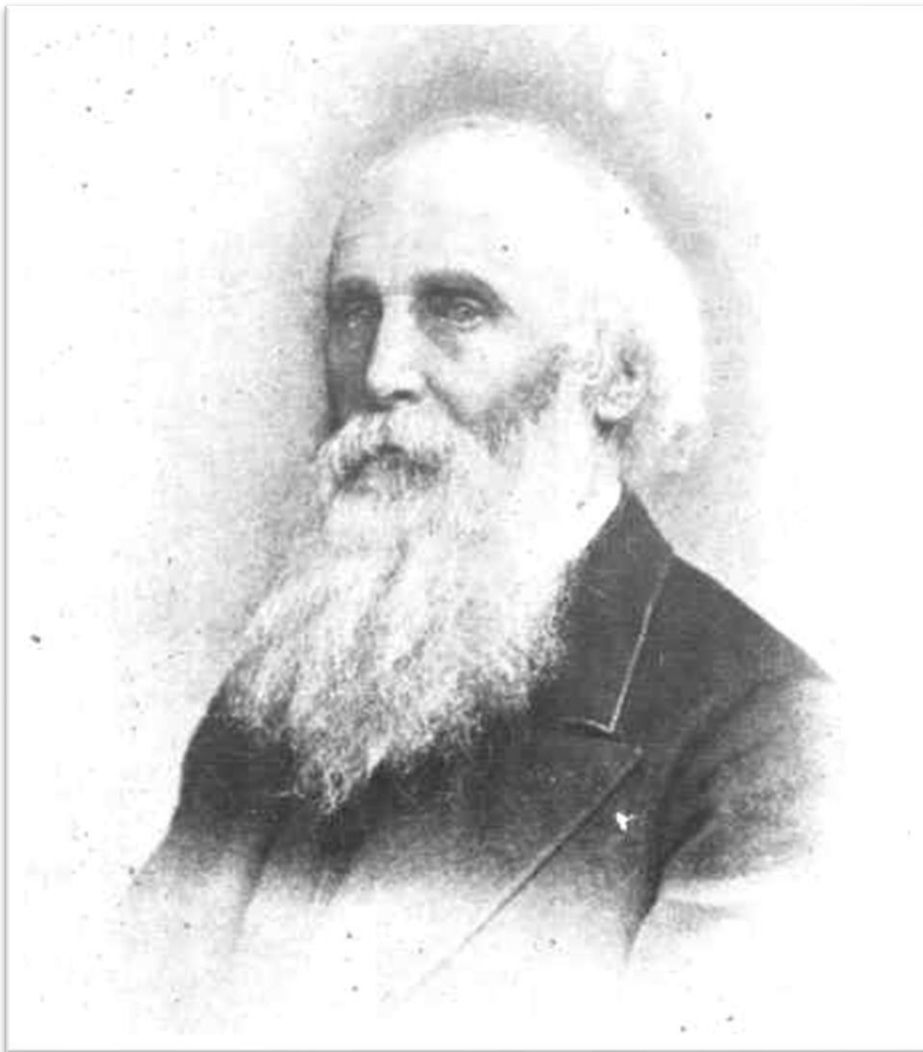




ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

Commodores of the Squadron By John Maclurcan

2. James Milson Jnr. 1867



Sydney Sails

James Milson, Junior, was appointed commodore in succession to Walker. He accepted the position reluctantly because of the pressure of his business interests, and, for the same reason, held the position for only a few months, when he resigned in favour of Henry C. Dangar. Milson declined a reappointment as vice-commodore, and that position went to Charles Parbury, the owner of Xarifa.



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Tuesday, 13th January, 1903 – Sydney Morning Herald

DEATH OF MR. JAMES MILSON.

An old and respected colonist in the person of Mr. James Milson passed away quietly yesterday morning at his residence, Elamang, Milson's Point, in his 89th year. Mr. Milson was a native of the colony, and was born at the Field of Mars, near Ryde, on the Parramatta River, in November 25, 1814. He was baptised in the old St. Philip's Church by Archdeacon Cowper, the father of the late Dean of Sydney. The major portion of his life was spent at Milson's Point, North Sydney, which was named after his father. Mr. James Milson was educated at the school in Phillip-street, conducted by the late Dr. Halloran, and of which Mr. Cape was assistant master. At the age of 15 years, he made his first entry into commercial life in the office of Messrs. Aspinall, Brown, and Co., of Charlotte-place. Later he became a partner in the firm of Messrs. Robert Campbell, jun., and Co., of Bligh-street, upon the site of the present Union Club. Mr. Milson's was a familiar figure in commercial circles, and he occupied many important positions. He was a director of the Bank of New South Wales, of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, of the old Australian Steam Navigation Company, of the Waratah Coal Company, and other public companies. Mr. Milson took an active part in the progress and development of North Sydney, and it was he who inaugurated the old Milson's Point ferry, which was subsequently sold to the North Shore Ferry Company, and more recently merged into the present Sydney Ferries, Limited.

