

Key to club's history

by hilary arber

COTTESLOE woman Cynthia Forman had no idea what a flurry of excitement she would create when she knocked on the door of Perth Dinghy Sailing Club, in Crawley, recently.

"I have something of yours," she said and handed over a small ornate key.

The key had been presented to her grandfather, Chief Justice and Lieutenant-Governor Sir Robert McMillan, to commemorate the opening of a new clubhouse on the river near Barrack Street 80 years ago.

Bearing the blue club burgee, it was inscribed on the back and dated November 4, 1922.

Mrs Forman said instinct had told her not to throw the key away.

"People are interested in history," she said. "My parents treasured things."

"The large family home in Peppermint Grove was full of grandfather's collection."

"I found the key when the house was sold and I moved to a smaller place."

"My grandfather was a very modest man and he would be delighted that the key has been returned to the club."

The club, which moved to its present site in the late 1950s, will celebrate its 100th year during the coming season and club historian Rod Smith was overjoyed with the find.

"It's a vital link with the past," Rod said. "This key represents an important chapter in the club's history."

The new clubhouse had been built to replace one destroyed by two disastrous fires in 1920 and September 1922.



Cynthia Forman and Rod Smith with the historic Perth Dinghy Sailing Club key.
Picture: Marcelo Palacios

The second fire had destroyed most of the fleet of 10 and 4-footers, including the champion boat Mele Bilo.

But club members and the whole community had pitched in to get the club back together.

"It's amazing that the key has turned up in our 100th year," Rod said.

The key will be framed, along with a photograph of Sir Robert, and added to the club's comprehensive museum.

Its story will also be included in a book being compiled to celebrate 100 years of sailing, which will be launched on next season's opening day in October.