

The Bluebird & Top Hat Newsletter



The official newsletter of the Bluebird Yacht Association of Victoria Inc. The articles and opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the official views of the BYAV.

From the President

Success can be measured in different ways, but with Bluebirds I see success in the level of support for both social and competitive events.

A most enjoyable evening was had by all 50 or so who attended our annual Presentation Night. This being a good number to fill HBYC's upstairs lounge, but we can always make room for more next year. A big thank you to all those who helped make it happen and to those who attended. I hope you enjoy the photos of the night that are in this newsletter.

The level of support for the winter series 'Bluebird Cup' is still as strong as ever with ten yachts com-

peting and up to nine on the starting lines. In contrast to the previous Winter Series we have only had one race cancelled due to a strong wind warning. More on that in the race report. For fear of preaching to the converted, I won't write too much in this article, but remember that through our enthusiasm for sailing, particularly in Bluebirds, the momentum for the class is self-perpetuating. Our starts have certainly been noticed with a degree of envy by members of our club who start later in the Brass Monkey series, but whose yachts represent almost as many designs as there are entries, with no hope of ever making up a class fleet (with the possible exception of Endeavour 24s).

Part of our measure of success is the fact that new owners are joining our fleet. The most recent being Leigh Yarnall who enterprising as he is, towed a hire trailer to Sydney and returned with a Formit Bluebird all in a weekend. Well done Leigh and we look forward to *Bad Boy* making its mark in the fleet.

It seems our unofficial coach and motivator Peter Roberts was much in demand while *Tandeka* was under repair. During the first four races of the Winter Series not only did he help three different boats collectively achieve three firsts and a sec-



The Bluebird Cup and other trophies

ond, but their results continue to show improvement without Peter. Great stuff Peter, but can we auction you off to the highest bidders for the last races mate?!

Ivan Knight

Inside this issue:

Bluebird Cup Winter Series 2005 - Interim Results & Race Report

State Championships Presentation Night pics

Interview with Leigh Yarnall

The Sentinels of Gellibrand's Point

Annual General Meeting Date

Don't let it happen to your Bluebird

Badboy: An Interview with Leigh Yarnall

Leigh Yarnall, brother of former Bluebird sailor Brian, recently purchased a Bluebird and brought it to Williamstown so he could join in the Association's races. Since this interview Leigh has spruced up his new purchase and been out on the water with the rest of the fleet.

When and why did you get interested in sailing?

Growing up in Williamstown, with

sailing in the family - Dad was in the merchant navy - it just seemed a natural thing to get involved in sailing. When I was about seven years old I joined the Sea Scouts, along with Andrew Blackstock, Bruce McCracken and John Erikson.

What's your sailing experience to date?

After learning in clinker dinghies at Sea Scouts, I went on to sail International Cadets at Hobson's Bay. I got very interested in cars for a number of years - I still own a racing car - before I decided to get back into sailing with a Bluebird.

Why choose a Bluebird?

Three reasons: I wanted to sail against others in the same class; I didn't have to spend a lot of money to get a good boat; and Peter Roberts gave me the idea a Bluebird would be just right.



Hijack ready to be transported to Melbourne

When did you purchase her?

June 2005. She was in Sydney. I rang to get a few details then flew up to have a look at her. I could see as I rowed out to her that she need painting, but other than that she was in pretty good shape.

What's she called and will you keep the name?

I've already changed her name to BadBoy. She was called Hijack.

Do you know anything about the history of the boat?

I don't know much about her history other than she was being raced four to five years ago in Pittwater. I hear she came second a couple of times.

How was the trip bringing her down to Melbourne from Sydney?

A bit of an adventure. My wife

Lindsey and I drove up to Sydney towing a cradle bolted on to the trailer that I'd hired. Unfortunately the time that I'd arranged to pick up the yacht was at low tide, meaning there was a ten foot drop at the bottom of the ramp. We had to wait for the tide to come in to float her onto the cradle. We finally got the boat on the cradle at 3.30 in the afternoon and lashed down by about 5.30pm. Then the fun began as we had to navigate our way through Sydney's peak hour traffic and onto the Hume Highway. About 30 km into Victoria my car's clutch disintegrated. By this time it was about 3am. I rang a good mate and asked him if he could come and get us - that is Lindsey, the yacht and me! As I said, he's a good mate, and we got a couple of hours sleep in our car while we waited for him to arrive. When he arrived, we quickly hooked the yacht up to his car and left mine on the side of the highway. We arrived at Newport warmies mid-morning, got her into the water and attached the outboard motor we'd borrowed from Ivan. All went well until the outboard pattered out of fuel at the Fergie Pier. Fortunately we just drifted gently onto the pier at Hobbos. We had arrived!

