

TO THE UNFAMILIAR

Fourteen footer racing began sometime in the 1890s, exactly when is not known but Oxley Sailing Club in Brisbane has in its possession some photographs taken in 1898 of an Interstate match between visiting N.S.W. boats and local craft. That may or may not have been the beginning of National Championships, but it proves that Fourteens had been racing as a class for some years prior to 1898.

Victoria and Western Australia have shared dominance in the National Title History, although all of the other states have won their occasional championship. The two most successful boats came from the now extinct St. Kilda 14ft. Sailing Club. H. C. "Mick" Brooke's "JOHN NIMMO" winning five titles shortly after the First World War, and Bill Osborne's famous "TRIAD". TRIAD won seven national titles, six consecutively, and no less than twenty two state titles. Bill Osborne subsequently won three more national titles in "QUEST", the last in 1953.

The last Victorian to win the title was Ivan Sutcliffe, sailing "RIPPLE" to victory in Brisbane in 1961-2 and the following year in Sydney. West Australia has won five out of the seven titles since, Brian Burke being the current champion.

The inaugural World Challenge series was held in conjunction with the 1967-8 National title in Sydney. Lawson Abbott won both titles from a fleet that included two Javelins from New Zealand and two representatives from every 14ft. class in Australia, proving that the Australian Fourteen is the fastest fourteen footer afloat.

In recent years there has been correspondence between some Victorian Council members and International 14 sailors overseas. The result being that the latter are now permitted to use trapeze wires and one or two other modifications that bring our respective classes a little closer. So it could be that in a few years we will be able to compete in "fair dinkum" world championships in our own boats.