

# MEMORIES AND REMINISCENCES FROM EARLY CHAMPIONSHIPS

## PART 2 AVALON SAILING CLUB NSW 1964/65

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On arriving at Pittwater in late December 1964 we found we had to launch the boats off the beach at Newport, some three to four miles south of Avalon. After launching and sailing towards the sailing club I was struck by the beauty of the area. The coastline around Pittwater consists of heavily treed steep hills and cliff faces broken by coves of pebble or sandy beaches.

Avalon Sailing Club is situated on the eastern shore of Pittwater on the Barranjoey peninsula. Access from the road was very limited at that time so launching facilities were not available. All competitors were provided with moorings for the regatta. Local Flying Fifteens carried antifouling and were moored virtually all year round in this safe protected environment.

In 1964 Avalon Sailing Club was a good solid family club with very strong junior fleets of Manly Juniors and Vee Jays. The Flying Fifteen was in the process of being introduced to the club as the senior class, and at this early stage boasted of club fleet of around 12 boats. In this fleet there were many young crew members and 6 boats were steered by skippers under 21.

Most competitors had arrived a week before the championships to tune up for the typical Pittwater conditions, light shifting winds and flat water.

The boat that created most interest was the brand new "Relience 1" built by Bill and Hal Shand from the Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club. This cold moulded timber boat was later to be used as the hull and deck plugs for the famous fibreglass Shand Mark 1s. Her foredeck was heavily cambered, she had rolled side decks, a sloping rudder post to balance the helm and generally set up like a dinghy. Her rig was also very different. She carried a new design very fine de Havilland mast matched with Miller and Whitworth sails. The combination of

de Havilland spars and Miller and Whitworth sails really took off that year with National Title wins in virtually every major dinghy class. - Flying Dutchman, 505s, Sharpies, Gwen 12s, Moths etc.

In the practice races "Relience 1" was showing great speed, particularly in the fresh breeze. After one of the early races Bill and Hal brought the boat into shallow water near the sailing club in order to lean it over and adjust the spreader angle. When easing the boat back upright the mast snapped in half with a loud crack. Fortunately the de Havilland factory in Sydney located a spare Flying Dutchman section and were able to rig before the next race. Bill adjusted the spreader angle at the factory and left it alone after that.

In contrast the local boats were flat decked and carried heavy untapered masts with quite full sails, mainly Herrick. During the practice races it became apparent that these boats were very fast in light to medium winds and flat water ie "Pittwater conditions".

Most of the visiting competitors were somewhere in between "Relience 1" and the Avalon boats in configuration. Typical was the defending champion "Molly O" which carried a moderately tapered Proctor mast with Elvstrom sails from the loft in Sydney. Mike Fletcher who operated the loft was so aware of the threat posed by Miller and Whitworth and their new concepts that he was on the water in a power boat most days looking after his clients.

A strong entry from New Zealand was skippered by Jim Bruton and crewed by Chris Bouzaid. After the Fifteen championships this crew went to Melbourne to contest the Prince Philip Cup in Dragons. Chris Bouzaid was to return to Australia in 1967 to win the Sydney to Hobart race in "Rainbow", and was a major player in New Zealand's emergence as a yachting power in the 1970s and 80s.

**Stan Brown from Tasmania arrived at the championships with a Flying Fifteen hull on his car roof, the keel in the boot and trailing another boat.**



Stan Brown from Tasmania arrived at the championships with a Flying Fifteen hull on his car roof, the keel in the boot and trailing another boat. Stan was from the new fleet in Hobart based at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania and sailed with one of his sons while the other two sons sailed the second boat.

Once the series got underway it was pretty obvious local knowledge was going to play a big part. Local boats would be virtually queueing up to get into particular coves and coming out on huge lifts or dodging rocks a metre off the shoreline.

"Relience 1" started the series off by winning heats in winds over 12 knots, while a top local boat "Bookiera" sailed by 20 year old Ian Downing was performing well in lighter conditions. Halfway through the championships "Relience 1" held a comfortable advantage until she was disqualified in one race after a relatively minor incident.

For the following heats the winds turned light and fickle and the championship result was to come right down to the last beat in the last race. "Bookiera" and "Relience 1" were fighting it out tack for tack near the head of the fleet in this race. Both boats achieved high placings but "Relience 1" failed by half a boat length for the required placing to take the title. The new champions were Ian Downing and his crew from Avalon Sailing Club after sailing a good consistent series.

In due time Bill and Hal Shand were to be compensated for this disappointing series. History credits them with a string of National Title wins beginning in Hobart in 1968 and the formation of a successful boat building business.

After this series David Hinkley, the builder of most of the Avalon fleet started experimenting with different ideas and concepts. One radical idea that didn't take off was fitting the boat with a cuddy, similar to a Dragon, complete with full length bunks and storage lockers. (Believe it or not!).

The Avalon Titles really fired up the class locally with fleets starting up on Sydney Harbour and Lake Macquarie. Given the young age of some of the top skippers, apart from Ian Downing, there were Nick King, Pat Hurley, Tony Tyson, Robert Dickson, John Bloch and their crews and the momentum created in the 1960s the Flying Fifteen class flourished in NSW in the 70s and most of the 80s. It is a pity the class is no longer operating in this state as we are missing out on many great sailing venues.

Who knows, maybe some smart ideas and promotions in the near future might just work.

Howard Proctor

Next Issue - Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania 1965/66



## Australian National Championship Results

### 1964 - 1965 sailed under the Burgee of Avalon Sailing Club

The third Australian Championship attracted boats from New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. There was also an entry from New Zealand sailed by Jim Bruton and Chris Bouzaid, the first time a New Zealand team had competed

Ian Downing and his crew were dominant in the light winds with Relience 1 winning in winds over 12 knots.

Half way through the series Relience 1 held a comfortable advantage until she was disqualified from a heat.

Stan Brown from Tasmania arrived with a hull on the roof of his car and the keel in the boot (truly Uffa Fox style) and another boat on a trailer for his two sons to sail.

*Unfortunately we do not have a full set of results for this series, however, the first place getters were:*

Place	Boat #	Boat Name	Helm	Crew	Home State
1	633	Bookiera	Ian Downing	<i>no record</i>	NSW
2	761	Relience 1	Bill Shand	Hal Shand	Vic
3		<i>no record</i>	<i>no record</i>	<i>no record</i>	