

## A C Saxton

The painting of Alexander Charles Saxton done by L. Herbert Beecroft is another of the first batch completed in 1908 when Beecroft's interpretation of his subject was at its most creative. Beecroft had established his reputation in Sydney quite quickly publicizing his skills through "entertainments" all over town. The commission to work for the Squadron must have been significant both financially and by establishing his credentials amongst those who could afford such a painting.

It is worth reminding the reader that photography only really began to establish itself, albeit among the wealthy, in the 1850s. By 1870, a studio photograph, usually stiffly posed in an artificial setting, became the substitute for the family portrait, although photographs were generally no more than miniatures, hardly suitable to be displayed over the fireplace in the study!



The caricature of Mr. Saxton is one of the best preserved among the Squadron collection. The colours are vivid and the painting unblemished from mould. Mr. Saxton stands proudly on his yacht "Awanui" in the typical

uniform of the Club of the period – double breasted 6 buttoned yachting jacket over white pants and a naval style yachting cap. As usual, he smokes a pipe and the script at the top right hand side says "My little Ship, AWANUI, D'ye see? Clearly Mr. Saxton was very proud of "Awanui" and the following article is just one example of the yacht's racing prowess.

**Sunday, 8th December, 1907 - Sunday Times**

**ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON**

**CARLETON CUP**

*Another ocean race, the third of the season, was sailed yesterday afternoon. The course was from Neutral Bay, round a flag mark moored one mile to the east of Cape Banks—the north head of Botany Bay—and back, and the prizes were the Carleton Cup and £7, presented by the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, for the winner. The*

Cup was the gift of the late Mr. T. H. Kelly to the Squadron, to be raced for annually by all yachts 10 tons or over. There were only two entrants for yesterday's race— **Mr. A. C. Saxton's** 'Awanui', scratch, sailed by her owner, and Mr. C. Brockhoff's 'Rawhiti', 1 min, sailed by Mr. W. M. Marks. The race was followed by the Club steamer Robbie Burns. The details are as follows: — 'Awanui' 1st, 'Rawhiti' 2nd.

Both yachts, under big topsails, were sent away to a splendid start, 'Rawhiti' having the weather berth. A short board was made into Robertson's Point (Cremorne) before Bradley's Head was reached. Here 'Awanui' was in the lead. After crossing the harbor, the eastern shore was worked in short boards to South Reef. At this stage 'Awanui' had opened out a lead of 40 sec from her rival. For the free reach to the Botany mark, balloon jibs were run aloft. Off Maroubra spinnakers were set, 'Awanui' having the inside running. Owing to the heating of the Robbie Burns' engine, the rounding mark was placed a good mile north of Cape Banks. Rounding the steamer at 3.20, 'Awanui' had a lead of 31 sec. It was only a close haul back to port, and over this portion of the course 'Awanui' opened out a lead of 2min 17sec. This lead, however, might be accounted for in the fact that although only a close haul to South Reef, 'Rawhiti' changed her No. 1 jib for a smaller sail. Running up the harbor, 'Awanui' carried her spinnaker to port, whilst 'Rawhiti' set her extra to starboard. At Bradley's Head these sails were substituted for balloon jibs. 'Awanui', drawing out her lead all the time, eventually won at 5.21.28, by 2min 23sec, after conceding 'Rawhiti' 1 min. Mr. Otto Bauer, assisted by the Club secretary, Mr. S. D. McLaren, was in charge of the race.

**"Sydney Sails"** contains this reference to Mr. Saxton's tragic demise.

*"A. C. Saxton, owner of a large timber business, had won distinction as a racing yachtsman. In 1905 he had won the Squadron Cup with Magic, and in 1906-7 the Gascoigne and Carleton Cups with the first Awanui. In 1909 he won the Beauchamp Cup for the third consecutive time, and therefore outright. In the various Club races, Saxton was rarely unplaced, and in 1920 at Melbourne he won for the Squadron the Northcote Cup with Awanui III.*

*On 30th September 1926 Saxton set out in a new yacht, Awanui IV, for a cruise to Broken Bay. Three other yachtsmen, Charles Trebeck, John McCathie and Frederick Holmes, accompanied him. The yacht cleared the Heads at 11 a.m., with Trebeck at the tiller, and headed northwards, running before a southerly breeze in a choppy sea.*

*Trebeck then reluctantly handed the tiller to Saxton, who, though he had only recently come out of hospital after an operation, stoutly declared that he was fit and well. When the yacht was off Bilgola Head, Trebeck went below for a few minutes. Suddenly the yacht jibed, and Saxton received a heavy blow on the head from the boom, which knocked him over-board. At the cry of alarm, Trebeck sprang on deck and put the yacht about. The dinghy was launched, and Saxton's body was recovered. He had apparently been killed instantly by the blow on his head.*

*As the dinghy ranged alongside, it was dashed against the yacht by a lifting sea, and capsized. Saxton's body was washed away, and disappeared. Despite a prolonged search, it was never sighted again.*

*As a mark of respect to the rear-commadore who had thus tragically lost his life while at the tiller of his own yacht, the Squadron cancelled its annual opening-of-the-season muster, which had been scheduled for the next day. In its stead, almost the whole of the Squadron's fleet, and many vessels of other Clubs, put to sea in a fruitless effort to find the body of the yachtsman for whom all held the highest regard. With the death of Alexander Charles Saxton, the Squadron lost an energetic and capable flag officer, an enthusiastic yachtsman, a generous benefactor, and one of its most prominent and respected members."*

