



## ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

**“Read all about it!”**

**The origins and early history of the Squadron – as reported in the Press of the day**

### **Part 4: The scene is set for a Harbour race**

**Saturday, 30th January, 1864 – Sydney Mail**

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The first squadron match of the season for yachts belonging to the Royal Sydney Yacht Club took place on Saturday last. A more favourable morning never dawned upon a day of anticipated pleasure. No dark or threatening cloud obscured the ethereal blue of the heavens, while the somewhat fervid rays of the summer's sun were gently tempered by a cool refreshing breeze from the eastward. To those whose ideas of wind and weather result from experience in the dear old Fatherland - and we allude particularly to the lovers and patrons of aquatic sports — it seems strange to talk of a pleasant easterly breeze, as that direction of wind in England is associated with recollections of dry, cold, harsh and bleak weather, while the westerly wind is almost invariably accompanied by weather of an entirely different character; but the wind and weather here at the antipodes are in harmony with all things else — they present the opposite of England. The very thought of a west wind here, with its concomitant dust and scorching insufferable heat, produces a feeling of suffocation; while, on the other hand, a delightful and invigorating east wind, coming as it does fresh from the surface of the beautiful blue waters which guard our coasts, is a refreshing and welcome as a summer morning's shower of rain to the anxious horticulturist.

Saturday morning, then, was like the latter, the only desideratum being a little more wind. At eleven o'clock those yachts that were entered to compete in either of the two races — for there were two, one for first class and one for second class yachts — took their positions in Farm Cove ready for the start. They were nine in number, namely; — the Chance, Xarifa, Era, Annie Ogle and Peri, first-class; and Why Not, Ida, Gitana and Scud, second-class. While the acting commodore was busy in getting the yachts into a line, and giving the necessary directions, the fine steamer City of Newcastle, Captain Budd, was embarking at the Circular Quay, a numerous company of yachtsmen and others who take an interest in these aquatic journeys, the fair sex being represented by a large number of gaily dressed ladies. There is scarcely any necessity to remark that the steamer answered the purpose admirably; for although the number of holiday folks on board of her exceeded 200 there was ample room for all, besides which a band was in attendance to vary the proceedings — for with such a company and such a spectacle as the yachts throughout the day presented, they required no enlivening. The steamer left the wharf at about eleven o'clock, and after giving those on board an opportunity to witness the start and view the squadron beating down to Bradley's Head, she returned and took in a number of other persons who were too late for the first trip. She again proceeded down the harbour, and met the vessels returning from the first rounding point of the race — the Sow and Pigs. With the exception of disembarking and returning for some few persons at Manly Beach, the vessel remained in attendance on the yachts all day and gave the gay folks who thronged her deck good views of the fairy-like vessels during the progress of the race — for we allude particularly to the race for first class yachts. A luncheon was provided for the company on board, but in consequence of the limited accommodation and wretched arrangements, a considerable number were obliged reluctantly to postpone their luncheon until after landing.

We imagine that more picturesque sights than those which the yachts presented at different stages of the races on Saturday were never seen on the waters of Port Jackson. Perhaps the most beautiful scene



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of the day was that when the yachts of both classes were running up the harbour under a press of canvas towards Fort Denison after going round the Sow and Pigs the first time. They were also seen to great advantage after this, when turning to windward from Bradley's Head toward the North Head. Particulars of the contests are given below, and but little of a general character need be said. The new yacht Xarifa unfortunately got on shore on the South reef, when having a considerable lead of her rivals, and was assisted off by the steamer Black Swan. It was fortunate that she got off without injury; but she was unfortunate in touching the rocks, as the assistance rendered to her in getting off disqualified her from further competition. She continued the course, however, and passed the flag boat 3 minutes and 47 seconds before the Era, which, with the deduction of 3 ½ minutes for the difference of tonnage, gave her an advantage of 17 seconds.

***Find out how the race unfolded in next week's edition...***

### Notes:

- The reference to the Fatherland, dear old England, persisted really until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The influx of European immigrants post war for such things as the Snowy Mountains Scheme was the signal of change
- In the same vein, the reference to the "Antipodes" encouraged the feeling that Australia was at the end of the earth.
- There is a reference to "getting the yachts in line". The start of the race would have been a great sight. The yachts were anchored in as straight a line as possible. At the start signal, they had to hoist their sails, weigh anchor and sail away.
- In 2020, reference to the "gay folks" and the "fairy-like vessels" takes on a meaning which would have been unimaginable in 1863.