



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

### Commodores of the Squadron By John Maclurcan

#### 7 George Alfred Milson (1889-1893)



#### **Sydney Sails (1876)**

Another and much younger enthusiastic yachtsman was Alfred G. Milson, grandson of the pioneer James Milson, Senior, and son of the Squadron's first vice-commodore and second commodore, James Milson Junior.

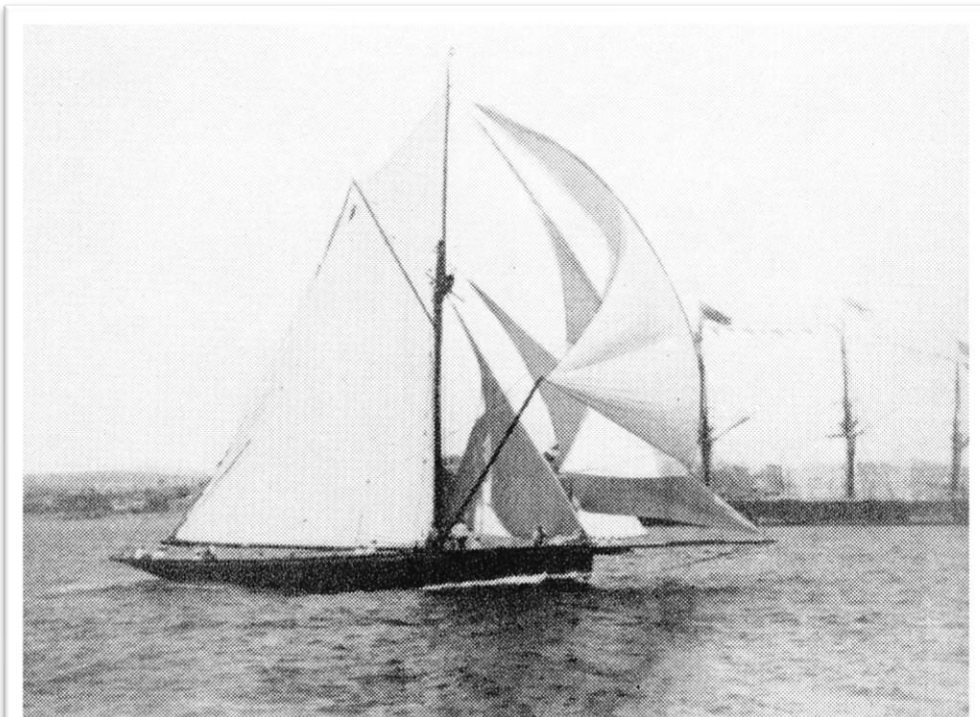
Alfred Milson in 1876 purchased the 9-ton cutter *Ione*, which had been built in 1867 by W. Langford for J. G. Ross. Her youthful new owner reconditioned her in what was then a novel way at Sydney, by ballasting her entirely with sheet-lead on the outside of the keel. In earlier years, yachts had been ballasted only with sandstone and gravel taken aboard. F. J. Jackson's *Gitana*, one of the foundation yachts of the Squadron in 1862, was the first in Sydney to use "outside" ballast, but she also carried some ballast inside. This practice was followed by other yachts at Sydney, but *Ione* was the first to be ballasted entirely outside. The experiment proved successful when *Ione*, with Alfred Milson at her helm, and his younger brother Arthur in the crew, in November 1876 won the prize in her class at the



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Balmain Regatta (Snail's Bay)—a brilliant debut to the yachting careers of these two Milsons of the younger generation.

Their grandfather, James Milson, Senior, had died at “Carabella”, near the shore of Careening Cove, Kirribilli, on 25th October 1872, aged eighty- eight, after a residence of sixty-six years in New South Wales. Milson’s Point, of which the native name was “Kirribilli” or “Kiarabilli”, had been so named because Milson, Senior’s, original home, built in 1824 but destroyed by fire in 1826, was on its shore (near the present-day north-east pylon of the Harbour Bridge). His son-in-law, William Shairp, had built “Carabella” in 1829.



**ALFRED MILSON’S *ERA***  
Built 1887, to the design of Walter Reeks,  
she won the Centennial Cup in 1888

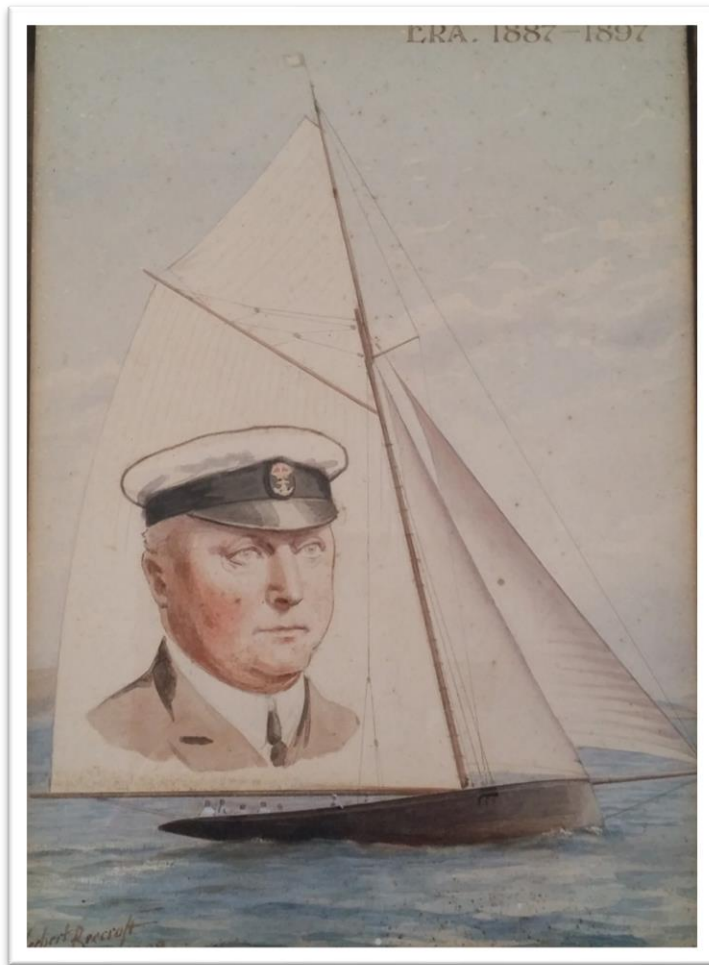
### **Sydney Sails (1886)**

“The first yacht to be designed and built at Sydney—and, it was asserted, anywhere in the world—under the load waterline and sail-area rule, was now (September 1887) laid down on the stocks at George Effis’s yard, Balmain, to the design of Walter Reeks, for her owner, **Vice-Commodore Alfred Milson**. She was to be named ‘Era’, in honour of the old-time yacht of that name which had been owned by Alfred Milson’s father, James Milson, Junior, thirty years previously.



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The new 'Era' was the biggest sailing yacht until then built in Australia. With a load waterline of 58 feet, and a sail-area of 4,191 square feet, she would rate as 41 tons under the new rule, or as 40 tons if less sail were carried, since she was designed to be rigged either as a cutter or as a yawl. Under this new rule the word "ton" was not strictly applicable, and the word "rating" was more appropriate. 'Era' would be rated as 53 tons under the old "Customs Tonnage" system, which considered overall length, beam, and depth; or as 38 tons under the "1730 Rule" which considered only load waterline and beam. Her great sail area of more than 4,000 square feet was therefore a penalizing factor in her rating in relation to yachts rated under the "1730 Rule", but that factor in itself demonstrated that the new rule was equitable.



Alfred Milson had 'Era' built as a successor to 'Waitangi' specifically in the hope of putting an end to the long supremacy of 'Magic' and of winning the Centennial Cup and the other big challenge races of the centenary year, and also of eventually winning intercolonial races against 'Janet' and other Victorian yachts. Walter Reeks, who had not only rebuilt 'Waitangi', but had sailed regularly in her as a crew member, incorporated in the design of 'Era' the latest ideas of yacht architecture, which he himself defined at this time as "minimum of wet surface, maximum displacement to wet surface, and, above all, harmony of parts." But, to these requirements of hull design, sail-area was now added as a vital consideration."

