

## D Carment

For the subject of this essay about the caricatures of L. Herbert Beecroft, I depart from my regular approach because the best source of information about David Carment is his descendants. I am grateful to Professor David Sulman Carment for kindly allowing me to reproduce these images and for lending his time to aid in the editing of this story. NOTE: the material has been edited from a biography originally published on the Australian National Maritime Museum blog on 13 March 2013 and is reproduced courtesy of The Australian National Maritime Museum. (Author Nicole Cama).

Beecroft's painting was completed in 1909 and is self-explanatory.

### The 'oldest yachtsman' in Sydney and his love for ATHENE

By all accounts David Carment was an energetic man, and one who never seemed to slow down with age. Described as 'young in spirits' David was '6 feet tall and well built'. Born in Comrie, Scotland in 1843, he came to Australia in 1872 after an actuary to the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) in Sydney met David while on a business trip to Britain and offered him a position with the company. During the voyage to Sydney, David stopped shaving and grew a long beard that he was to keep for the rest of his life, a steadfast traditionalist until the end.

On 27 January, 1876, he married Elizabeth Shallard at St. Philip's Church of England on Church Hill, Sydney. Together, they had five children of whom only two survived infancy – Elizabeth Edith and David Shallard. David Carment was considered one of Sydney's 'outstanding personalities' and served as Honorary Treasurer of the Royal Society of New South Wales as well as the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. He was also, it seems, a fine singer, and sang in the Philharmonic Society concerts in Town Hall as well as at the opening of the famously ill-fated Garden Palace Exhibition of 1879.



At the centre of this story for me, however, is the yacht David had built in 1905 and named *Athene*. Designed by E. W. Heywood and constructed out of New Zealand Kauri by W. M. Ford of Berry's Bay it was, according to his grandson Max Carment, 'fast and wet, 34 feet length, 8 feet 6 inches beam, and 6 foot draught, and with over 1 ton of lead external ballast'. An early mention of the yacht appears in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 April, 1906, saying a private yacht race was to take place between *Athene* and Mr. J Young's *Herreshoff*.

David revelled in Sydney's picturesque harbour and nowhere is this more evident than in the Carment family's private collection of photographs shot on board the yacht. The man with the long white beard appears dignified; beaming proudly in the yachting uniform he always wore as homage to the sport and its associated Clubs. In December 1913, he colourfully described what an average day sailing was like in a letter to his son, David Shallard, displaying just how ingrained the sport had become in his life:

“On Saturday I took the boat down the harbour with a crew of three ... We had a good sail in a fresh nor’easter and had a great view of the numerous open boat races. On Sunday it blew pretty nearly a “black nor’easter” in the afternoon...we went to North Harbour and had a truly great sail home round by Shark Island carrying full mainsail and jib. You see the lapse of years has not abated my love of a good breeze. I wonder if you’ll take to sailing again when you come back ... or whether you are tired of the finest sport in the world.”



David was rear commodore of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in 1919, vice commodore from 1920 to 1923 and a life member. He was also a member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club, and he lent his support to other Sydney sailing Clubs. Max Carment stated that during the 1920s and 1930s, David or his son would race *Athene* every Saturday. During the 1926 season, *Athene* ‘was the most successful boat, having won the Tempest Trophy, Jubilee Cup, Boomerang Cup.’ Her skipper, David Shallard, also won the captain’s trophy for the best record in “A” class. Each Sunday, David and his son would pack lunch for themselves, the crew and any other passengers, before walking to Sandeman’s boatshed in Careening Cove to launch their dinghy. Max described what followed:

“As soon as the anchor had been dropped, cushions were laid out on the cockpit seats and a folding table set up for lunch. Lunch was always the same – cold beef, potatoes boiled in their jackets in sea water, pickles, bread, butter and jam. If it was hot an awning was set up over the cockpit. After lunch Grandfather went down to one of the two bunks in the cabin for a nap, and most of the others rowed ashore for a walk on the beach, or in summer, a swim ... We usually returned to the moorings in Careening Cove about 5 pm.”



