



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

**“Read all about it!”**

**The origins and early history of the Squadron – as reported in the Press of the day**

### **Part 11: Dr. Milford and his Yachts.**

DOCTOR FREDERICK MILFORD was the brother of Herman Milford, one of the original signatories when the club was formed in 1863. At the time, he was part-owner of the yacht Eclipse. He was the son of Judge Samuel Milford, a Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, who had arrived in Sydney from England in 1843, and had been resident Judge at Moreton Bay (Brisbane) from 1856 to 1859. At that time Dr. Milford, newly graduated in medicine from St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, had begun practice in Brisbane. Whilst there he had sailed to Rockhampton in a yawl and thus gained experience of ocean yachting. He had settled in medical practice in Sydney in 1860, and was an enthusiastic yachtsman of whom it was said in later years, “no more ardent lover of the sport ever held a tiller”. He was made a Life Member of the RSYS and died in 1902.

### **Saturday, 30th January, 1897 – The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser**

Dr. Milford is a veteran whose name is known everywhere in Australian yachting circles. He was a good swimmer before he was seven years old, and his proficiency has since saved his own and other lives. The first Anniversary Regatta he recollects was that of 1841, when Macquarie and Dawes points were thronged with sightseers. Petrel, Friendship, Sylph, and Templar were the chief competitors. The Templar was a sliding-gunter boat, a rig Dr. Milford considers to have been very graceful. There was no gaff to the mainsail, which was continuous from the boom to the head of the top mast. The trouble was that when it was desired to reef while under way the topmast had to be lowered and the reef points tied, a difficult operation in a heavy squall. So, 10 years after Dr. Milford first saw it, the sliding gunter had gone out of use. Dr. Milford's first experiences were with a whaleboat, with rudder, mainsail, jib, and jigger, belonging to his father. She had as crew the father, four sons, and Mr. A. O. Moriarty, of the Lands Department. Centreboards were then unknown, and as the whaler could not beat, the crew had some exciting pulls and sails in her. A neat 17ft. boat, with sprit sail and jib, was the senior Milford's next craft. Dr. Milford and a younger brother had an amusing experience in this boat once. They took it in a strong south easter to visit H.M.S. Herald (on which was Lieutenant, now Captain Hickson) and were beating out of the bay close reefed, and without a centreboard were naturally having a very wet time, when a man-o-war launch ran down and hailed them to lay to. As they took no notice the launch came up, a sailor jumped aboard, whipped sail off the small boat, and in spite of the protests of the boys, they were taken in tow to the warship, where they were detained all night and hospitably treated, the officers explaining that they were "not going to look quietly on while people drowned themselves." Comedy changed to tragedy with an ill-designed five-tonner, which an Indian officer, Captain Grainger, here on furlough, sold for a nominal sum to Dr. Milford.



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

She had a habit of missing stays at critical times. Mr. T. Plunkett, nephew of the then Attorney-General, borrowed the cranky craft, put in a bigger mast and sails on the advice of a professional, and five started on a cruise in her. A southerly caught her between the Heads. The hull, with the mast broken short off, was found next day, but no bodies were ever recovered. That was in 1850.

In 1851 Dr. Milford went to study at St. Bartholomew's, and did some boating in England. Returning, he began to practise at Brisbane, and when the northern goldfields broke out, started for Rockhampton in a cranky yawl-rigged craft, 50ft. long, with 2ft. 6in. draught. There were a crowd of passengers, and it took them an adventurous month to do the journey.

About 1874 the doctor bought the 16ft. centreboard racing boat Young Jack and raced her repeatedly in the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club against chiefly the Julia, of Mr. Soutar, and a boat owned by Mr. Doyle. His enthusiasm became so great that he had six different masts and suits of sails for this craft. Once, in a nor'easter, with the late Mr. Deitrich as one of the crew, the boat capsized twice without serious consequence, but in course of time Dr. Milford tired of these unpremeditated baths, and taking a five-tonner design of "parabolic construction" from Mr. Dixon Kemp's work, he had the Doris built by Mr. George Ellis, and raced her from 1880 to 1884. She raced the Australian, Ione, and Mabel, and won several prizes here, but her chief win was at Melbourne, where her owner beat 16 local boats with her for a £50 prize.

In 1883 the doctor built the Sao on another Kemp model, and she won three races out of five in 1884, and five out of seven in 1885, and won many a race till she was cut down by the steamer Pearl while becalmed off Balmain on 21st April, 1888. Three ladies were amongst those on board, and all were got on to the steamer. The Sao sank in 4 ½ fathoms, was got up three days later, repaired, and is as strong as ever. Her races included one to Wollongong and back, and to Barrenjoey, and the winning of the Gascoigne and Dunbar cups. Dr. Milford also possessed the Waitangi and the Iolanthe for a time.

Dr. Milford's next boat was the Isea, designed by Mr. W. Reeks and built by Mr. W. Ford, and he regards her as the most elegant model, and as good a sea boat as any in the port. Her tonnage is 9.97, and while he had her Dr. Milford made several trips to Port Stephens, Jervis Bay, the Hawkesbury, and Port Hacking, and won numerous races. She was sold last year to Mr. Griffiths, of the P.A.Y.C. Dr. Milford was for two years vice-commodore of the P.A.Y.C. and for eight years commodore and has been a member both of the S. A.S.C. and the Sydney Dingy Club.

He has now given up yachting, and contents himself with sailing an eight-foot canvas dingy and pulling a light skiff. As an old medical man, he says, "I am satisfied that yachting as practised by Sydney yachtsmen is one of the most health-giving and pleasant sports which we possess. The variety of exquisite scenery in every part of Port Jackson must be of great benefit in quieting irritable nerves and giving tone to the system, while the pure air found on the forest-clad shores of our bays acts as a general tonic to the debilitated anaemic patient. Unfortunately, the carrying it out requires a very well-lined pocket, which every member of the community does not possess."

Points to note:



### ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

- “Sao” is still around and turns up sometimes at the S.A.S.C. gaffers day.
- It was common for yachtsmen to be members of both the RSY and the P. A.Y.C (now the Royal Prince Alfreds). In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, to race with either club, you had to be a member and this was not overturned until 1920. The race programmes were designed in consultation so that they did not overlap.



LATE DR. MILFORD,



*Sao*



ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON