

Mud Flats and Flowing Tides

The History of the Newhaven Yacht Squadron

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Kityikana – Cherub Years

In July 2006 we decided to build our own 125. We contacted the 125 Association and after sending a cheque for \$50.00 we received a cardboard cylinder in the mail. This contained all the patterns drawn out on brown paper and 34 pages of timber and material lists, instructions and measurement guides. We bought an old boat, the boat was rotten but the sails were in really good condition and there was a mast, boom, spinnaker pole, rudder and a lot of fittings we required. It also acted as a great pattern when we were unsure of what the instructions were referring to.

Marine ply was purchased from Melboard in Hallam and the Western Red Cedar in big slabs from a Melbourne timber yard. The cedar was cut into correct sizes; the patterns were cut out, traced onto plywood, cut out with the jigsaw and planed as they were fitted.

Finally we were ready to start construction. The boat was built on two frames the shape of the main bulkhead and the transom so we constructed these. As the boat was longer than the ply the sides and bottom of the boat had to be joined together. This was done using epoxy glue and copper nails with a butt strap on the inside. We then joined the bottoms together, then the sides, and the transom were added. The hull is tied together with fishing line and copper wire to form the floppy hull. Floppy hull is a good name for it as the boat flops around like a piece of jelly.

The next tasks were to shape and fit the keel, the transom stiffener and sternpost; jam the main bulkhead into place, the mast understep and the forward bulkhead; glue and screw the centre case; cut the slot for the centre board; fit the stem, the stringers, the sides of the seats and the baffles inside the seats for strength and shape, then the framework foredeck support and finally the thwart across the back of the centre case to stop the case from twisting.

Before we could fit the deck all the seams were fibreglass taped and the inside was given a few coats of varnish to seal the timber. After the deck was fitted, the gunwales and coamings were shaped and screwed into place; finally, the floor battens were fitted. After the seams inside and outside were fibreglass taped 'for strength and hopefully to stop any leaks', the boat was sanded, painted and varnished. Friends gave us the centre board and a second mast with some fittings.

We spent some time trying to decide on a name. *Mum's Mess* was a popular choice for a while, a bit cruel, though I must admit it had looked a bit messy at one stage. *Kityikana* was finally chosen, or perhaps overruled. *Kityikana* is an Aboriginal name that means 'be happy' – I think a fitting choice as how could you not be happy when you are out sailing? After 14 months launch day finally arrived on the 23rd of September 2007, with a few words of thanks and a splash of champagne, some on the boat and a little down our throats we gently pushed *Kityikana* into the water phew she floats, passed the first test). We raised the main, hopped aboard and we were off sailing.

The smiles on the faces of Matt and Rowan confirmed that *Kityikana* sailed beautifully.

When you are out on the water please watch out for a 125 with a white hull and red stripe down the side and a red stripe and a number 324 on the sails. It will be *Kityikana* and two boys out enjoying themselves, probably about to cause some mischief.¹

Chapter 2

1962 – 1972

Kityikana – The Cherub Years

'This is a story of how a yacht club was built in just 20 months.'²'Well, I was on the pier when the yacht club started. Percy Fraser, Sammy Huther, the old man (Ken Lacco), Lindsay Talbot, George Mapleson, myself and I don't know if the brother was there or not. The Talbot boys had the MaryT, a little 13 ft wooden boat. They were sailing down there and young Dougie Fraser had a little Sabo and I don't know what Huther had. He had a little boat and they were mucking around below the old main pier, down towards the old bridge, the old ship, and we were all standing there watching them and someone said, "We should form a yacht club to teach these kids to sail properly." And that was the start of it.'³

An advertisement was placed in a local Phillip Island newspaper floating the idea of a yacht club to teach the boys how to sail. 'Anyway, in Christmas '61 I went into the store where Peter Talbot was working then. I remember it quite clearly when he said "Do you know there's going to be a yacht club?" We'd all been sailing a bit on and off with each other on various boats. They'd put notices in the store itself. It wasn't just in the newspaper.'⁴ This was, of course, the early 1960s, a patriarchal society, with the interests of 'the boys' being paramount. 'So a few people said we should have a club or something for the kids. So they had a meeting and decided to go ahead with it. So Percy pushed it.'⁵

On 26 January 1962, an Australia Day weekend, about fifty-six people turned up to the advertised meeting, which was convened by 'the honorary interim organisers'⁶ Ken Lacco, Sam Huther and Percy Fraser, at the Newhaven Hall. After some discussion, those gathered decided to form a yacht squadron. A squadron generally includes both sailing and motorboats, as well as other water activities such as angling; whereas a club usually only covers one type of boating activity. Given the disparate interests of the group gathered at the Newhaven Hall, it was decided that a squadron would be more inclusive. However, since the founding of the squadron, members and records use the words squadron and club interchangeably. The inaugural first general meeting of the Newhaven Yacht Squadron was advertised for 8.00 pm on 9 February 1962 at the Newhaven Hall.⁷

Over the next two weeks, Percy Fraser, a businessman and boating enthusiast, threw himself wholeheartedly into the task of writing a constitution and, according to an article published ten years later commemorating the foundation of the squadron, he explained how he came up with the Constitution of the Newhaven Yacht Squadron.

First scrounge three or four sets of rules and by-laws from the established clubs (you'd be surprised how these clubs will help you) then sit up to 3am for a week amending and drafting to suit your own peculiar requirements – that's the hard part!⁸

The first official squadron meeting was duly held on 9 February 1962 in the Newhaven Hall. At that first meeting, a total of seventy participants, twenty of whom were teenagers, became members of the newly formed club. Office bearers were immediately elected and not surprisingly

the promoters of the idea headed the list. 'All the committee was local...there weren't many Melbourne people.'⁹ Percy Fraser, the driving force behind the idea, naturally became commodore. Ken Lacco, whose boat-building skills were legendary and whose family business had a long boat-building history in the area, was elected rear commodore, and Sam Huther, a well known local Ford dealership businessman and the owner of Wonthaggi Motors, was elected vice commodore. As Lindsay Talbot was given the task of finding the monies to get the project afloat, he was elected treasurer. HA 'Skipper' Fleming, a retired Government Surveyor, obviously a man familiar with bureaucracy, was elected secretary. His hand-written notes of the first general committee meeting remain a beautiful example of copybook script. These key players were to be assisted by safety officer and cadet captain, John Mitchell, as well as various sub-committees yet to be determined. The club was in business. Unfortunately, it had neither a site for the clubhouse, nor a clubhouse, nor even any boats. None of this deterred this enthusiastic group of foundation members.

The minutes of the first committee meeting of elected office-bearers, which may have been held at Percy Fraser's house behind old Dutchies (a family-run restaurant) or at the Newhaven store, commencing at eight-fifteen in the evening on 10 March 1962, record the enthusiasm and determination of the group. The squadron was not a month old but already the secretary had sent off correspondence to the Phillip Island Shire Council requesting to lease a site for the prospective clubhouse. On 22 February 1962, the Council had approved a three-quarter acre site on Seaview Street, Newhaven where the club now stands. There was a healthy balance of £283-08-00 in the National Bank, reflecting subscriptions collected from the founding members.

The dinghy sub-committee, comprising Ken Lacco and George Taylor, presented their report to the committee on the type of craft considered to be appropriate for training cadet members. They took into account the fact that members were, according to Fraser's reminiscences, 'ordinary folk'¹⁰ so could only afford a cheaper type of boat for teaching their children sailing skills. It still had to have a sufficiently high performance to appeal to the youth of the day who were being distracted by the temptations of Rock 'n' Roll and the Swinging Sixties. Local conditions were also considered and advice had been sought from diverse quarters before the final decision was made to recommend the Cherub Mark VI 12 foot dinghy, a New Zealand designed boat.

By the conclusion of the meeting, the committee came to the unanimous decision that the order of priority was to first build boats for the children to sail, then to build a clubhouse with boat storage underneath and, finally to build an access ramp to cover all tides. Their members came from all walks of life and a 'we-can-do-it' attitude pervaded the squadron, so the committee was certain that their priorities would be achieved by the members' willpower and hard work. The meeting closed at 10.50 pm and, according to legend, Percy Fraser pulled the cork from a whiskey bottle, tossed the cork out of the back door and declared the meeting closed. There were inevitably a few sore heads in the morning. This too became the pattern for many of the early squadron meetings.