How would you describe her condition?

She's in pretty good nick. A solid deck.

What is the best feature of your new Bluebird?

The Bluebird Has Landed

The following article was recently the cover article on the AFLOAT website www.afloat.com.au

The new name and design!!!

The Bluebird is a compact keelboat that has been around for generations. It is enjoyed by new and seasoned sailors.

In capable hands it can give larger and newer designs a run for their money and it is also an economical alternative to modern designs.

Joyce and Patricia Warn who still compete in the annual Yngling Worlds at age 74 had their first sail on Hal Harpur's Bluebird *Ladybird* in about 1954 and then went on to sail socially on *Talua*, the first Bluebird built.

"We liked sailing and in those days very few females raced or owned boats so we decided to buy our own boat and we chose *Charm* (probably the prettiest Bluebird ever with pale yellow hull, teak deck and pale var-

nish coachhouse).

Charm was built privately by Beverley James, a shipwright at Halvorsens. We purchased her on Anniversary Weekend in January 1956 and with the help of Hal's best friend Brian Hill subsequently learnt to sail," they said.

Bob Griffiths purchased his Bluebird *Tuppence* in about 1990.

The current (NSW) State Champion Steve Piper *Sandpiper* and I have raced each other for many years now at Drummoyne Sailing Club, State Championships and other races and have always enjoyed the competition and sportsmanship virtually all the time that I have owned my boat. Old competitors such as Clive Roughly *Skipjack*, Keith Poole *Tringa* and Keith Steward *Omega* all owned their

They ended up in winds gusting up to 40 knots and a turbulent sea.

"I will never forget that nightmare trip as long as I live," Bob said. "However, I suppose that is one of the reasons why I am a dedicated Bluebird owner/enthusiast. Morrin & I have been out in all types of weather both cruising and racing, this is a safe boat to learn on as it is very forgiving. It is also still a very competitive boat and there are many plaques on board to testify to this. Needless to say I love my boat. I also need to say that I have been very fortunate to

Bluebirds for 20 plus years and loved racing particularly in the State Championships."

At one time Bob, Morrin Grigg and sailed *Tuppence* up to Lake Macquarie.

Don't Let it Happen to Your Bluebird

Jean and Norm Price were recently in New South Wales where they chanced upon a Bluebird being loaded – into a skip! If only Ivan was there, he would have saved it!

According to the Bureau of Meteorology:

Climate is what you expect; weather is what you get.

1



2



3



4





Bluebird Cup Winter Series 2005 – Interim Results

Yacht	Sail No.	Heat 1	Heat 2	Heat 3	Heat 4	Heat 5	Heat 6	Heat 7	Heat 8	Heat 9
Revel	H292	1	1	3	4	2		4		
Paramour	H66	2	DNS	2	1	7		5		
Shadow	H241	3	2	4	2	3		2		
Warranilla	H271	4	4	DNS	5	4		3		
Gaylene	H1138	5	DNS	DNS	3	5		DNS		
Bounty	H56	DNS	3	1	DNS	6		7		
Hanini II	H113	DNS	DNS	5	DNS	DNS		DNS		
Secret	H90	DNS	5	DNS	DNF	DNS		DNF		
Jay	H411	DNS	DNS	DNS	DNS	8		6		
Tandeka	H158	DNS	DNS	DNS	DNS	1		1		

