

I suppose I could say it all started on 15th January 1954 when I signed off as a merchant seaman on the M/V Duntroon (1000 tons). In September of that year I took a position ~~off~~ with the Office Insurance Company Ltd.

After a couple of years there I was asked to take up a position as secretary of the Perth 14 ft Dinghy Club by the then Commodore Clavie Felton who was an ~~assess~~ assessor with the company. I can remember being a bit apprehensive at the time as I had not done this sort of thing. Clavie assured me that it was not a difficult job - ~~it~~ just to be able to write a few letters and keep the club's records. The job became available as the previous secretary of some 20 years had died.

I took the job on but little did I know what I had let myself in for. "Wow." You see the deceased secretary did not keep much in the way of written records as he kept everything in his head. After making a few blunders I managed to get some order. I was helped considerably by one Jack Poor who was the treasurer at that time. ~~Jack~~ Jack was a bit short on temper at first but after time he and I got on very well and things settled down. The major problem was that I didn't know anybody except Clavie & Jack, so "I went in off the deep end." At that time of ~~course~~ ^{COURSE} the Club was situated on Riverside Drive near the Barrack Street Jetty. The building was a bit ramshackle but structurally sound. Today there is one single pile in the river which was ~~the~~ the end of the ramp of the Clubhouse.

Clavie retired at the finish of his time as Commodore and was taken over by Theodore (Bill) Burke - once again I had some well mentioned difficulty with Bill as he was a bit short tempered too, but as time went by we both settled down and got on well. Bill was a really good bloke and a very hard worker for the Club.

I can recall an incident during a social being held in the upper deck. It was when five and six dancing dances were the norm and as the rhythm caused the building to sway a little Bill and I were ^{DOWN} below in the boardshed shoring up the rafters. The place was not in danger as the building was too sound for that.

The time came when the construction of the Narrows Bridge commenced. The earth and water works caused Perth Water to silt up thereby making it very difficult for our dinghies to sail so we had to do our starts and finishes downstream in the vicinity of Quarries Spit. This eventually, started us

thinking of moving from Perth Water further downstream. The club decided to apply to the Perth City Council for a site in ~~the~~ Crawley Bay ~~between~~ between the Hale School boatshed and the University Rowing Club boatshed. Things went ahead until the Commodore of Royal Perth Yacht Club objected. (The commodore was W. J. Lucas who was a city councillor and proprietor of a radio and electrical business in the city). We had a "big gun" in our membership in the name of Felix P. Nickels - known as "Phil" - he owned Sargents Pharmacy in Inglewood and was very well known to the judiciary (he was a J.P.) the Police Heischay, Politicians and "anybody who was anybody" in Perth including city councillors. Phil went to bat for us and subsequently we were granted the site of land which the club occupies today.

This now set us about moving from Perth Water to Crawley which caused the demolition of the Old Clubhouse which we ^{HAD} occupied since 1904. An interesting fact came up was that the club was connected to the water and sewerage which was unknown to the water supply department (subsequently we never paid any rates). It appears that during WWII the building was occupied by the U.S. Navy as a billet and they ~~just~~ just connected it up and didn't tell anybody!

Well now! The task was ~~about~~ about building a new clubhouse and this is where Bill Burke came to the fore. Bill was a well known builder in the city and he took it upon himself to design and build what we have today. The job was a self help build in that the members pitched in and we built the original ourselves, we were fortunate that many of the members were tradespeople - we had Plumbers, Electricians, Bricklayers, ^{GLAZIERS} Concreters, who did a dedicated and wonderful job. I was one of the labourers who ~~he~~ helpted out. Bill Burke supervised the whole business - did a great job. We commenced by building the boatshed which served for the first year as our clubhouse. During this time it was customary to "open a barrel" after the conclusion of racing and I noticed there were some strange blokes present one time. I did not take a great deal of notice as we often had visitors who were invited by members. It turned out that these blokes were cops from the licensing Branch and subsequently we received a summons that we were ^{selling} selling packaged liquor?? We summoned Phil Nickels who "spoke to some people" but we had to go to court. Bill Burke had to appear before the magistrate and we were fined £10. "Strange", as Bill was ~~all~~ a teetotaler, who had to appear for selling liquor!! The major problem was that we had an infringement registered ~~against~~ against the club which caused some

problem at a later date.

Well, the club started growing in membership as 14 ft dinghies were increasing in popularity and we had finished the upper section of the clubhouse to everybody's satisfaction.

I might mention of the dedication and assistance of our Ladies Committee. These girls put in a tremendous job and were very hard workers - of course they still are - God Bless Em.

By this time I had served some years as secretary (I can't remember how many) and I had received promotion in my job to insurance inspector which occupied considerable time as it included tours of duty to country areas and as a result I was not able to do the secretary's job to the best of my ability and I was voted out of the job. I took over the job of coxswain of the rescue boat which was a worn out naval pinnace off a WWII destroyer. The Rigby engine packed up on it but I had a former ~~friend~~ friend who had one - it was purchased for £10. and installed. The boat itself didn't last much longer as it was starting to fall apart and eventually sank at its mooring in ~~front~~ front of the club. We bought another nice launch called Kurrage which served us well (I don't know whether we still have it, as it would be pretty old by now).

I was asked by Bruce Stoss (deceased) to nominate for Rear Commodore however I was outvoted by Brian Burke (Bill's son). Brian had to resign due to loss of business (he was a very prominent builder) so as I was second I was catapulted into the job. Subsequently I rose up through the ranks to Commodore. It was a lot easier as commodore in those days as the membership consisted of only 14 footers and a few VIs (this was about to change). I was approached by the Heron association for membership - they sailed out of RPYC who were not very keen ~~at~~ on keeping them. This ~~wasn't~~ meant some changes to our constitution and club name. The committee agreed to accepting the Herons and the club's name was amended to Perth Dinghy Sailing Club Inc. after dropping out the "14 ft" from the name.

Subsequently we were approached by a group of mostly Poms who sailed Signet dinghies generally in the Lakes District of U.K. They were very successful in becoming members and in ^{fact} I built one for my family. My late daughter Diame and Clayton did not get on too well with this boat and Clayton eventually went into other classes (namely 18 ft ships).

So now the club had become a multi class club and just grew and

grew to ^{THE} magnificent club it is today.

I was instrumental in getting our Flag Officers into correct naval uniform as I felt that it would enhance the prestige of the club which of ~~course~~ course is one of the oldest on the river and after all our pre second world war members all wore uniforms.

To be elected as Commodore of this club gave me great and worthwhile confidence - it helped me through my working days as ~~Manager~~ Manager for Western Australia of Australian Aviation Underwriting Pool Pty Ltd, a position I occupied for 25 of 27 years until retirement.

The Dingly Club has been and still is a very large part of my life and I am grateful that I was elected as a Life Member some years ago although I really don't know what for.

John Malcolm Erwin

13th January 1933 to ?????