The idea of a Cherub was in part Percy Fraser's according to Lindsay Talbot, as Fraser had been to New Zealand and had sailed the Cherubs there. In an interview, Lindsay Talbot remembered, that 'the New Zealand mob had come over (to Phillip Island in the early 1960s) and raced against us and gave us a proper hiding'.¹¹ The Newhaven sailors had not trained with spinnakers so they were totally out-classed in the sailing races up the bay. Of course, there had always been smaller

sailing boats at Newhaven, such as Sabots and Gwens, which the boys had pitted against each other in impromptu races, but they were never evenly matched or as highly mobile as the Cherubs.

The Cherub was an ideal boat for teenagers. You had to be pretty athletic. In strong winds, she was very exciting, and the flat-cut spinnaker and the trapeze meant that we could get her planning like a speedboat. With Fergus on trapeze and me at the helm, with both of us wearing woollen jumpers soaking wet, we had a ball. The wet jumpers gave us the weight to balance the boat. Later the racing rules prohibited the wearing of heavy clothing – the spoilsports!¹²

John Spencer of Auckland had created this amazing boat. It was of simple design but with impressive sailing ability, which allowed youthful sailors to race competitively and safely. The Cherub was made of marine-ply with multiple buoyancy tanks. It was 12 feet long, with 100 square feet of working sail, and provision for a spinnaker (9' x 9' x 14'). Percy Fraser strongly supported this choice of boat as he believed that it had 'a lot of sail for the size, but just the thing for the kids and not a trainer, but the real thing!'¹³ It was exactly the type of boat to take the boys' thoughts away from the distractions of popular culture.

Plans for the building of the boats were obtained from New Zealand and the sails were purchased from Douglas Sails Sorrento. The committee decided to build ten club boats for a start, although only two club boats were ever completed. These two Cherubs were for the use of cadets who could not afford a boat of their own. 'Percy said he would buy one and George Taylor said he would buy the other for the club...*Cheers* and *Cheerio*...the old man built them.'¹⁴ In later years, Herb Fowler was quoted: 'Ken was an artist with wood.'¹⁵ Inspired by the magnanimous gesture of committee members, eight boats were immediately ordered by other squadron members, and once more, Ken Lacco offered the use of his boat building yard to assist in building the junior class training boats. 'We had umpteen little boats mainly due to Ken Lacco.'¹⁶ To showcase the new boats a weekend of racing was planned for that year's Easter long weekend. A racing sub-committee, consisting of Messrs K Lacco, J Mitchell and H Fleming, was appointed to handle the events for sail and powerboats on Easter Sunday, 22 April 1962. A social event was planned for Easter Saturday, preceding the sporting activities. Squadron minutes note that a letter of thanks was sent to Mr Alf Ward for his donation of trophies for the races scheduled for Easter Sunday. From those early days of the squadron, the culture of giving became entrenched.

When we went sailing we used to put them on the beach down between the Newhaven pier and the first slip. In those days it was a nice sandy beach and we'd sail from there. We'd put the boats together on the beach and go sailing from there to the races.¹⁷

Over the Winter of 1962 more members joined the squadron, bringing with them powerboats and other sailing classes, such as Gwen 12's, International Cadet dinghies, Vee-esses and a Quick-cat. Lindsay Talbot had the *Mary T*, a fishing boat, named after his wife, which he built from a design by Ken Lacco. According to Mary Talbot, this was one of the first yachts in Newhaven. Percy Fraser had a fishing boat, the *Bran 'D' Lil*. Sam Huther's boat, the *Julianna*, was a 30-foot fishing boat with a Ford engine that Ken Lacco's brother Alec had built. Entire families joined the squadron as there was little else to do. 'You had the Huther family, the Taylors, Talbots, the Sherrifs, Farrels, Frasers. Heaps and heaps of people...Some had powerboats, kids had yachts. The Cherubs were popular – there used to be quite a few of them here at that stage.'¹⁸

There were the two Fraser boys and George Taylor had four daughters. There were five boys in the Talbot family, three of whom sailed, and Sam Huther's boy. Les Wallace, Peter Clark, Les and Mattie Ingham, Bill Moat and Ray Kidd all enrolled their children as sailors. Then Neil and Snow Lacco joined up. Margaret White, the matriarch of "all those people who lived on the hill", her sons and grandchildren were all involved in the Squadron. Many fishing families were also involved, among them the Legge family and the Mitchell family. The Gensers and Bob Hughes and his boys came in shortly after the start of the club.¹⁹

The story of how the clubhouse site was acquired is not without its own myths. The members wanted a site along the foreshore between the pier and the old slipway in Newhaven, to the north of the Phillip Island Bridge. It was the only sandy-beached area facing the Gutter where most of the members had their boats moored. It was known by the sailing fraternity to be a safe spot and therefore a good place for off-the-beach training and racing. When the Phillip Island Shire Council was approached they had a different idea and decided that the club should have a site on the other side of the bridge in Cleeland Bight near Woolamai.

Ken Lacco tells the story of how the Council was convinced to change their mind. He was playing a game of golf one day at Cowes Golf Course when he met Jock McKecknie, the Council engineer, and played a round with him. He asked McKecknie why the Council was so set on the squadron having a site at Cleeland Bight. In turn, McKecknie asked him why the squadron was so set on the Western Port site. 'He hammered him and he hammered him' about the strong tides that affect Cleeland Bight. He ended his argument by saying that children and inexperienced sailors would be swept out into Bass Strait. "What do you want?" the old man said. "A bit of your land." "You've got it."²⁰ Soon after that conversation the Council granted a lease to the site that the squadron had originally proposed. The land for the squadron clubhouse was a three quarter acre waterfront site on Seaview Street, Newhaven, leased from the Council at an annual peppercorn rate of £10.00.00. As soon as the squadron had the agreement drawn up on paper they hired a 'bulldozer chap'²¹ who was apparently very cheap, to come in and level the site.

According to squadron history, the Council wasn't interested in helping the club at the time, although Shire engineer Jock McKecknie was an exception. In spite of this disinterest, Percy Fraser managed to push all the permits and paperwork through. As many club members have said over the years, 'he would have knocked on God's own door to build that bloody Yacht Club'.²² He wasn't deterred by whoever he had to speak to and even approached the Premier of Victoria when it came to the next stage of the grand plan – the building of the marina.

At the end of March 1962, the Victorian Government's Tourist Development Authority gave the Newhaven Yacht Squadron a grant of £1,600 to help pay for a launching ramp, which was to be used by the public as well as by club members. This same ramp is still used by the public today to launch their boats, although members now have a second ramp in the marina for their private use. According to Ken Lacco,²³ club activities were really all a bit haphazard at the time as the boys raced their boats on the weekends while the members built the Cherubs and, at the same time, negotiated the land lease and planned the building of the boat ramp and the clubhouse.

The work on the boat ramp finally got underway early one Saturday morning in February 1963 when between forty and fifty members, under the Shire engineer's supervision, started work and completed the preliminary work before the change of tide at one o'clock in the afternoon. They first sandbagged the end of the ramp, then – using three mixers and three trucks to mix the

concrete – they poured 250 yards, or 20 tons, of concrete to create a ramp by the evening. The ramp was 166 feet long and 22 feet wide. As they could only work at low tide, it took 28 hours of backbreaking work over two weekends to finish the ramp. They were ably supported by the ladies with their never-ending supply of food. ‘The ramp went on and that was it...there wasn’t even much of a jetty there. There was Basil Newman’s old jetty, which was alongside it...A couple of sticks at the end of the boat ramp – nothing like the facilities that are there today.’²⁴

In the meantime, the building sub-committee was collecting subscriptions to cover the cost of the materials for the clubhouse. Given the talents of the membership, labour was donated by members and only the costs of materials needed to be considered, which ensured that the club’s funds remained healthy. Annual subscriptions were two guineas for members and fifteen shillings for juniors. Mary Talbot recalled that both she and Lindsay, who was the Treasurer, collected the subscriptions although, in reality, it was Mary who took the money and kept the books in the early days as Lindsay, a fisherman, was always out at sea. Some years later, George Farrell was appointed auditor and apparently he would just turn up unexpectedly and go through the books. ‘We got a hell of a shock when he turned up one time with a new Kalamazoo book-keeping system, which was state of the art stuff at that time.’²⁵ Apparently, all was well with the funds and no stories or rumours of book-keeping incompetence abound.