### Friday, 22nd March, 1912 - Sydney Morning Herald

NORTH SYDNEY FINANCES.

PRESENTATION TO MAYOR.

A representative gathering met at the North Sydney School of Arts last night to do honour to **Alderman Alfred George Milson**, late Mayor of North Sydney. For three years in succession Alderman Milson was elected Mayor and his administration of the affairs of the municipality was so successful that the citizens determined to mark their appreciation of his valuable services in a practical manner. As one of the visitors, the Mayor of Mosman put it. "If all mayors, instead of increasing the burdens of taxation, and without involving the municipality in new borrowings carried out the





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necessary work, and yet reduced the loan indebtedness by £10,000, they would certainly be deserving of public eulogy.”

Mr. J. Duggan the chairman of the committee appointed by the citizens to publicly recognise Mr. Milson's efforts presided and the attendance included prominent residents, several aldermen and those engaged in the professional and industrial life of the district.

Ald. E. Clark as the oldest alderman was entrusted with the duty of presenting Ald. Milson with a handsome illuminated address expressive of the ability and distinction which had marked his performance of public duty during the time he had occupied the mayoral chair and the thanks of the citizens for the assistance given by him and Mrs. Milson to all charitable and social movements. He indicated the high estimate entertained by the ratepayers of Mr. Milson's work in advancing the interests of the municipality.

Mr. Milson made an appropriate response.

### **Sydney Sails (1928)**

At the peak of the sailing season, on 20th February 1928, **Alfred G. Milson** died, aged seventy-one years. He had been a member of the Squadron for fifty years, had been vice-commodore for seven years (1882-9) and commodore for four years (1890-4) and had also been for several years Mayor of North Sydney. Throughout his life he had been an active sailing yachtsman, in his earlier years in races, and later as starter, handicapper or judge in Squadron racing events. The Squadron recorded in its minutes “deep appreciation of the services of one whose foresight resulted in the establishment of the Club House at Kirribilli, whose knowledge and skill as a yachtsman will be always traditional in the Squadron, and whose personality and good comradeship will be remembered with affection.” To perpetuate his memory, two members of the Squadron, Q. Deloitte and C. J. Henty, presented a trophy, the Alfred Milson Memorial Cup, for which an annual competition was begun in the 1931-2 season.”

### **Thursday, 26th January, 1928 - Sydney Morning Herald**

MR. ALFRED G. MILSON.

SUDDEN DEATH OF FAMOUS YACHTSMAN.

**Mr. Alfred G. Milson**, chairman of the Anniversary Day Regatta committee, died suddenly yesterday morning at the rooms of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, at Kirribilli. He was one of the most famous yachtsmen of Australia, and a leading figure in the commercial and philanthropic life of Sydney and of New South Wales.

Milson's Point was named after his grandfather, and the Milson family has been directly associated with the public and business life of Australia since the days of Governor King.

James Milson, the founder of the family fortunes in Australia, arrived in Sydney in 1804 as a free citizen, with letters of Introduction from prominent public men in England to Governor King. He was the first person to settle on the north shore of Sydney Harbour, and his home was the first building erected in that part of the colony. During the administration of Governor Macquarie, Mr. Milson "was given" a re-grant of what is known in the official records as "Ryan's grant," which included the area from the Milson's Point Station to the Kirribilli Point.

The father of Mr. A. G. Milson, also called James, after his father, was born on the orchard holding at the Field of Mars on November 25, 1814. He eventually acquired large pastoral interests in Queensland. He was a friend of W. C. Wentworth, a member of the first volunteer force in New South Wales, a director of the Bank of New South Wales, of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the A.S. N. Company, the Waratah Coal Company, and many other commercial undertakings.

Mr. Alfred G. Milson was born 72 years ago. He was educated at the Sydney Grammar School. After leaving school he was for some years an employee of the Bank of New South Wales. Later he joined his father in business and was associated with him in the management of the pastoral properties in Queensland. Returning to Sydney he was for many years the manager of the Union Mortgage and



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Agency Co., Limited. He resigned that position in order that he might give more time to public matters and to aquatic sports, in which he took the keenest delight as did his father.

At the time of his death yesterday, Mr. A. G. Milson was deputy chairman of the Permanent Trustee Company, and a director of the Australian Gas Light Company, the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation (Australian branch), and the Sydney Exchange Company. He was associated with the Bank of New South Wales as one of the auditors since 1888.

### PHILANTHROPIC WORK.

In recent years Mr. A. G. Milson gave a great deal of time to social and philanthropic work. During the war period he took a great interest in the organisation of "Jack's Day," which resulted in £108,000 being raised for the benefit of the men of the Royal Australian Navy, and of the mercantile marine.

The Navy League claimed a great deal of Mr. Milson's attention, he being one of the founders of the movement in Sydney. He was honorary secretary of the league from its inception.

Another object of Mr. Milson's enthusiastic attention was the work which has been done for naval men at Royal Naval House since its foundation nearly 50 years ago. At the time of his death, he was honorary secretary, treasurer and one of the trustees. Mr. Milson was for many years a member of the old Naval Brigade, from which he retired in 1900 with the rank of commander. He was also a member of the board of the Royal Shipwreck Relief Society and of the New South Wales Ambulance services. He was a foundation member of the Australian Pioneers Club, a member of the Union Club since 1882, and of the Royal Sydney Golf Club.

### YACHTING INTERESTS.

The interest of the family in yachting went back to the early days of his boyhood. His father was one of the founders of the present Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, which was established on July 8, 1862, but his interest in sailing went back much earlier than that. In the year 1836 the late James Milson was instrumental in founding the first boating Club on Sydney Harbour. Mr. A. G. Milson was the winner of many historic yachting events. The first official Interstate yachting race took place on Sydney Harbour on January 15, 22 and 29, 1887. Mr. A. G. Milson in his 'Waitangi' won the first and second races against the Victorian representative, Sir William Clarke's 'Janet', and the other representative of New South Wales, then the property of the commodore of the squadron, the late Sir James R. Fairfax. In the following year, Mr. A. G. Milson sent his yacht 'Era' to Port Phillip, where it was successful in winning the big prize which included a gold anchor valued at £100 and £400 cash.



ANNIVERSARY REGATTA.



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Mr. A. G. Milson was vice-commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron from 1882 to 1889, and commodore from 1889 to 1893. Since then he had been actively engaged with the organisation of the various yachting fixtures held on Sydney Harbour. He was for many years vice-president and treasurer of the Anniversary Regatta Committee, and three years ago succeeded Judge Backhouse as president of the committee. He took the keenest interest in the arrangements for the Anniversary Regatta, which will be held today, and had looked forward with eager anticipation to presiding at the various functions to be held in connection with this historic event.

### MUNICIPAL SUCCESS.

The late Mr. Milson always exhibited a keen interest in the local government of North Sydney, and for many years took a practical part in the affairs of the municipality. From 1900 to 1913 he was an alderman of the North Sydney Council and for four years was Mayor of the municipality.

### JUDGE BACKHOUSE'S APPRECIATION.

Judge Backhouse, who had been a life-long friend of the late Mr. Milson, said last evening that Mr. Milson was a boating man of the best type. Only last Monday the late Mr. Milson was in charge of the steamer following the Syonara Cup race. "The Anniversary Regatta," continued Judge Backhouse, "owes very much to Mr. Milson, and it will be difficult, even if it be possible, to fill his place in the coming years. But Mr. Milson was much more than a yachtsman; he was a good citizen, who took an active and most useful part in many phases of public life. In particular, he had an intense interest in the navy, and during the war he helped considerably in matters connected with the sea force. Since the war he played an important part in the work of the Navy League, which is doing an immense amount of good. For those who know Mr. Milson as I did it would be hard to say anything of him other than as a friend. We who were closely associated with him loved him dearly, and his loss is a terrible blow to us."