht Club combined to hold a race over the original course to the Tamar Heads, this has been followed by races each year in December, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005.

Research indicates the first Ocean races were as follows:

( Source Yachting World Encyclopaedia Author Peter Johnson and Ian Dear, Historian for the Royal Ocean Racing Club )

- 1904 Brooklyn New York to Marblehead Mass.( Brooklyn Yacht Club)
- 1905 Brooklyn New York to Hampton Roads Virginia (Brooklyn Yacht Club)
- 1905 Marblehead to Halifax (Eastern Yacht Club)
- 1906 Transpac Race Los Angles to Hawaii
- 1906 Cowes Isle of Wight to Dinard / St. Malo France
- 1906 New York to Bermuda
- 1907 Rudder Cup Port Phillip Heads to Low Head Tasmania (Royal Geelong and Tamar Yacht Clubs)

To put the 1907 Rudder Cup in perspective, the Fastnet Race did not start until August 1925 and the Sydney – Hobart December 1945.