The general committee was not without ambition as the minutes of 31 March 1962 record. Percy Fraser and Ken Lacco made submissions to the Victorian Yachting Council for official recognition of the club. The squadron was ultimately granted recognition by the Royal Yachting Association of England. Percy Fraser, always a man with grand plans, initially wanted to call it the Royal Newhaven Yacht Squadron but, not surprisingly, this suggestion was knocked back. Members recall that in spite of his machinations, Percy Fraser was a hard worker when it came to club matters and selflessly used his assets to further the fortunes of the squadron. He would take squadron work home with him and have a staff member at his office look after the paperwork. Percy Fraser owned EP & A Fraser Stevedores, his family’s business, started by his grandfather, then run by his father and uncle before Percy took over. As one foundation member recalled, ‘I went up there (to Percy’s office) one day and he said “see that girl over there” – he said all she does is the yacht club work.’²⁶ Others, unable to support the club financially yet equally dedicated to the success of the squadron, donated their time, their labour and their expertise as plumbers, carpenters, electricians and in a myriad of other trades.

Sometime during this early period, Percy Fraser ran a competition for the design of the club burgee. This competition was won by Skipper (Harold) Fleming, a foundation member, whose design of a triangular flag with a red triangle at the tip, two dark blue triangles mid-flag and a pale blue triangle at the base, is seen proudly flying on Newhaven squadron boats. Percy Fraser designed the club blazer pocket badge with its life-ring motif. A small gold star was added under the pocket badge to distinguish foundation members from the rest of the membership as a tribute to the work they had contributed to the club in those early days. A framed photograph of one of the early blazer pocket badges, taken by Percy Fraser, can be found at the clubhouse and in the Archives.

Easter weekend quickly arrived and the squadron held its first social event at the Newhaven Hall. One hundred and fifty people attended the dance and social. There is no record of the food consumed but the event was probably listed as a ‘bring your own’ (BYO) as there were no cooking facilities at the hall. This event set the pattern of entertainment for many years. Club members

danced to the squadron's own band, 'The Islanders'. Designs for the squadron's burgee were displayed and the hall was decorated with the trophies that Alf Ward, Sam Huther and others had donated for the Easter Sunday races. The following two days were occupied by yacht races. Records show that the squadron's first boat, the Cherub *Cheers*, came second. Bill Mitchell and Jean Farley won life jackets. It was a very successful first Easter for the club both socially and financially.

Following the success of the Easter weekend, the minutes of 20 May 1962 note an influx of new members including AH Stuchbery, W Mitchell, AE Smith and JF Stuchbery, who were to play important roles in the life of the club. Sales of club merchandise were good with one hundred and fifty club burgees, three commodores' flags, six cap badges and four dozen blazer pockets purchased in the first months of the squadron's existence.

At this stage, the building sub-committee was formed, comprising Ken Lacco, George (Poowong) Mapleson, John Mitchell, Don Sheriff and B Orchard. New members were quickly buttonholed to stand for this sub-committee. The building sub-committee was authorised to spend £450-00-00 on materials for the clubhouse using voluntary labour to construct it. As a way of raising additional funds, and probably instigated by that astute businessman Percy Fraser, negotiations proceeded with Shell Oil for the exclusive rights to sell Shell products to squadron members and to install fuel bowsers at the bottom of the eastern steps which led down from where the clubhouse was to be built.

SQUADRON FINANCES: Under this heading, one small comment, we have both Standard and Supergrade Petrol available on site. Why not purchase your Petrol Requirements from the Squadron? This augments your funds. Your Yard master, Bob Davies, has the Keys and will be pleased to supply your needs.²⁷

The secretary, Skipper Fleming, was not a sloth either when it came to contacting other clubs in Western Port. He proposed that they all synchronise events for the coming 1962/1963 season to allow wider participation between clubs. This practice of avoiding clashes between club events was continued up until 2001 when, as each of the clubs grew and increased the number of events they ran, it became too difficult to find free weekends during the racing season to co-ordinate activities between clubs.

During that busy Winter season of 1962, members and cadets attended blackboard lectures on the theory of sailing, racing and safety. This prepared them well so that during the Summer racing season, extending from October 1962 to April 1963, twenty-five racing events were conducted for both sail and powerboats. Not even the fact that the first Sail Past, at the start of the Summer racing season, was a wash-out as the rains poured down, deterring enthusiastic members. The morning of the Sail Past, Lindsay and Mary Talbot remember sitting in George Taylor's shed on George's block (as George's house wasn't built yet) drinking morning tea and watching the wet goings-on.²⁸ George Taylor's daughters were all interested in sailing so were involved in the opening day activities. Others had had great success in the best-dressed boat competition. 'My later boat – *Rebecca* – used to always win best-dressed boat. People complained because we had the dog on the boat...they gave us the award and they gave us a can of Pal.'²⁹

From the very first days of the squadron, racing was highly competitive. 'But what I like about yachting [is that] it wasn't a physical contact sport. Whoever could take advantage of the wind

[or] whatever there was of it did. And if a bloke was in front of you, you would try and trick him into a move that wasn't good for him.'³⁰ John Mitchell enjoyed the sport so much that he built both his boats, *Challenger* and *Challenger Too* at home. Both were Victorian champions (seasons 1963/64 and 1964/65). Decisions were often challenged, no matter whom they were against.

Well, I protested against the Commodore's son once. It was like trying to get a free kick, protesting a yacht race. And the Commodore got to me and said 'Now, I don't know if this is right' but Old Skipper (Harold Fleming who helped Percy Fraser with the handicaps) was a Royal Yacht Club man from way back said ' Now, now Percy, this has got to be done right'. And I won the protest!³¹

Records show that in the squadron's first season (1962/1963) the Division 2 Club Champion was John Mitchell (skipper) and Bruce Talbot (crew), Cadet Champion was Ian Huther in *Cheetah* and the Tom Wight Memorial Trophy winner was Terrill Taylor in *Cheeky*. Terrill Taylor was one of George Taylor's four little girls and was to become an experienced sailor and regularly starred in the season's awards. 'You only raced for the glory of it and you'd get a small trophy.'³²

On 21 December 1962 the Shell agreement had been signed, thereby cementing the squadron's financial position and allowing it to prepare for the building of the clubhouse. Membership had increased to one hundred and fifty-three members. There were twenty-eight boats, including ten Cherub class boats, registered on the squadron books. It was certainly a Merry Christmas and, as the squadron foresaw, a prosperous and busy New Year.

The newly formed building sub-committee worked hard to ensure that plans for the clubhouse were drawn up and approved by the Council before the end of 1962. Don Sheriff, cabinet-maker and a foundation member, drew up most of the plans for the clubhouse and was the driving force behind its completion. The plans were for a two-storey building with the main lounge supported on tubular steel supports, extending over the cliff edge to provide boat storage space underneath. The layout of the first floor of the clubhouse ensured that there were magnificent views of the squadron's sailing areas and Western Port. The total area was to be 2,000 square feet, with about 1,600 square feet of boat storage space under the main lounge. The plan was to develop the clubhouse in three stages. The first stage was what the committee considered to be the bare essentials – kitchen, secretary's office, toilets and change rooms – to enable racing activities to commence in earnest. The next two stages would commence, finances permitting, as soon as the first stage was finished and would support the activities of the committees and the development of the social life of the squadron.

Work began on the building in January 1963. This was the Summer vacation for schools. Many businesses in the 1960s in Australia, especially in the building and manufacturing sectors, closed from the week leading up to Christmas, opening again in the last week of January just before the school year started. This was a perfect time for the membership to come together as many of them, such as Stan Broad a plumber and George Mapleson a bricklayer, were in trades that closed for the Summer vacation. This was a period of great building activity for the squadron. Members who were children at the time fondly remember long hot Summer days playing around the building site with the sounds of the hammer and drill punctuating their play, as their fathers worked on the clubhouse while their mothers provided the food for the meal breaks. 'You would take them down to the club and keep an eye on them...But they were all as wild as wild!'³³ The older boys were conscripted into helping with the building and were called the 'fetch-it-boys'³⁴ as

their job was literally to go and fetch materials and tools. By 23 March 1963 the clubhouse was built to joist-floor stage and a 2,000-gallon water tank had been installed. By June of 1963 the downstairs section was completed to lock-up stage with the steel supports bedded in for the erection of the main lounge upstairs. Working bees were organised for two weekends in August 1963, and by mid-September 1963, the whole clubhouse was at lock-up stage.

