



SYDNEY FLYING SQUADRON LTD

A brief history of 130 years of
THE SYDNEY FLYING SQUADRON
1891 to 2021



In 1891 a group of Sydney sailing enthusiasts met to discuss the establishment of a sailing club which would admit all classes of sailing craft. It was their belief that if they were successful in forming such a club it would revolutionise sailing on Sydney Harbour. The meeting was held at Rainford's Cambridge Club Hotel in Sydney in

August 1891.

The first Honorary Secretary elected at that meeting was WJ Richardson. The meeting also elected a committee of seven, consisting of G Ellis, Mr Eaton, Mark Foy, Mr Lapham, W Fitzhenry, Mr Blair and Mr Perrett.

Sydney Flying Squadron Yacht Club.

The Sydney Flying Squadron Yacht Club is the name of a new sailing club which is being inaugurated for the forthcoming season under the most favorable auspices. The promoters have the best of objects in view, and that is to more thoroughly popularise sailing. They point out that at present after the vessels have once started all interest is gone, from the fact that so few persons are enabled to witness the racing from start to finish and then only from a steamer, and often under considerable inconvenience, especially for ladies, who, if they had a fair opportunity, would gladly witness the races of the smaller craft, as well as those of the regular yachts. With this idea in view it is proposed to endeavor to obtain certain concessions of harbor frontage, off which a triangular course is to be buoyed off of not more than 3½ miles in length, and the races to be sailed in beats; that all boats shall carry distinctive colors on their sails, so that they may be readily known on reference to the racing cards. The prizes too are to be offered on a much more liberal scale than hitherto, and each class of club boats shall have their afternoon's racing on alternative Saturdays, and the handicaps shall be given to the various sailing masters when starting their boats, a system which answered so well with the Port Jackson Club last season. Mr. Mark Foy, who is taking a leading interest in the new club, has generously given the sum of £200 towards the formation of the club, and other amounts have been promised. The club rooms have been leased in Oxford-street, and will shortly be placed in order for members. Two or three meetings of intending members have been held, and the masters of the following vessels have intimated their intention of registering their boats in the club, viz., Lottie, Cynthia, Maceland, Elsie, Grace Darling, Splendor, Flyaway, Kannanook, Sophia, Mantua, Ghost, Our Tom, Our Roy, Our Boys, Iverna, Latona, Wild Wave, Regina, and Etna. Mr. W. J. W. Richardson has been appointed secretary, and a committee consisting of Messrs. Foy, Ellis, Lapham, Eton, Blair, Eton, and a number of the crew of each boat entered have been nominated to draw up a code of rules to be submitted to a general meeting of members to hold at an early date.

SYDNEY FLYING YACHT SQUADRON.

Yesterday Mr. W. McMillan, M.L.A., introduced a deputation, consisting of Mr. Mark Foy, Alderman J. H. Rainford, and others, representing the Sydney Flying Yacht Squadron, to the Minister for Lands. The object of the interview was to secure if possible the use of Clarke Island, or some other island or prominent place in the harbour, from which races of the squadron could be witnessed. The club wished to have the control of steamers running to such spots, and make a charge for entrance if necessary, in order that the people using the ground might make some return to the club, and enable it to offer better prizes for competition; also that it might hold out a guarantee to the public that there would be no rowdyism. The club had not been long formed, but it was now so popular that it had over 1000 members. They would probably only require the use of the ground about every second Saturday; and in making this request they considered that they were only asking for a similar concession to what was granted to footballers and cricketers at Moore Park and other places.

Mr. BRUNNER, in reply, said he thought he thoroughly understood what was required. Though the matter might seem to them a very simple one, it was really surrounded with difficulties. He might say at once that, so far as the club was concerned, it and others who sought pleasure on the water had his warmest sympathy, and they were certainly entitled to similar privileges to those conceded to other sections of the community. They were, perhaps, unaware that nearly everything done in that department was governed by Act of Parliament, and no authority was given to charge for entrance to a public park or recreation reserve. These reserves were vested in trustees, and should be open to the public free of charge. He would give the matter further consideration, and see what could be done, but from the cursory glance which he had given the case he thought they would, if a desirable spot could be found, have to apply for a suitable lease, which would, if granted, confer the right which they sought to obtain.

NOTICE OF CLUB FORMATION

AQUATICS 13 August 1891

REQUEST TO USE CLARKE ISLAND

SMH 27 August 1891

Newspaper articles accessed at [Trove.nla.gov](https://trove.nla.gov) [here](#) and [here](#)

The Sydney Flying Squadron was a result of the vision of Mark Foy to make racing on Port Jackson available to all, in a sport both healthy and exciting to spectators as

well as participants.