In all other matters affecting the advancement of the district in which he made his home and with which he was so closely connected, he took an abiding interest, and in the cause of charity he was ever foremost.

Mr. Milson was also a large owner of station property in Queensland and was for many years in possession of the well-known Wolfgang and Corana stations in the northern colony. At the time of his death, he owned Spring Vale and Herbert Vale stations, both of which are in Queensland.

Mr. Milson was twice married. On July 22, 1852, he married Marianne Elizabeth, daughter of Captain Grimes, a son of the first Surveyor-General. He had issue three sons and four daughters. His first wife died in November, 1864. In November, 1869, Mr. Milson married Anna Stewart, sister of Mr. Neil Stewart, of Parramatta, but who died on December 10, 1888.

Of his three sons Mr. Alfred G. Milson is an alderman of the borough of North Sydney and a well-known member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and the owner of the crack yacht Era. Messrs. Arthur and Leslie Milson are engaged in pastoral pursuits in Queensland. His three surviving daughters are Mrs. W. Alison (wife of Mr. Alison, secretary of the Taxpayers' Union), Mrs. Otto Bauer (wife of Mr. Bauer, of Messrs. Rabone, Feez and Co.), and Mrs. Prosper Williams (wife of the well-known solicitor and yachtsman).

In yachting circles Mr. James Milson was a very old identity and a prominent figure among yachtsmen in the early 30's. He may be described as the "doyen" of Australian yachting. He remembered regattas as far back as 1834, at which period they were got up among the ships' boats, which were provided with temporary keels to increase their stability. In 1836 there were several small yachts afloat and an informal association of yachtsmen, who flew a flag much like that of the Royal Sydney. It was the first approach to a club in Australasia. The boats were all open and known as first-class sailing boats in the regattas of the day. The association consisted of Messrs. Burton



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Bradley, with the Swallow; John Ritchie, Ariel; James Milson, Sophia; Elyard, Wave; and George Macpherson. Mr. Bradley was commodore.

Mr. Milson used to say that in those days Good Friday and Christmas Day were the only recognised public holidays. In 1837 Mr. Milson entered his first yacht, the Sophia, for the first Anniversary Regatta organised to celebrate the forty-ninth anniversary of the colony. There were nine boats in the first-class boat race, and an interesting contest resulted. After that Mr. Milson gave up boating for a time, but in 1841 he resumed the pastime and raced with the Friendship, a famous 12 ton decked boat, built especially for him by Mr. George Green, of Lavender Bay. The craft carried all before her and was afterwards fitted with a cabin and used for cruising on the coast. In her fastest days she was sliding-gunter rigged. Later her rig was altered to a cutter but under the new rig in her first contest she suffered defeat at the hands of Mr. George Thornton's Champion.

Mr. Milson then made a trip to England, and in 1855 returned with the Mischief, an 11-ton cutter. She was the first English yacht in Port Jackson and marked a completely new departure in style and rig, so far as the colonies were concerned. She had won many races in England, and for many years continued her victorious career here. In 1856-57 a formal club was formed, with Mr. Hutchinson Brown, police magistrate, as commodore. Then came the Sydney Yacht Club, and subsequently the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, with Mr. Howell, an old English gentleman, as secretary. Mr. Milson took a leading part in the formation of the association, which boldly applied for the honour of the white ensign but got instead the blue. In 1859 he built the Era, which came out in frame-work from England. Mr. James Milson was the first vice-commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron.

Mr. Milson during the past four or five years relinquished his business connections but was able up to within the last three or four weeks to visit the city. His illness, in which he was attended by Drs. Isbister and Chisholm, was of brief duration and he passed quietly away about 9.30 yesterday morning. By his death is removed another of the few remaining links of the chain connecting the history of the past with the present, and the news of his demise was received with regret by a large circle of friends. As a mark of respect to his memory the flags on the boats of the Sydney Ferries, Limited, were yesterday flying at half-mast, and many other evidences of the esteem in which he was held were manifest.