When it first started – the working bees – everybody who could, would lend a hand...You'd work all day and play hard at night...Old George Mapleson was a non-drinker. The amount of work he put into the club in the early days – it was endless – nothing was too great for George. Bricklaying, getting sand or rocks – he was a dedicated worker for the yacht club. There aren't many blokes like George.³⁵

The estimated cost of the building was £2,000 but because of the ethos of 'do it yourself'³⁶ and all the work was done on a voluntary basis, there was no overdraft or mortgage. Percy Fraser's reminiscences about this exciting time of building the clubhouse record that 'the back had been broken (and the bank balance too!)'³⁷ Throughout all these building activities 'the Ladies', as the club minutes record, were busy preparing meals, morning and afternoon teas during the days and weekends when work was in progress. Some, like Marge Horan, became known for their culinary skills. She admitted that she was the 'jam scone queen.'³⁸ The closeness of the group resulted in great camaraderie and many long-term friendships were forged as the clubhouse rose from the mud.

As the building was being constructed the Ladies were right behind the menfolk providing meals and tea breaks. This tradition continued after the building came into use, as the men were always working to add fittings etc most weekends. So by Saturday evenings the members would finish off the day's work on Saturday night around 6pm then meet together in the clubhouse. So began the tradition of the 6 o'clock drinkies, which continues to this day; commemorating the toil, sweat and selfless enthusiasm of the members in those early years.³⁹

In fact, the ladies were so busy sustaining the strength of the workers that it was not until 22 February 1964 (ironically a Saturday) that they finally drew breath and formed the Ladies Auxiliary. Their stated purpose was to raise money for the squadron but in a practical sense it was also to provide sustenance for working bees. The twelve ladies at the meeting elected Mrs Dot Fraser as president, Mrs Mary Talbot as vice president, Mrs Stella Huther as treasurer and Mrs Wilma (Billy) Moat as secretary. 'Dotty Fraser, that's Percy's wife, was a wonderful woman – she was very outgoing – always did a tremendous lot for charity...we had great comradeship and spirit and friendship.'⁴⁰ Obviously, the enthusiasm of the general committee had rubbed off on its female members as they immediately set about organising a ball (to be held on 13 March 1964), a raffle and a barbecue, and later in the year a few fancy dress days were planned.

A pretty good social life – some very good parties down at the club, even before it was finished. Plenty of BBQs and what have you – a lot of social gatherings at different people's houses until the clubhouse was finished.⁴¹

Their endeavours resulted in a bank account being set up in the name of the Ladies Auxiliary and their monies assisted in sending club members to compete in the Cherub Nationals in Perth Western Australia in 1965. Later they stepped back into their culinary domain and helped in the purchase of fittings for the clubhouse, in particular the vinyl for the kitchen floor, a sink, a copper

(for heating water), table and chairs, drinking glasses and curtains to name a few. Mary Talbot remembered that, 'We were very busy, us girls. And it was not just with food duties at the clubhouse but when the boys were sailing, we used to have them around on a Sunday Night for post-mortems. We fed hundreds of them!'⁴²

In the meantime, the menfolk continued working outside, completing the fencing, dinghy-racks and paving. Members' children were kept occupied helping to build the clubhouse, training and racing their boats or organising cabarets for the entertainment of families in the evenings. Years later, Lindsay Talbot remembered that, 'All the kids in town were interested. They were out in boats not playing around town.'⁴³ The aspirations of the men on that windy Sunday morning in January 1962 were achieved in less than two years.

We all helped. Old George Mapleson had his old truck and we used to go out and get rocks which were bagged up and taken to Melbourne and sold to garden supply places. We'd take the rocks down to town and bring back Bessa blocks for the yacht club. Go and cart the bricklayers' sand and the Bessa blocks down below...There were a lot of working bees – something on every weekend.⁴⁴

Building progressed throughout 1963 with the secretary's office finished and the electrical wiring completed. Decisions were made to purchase a flagpole, the balcony balustrade was completed and Don Manning finished building the brick wall under the club. Not all committee members were involved in the actual building of the clubhouse. Many were fishermen and were out at sea. Lindsay Talbot was one who left his duties as treasurer to his wife, Mary. Ken Lacco was another who regularly went out to sea, although he obviously enjoyed being involved in the building of boats even though not all were to his liking. He often reminisced about the time when 'A few of them wanted a boat called the Lightning – but I didn't want them to build this, as it was an old design.'⁴⁵

The Lightning, a 19-foot trailable centreboard sloop, was designed by Sparkman and Stephens as an affordable family day sailor and racing boat. It is still popular in the United States. Percy Fraser, who made this request, was obviously a persuasive talker.

Anyway, I built it out of Canadian Cedar. She was an American design – square built. When I finished it I gave Perc the bill for £50. He wouldn't pay it. He said the boat was built by unskilled labour!⁴⁶

This led to a temporary estrangement between the two friends as Lacco got annoyed with Fraser, closed his shop and went back to fishing. Lacco was right in his assessment of the boat as 'The Lightening was an American design for three men, but it wasn't a success.'⁴⁷

However, Percy Fraser, never one to admit defeat, got Lacco back into the club by the simple expedient of appointing him to a sub-committee. Lacco only found out he was on the Racing Committee on the day a race was run.⁴⁸

Percy Fraser's grand plans for the club continued. At that stage, there were more than sixty registered Cherubs throughout Australia, with the various States holding Championships each season. According to Ken Lacco, because Fraser had influence in the right places he was able to gain the confidence and approval of the parent body of the Cherub Club in New Zealand. Fraser was also able to muster the support of Cherub owners from as far away as Western Australia and Queensland. The result of all these machinations was that the First Australian National Cherub Championships were conducted by the Newhaven Yacht Squadron during the week of 20 to 27

January 1964 in conjunction with the National Cherub Owners Conference. This was a real coup for a fledgling club. Plans were also made for social functions during the week of sailing activities. They included a dance in honour of the interstate competitors.

To celebrate this important occasion, the Newhaven Yacht Squadron organised the commissioning of a trophy to be presented to the overall winner of meet. The Victorian Cherub Trophy was donated by the squadron and symbolised the Cherub class in Australia. It was constructed of New Zealand polished Kauri and shaped in the form of a boomerang with the Cherub heart insignia in the middle. Reefer jackets, with the pocket insignia of the Cherub Class Owners Association and a gold star identifying foundation members of the Newhaven Yacht Squadron, were ordered to mark this occasion.

Power Boat and Yachting magazine of March 1964 described the momentous occasion:

Western Australia scooped the pool at the first Australian Cherub class championships conducted by the Newhaven Yacht Squadron, Phillip Island, Victoria. Each of the five heats developed into a close struggle between the Westerners who took the first four placings on final points... The first four boats were from the Mounts Bay Sailing Club. *Jason II* was⁴⁹ the best of the Queensland contingent of seven boats. Best Victorian was *Challenger Too* (John Mitchell, Bruce Talbot) who finished seventh. Several of the West Australian boats were sold to Newhaven Yacht Squadron members... New Zealanders Russell Botterill and Wayne Dillon, who brought *Watties's Pride* to Newhaven for the championships following their appearance in the 12 foot Interdominion contest on Sydney Harbour, said the standard at the championships was higher than they thought it would be. All the Australians lacked was competition.⁴⁹

Percy Fraser, who was an official observer at the championships, summarised the events of the week for readers of the magazine.

There are quite a few reasons for the superiority of the Western Australians over the Victorians and Queenslanders. First, their crews were better experienced and teamed better... Their boats were lighter and better rigged and tuned... Also, their spinnaker drill was a pleasure to watch. However, the Cherub is a development class and this is certainly all to the good. The series did provide our lads with terrific experience, and it was interesting to note the improvements in the times each day.⁵⁰

Having run the Cherub Championships successfully, Percy, never one to hide the squadron's light under a bushel, no doubt enjoyed firing that future challenge to the experienced Western Australia sailors who had won the championship. Although well organised, the first Australian Cherub championships were not without incident as the Queensland team broke their mast.