This was the reason for his three innovations, triangular course, pre-start handicapping and coloured sails (later reduced to coloured symbols).

THE SYDNEY FLYING SQUADRON YACHT CLUB.

A race in connection with the above club will be sailed this afternoon over a triangular course. The boats entered with their handicaps are as follow :— Kannanook, Regina, and Lottie, scratch; Our Tom, 2 minutes; Ghost, 3 minutes; and Violet, 3½ minutes. The prizes are £5, £2, and £1, being first, second, and third respectively.

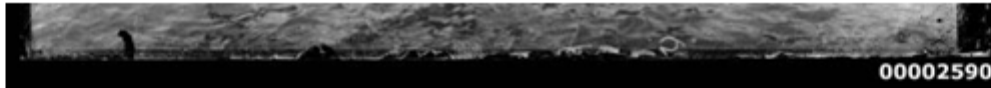
NOTICE OF FIRST RACE

SMH 5 October 1891

The first race was to be held on 5 October 1891 ([Notice of Race](#)) but due to weather conditions was abandoned. Read the race report from the SMH on 6 October 1891 [here](#).

Hanging around Clark Island waiting for the start...





William Hall Photo, 1905. ANMM Collection



Photo courtesy of Jim North collection

Over the years the club has met many challenges, such as the debacle of the 1892 Anniversary Regatta, the defection of the League in the 1930s - just to mention a few... but the Squaddie continues to prevail!

In 1958, with the help of Club membership, the SFS secured the Club House at the current location in Careening Cove and in 1973, assisted by legendary "SFS Members for Life" the club bought the Pattons Slipways site.





North Shore Rowing Club, Careening Cove

Photo courtesy "A century of Sydney's Flying Sailors"

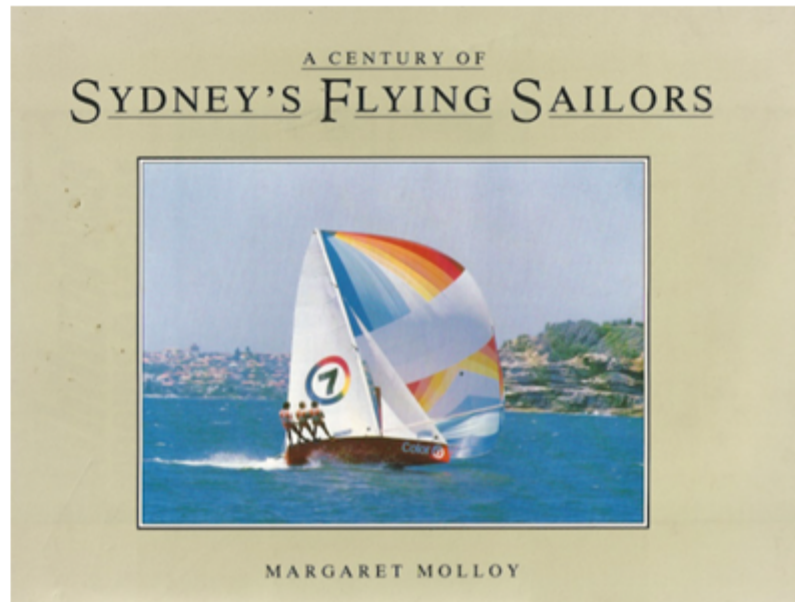
If only Mark Foy and those founding members could see that their vision still exists
130 years on.

The Sydney Flying Squadron's values remain the same to this day, a club for the
everyday man or woman, while every competitive sailor worth his or her salt across
the world knows what a Mark Foy Start is. It is indeed a lasting legacy!



We are always looking to provide opportunities for people to join us. Don't worry if you are a first timer, there are plenty of old hands to teach you. If you want to be a volunteer on one of the support boats, or just with social events, there are lots of opportunities to get involved. Our sailors and volunteers range from teenagers to 80-year-olds. Boats have a range of male and female crew and everyone is welcome. Get involved.

Much of the content in this mailout has been taken from Margaret Molloy's book "A Century of Sydney's Flying Sailors"



Follow the Sydney Flying Squadron at [FaceBook](#) and [Instagram](#)

Don't forget to support your local community club.

See you at the Squaddie!



Sydney Flying Squadron Ltd

Australia's oldest open boat sailing club

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