



E W Tawse Tankard

A mystery with a happy conclusion. Recounted by Life Member John Maclurcan.

Part 1, October 2021

Recently, a box was deposited in Archives containing bits and pieces which had been displayed on the picture rail of the entrance hall of Wudyong. There were Certificates of Appreciation, a few trophies, a silver tray and sundry other items.

One particular item caught my eye – a heavily tarnished silver tankard. I studied the engraving and could just read the date 22nd Oct, 1918. This immediately quivered my antennae because I knew there was no racing in 1918 due to the World War.



I took the tankard home to clean and it came up almost like new. On one side was the following engraving:

Presented to
E. W. TAWSE (THE BOY)
By a few friends on the eve of his departure
FOR ENGLAND
Billy, McLuD,
Shill, Robbie,
Little Davey.
OCT 22nd 1918.
SYDNEY, NSW

On another side was a very large Squadron Crest, very accurately engraved into the metal.



On the bottom of the tankard, it was marked MH&CO BROS, the hallmark of the silver smiths Martin Hall & Company, a Sheffield (England) based firm of silversmiths, electroplated manufacturers and silver, plated and steel cutlers. Here is a short history of that Business:

The firm started in 1820 with the partnership of Henry Wilkinson and John Roberts, trading as Wilkinson & Roberts. Wilkinson left in 1846 and Roberts went into partnership with his former apprentice Ebenezer Hall becoming Roberts & Hall. Richard Martin and Joshua Hall (brother of Ebenezer) joined the partnership in 1854 and the firm became Martin, Hall & Co, converting to a limited company in 1866.

With a factory in Sheffield, they went on to open showrooms in London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Sydney. As well as producing sterling silver and electroplated wares, they also had a successful much cheaper line of products produced in their patented white metal called "**Martinoid**" an alloy of white metals made to look like sterling silver but with no meltdown value.

They exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851, the International Exhibition in 1862, the Sydney Exhibition in 1879, the Melbourne Exhibition in 1881 and the British Industries Fair in 1915.

It is not clear whether the business was sold to Frank Cobb & Co in 1932 or went into liquidation in 1936 when it was delisted.

Concerning Mr. Ernest Watson Tawse, I have uncovered that he arrived in Australia in 1912, representing Brown & Tawse, a Scottish engineering firm based in Dundee and specialising in steel manufacturing, particularly for shipbuilding. He remained in Sydney for 6 years, until his departure as recorded on the tankard. He raced a power Boat called "Ayesha" in 1914 but I have been unable to find anything more about his exploits on the water.





Returning to the Tankard, it is impossible to know how it came into the Squadron's hands but here is a theory - Ernest Tawse died in 1971 and his family sent the tankard to the Club based on the engraving on it.

If any member can shed any further light on this, the History Committee would be interested to hear from you.

John Maclurcan
October, 2021

Part 2, March 2022

The above article was published on the RSY website under Our Heritage, but thanks to Covid re-rearing its ugly head, never made it into the OnBoard newsletter. Nevertheless, it was spotted by a descendant of EW Tawse!

Sent: Tuesday, 8 March 2022 03:02

To: RSY <rsys@rsys.com.au>

Subject: Re: Article - Trophies E.W. TAWSE tankard Written by John Maclurcan

Dear Mr Maclurcan

I have been researching my family tree and have found your article referring to a tankard which was deposited in the archives section at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron.

This tankard was presented to my grandfather Mr Ernest Watson Tawse on Oct 22nd 1918 on his departure from Sydney. He had resided in Sydney for six years whilst representing the engineering firm of Brown and Tawse from Dundee in Scotland.

He had two sons and a daughter. My father (his son) was Gerald James Gordon Tawse and I have two sons Alistair and Lawrence Tawse and four grandchildren. I have very fond memories of my grandfather and stayed with him often at his home at Woldingham, Surrey.

His passion for the sea was passed down to my father who became a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy. He owned a sailing yacht 'Jaranda' whereupon I took up the love for the sea and consequently bought my own sailing yacht 'Summertime' and passed that love to my two sons. Each eventually became Naval Officers, who now both own their own sailing yachts today and passing on the 'Tawse' sailing tradition down to my grandchildren.

As you will see from the attached photograph, I have in my possession my grandfather's card case, which he obtained from the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, which I cherish along with the only other memory of my grandfather, his old comfortable chair.





I do realise that I have a cheeky request, but wondering whether your committee would agree to returning to the family, grandad's tankard, where it would be cherished by the next Tawse generations, rather than remain in your archives and eventually become just another tankard by an unknown owner.

I am happy to provide you with further documentation as proof of my authenticity and of course would certainly reimburse you for any costs involved, if your committee would agree to my request.

Kind Regards
Robert Anthony Ernest Tawse
Devon, England

Peter Bradford, the RSYs Hon. Archivist and Chairman of the History & Archives Committee, immediately approached the General Committee to approve this request, which they did.

John Maclurcan then replied:

14 March 2022

Dear Sir,

I could not tell you adequately how pleased I was to receive your email. It is such a happy outcome when there are so few "happy" occurrences in these very difficult times.

On behalf of my colleagues on the History Committee at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, and in particular, the Head of the Committee, Mr. Peter Bradford, I will be delighted to send the Tankard to you for your family to treasure.

When I discovered it languishing in a box, cleaned it up and in so doing, found some of its history, I speculated on how it might have come to be at the RSYs. Now it is irrelevant because it can be returned to its rightful heritage.

I will collect the tankard tomorrow and send it soon on its way to you,

Keep safe,

Yours faithfully,

John Maclurcan

This John duly did. We are delighted to have solved a mystery and reunited an interesting artefact with a Squadron family.

Discover more fascinating artefacts and stories at www.rsys.com.au/our-club/our-heritage