At 4.00 pm they [the Queensland boys] came to me and asked me if I could get them a new mast. I went over to Cowes to get a bit of good Oregon [timber] but I couldn't get it. So I looked around and got some Canadian Cedar. I brought it home and used the router on it, working up to 9.00pm that night to make the mast hollow. I had 32 cramps on it on the bench and glued it up. I got up at 6.00 am the next morning and routed it all over, sanded it and painted it so it was finished the next day. The boy from Queensland was a bit worried about how much it was going to cost as he did not have much money but I said 'Don't worry about it.' This was typical of the man Ken Lacco was. In the end, as the

Queensland crew insisted on an account, Ken charged them £10 for the cost of materials. Ken was not disappointed in the Queensland crew either as 'when he got back [to Queensland] the money came down'.⁵¹

By the end of the 1964/1965 sailing season the club membership was nearing two hundred and plans were made to close the list at two hundred and fifty due to lack of space. At that stage, the Newhaven Yacht Squadron still had no marina in which to dock the members' boats. They were being moored at anchor close to shore in Western Port in an area known locally as the 'Gutter', which is a stretch of deeper water opposite the Newhaven foreshore. Other boats were moored at the Newhaven pier. In spite of the difficulties of mooring a boat in waters with fast tidal flows and marked differences in water depth between high and low tides, nearly fifty boats were registered. Interest would grow steadily as more holiday-makers arrived after the new bridge between San Remo and Phillip Island had been built in 1969. Subscriptions set by the finance sub-committee, in an attempt to build up the financial viability of the squadron for the next stage in its development, were still the lowest in Australia but as enthusiasm was growing exponentially, so were the funds.

The club was very busy with families from Melbourne holidaying in the area and joining those living at Newhaven for weekends dedicated to sailing and racing. The club at Newhaven was a very vibrant place to be.

Children were involved in club activities as well as all forms of boating activities although there was always the risk of a possible mishap.

Fiona, who was about 4 or 5 at the time, would ask 'Can I go to the boat with you?' I had a job to do one day and I had to get under the wheelhouse floor to get to the front of the motor and I said to her 'Now look, you stay inside the cockpit of the boat. I don't want you to go out.' I was only about 5 minutes and I looked out and I couldn't see her in the cockpit and I'm going 'Where are you?' and I think 'I can't go home to Mum and say 'Fiona's gone down the channel!' The little bugger had got onto the deck and climbed up on the wheelhouse roof and she was sitting there and laughing.⁵²

At this time, the clubhouse was built on the banks of a small bay with a very small beach. Like all the shoreline in Western Port, the bay and beach are tidal and form part of the mudflats that were first mentioned by George Bass when he explored this area in 1798. To get to the water, boats were transported by trailer to the beach or to the public ramp and launched from there. Smaller boats were carried across the sand into the water. Larger boats were moored in the Gutter. As the waters are tidal, deep-hulled boats were often stranded on the mud in the Gutter at extreme low tide. Shallower-hulled boats remained floating in this stretch of water but could not be sailed out until high tide because they were technically 'mud-locked'. Some boats were roped to the jetty that stretched out into the deeper waters. At low tide these boats would be left hanging on their moorings from the side of the jetty if insufficient slack had been left in the ropes to allow the boat to settle on the mud.

However, using the extremes of tide was one of the methods of tending to the hull of a boat when maintenance was required. The boat would be firmly moored to the side of the jetty at high tide. By low tide the boat would be suspended upright from the side of the jetty allowing access underneath it. Work would rapidly progress on the hull until the tide started to rise and finally the boat could be sailed back to its mooring in the Gutter, maintenance having been accomplished.

Smaller boats were allowed to settle on the mud close to the shore or they were leaned against the jetty to keep them upright and their maintenance was also accomplished in the period between peaks of tides.

Obviously, getting to a boat moored in the Gutter was an interesting problem. The locals left small rowing boats moored at the jetty and boat owners and crews borrowed them to get out to the larger boats at anchor in the Gutter.

In the early days most of the power boats used to be anchored out in the channel in front of the yacht squadron and then down towards the pier...They'd have dinghies stored in the yacht club grounds and carry them down to the water and row out. If they were lucky they'd have an outboard motor. A couple of them had boat sheds down between the yacht club and the Newhaven pier...I think there's still one shed down there. I think its old Percy Fraser's original shed.⁵³

If the tide was at high slack tide it was possible to row out to the boat but at the turn of tide the currents were so strong that it was more practical to launch the rowing boat from a point that would allow the tide to carry the rowing boat past the owner's anchored boat. 'I remember dad and I rowing out – two of us on the dinghy – rowing like hell against the tide to get ourselves out on to the boat.'⁵⁴

Another method of getting to the moored boats was to swim out to them. Ex-commodore Hamish Hughes recalls that swimming out was also an option but only when the weather was warm. Owners of motorised boats would swim with the engine keys between their teeth for fear of losing them from their pocket. Extra clothes were often left on the boats to give the sailors a comfortable and dry sail.

Apart from these difficulties, a boat moored in the Gutter or at the pier was also subject to the strength of tides and winds. It was not unusual to see one torn from its moorings either because it was carelessly moored or because there were strong tide and wind conditions. 'Every now and then one would break away. You'd get a heavy blow and they'd go for a wander up or down the bay. Over the years there's been quite a few broken loose but most of them were found. The odd one would sink but they'd get it up.'⁵⁵

Many sailors were grateful to *Poowong*, George Mapleson, a retired farmer and a handyman-about-town, whose nickname reflected the fact that he came from the town of Poowong. He was the self-appointed rescuer of many boats that drifted from their moorings, ensuring their safe retrieval. George Mapleson was a Steptoe-like character, dressed in well-worn clothes, and was known for his scavenging and hoarding. He became an early member of the club and was the unofficial safety officer. He was always helping people and keeping an eye on the 'boaties' and he never went home until everybody came in from Western Port waters. He was also renowned for his uncanny ability to determine the direction in which an errant boat had drifted and, more importantly, where it was washed-up.

Oh, yes. He used to look after my boat –the little Lacco built one I had. It went under the bridge twice. It was moored up the top before the Marina was in – and it went around and around and broke the chain and went under the bridge and beached herself. Old George brought her back, hooked her up again and when there was another storm it did exactly the same thing again and went under the bridge and beached itself.⁵⁶

George Mapleson was also, according to legend, the ultimate poacher. A story that is passed around the club tells how he had promised a friend two hundred birds for her wedding. So he went to the sand dunes behind Surf Beach and started pulling birds out from their burrows. This was an illegal activity and unfortunately for George the fisheries and game warden, who was patrolling the dunes saw him take off, dropping the bagged birds behind the sand dunes. When he was caught George explained that the reason he ran was because he was training for the Phillip Island football team. He was naturally charged with poaching but that didn't stop him from borrowing a dinghy early the next morning and rowing out around Cape Woolamai to retrieve the dropped birds. The wedding went ahead as planned.

Initially, it was because of the children that families holidayed in Newhaven and developed the squadron. However, even after their children had grown up the adults continued to holiday in Newhaven and to use squadron facilities. By that stage most of them had developed their own interests in fishing, sailing and boating. They continued to keep their boats in the Gutter and deal with the vagaries of tide and wind 'and that was the driving force behind the development of the Marina'.⁵⁷

It wasn't surprising that club members started to discuss the possibility of a safe haven or marina where they could moor their boats at jetties protected from the whim of tides and wind and where they could access these boats irrespective of the weather conditions. As there was no natural land formation that could be utilised as a marina it would need to be created. The dissenters objected to these suggestions. They believed that the widely fluctuating level of water between high and low tide would mean that a very deep hole would need to be dug. They also felt that the ground was too soft to allow earth-moving equipment to do this job and that men with shovels would never be able to excavate the foreshore at Newhaven to the depths that were required to create a marina.

In the meantime, work continued to progress on the clubhouse, as well as, the surrounding area. The foundations were laid for the retaining wall at the south side of the clubhouse, brickwork under the clubhouse was completed and electrical and plumbing services were extended into the clubhouse. Up to that time and throughout the whole building project, the club had no toilet facilities. Arrangements were made in mid-1963, when the clubhouse was at lock-up stage, for the Shire Council to build public toilets close to the spot where the modern-day marina entry stairs were ultimately built. These toilets are still used by the public today.

In all of the building activities, sailing competitions were not forgotten. In March 1965, the Newhaven Yacht Squadron, with the financial assistance of the Ladies Auxiliary, attended the 1964/1965 Australian National Cherub Championships held in Perth Western Australia under the auspices of the Mounts Bay Sailing Club, situated at Crawley Bay on the Swan River. The carnival attracted thirty-four entrants and Victoria nominated six of the boats. The invitation race was sailed in heatwave conditions with the temperature over 100°F (38°C), humid with little wind. Many were unable to finish within the time limit. However, of those who did, on adjusted time the winner was *Sandra* (Ross Swanson, Western Australia) from *Cheetah* (Ian Huther, Victoria) and *Shy-Ann* (Miss A Ballantyne, Western Australia). Conditions were difficult for each of the five championship races, ranging from humid and windless to moderate sea breezes of twenty knots and finishing in the last race with gale conditions and winds over thirty miles per hour (forty-eight kilometres per hour). This resulted in only six boats completing the course and all except the winner, *Ace*, capsizing; some, several times. The Victorians did not compete in the last race as

they decided that conditions were not to their liking but they can be forgiven for their decision as they were only sixteen years old and had not trained for sailing in these conditions. The overall winner was *Ace* winning all five heats. This exceptional performance gave the sixteen year olds Gordon Lucas and Phil Arnold all three titles that season – Australian Cherub Senior, Junior and Cadet Champions.