On 29 April 1934, only weeks after his last cruise on *Athene*, David died of bronchitis and myocarditis at the ripe old age of 90. The tributes poured in, including one from Air Vice Marshal Sir Philip Game, Governor of New South Wales, who referenced the sport David loved so much: ‘I always admired him so much in all the various roles in which I came across him and was amazed at the way in which he handled a boat in any and every weather.’ Another tribute piece was written by a relative and published in the *Northern Star* and summed up his character quite eloquently. Amy Shallard described him as a ‘courteous gentleman’ and, despite being the ‘oldest yachtsman in Australia’, she had ‘vivid recollections of beating up the Harbour in the teeth of a howling westerly gale with “the Skipper” (as he was affectionately called) at the tiller when he was over 80 years of age.’ Four to five hundred people attended the memorial service at St Peter’s Church in North Sydney.

*Athene* stayed with the family until 1950. Though it was still sailing in 2008, like many of its contemporaries, it was significantly altered from its original form. Like the photographs themselves, *Athene* represents the “golden olden days” of recreational boating in Sydney Harbour.

**Wednesday, 23rd May, 1934 - Northern Star Lismore**

*AN APPRECIATION*

*LATE DAVID CARMENT*

*There died recently at his home at North Sydney, **David Carment**, ex-actuary of the A.M.P. Society, in his 91st year, a courteous gentleman and very fine classical scholar. His father was a minister of the Free Church of Scotland and preached alternately in Scotch and Gaelic. Mr. Carment was educated in Comrie (where he was born) and Edinburgh, where he read Greek and Latin with the late Prof. Blackie, of Edinburgh University. Unlike most, he retained his knowledge and was as familiar up to the day of his death with the ancient classics in their original languages as the average man is with Dickens and Shakespeare.*

*He was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries at an early age and shortly afterwards became a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries. He arrived in Sydney in 1872 under engagement to the A.M.P. Society and on the retirement of Mr. Black, became Actuary.*

*Perhaps not the least of the factors which contributed to the wonderful success of the A.M.P. was the mathematical accuracy of the wide knowledge of life insurance of David Carment. He was very liberal and never refused help to any deserving case.*



*ACTIVE CHURCH WORKER*

*He was a member of the Presbyterian Church and took an active part in its management. He was also a member of the various scientific societies and at times an office holder. He represented Australia at various International Actuarial Conferences in the U.S.A. and England and was the author of one book and several pamphlets on actuarial matters. At the time of his death he was collecting data for another publication on insurance in England and America.*

*One of his hobbies was music and he sang in the Philharmonic Society concerts in the Sydney Town Hall. He also sang at the opening of the Garden Palace Exhibition. He had a genial disposition and contributed to the success of the celebration of the writers golden wedding, by singing "The Good Rhine Wine," when he was nearly 90 years of age. He was a member of the Australian Club for half a life time. He married Miss Elizabeth Shallard, who predeceased him three years ago, at the age of 83. He left one daughter, Miss Bessie Carment (who was studying music in Germany at the time of the war, and who was one of the last refugees to get away), and one son, David Shallard Carment, who had just taken his degree as "Naval Architect" in Glasgow and was brought out by the Federal Government for naval work at Cockatoo Island.*

*WONDERFUL VITALITY*

*He attributed his long life and wonderful vitality to regular habits. Cold plunge bath at 7.30 every morning, breakfast at 9 sharp, and if one was not down he wanted to know why. Coffee at 11 and then off to town and a call at the A.M.P. office where Mr. Carment's room was kept for him up to the time he died, although he retired 20 years before. He was a member of the Prince Alfred Yacht Club, Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and Sydney Amateur Sailing Club and was probably the oldest yachtsman in Australia. The writer has vivid recollections of beating up the Harbour in the teeth of a howling westerly gale with "the Skipper" (as he was affectionately called) at the tiller when he was over 80 years of age. He built the auxiliary cruiser "Athene" some 25 years ago and had a cabinet full of prizes. He was a most enthusiastic yachtsman and was noted for the fact that in spite of his years, he would "go out" in all weathers.*

*To sum up, he was one of the few surviving members of the Victorian "aristocracy of culture and learning," and the world is the poorer for his passing. In the words of Adam Lindsay Gordon, he is "A good man gone where we all must go." Four to five hundred friends attended the memorial service at the Presbyterian Church. It was conducted by four clergymen (personal friends). He was buried alongside his wife at Gore Hill and the funeral was a mile long.*

A. SHALLARD. Boonah, Queensland.

**September, 2015**