The funeral leaves Elamang, Milson's Point, at 3.30 p.m. to-day, for St. John's Church, Milson's Point, thence to St. Thomas' cemetery, where the interment will be made.

Monday, 19th January, 1903 – Sydney Morning Herald

THE LATE MR. JAMES MILSON.

MEMORIAL SERVICE.

At St. John's Church, Milson's Point, yesterday a memorial service was held in connection with the death of Mr James Milson, who up to the date of his last illness was a regular attendant at the church. The altar was draped in purple, and the service was attended by a large congregation. Specially appropriate hymns and psalms were rendered, Mr Sherlock presiding at the organ. The rector (Rev. H. C. Vindin) preached, and took as his text the words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you if a man keeps my saying he shall never see death," St. John viii, 51. He said that in times of great joy their sky was often clouded, and by the death of Mr. James Milson a heavy cloud of sorrow had arisen upon them. They deplored his death, but in the simple manner of his life he was before them he would be the first to say, "Do not flatter me." He (the preacher) could, however, refer to



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his true and hearty service in God, and as a grand and noble servant of Christ. Often had he offered to conduct a service at the home of the late Mr. Milson, but that gentleman had always replied that so long as God permitted him to walk to Church, he would do so. In spite of his great age, he was a frequent communicant at the 8 o'clock service, an example that might well be followed by others of the parish, many of whom considered that in attending the evening service they fulfilled their duty. Let their sympathy with the bereaved go further than draping the church and singing special hymns and let them offer up prayers for the comfort of the bereaved relatives and show that they had so grasped the truth of universal brotherhood that they could weep when others wept and rejoice in their rejoicing. It was for them to deplore the death, but for the departed it was all gain as he had reaped the fullness of joy and the pleasures of eternity. With a true belief in Christ death was swallowed up in victory and opened to His faithful soldiers an upper and higher state.

Wednesday, 21st January, 1903 – The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser

The Late Mr. James Milson

The death on the 12th instant of Mr. James Milson in his 89th year was reported in last week's "Mail." Mr. Milson was a native of the colony, and was born at the Field of Mars, near Ryde, on the Parramatta River, on November 25, 1814. He was an earnest worker in all of the many vocations and avocations with which his name was for nearly 70 years identified. A merchant, a bank director, a director of navigation and sugar companies, a pioneer in Sydney's steam ferry service, a pastoralist, an energetic yachtsman, and a liberal giver and worker in charitable causes. Such is the record of the life of the man whose body now rests in St. Thomas' Cemetery, North Sydney. At the graveside Archdeacon Langley spoke of Mr. Milson's character as that of a Christian gentleman—one who left the community poorer by his death. Mr. Milson's early days were not without some memorable experiences.

When a small boy, living with his father and mother on the Field of Mars, young Milson had rather an exciting experience. The house was bailed up one evening by bushrangers. Mrs. Milson went to the door, and the leader demanded that all the spirits and firearms should be handed out. "They were going to Broken Bay to get a ship," they said, "and sail back to England." In the company was a former lieutenant of the Navy, who had been convicted on a certain charge, and he was going to navigate the ship. The chief of the gang made this explanation to Mrs. Milson, and then said that they did not intend to do any harm to her, because Mr. Milson never ill-treated his servants. Mrs. Milson replied that all she had in the house was a bottle of brandy, and she wanted it for medicine. The band then went away without attempting to take anything. They were afterwards captured—with the exception of the ex-lieutenant—and all hanged on Gallows Hill, Lower George-street.

"Pinchgut" was riot always the fort that it appears now. It was once a pretty little island, on which James Milson and others were accustomed to gather five corners, a native fruit well known to Australians. When the Richmond River was discovered James Milson's father and others chartered a vessel at Sydney to visit the place. They made their visit, and after examination decided not to have anything to do with it and returned to Sydney. On that occasion James Milson, sen., displayed bad judgment, but it is understood that he had to go by majority rule.

It will, no doubt, be difficult for people nowadays to believe that a steamer ever took two days to proceed from Neutral Bay to Parramatta. Such is the case, however. The first steamer, a stern wheeler, was built in Neutral Bay, and after everything had been got ready, she started on her trial



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trip, and reached Parramatta two days later. It appears that sufficient allowance had not been made for "patches" up the river, and the new boat now and again got hard and fast on a bank and had to wait for the tide.