Most of Newhaven went to Perth...there were four of us from here [who] drove over and the rest went by train...A lot of good friends were made from that time...I was lucky to sail in the World Championships in Western Australia...I sailed for England...the English skipper came out on a shoe-string budget and arrived with no crew. I happened to be in the yacht club when he was looking for crew...I was pretty naive at the time that an English sailor would know how to sail in strong winds – anything over ten knots was too strong for him.⁵⁸

Although the Victorians did not star in the placings, they learned a lot from this experience including techniques for sailing in the short chop common to the Swan River. Newhaven Club members went on to compete in Cherub competitions in Redcliffe Queensland in 1965/1966. *Power Boat and Yachting* magazine recorded their participation with a photograph captioned 'The Victorian Cherub Team pose with stalwart of the class in Australia, Mr Percy Fraser.'⁵⁹ Following this, sailors from the Newhaven Yacht Squadron participated regularly in local series as well as in Tasmania, Lake Boga and other interstate ones. 'I have in mind to co-ordinate at least two Clubs to visit us on any one week-end or Sunday from the following Clubs viz: Lake Boga, Royal Brighton, Parkdale, Victorian Ladies Y.C and Latrobe Valley Y.C.'⁶⁰

Back on Phillip Island the appeal of a marina still exercised members' minds. The first official mention of it was made in the minutes of August 1965. Discussions about the possibility of a marina continued throughout 1965. Costs were one issue but the problem that most preoccupied members was how to excavate an area deep enough so that it would not be subject to the variations in tide. The old suspension bridge, which at that time was the only way to access the island, was not built for the transport of heavy earth-moving vehicles of the type that would be required to dig the marina.

In spite of the difficulties that they foresaw in bringing this project to fruition the general committee decided to pursue this matter further. In October 1966, the Newhaven Yacht Squadron sent a letter to the Phillip Island Shire Council regarding plans for a marina. The project was called the Safe Haven and Swimming Pool project. The committee made the decision to include a pool area for children in the belief that the Shire Council was more likely to approve such a proposal and there would be less opposition from local residents. 'We are now exploring the possibility of gaining a Boat Harbour, Marina and SWIMMING POOL through our own efforts. Enquiries lead me to believe that we can get, (with Council support) a loan of up to \$50,000 repayable on 5% Interest and 2 ½% off Principal over 21 ½ years, and in addition, a grant to build a Rock Swimming Pool as an adjunct.'⁶¹ Ultimately, the plans to include a swimming pool within the marina complex were abandoned as they were deemed too difficult to accomplish and as they had no impact on the Shire's decision to permit the building of a marina. Shortly after, an impromptu meeting was called to discuss this proposal.

On Friday 4 November 1966 our club secretary (Mr Ron Davis) and myself (Rear Commodore Taylor) received the Minister of Tourism and Health, Mr Vance Dickie, and Mr M Harkens, Director of Development Authority,

at approximately 4 pm. The Minister was accompanied by the Shire Engineer, Mr McKecknie, and Councillor W Papworth. Other visitors to attend the Club House were delegates from other Progress Societies from various parts of the Island. The discussion was short and to the point as the Minister was obviously anxious to return to Melbourne. He was shown the area we wished to excavate, the site for the proposed swimming pool, and the general idea of the Marina scheme.

The Minister then addressed the assembly and promised to consider carefully all the plans that had been put forward to him, promised nothing, and made his departure.⁶²

Immediately, Commodore Percy Fraser began negotiations with various organisations and with his government contacts. Little did the proposers of the project know that this was the beginning of what would become a marathon effort stretching over the next eight years before work on the marina would finally commence. In the meantime, clubhouse life continued.

Within the Clubhouse, we hope to also complete the Powder Room and Men's Cloakroom, have the Hot Water Service in operation and conduct all of our Social activities in the Clubhouse which after all, is why we have built such a nice edifice for your benefit.⁶³

'During the past season, we have acquired a Piano complete with Cover. Our sincere thanks to the Donors Mr and Mrs E.B. (Bill) Wight. Also, our sincere thanks to George Eastburn for making available a Power Sander and to Vice Commodore Sam Huther for operating same. We now have a nice smooth dance floor in the Clubhouse.'⁶⁴ In December 1966, the minutes record the first functions held in the new clubhouse – the Christmas Dinner and Dance and the New Year's Eve Party.

The Club ...was a big part of our social gatherings... it was very intimate – we all had tremendous fun – we were a pretty wild lot actually! I can remember New Year's Eve, which was always a big night. We went around to the club and you knew everybody then and I think that this was how it became such a closely knit thing that there was tremendous comradeship that everybody did their bit whether you were a professional or a trade, you all contributed...in a community.⁶⁵

'They used to get a bit of grog into them and sing and tell yarns. Then I remember we had a piano there. Well, anyway, old Sammy Huther got a fair few grogs in him and he's shifting the piano and he banged his head.'⁶⁶ In January 1967 the minutes record the further purchase of crockery and cutlery. One can only guess why these purchases were required so soon after the Christmas and New Year's parties.

Until the clubhouse was useable, other sites were used for meetings and gatherings. Percy's house, among others, was used for committee meetings, which were held in a convivial and relaxed atmosphere, especially after the official meeting closed. Although, according to club legend, 'if they had a meeting they'd have their jug of so-called 'water' on the table and everybody thought they were behaving themselves drinking the water. It was only when somebody else wanted a drink one night after the meeting and they filled their glass up and realised it was ice cold vodka or gin.'⁶⁷ The local Progress Hall at Newhaven was also the site of many social gatherings as was the local hotel at San Remo. Lyle Williams, the hotelier and a

squadron member, is remembered as being a great help in party matters with many memorable nights held at his hotel. He was not just a party man, he was a strong supporter of club and community. In the 1970s he donated the cup, which bears his name, for the squadron's Around Philip Island Race. At the same time, a powerboat trophy was donated by EB Wright suggesting that the powerboat owners' group was also a healthy presence in club competitions. Lyle Williams's name is also associated with a community event he suggested in the early 1980s. He donated \$1,000 towards this event which he suggested should consist of a swim across the channel from San Remo to Newhaven and a run back across the bridge. Now in its twenty-ninth year, this event is known as the San Remo Channel Challenge. It continues to draw large crowds of participants and onlookers to Bass Coast annually.

After the Christmas and New Year festivities of 1966/1967, the idea of the marina was broached once more. The minutes record that a test dredging was successfully carried out in the proposed marina area. The foreshore where the marina was planned gently slopes down toward the deeper waters that become the Gutter and Western Port. The floor is muddy mangrove and is exposed at low tide leaving boats stranded in the mud until the next high tide. The marina would have to be dug out of this mud to such a depth as to ensure that boats would remain afloat at low tide. The concern was that the mud floor would not hold any sizeable earth-digging machinery and that the marina would need to be dug out by hand – a herculean task even for the most enthusiastic member of the squadron. Squadron legend says that during Easter 1967, when there were extremes of low and high tide, 'Sam Huther... he demonstrated that you could actually do it by coming down with this Ferguson Tractor at low tide and drive across the mud and didn't disappear.'⁶⁸ This exercise conclusively proved that heavy earth-moving equipment could be safely used to dredge out the marina. However, the issue of how to get heavy earth-moving equipment onto Phillip Island still remained unanswered given that the suspension bridge would not hold that type of weight. This exercise also earned the squadron and Sam Huther a letter from the Victorian government accusing them of starting the marina without approval.

The years of 1966 and 1967 were also memorable for two other decisions made by the committee. The first was to purchase club ties to sell to members. At that time no squadron merchandise was available for female club members. The second decision was to produce a monthly club newsletter. The exact date of the first newsletter is unknown. Today only one copy of this newsletter exists in the squadron's archives. It is dated 2 May 1966 and is titled from the 'Office of the Commodore, 26 King Street, Melbourne', which was Percy Fraser's workplace address. It is a four page roneoed foolscap-size typed document that records the many activities of the squadron. In particular, it congratulates members on the state of the club's finances.