**Friday, 1st October, 1926 - Sydney Morning Herald**

**YACHTING FATALITY OFF NEWPORT.**

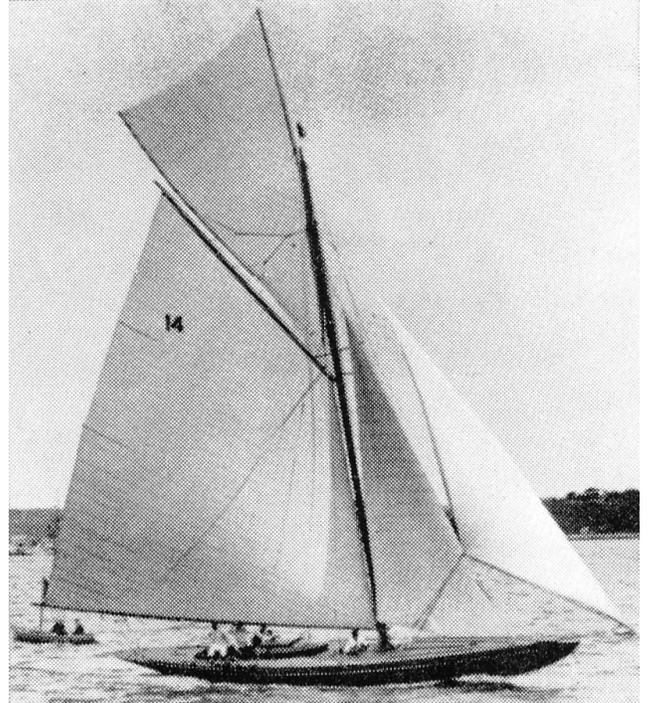
**Mr. A. C. Saxton Drowned**

### ***KNOCKED OVERBOARD BY BOOM.***

*A yachting fatality occurred off Newport shortly after midday yesterday, when Mr. A. C. Saxton, the principal of the firm of A. C. Saxton and Sons, Ltd., was lost overboard. Efforts were made to rescue him but without avail. His body has not been recovered.*

*Under lowering skies and in a southerly wind, which was blowing in strong gusts, causing a choppy sea, the yacht Awanui IV., of 12 tons, cleared Sydney Heads at 11 o'clock yesterday morning in commencement of a voyage to Broken Bay.*

*The party on the yacht consisted of Messrs. Alexander Charles Saxton, Charles Trebeck, Ivan McCathie, and Frederick Holmes. With the strong wind dead behind her the little vessel made good progress along the coast, and the trip was being enjoyed by the party. The wind became stronger when the yacht was about two miles off Bungan Head, near Newport. Yachtsmen who have made the trip from Sydney to Broken Bay realise that when approaching the latter port there is always a danger of their vessel jibing. Mr. Saxton apparently was watchful for this, but, notwithstanding his care, the vessel did jibe. Portion of the sail caught on the crosstree, and, while an effort was being made to free the sail, the boom, which had been hooked up, came down with terrific force. It struck Mr. Saxton, who was at the wheel, with a force that caused him to fall overboard.*



*With great presence of mind, the other members of the party got the Awanui IV under control. Mr. Trebeck rounded the vessel up, and got Mr. Holmes off in the dinghy. With difficulty, Mr. Holmes reached Mr. Saxton in the choppy sea and hauled him into the dinghy. Mr. Holmes commenced to row back to the yacht, but the dinghy half filled with water. At the same time, the yacht was worked towards the dinghy, but when the latter was ranging alongside the yacht, it was struck by the larger boat, causing it to capsize. It is thought that the blow received by Mr. Saxton from the boom of the yacht stunned him, as he was helpless. He was thrown into the sea when the vessels came together and quickly disappeared. Although a long search was made, no trace of him could be found.*

*The yacht was taken to Bayview by Mr. Trebeck.*

### ***MR. SAXTON'S CAREER.***

*The late Mr. Saxton, who for many years has occupied a prominent place in the business life of Sydney, was born at Remuera, Auckland, N.Z., and was 61 years of age. He came to Sydney as a boy, and entered the business of his father, the late Mr. C. T. Saxton, who had established a timber firm. At a later date Mr. Saxton acquired his father's interest in the business, and from a very small beginning built up one of the largest firms of its kind in Australia. Some time afterwards, the late Mr. J. H. Binns entered into partnership with Mr. Saxton, and they floated the business into a private company, under the title of Saxton and Binns, Ltd. In 1908 Mr. Binns retired from the business, Mr. Saxton acquiring his interests. Nine years later the firm became A. C. Saxton and Sons, Ltd., under which title it is at present conducted.*

*Mr. Saxton was for many years president of the Sydney and Suburban Timber Merchants' Association. He was also an enthusiastic yachtsman and golfer. He was rear-commandore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and was one of the founders of the Drummoyne Golf Club, and was president of the Leura Golf Club. For some time past he had occupied the position of president of the Drummoyne branch of the Nationalist Association.*

*In yachting circles Mr. Saxton was regarded as a skilful navigator, and built and owned not only Awanui IV., but the Awanui I, Awanui II, and Awanui III. Mr. Saxton was the holder of the Northcote Cup for six-metre boats, having held that trophy for some years. He had not been challenged for it for some years.*

*He was a member of the Australian Golf Club, the Royal Sydney Golf Club, and the New South Wales Club.*

*Mr. Saxton is survived by his widow (formerly Miss Janet Wilson) and five sons and one daughter. The sons are Messrs. Harold, A. W., C. D., and Geoffrey Saxton (who are directors of the firm of A. C. Saxton and Sons, Ltd.), and Mr. Saxton (who is at present in business at Tacoma, Washington, U.S.A.). The daughter is Miss Janet Saxton.*

**September, 2015**