The old fig tree at Milson's Point, which was blown down the night before Federation Day, was regarded as an old friend by Mr. Milson—when he saw it blown down, he remarked, "That's a bad omen—federation won't be a success." Many years ago, a blackfellows' fight was witnessed on the green near the same tree. The Hunter River natives came down to Sydney and met the local blacks in conflict. The "visitors," in order to cross the Hawkesbury, because there was no bridge, made canoes, and then ferried themselves across, and came on to Sydney. The battle lasted for some hours, but, as was usual, very little damage resulted. There was much noise, and, according to Mr. Milson, only one man was hurt.

Whenever the deceased gentleman discussed old Sydney with anyone, he was apt to tell the story of the boyhood boating days. They got the boat up to a spot where Bridge-street crosses now and landed. They then crossed over the little bridge which old residents will remember. One of his amusing yarns was one about the officers of the navy, represented at Sydney in those days. On one occasion a ship was discovered on fire in the Cove. It was towed out below Pinchgut, and the man-o'-war tried to sink her. The first shot fired, carried away the ship's topsail yard, a mark very much above the hull of the ship. On another occasion the man-o'-war's men were having shot practice, firing at floating targets off Kirribilli. Instead of finding the targets, some of the marksmen sent their shells into Mr. Govett's (the old-time surveyor), camp, and frightened everybody. The camp was situated ever so much higher than the waters of Kirribilli.

There were no sharks in Sydney Harbour when James Milson was young, and it was a common thing for men and boys to jump in on Fort Macquarie and swim across to Kirribilli. The monsters were attracted to Sydney Harbour, he always asserted, by the establishment of the whaling depots in Mosman, Neutral, and Berry's Bays.

Mr. Milson was a fast friend of the statesman Wentworth, and did not believe in payment of members. He was a Conservative in many respects, but his Liberal views on other matters were well known. He was also a Low Churchman. Adverting to old times, it may be stated that during the time when flour was scarce, people had rather a bad time. Mr. Milson could remember when, in one day, corn was reaped, threshed, ground, and eaten as bread. Flour was very scarce at that time. He could also recall to his memory, during those trying times, when his father sold cattle to the Government and had them returned as rations for the servants.

He could also tell a great many interesting facts concerning the early law grants. Another story he could tell was about a certain visit his mother made to Sydney. She saw posted up, "Tea, only 10s per pound." She purchased a pound but found out afterwards that it was no good. She went back the next day and interviewed the seller. The reply received was, "Well, what can you expect at the price."

He had been a member of the first volunteer force in North Sydney, a regiment which after wards became well-known as the St. Leonards Regiment, under the late Captain Guise. His father before him had been a member of the Duke of Rutland Volunteers, raised in England at the time of the



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French scare in 1798 or 1799. When his father left Government House to take up his residence on the North Shore (it was not known as North Sydney then), James Milson went to live at the officers' quarters, Fort-street, with Dr. Ivory, of the 3rd Buffs. It is only within recent years that the old building was demolished. The doctor was a great friend of young Milson, and also a benefactor. The boy lived with the doctor there, to enable him to attend school in Phillip-street, there being no communication with North Shore. Colonel Cameron, with his family, also lived in this place, and he took great interest in the new member of the household.

After leaving the Phillip-street school, Mr. Milson made his entry into commercial life, having accepted a position with Messrs. Aspinall, Burns, and Company, merchants. At this time there were only two other firms of the kind in Sydney. He remained there for a few years and then joined Robert Campbell, jun., and Company; afterwards becoming a member of the firm. They were merchants, and owned whalers, and other ships, which traded home. Part of the office still remains, and the old store is portion of the back premises of the Union Club.

James Milson married in 1852 and went for a trip to England and Europe. He journeyed by the steamer Chusan. Lord Tennyson, Governor-General of the Australian Commonwealth, might have got the font-name of Alfred, instead of Hallam, after all. Why he did not get Alfred Mr. Charles Brookfield has lately told us in his memoirs. As his father and his god-father, Hallam, were walking together to the font, the latter asked what the boy's name was going to be. "Well," said the father, "we were thinking of calling him 'Hallam.'"

"Why not 'Alfred'?" his godfather suggested modestly.

"Aye," said the father, "but suppose he should turn out a fool!"