cancelled

Bluebird Cup Race Report

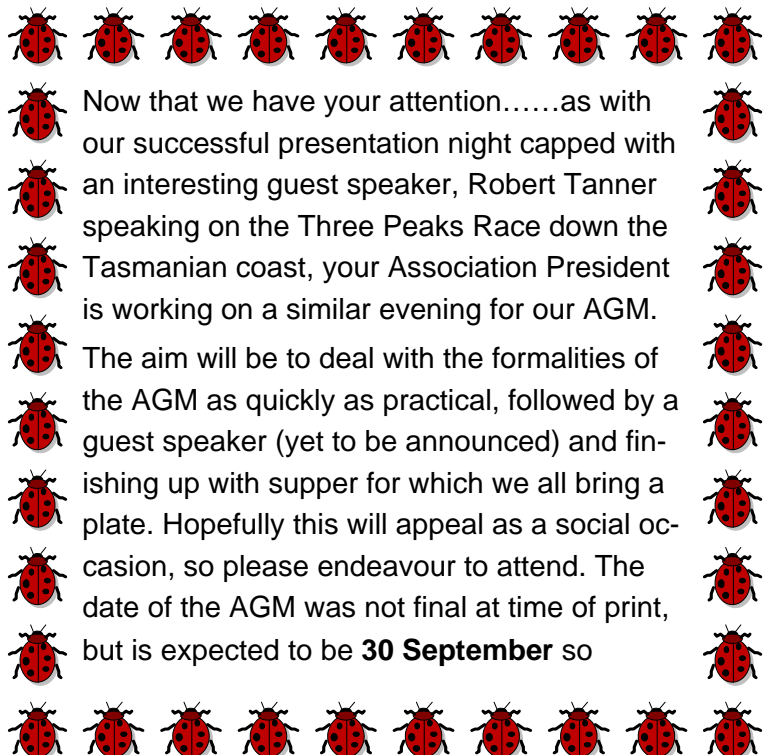
Despite there having been six races sailed, no clear leader has emerged. Over the last two heats still to be sailed, the placings are still open to any of six competitors.

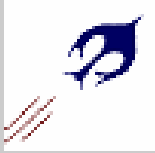
The biggest improvers in this series have been from Warwick Norman and crew with two early wins followed by some consistent good places. Ian Lewis and crew in *Shadow* has gone from consistently near the tail of the fleet over a number of years to a very consistent near the front during this series. Ian McGrath and John Vermeulen have also been campaigning *Warranilla* very well particularly to windward when they appear to climb away from us all. Keep it up guys, it's all a matter of practice – you know, the more you get out there, etc.....

Now that *Tandeka* is race ready, Peter Roberts and Glenn Hall are at last making their presence felt by winning the last two races. And doesn't *Tandeka* look great with fresh paint? Not that we get to see much of it after they take off from the start.

The laying of a club rounding buoy, just north of channel pile no. 80 has helped us avoid the Brass Monkey fleet when nearing the finish of

**FREE
OFFER**





The Sentinels of Gellibrand's Point

This article has been reprinted with the kind permission of the author, local historian Cliff Gibson. Cliff was a member of HBYC for 36 years from 1946. He has owned and raced a number of different yachts from Sharpies to Diamonds, many of which he built himself. Cliff is well known in Williamstown for his research and writings on local maritime history and for

Those yachties who raced or sailed the waters off Williamstown prior to 1976 would fondly recall the Gellibrand Pile Light situated 7 1/2 cables from the outer end of Breakwater Pier. It served yachtsmen as a mark of the racecourse until its demise. Its main purpose was to guard the reef off Point Gellibrand for shipping and therein lies a fascinating story dating back to 1840.

Capt. William Hobson aboard H.M.S. Rattlesnake carried out the first full and official charting of Port Phillip in October 1836. In his report to the Governor of the Colony of New South Wales, Hobson recommended a system of lighthouses, beacons and buoys to assist in the safe passage of shipping. However, it was not until March 1840 that a floating cask buoy, our first sentinel, was anchored on the seaward end of the reef that extends approx. 900 yards (825 metres) in a SSE direction from Gellibrand's Point. As an additional aid for after dark navigation of the area (the second sentinel) a lighthouse was erected. It was constructed of a blue-stone (basalt) foundation with a skeletal timber superstructure costing £70. At a cost of £50 the following items were supplied: 'the brass lamp with copper dome and arrow and vane and four squares of plate glass, 12 x 16 inches. Two copper squares for the dark side, three copper plated reflectors, copper fountain lamp containing three pints, three A grand brass burners with wrought iron spindle and stand, with screw bolts for fixing, also a small copper

lantern for the purpose of lighting said lamp.' It showed a plain stationery light for thirteen nautical miles.

In 1848 tenders were called for a more substantial light structure and in the following year James Linacre erected the third sentinel, a substantial bluestone structure which still stands today and is known as the Time-ball Tower, but that is another story. Interestingly the arrises at the base of the tower are set at the cardinal points of the compass whilst a bench mark on the sill originally made to fix the level of the then adjacent tide-gauge, was used as the datum point from which all surveyed heights in Victoria were measured. The tender price was £925, but there was an extra 1115 cubic feet of foundations and stone work costing £278, 15.0 and other works costing £264.5.0, the total cost was £1,468.