We have emerged from our first four years with all loans liquidated and sufficient in hand to maintain a program of continuous improvement. To those who have helped us over these difficult years, we, your Committee, extend our grateful thanks, particularly those who turned their loans into donations. To those who put in time and work effort, also our most sincere appreciation.⁶⁹

About this time Percy Fraser, not content with having to attend to his own business as well as club business, which included the convoluted and complex dealings relating to the marina project, was instrumental in developing the idea of the Western Port Safety Council. This authority is made up of local boating clubs in the Western Port region. Volunteers from each club assisted in running the network of radio-based stations and participated in weather reports, safety alerts and in

search-and-rescue missions in association with the Water Police and Maritime Authorities. It would take another twelve months before the Western Port Safety Council finally started to function as a result of the dedicated work of Captain Frank Hart. In recognition of this important endeavour, Captain Hart was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Newhaven Yacht Squadron.

Over Winter, club activities continued at the yacht club although at a more relaxed pace. When sailing, boating and fishing were at their quietest the planning and maintenance committees came to the fore with ideas for improvements. Projects were completed. In the Winter of 1968 the barbecue area was completed. With the membership steadily rising and after-race debriefing being a very social affair it was felt that an after-race barbecue would be greatly appreciated by the sailors and onlookers. The feelings of that committee of yore have proved to be true and over the years this area has seen constant activity and been the site of many a tall story; the upstairs lounge being the other contender as the site for tall fishing and sailing stories.

Winter was also a time when, like migratory birds, club members sought warmer climes either in the northern states of Australia or in the countries of the Northern hemisphere. In 1968, Percy and Dot Fraser travelled to the United Kingdom and Germany to catch up with family and Percy, never a man to let an opportunity slip by, conducted a tour of marinas there. He later reported back to the committee that he had seen walkways that rose and fell with the tides. This was an outstanding feat of engineering coming, unfortunately for the club, with an equally outstanding price and making it a non-viable option at that time.

October 1967 is minuted as a busy month. The Ports and Harbours Authority granted permission to the club to lay permanent buoys for racing. This put an end to the occasional comedy of errors that ensued as course officials attempted to site the temporary markers just prior to each race. The National Cherub Championships were held in Tasmania and again Newhaven Yacht Squadron members attended. It was also announced that the annual championships were to be held at Parkdale Yacht Club in February of the following year. This was a much easier location for members to get to given that they paid their own expenses unless the club came to their aid. Agreement was reached to hold the Victorian Yachting Council's 12-foot Open Championships at Newhaven between 16 and 17 March 1968. Another coup for the club as, compared to the seniority of some of the other clubs, it was still in its infancy.

Much excitement ensued when the club received notification that the Phillip Island Council approved, in principle, the marina proposal. This resulted in a marina account being opened at the National Australia of Bank in optimistic preparation for the marina excavation expenses. That October, Opening Day also turned into an exciting event. Not one to be deterred by the procrastinations of bureaucracy, Percy Fraser, remembered as a big man with a bald head and glasses, used his influence in the Liberal Party and succeeded in persuading Don Chipp, then Minister for Navy and Tourism and later the founder of a new political party called the Democrats, to take the salute from the pier off Newhaven foreshore at the annual opening day celebrations. From the early years, as the club did not have its own jetty, the opening day salute was either taken from the Newhaven jetty or from a cray boat. It turned out to be a big day with a number of dignitaries and a large contingent of locals and visitors turning up and everybody standing on the pier.

From the second open day on for some years Percy Fraser took the salute from a cray boat, the Margaret Wight which was named after my grandmother. I thought that it was a terrific thing because it really demonstrated the link between the squadron and the community as it then was and how many other clubs would have the commodore dressed up standing on a cray boat.⁷⁰

In September 1968, the club received a letter from the Ports and Harbours Authority offering to help with marina excavations and this led to a further flurry of activity in anticipation of the apparently imminent building of the marina. An expert was invited to quote for the cost of the project and, to the committee's horror, the price of the works was estimated at over one million dollars. Committee and community discussions ensued about how to achieve the excavation at a lower cost. In June 1969 the committee appointed RW & JS Young, civil engineers of St Kilda, to prepare the marina plans. Ron Affleck was a senior partner in this company and later became a club member. In the 1980s, when the club was planning additions and alterations to the marina, he was able to locate the original plans so that the work on that later stage of marina development was made easier.

The idea was floated that the marina should be dug with land-based equipment. The hole would be excavated to six feet below water level and the spoil would be used to build the retaining walls, which would hold the tidal waters back. The dam wall would then be breeched on completion of the marina, just like a farmer's dam. The marina was finally built in this manner but not for another four years. Estimates showed that this method would cost approximately \$40,000. Optimistically, as part of the financial investigations, contractors were approached for quotes and, in January 1970, the committee accepted a quote from contractor, Keith Cochrane, to excavate the marina at 35 cents per cubic yard with approximately forty-three thousand cubic yards requiring excavation.

Over the ensuing months, committee discussions concentrated on how to fund the building of the marina. These discussions were to occupy the committee for another two years until, in June 1970, a Registered Marina Co-operative Society was formed and run by Hugh Stuchbery, 'being a High School Headmaster, he was familiar with the development of co-operatives to build things for schools.'⁷¹ Twelve thousand shares were issued although a further four thousand were required for working capital. Also, in an attempt to reduce opposition from the Public Works Department, a special meeting, convened in February 1971, changed the name of the marina project to the Safe Small Boat Haven. However, this name change was possibly unnecessary as the attitude of the Public Works Department was summed up, as legend has it, by the comment made at the time that 'It's only a heap of mud anyway. We might as well give it to them.'

The co-operative started to accrue funds, although not at an adequately fast rate. This lack of money almost resulted in a delay in the commencement of the marina construction. A special executive meeting was held on 12 March 1972 to discuss the problem of lack of funding for the project. There was a substantial deficit of approximately six thousand shares priced at \$6 per share. (The minutes note \$600 per share, which is no doubt a typographical error, as this would have been an unheard of sum, even outstripping such impressive stock exchange performers of the time as Poseidon NL which was listed at \$12.30 per share, although some brokers were predicting it would reach the lofty price of \$382 per share). In desperation, the executive meeting asked the membership to buy more shares so that a Treasury-backed loan of \$30,000 could be taken up. The minutes note that 'certain, un-named, members undertook to bridge the gap!'⁷²

This outstanding financial commitment by those members, very much in keeping with the ethos of the club, assured that it would be able to finance its marina.

Fortuitously, at the same time, the old San Remo Bridge was being dismantled as the new bridge had been opened on 21 November 1969. Several benefits flowed from the building of the new bridge. The population of Phillip Island increased, as did the membership of the squadron. Heavy vehicles could now easily cross from the mainland therefore the heavy earth-digging machinery that the marina required became a reality. With the dismantling of the old bridge, second-hand building materials became available and, most importantly, these materials were cheap. The committee showed great foresight when they purchased the second-hand timber and broken concrete blocks to help with the building of the marina. In this decision they were ably assisted by Harold Waldron, a club member who had recently bought a home in the area and who was also in charge of building the new San Remo Bridge and demolishing the old one. The acquisition of these materials helped keep the costs of construction down. The blocks were used in the building of the dam wall to hold the sea back and the timber became part of the walkways within the marina. However, as the building works had not yet begun, these newly acquired materials needed to be stored. The club did not have enough land to store them so a member with land close to the club offered to store the building materials on his block. Then, as the project limped from one bureaucratic request to the next and days turned to months and the New Year of 1970 was ushered in, that kindly member received a letter from the council giving him thirty days to clear the rubbish from his block. This was yet another hurdle for the marina committee to overcome.

Apart from the all-consuming work on the marina project, other club projects were not forgotten. In November 1968, the shower block was built under the clubhouse – an unheard of decadence allowing many a cold and well-salted sailor the luxury of warming themselves as they washed the brine out of their hair and pores, but one that took a bit of getting used to.

