

**Presentation by David Kellett AM
22 Jun 2022**

Report by Stephen Thomas



David Kellett AM, flanked by John Taylor and David Henry

On the shortest day of the year, 105 attendees visited our Club to hear Squadron Member David Kellett talk about the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race from 1968 to 2021. 80 guests stayed for dinner afterwards.

David began his talk by declaring he had been lucky to have the sailing career he has experienced. He started at MHC as a 15 year old but his ambition from an early age was to sail in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. He achieved this as a 20 year old on Charlie Middleton's Swanson designed, Carmen class yacht, *Calliope* in 1968. The following year he was invited by Boy Messenger to join the *Grete II* training squad with Alan Payne, and this was the start of life-long friendships fostered through sailing.

In the ensuing years, he was invited to sail on a number of yachts owned by passionate sailors, in an era when the Sydney to Hobart was primarily a Corinthian event. The owners mentored David and allowed him to hone his racing skills. These yachts included *Bacardi* with Peter Cole in 1970 (they encountered a 70 knot gale.) In 1971 on *Koomooloo* and in 1972 again on *Bacardi* (they suffered a broken mast.) That same year, he was invited to sail with the American team in the One Ton Cup Championship. Here he met the love of his life and soul mate, and moved to the USA for two years. While living there, he sailed with the US Southern Cross Team and was Liaison for the America's Cup challenge organising accommodation and other services for the Australian team.



On returning to Australia, David was able to team with Bernard Lewis on *Gretel II* which had been modified for ocean racing, and competed in the 1978, '79 and '80 Sydney to Hobart Races. Bernard, who was not a sailor but loved to participate in the races, purchased *Siska IV*, renamed *Vengeance*, achieved line honours in 1981 and was fourth to three other Maxis (*Condor*, *Apollo* and *Helsal*) in 1982. *Vengeance* was third in 1983 and second in 1984 to Peter Blake's *Lion New Zealand*.

Bernard Lewis decided to upgrade *Vengeance* and David became Project Manager for the building of *Sovereign*, an 80 foot David Pedrick design in aluminium, in Mona Vale. While *Sovereign* was being built, he sailed in the 1985 Sydney to Hobart on the South African boat *Rampant*. 'A flyer off the wind but sailed like a cork upwind.' *Rampant* was heavily penalised for being OCS at the start, giving David his worst Sydney Hobart result.

Sovereign, although forced to retire with gear damage in her first race in 1986, became a world champion boat under David's guidance. In 1987 she won both line and handicap honours in the Sydney to Hobart, the first Australian boat to do so. *Sovereign* campaigned overseas and won the world Maxi championship and was later sold overseas.

David continued to campaign big boats including *Condor* (now named *Condor of Currabubla*) and *Kookaburra*, Iain Murray's America's Cup defender off Fremantle.

In 1997 he teamed with Charles Curran on *Sydney* and completed his 26th Sydney to Hobart on this boat in 2000. He continues to sail *Sydney* with Charles in the RSYS Saturday inshore races.

After the 1998 race, David became involved in race communications on the radio relay vessel. In 2005 the Winning family gifted their motor cruiser *JBW* to the CYCA for the Sydney to Hobart race; David has been responsible for race communications on this boat ever since.

Although he did not talk about it, David has been heavily involved in sailing administration at club, national and international levels. He is a Life member of Australian Sailing and was awarded an AM for services to sailing. David served as Vice President and Treasurer of World Sailing for 10 years and was awarded the prestigious Beppe Croce Trophy.

David claims he was lucky to achieve his sailing results ... but surely it his sailing, leadership and communication skills which have resulted in this luck.