After Linacre's lighthouse commenced operations in July 1849 a Government Gazette notice of 2nd August 1849

advertised an auction sale of (and I quote) 'the old lighthouse at Williamstown comprising wood, iron, and stone work as it stands. The whole of the material to be removed within ten days' (end of quote). Linacre's bluestone lighthouse showed a red light warning shipping approaching Melbourne until 25th July 1859, when the Department of Ports & Harbors in its wisdom decided to moor a temporary lightship off the reef to replace the cask buoy. This lightship had formerly been the sail-

ing vessel J. W. Dare. This fourth sentinel exhibited two fixed white lights of equal height 7.3 metres apart and commenced operation on 25th July 1859.

Tenders were called on 30th May 1860 for the fifth sentinel. This tender for a purpose built timber lightship was awarded to pioneer Williamstown boat builders, William and George White on 20th June 1860 for the sum of £3130. Additional costs of £120 were expended. White's lightship duly took station and a Notice to Mariners of July 1861 advised: The Gellibrand's Point Lightship has one mast surmounted by a ball, and exhibits a white revolving light, showing a bright flash every thirty seconds. This fifth sentinel guarded the Gellibrand's Point reef for 34 years until 4th March 1895 when, for reasons I have been unable to find, it was removed and transferred to the north end of the West channel off St. Leonards on 29th March 1895.

White's Lightship was advertised for sale on 20th March 1897, she was described as 182 tons, register, 92 feet length, 21ft. 6inches beam and 11ft. 6inches, depth of hold.

White's lightship was replaced on 4th March 1895 with our sixth sentinel, an ungainly circular iron light vessel previously in service in the West Channel at Swan Spit. The firm of Anderson, Campbell and Sloss built this vessel on the banks of the Maribynong River during 1886-7 at a cost of £4854 plus £150 for the apparatus. At the same time this firm was engaged in building the lighthouse service vessel Lady



Lock. Indeed, the then Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, KCB, stood on the partially completed hull of the light vessel to launch the vessel he named in honour of his wife, Elizabeth -Lady Loch. The light vessel was described as an 'iron circular light vessel, the hull is 36 feet (11 metres) in diameter, painted red and is surmounted by a round iron tower painted white showing a red light 38 feet (11.6metres) above sea level.' It commenced operation at Swan Spit on 12th September 1887 and remained there until 10th October 1894.

The circular light vessel commenced operating off Gellibrand's Point on 4th March 1895 and had an eventful career there until February 1906. On no less than six occasions she dragged her moorings or broke her mooring chains and on one of these times crashed into Breakwater Pier at Williamstown. It was a joke shared around the family of Lighthouse Keeper Francis John Squire that in 1904 he was 'shipwrecked on Breakwater Pier.'

Tensions are sure to surface on board any vessel at sea and this is instanced when in 1899 the assistant lighthouse keeper arrived on board the circular light vessel rather drunk and picked a fight with the lighthouse keeper, resulting in blows being struck. A week later the two appeared before the bench in the Williamstown Court and the drunk was jailed for assault.

Because of the Light vessel's wayward habits the Ports & Harbours authorities decided remove the recalcitrant vessel and to build a more substantial structure. On 12th February 1906 the light vessel was towed away and floated into the Alfred Graving Dock at Williamstown. There the superstructure comprising the base plate, livingquarters,

tower and lantern were cut away from the circular iron hull and placed on a barge floating in the dock. Meanwhile a piled structure was being constructed approximately 400 metres from the reefs edge by the firm of Ross, Fraser & Patience. Their tender price was £1,925. The work undertaken was comprised of 33 piles up to 70 feet (21.3 metres) in length driven through the clay seabed to the basalt shelf, an indigenous foundation of the western plains upon which Williamstown sits. Atop the piles, timber bearers, cross-heads, and decking were installed. Below the top deck was a lower deck, comprising an engine room and store-room. The recently severed superstructure was floated out to the site on the barge where it was lifted up some 23 feet (7 metres) and positioned on the new decking.

The Gellibrand Pile light, our seventh sentinel commenced operating on 1st August 1906. The flashing light, every 2.5 seconds at a height of 50 feet (15.2 metres) was visible for 10.4 nautical miles. However, within four months the structure developed the wobbles. It was then realised that the 2.7 metres of the clay bed through which the piles had been driven, before hitting the basalt, did not provide sufficient stability to safely hold firm the 96 feet (29.2 metres) structure, so 3000 tons of stone was placed around the piles to provide the necessary stability.