Fred Arblaster came one morning and the water meter was ticking, so there was a tap on. So Fred comes down [and the door] didn't have a, you know, 'Stay outside' [Lyn] on the door. Fred just opened the door half asleep and there was a naked woman standing there towelling her back and then [she] said 'Good morning Fred, lovely day.' Well Fred was a wreck for the rest of the day.⁷³

In January 1969 the club took part in the mock rescue of three boats. This activity was arranged and co-ordinated by the newly formed Western Port Safety Council with Percy Fraser and Sam Huther taking part, as well as a number of members. This exercise alerted the members to the need for communication. As a result the squadron purchased the first radios for the club rescue boats. The clubhouse also set aside a room (with views over Western Port) as a base station. Over the years this facility has proved its worth in keeping watch over yachts and their crews on race days and in real-life rescues in association with the police authorities.

The 1969/1970 Season had been opened by RJ Hamer MHR, Minister for Local Government. Again, as future events would show, Percy Fraser was working his political magic for the benefit of the club by inviting such a prominent political figure. He and others continued to lobby Ted Jeffrey, the Bass Coast President, and Councillor Orr, President of the Shire of Phillip Island, to gain Council support. They also had many discussions and meetings with the Department of Crown Lands and Survey to finalise the acquisition of the land for the marina. However, the stumbling block was that there was no precedent that permitted the development of a private marina on crown land. Unless the law was changed by the State Government, the authorities had

no power to grant the necessary permits. So, having gained the support of the Shire and the agreement in principle of the Department of Crown Lands and Survey for the purchase or lease of a ten-acre area of foreshore tidal flats, the squadron approached the Victorian State Government to sanction the lease of foreshore land. This sanctioning would require an Act of Parliament. Percy Fraser's political connections could not have been more precious at this critical time. In particular, Maurice Harkins, who was a minister in the Hamer government at the time, was supportive of the squadron's negotiations. Later, he was made an honorary life member for his help. After more lobbying of parliamentarians, a special act was finally introduced in the Victorian Parliament by Mr Borthwick, Minister of Lands and Mr Rob MacLellan, Minister for Gippsland West. Member John Campbell was Clerk of the Legislative Assembly when, in the early morning hours of 3 November 1971, the act was passed unopposed. Club legend suggests that the act was read in the middle of the night so as not to attract the attention of 'greenies' who were against development of crown land. One politician benefitted from this as much as the squadron benefitted from its association with politicians. At the squadron's open day on 11 February 2012, Rob MacLellan admitted to meeting his wife-to-be on a blind date at the Newhaven Yacht Squadron forty years previously. The Newhaven Lands Act 1971 allowed the club to lease from the State of Victoria ten acres of foreshore adjacent to the clubhouse. The final bureaucratic hurdle had been conquered, although the lease did not officially begin until 1 February 1976.⁷⁴ Ultimately, only five acres were used to create the Newhaven marina.

On 8 May 1971 an open meeting of club members was held. The items for discussion were to appoint trustees, to execute a trust deed, to appoint the civil engineers, to reach an agreement to pay the Department of Lands' costs and to facilitate approval from the general membership of the Safe Boat Haven. All went well and the Marine Works Management Sub-committee was formed. Sam Huther resigned his position as Vice Commodore and became chair of this committee. He was joined by his son, Ian Huther, as well as founding members George (Poowong) Mapleson, Bill Moat, Lindsay Talbot and Hugh Stuchbery who was the co-operative's secretary ex-officio. The decision was that the original co-operative members, who had staked their monies in the shares when this project was still an idea on paper all those years ago, were to be given priority when berth positions were to be assigned. Given the real possibility that the project could easily have failed and the supporters of the co-operative would have lost their money this was an appropriate gesture.

As the work of running the club increased, a special meeting was held in March 1973 and the number of members on the general committee was increased from four to seven. The increasing workload of the committee was stretching the resources of the four elected members and although external club members were invited to sit in on committee meetings they were only there by invitation. They certainly helped with the task of advising the committee and supporting the committee's work but it was time to formalise the work of those invited members as committee work was expanding fast with the growth of the squadron.

No doubt the club approached its tenth anniversary in 1972, and the start of a new year, with great anticipation. It had grown from a conversation between friends to the reality of a club made up of three hundred members, a clubhouse, and squadron rescue boats. In its second decade, the squadron would have a marina. This had been the fledgling club's hardest fought battle. It had resulted in reams of correspondence over the years, many business lunches, endless discussions

and numerous occasions when hopes were raised only to be dashed by 'requests for further information'.⁷⁵

Finally, in November 1972, all the paperwork was finalised and with no apparent impediments in sight, excavation of the marina was set to commence. Then the contractor broke his leg and he withdrew his services, being unable to honour the excavation contract. The project looked as though it would falter over the Summer of 1972/1973.

¹ Excerpts from 'Building Kityikana' by Pauline Draper, NYS Quarterly, Autumn 2007

² Commodore Percy A Fraser, Power Boat and Yachting, November 1963

³ Neil Lacco interview with Wanda Stelmach, September 2011

⁴ Matthew Ingham interview with Wanda Stelmach, June 2012

⁵ Lindsay and Mary Talbot interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

⁶ The Newhaven Yacht Squadron, Notice to Provisional & Intended Members Circular, 1 February 1962

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Percy A Fraser, Power and Boating Magazine, November 1963

⁹ Herb Fowler interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2012

¹⁰ Percy A Fraser, Power and Boating Magazine, November 1963

¹¹ Lindsay and Mary Talbot Interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

¹² Hamish Hughes Interview Wanda Stelmach, June 2010

¹³ Percy A Fraser, Power and Boating Magazine, November 1963

¹⁴ Neil Lacco interview with Wanda Stelmach, September 2011

¹⁵ Herb Fowler interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2012

¹⁶ Lindsay and Mary Talbot Interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

¹⁷ Butch Legge Interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ John Mitchell Interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2009

²⁰ Neil Lacco interview with Wanda Stelmach, September 2011

²¹ Ken Lacco interview with Bernie Hayen, February 2001

²² Lindsay and Mary Talbot Interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

²³ Ken Lacco interview with Bernie Hayen, February 2001

²⁴ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

²⁵ Lindsay and Mary Talbot interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

²⁶ John Mitchell interview with Wanda Stelmach, June 2009

²⁷ Percy Fraser, Commodore, NYS Newsletter, May 1966

²⁸ Lindsay and Mary Talbot interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

²⁹ Hamish Hughes interview with Wanda Stelmach, June 2010

³⁰ John Mitchell interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2009

³¹ Ibid

³² Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

³³ Marge Horan interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009

³⁴ Hamish Hughes interview with Wanda Stelmach, June 2010

³⁵ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

³⁶ Percy A Fraser, Power and Boating Magazine, November 1963

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Marge Horan interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009

³⁹ Ian Jemmeson, NYS Newsletter, Spring 2002

⁴⁰ Marge Horan interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009

⁴¹ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

⁴² Lindsay and Mary Talbot interview with Bernie Hayen, December 2000

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Butch Legge Interview Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

⁴⁵ Ken Lacco interview with Bernie Hayen, February 2001

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Bob Ross, Power and Yachting Magazine, March 1964

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- ⁵⁰ Ibid
- ⁵¹ Ken Lacco interview with Bernie Hayen, February 2001
- ⁵² John Mitchell interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2009
- ⁵³ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010
- ⁵⁴ Hugh Stuchbery interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2011
- ⁵⁵ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010
- ⁵⁶ Arthur Foster interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009
- ⁵⁷ Ken Stuchbery interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2011
- ⁵⁸ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010
- ⁵⁹ Power Boat and Yachting Magazine, February 1966
- ⁶⁰ Percy Fraser, Commodore, NYS Newsletter, May 1966
- ⁶¹ Ibid
- ⁶² George Taylor, Rear Commodore, Typed Notes, NYS Archives
- ⁶³ Percy A Fraser Commodore, NYS Newsletter, May 1966
- ⁶⁴ Ibid
- ⁶⁵ Marge Horan interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009
- ⁶⁶ Arthur Foster interview with Wanda Stelmach, January 2009
- ⁶⁷ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010
- ⁶⁸ Hugh Stuchbery interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2011
- ⁶⁹ Percy Fraser, Commodore, NYS Newsletter, May 1966
- ⁷⁰ Matthew Ingham interview with Wanda Stelmach, June 2012
- ⁷¹ Hugh Stuchbery interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2011
- ⁷² Ian Jemmeson, Archivist, NYS Minutes, March 1972
- ⁷³ Neil Lacco interview with Wanda Stelmach, September 2011
- ⁷⁴ Ian Jemmeson, Archivist, NYS Minutes, May 1976
- ⁷⁵ Ian Jemmeson, NYS Quarterly, Spring 2002