For the next 31 years the Gellibrand Pile Light functioned without fuss. In 1937 electric cable and telephone was laid to the Pile Light. The previously gas operated light was changed over to electrical operation. In 1938 a further 250 tons of stone were stacked around the piles Mervyn, (known as 'Bill' to his friends) Taylor was appointed lighthouse keeper in 1934 and with his wife Louise, daughter June aged 8, and Max 4 moved into their novel seaside residence on the Pile Light. They lived there for seventeen years with the simple address of 'Gellibrand Pile Light'.

The life of the Taylor family was a continual source of interest to the Melbourne press and their readers. The family had an unbeatable magnificent view of Hobson's Bay and the passing water traffic and at weekends they could watch the yachts race as they rounded their home that doubled as a 'mark of the course'. They could also dangle a line over the side from their verandah and catch a fish or two for breakfast. June and Max would then be taken ashore (weather permitting) by their father in the motorboat to attend school at the Williamstown State School No. 1183. In the afternoon father Bill would collect the children from Gem Pier and return to their magical home.

In his early teens Max built a small yacht in the Lighthouse's engine room. Yes, the Gellibrand Pile Light had an engine room! Here were housed two diesel engines and air compressors to service the fog horn that bellowed out to warn shipping of their location off the Point Gellibrand reef. The beam of Max's yacht was dependent on the space between the air compressor and the wall.

Another interesting item of life on the pile light was the location of the bathroom. It was located on the wind swept 'balcony' To have a bath necessitated heating up buckets of water on the coal fired kitchen stove and carrying them outside to the bath. By the time there was enough water in the bath in which to splash -the water was just luke warm.

In her teen years Bill's daughter June met a young fellow at a local dance who offered to escort her home, not knowing that she lived on a lighthouse. As they walked down to the foreshore past the wheat stacks, well known cuddling spots for the youth of the town, the young man thought all his birthdays had come at once. His hopes were dashed when June produced a torch and signalled for her father to come and pick her up from Breakwater Pier.



This she promptly did leaving a disappointed fellow standing on the rocks.

After Bill Taylor retired in 1951 five lighthouse keepers followed him between 1951 and 1976. One of them was a colorful character who after a couple of near misses met his fateful end. Known around the Williamstown waterfront as 'GP', he was victim of the demon drink and prone to unseaman like habits whilst afloat. On one particular occasion he purchased a mattress for his bed on the Lighthouse. 'GP' duly placed the mattress on the cabin top of the work boat at the Ports & Harbors Depot and chugged off towards the Light. As he rounded the Breakwater Pier the bow dipped into an oncoming wave and the mattress went overboard as he had not bothered to secure his cargo. Eventually after much manoeuvring 'GP' managed to get a line around the floating mattress and proceeded on his way. One can only imagine 'GP', with feelings of discomfort, sleeping on a damp mattress for many nights - the salt content of the mattress retaining water, as it will.

On another occasion 'GP' was coming alongside the lower landing of the lighthouse. He left the engine in gear as he jumped for the landing and failed to hold securely the bowline with the result that the motor boat put--putted away into the distance. It eventually ran itself up on the beach at Point Cook, some seven miles away. The engine must have kept running for some time after it took the ground as when the shipwright went to recover the motorboat he found that the action of the propeller had thrown up a sand bank astern thus preventing the boat from being washed away.

On another occasion, early one morning 'GP' fell overboard from the motorboat and had to swim ashore near Breakwater Pier whilst his boat went on it's way eventually coming ashore on the rocks. He then walked a kilometre to the Ports & Harbors Depot and waited for the first shipwright to arrive. At 0800, the same shipwright who

had rescued the workboat from Point Cook arrived at the depot to find a shivering light housekeeper. He told the shipwright that the motorboat was on the rocks near the Time Ball Tower. By the time the shipwright had gathered a couple of workmates and walked around there, they found the scavengers had started work. They had removed the propeller and were busily engaged trying to steal the engine. Eventually 'GP's' luck ran out as a few months later he again fell overboard and was drowned.

The Gellibrand lighthouse fog horn was a familiar sound to residents with its low 'moo-moo' sound and could be mistaken by a visitor to Williamstown as that of a lost cow and was therefore known as 'Kermode's cow', named after Mr. George Kermode, at one time Chairman of the Melbourne Harbor Trust. Many Williamstown folk, and I here include myself, remember it's sound with deep affection. It had a quaint grandeur and beauty. It was music to

Cliff Gibson with the model he made of the Gellibrand Lighthouse.



The Gellibrand Lighthouse burns to the waterline in