

# History of the Charlottetown Yacht Club

**Editor's note:** The Charlottetown Yacht Club is celebrating its 60th year in operation this year. The following is an excerpt of a history of the club written in 1991 by Rob Hambly. Some additional information has been included to describe changes at the club in recent years.

Sailing and boating has always been a big part of Island history. The Charlottetown harbor, one of the finest harbors on the east coast of Canada, has been a haven for boaters dating back hundreds of years.

As boating started to become popular in the early 1900s, two clubs developed on the Charlottetown waterfront. The Hillsborough Boating Club which was located east of Peake's Wharf, just west of present day McKinnon's Lobster Pound. It was primarily made up of members owning rowboats, canoes or rowing skiffs.

The second boating club was the Charlottetown Yacht Club (CYC). It was located on a narrow wharf running parallel with Queens Wharf and Pickard's Wharf. The club was made up of people promoting boating and sailing as a sport.

It is believed that some of the members of this club were involved with the development of the CYC incorporated in 1938.

With the increasing number of crafts, competitive boating gained interest. In 1925, the CYC and the Hillsborough Boating Club hosted an "Aquatic Sports"

day in the Charlottetown harbor. It included motorboat, canoe and rowboat racing.

On April 22, 1938, the CYC was incorporated. It chartered members included: A. Malcolm Irwin, Henry C. Bourke, Fred W. Morris, Walter S. Grant, John J. Morris, George P. Nicholson, John J. King, Alexander C. Sinclair, Simon P. Paoli Jr., James A. Currie, Joseph L. Curran, George Buntain, Earl C. Baker, Norman M. Saunders, Percy W. McNevin, John O. Hyndman, Frank H. Stanley and Kenneth M. Martin.

A year later the club house was built.

It was constructed on property originally owned by the Carvellos, but was later sold to the city. At that time, the city used this property for a garage to repair machinery and crush rocks, as there was a rock crusher also located there.

A strip of land west of the city's property belonged to W. Henry Aitken. It was also acquired later by the CYC. It extended south from the south east corner of the Auld Estate to the end of the Pownal Wharf.

Boats were moored between Pownal Wharf and Pickard's Wharf.

Fred Morris was one of the early founders of the CYC. He was responsible for organizing fundraisers and programs for the club. He also donated quite a bit of money himself to the club and was awarded the title of first commodore from 1939 to 1943.

"Mac" Irwin was probably one of the key persons involved in developing the CYC, both before and after it was incorporated. He also contributed greatly to the sport of sailing itself. He was involved in the construction of a number of sailboats. The most recognized is the "Zenith", a very well respected sailboat that was one of the harbor's finest and fastest crafts.

He acted as treasurer from 1943 to 1947, as well as commodore in the early to mid 1960's.

Around the same time as the CYC was incorporated, the Yacht Racing Association of the Northumberland Strait was formed. Mac Irwin, Ken Martin and Jim Blanchard were primarily responsible for its development. It was designed to coordinate races with Summerside, Shediac, Pictou, Borden and Charlottetown.

During the war between 1939 and 1945, the yacht club's membership rose considerably as military personnel joined. Memberships were approximately \$5 per person.

During these years, sailing and rowing were more popular as gas and fuel were of limited supply and great expense. Sailboat racing was still increasingly popular with annual regattas held at the club.

From 1943 to 1947, Fred Small was commodore of the CYC. Fred, although not a chartered member of the club, was a very important member. He was always actively involved in club activities. During the 1930s

and 40s, Fred was described as "the strongest man on the waterfront" (Mac Irwin). He was in tremendous physical shape from rowing and paddling. Fred Small's interest in the CYC never waned and he remained active and respected at the club until his death in the late 1980's.

The club was recognized throughout the Maritimes for its spirit and hospitality. Money was very limited. Membership fees barely covered club costs. At that time there was no bar at the CYC. However, members would often bring liquor into the sail loft during social events.

A dredging operation taking place at the Department of Transport Wharf enabled work to be done to the CYC's Pownal Wharf at little cost. The captain of the barge doing the work at the D.O.T. Wharf would spend time at the club with the members during social gatherings. He would often do work for the club at very little cost, if any at all.

Little organization or formal planning was involved in club activities. Races would be put in by Mac Irwin and Hal Burke. They would motor out in Hal Burke's boat, "Restless" with painted cheese boxes signalling the starting sequences for the Snipes races. With the large number of Snipes in North America, the "Snipes Class International Racing Association" was formed. It set the standard for Snipe Class racing in North America. Several members of the CYC belonged to this and would take part in class racing throughout the Maritimes. Boats at this time were pretty much located on moorings in front of the club.

Snipes owned by members included: Ken Martin's "Four Bells", Hal Burke's "Scout" (later sold to Billy MacLeod), Ian and Anne Rankin's "Wings", Billy Bentley's "Snake Eyes", Ralph and Margaret Dumont's "Dingbat". Other owners included Avan Andrews and Clive Stewart.

On November 27, 1959, the CYC placed an offer on the Aitken property. Five months later, on March 8, 1960, Mrs. Aitken signed the property over to the CYC.

It wasn't until June 1964 that the club made another

offer on a parcel of land. The offer was made to the City of Charlottetown to purchase the land where the club house sat. On December 17, 1964, it purchased this property. Previous to its purchase, the club leased the land from the city.

The early 1960s were important years for the club with the purchase of their own land.

In 1963 the club formed the Junior Sailing Program with the purchase of twenty 16 foot Flying Junior sailboats.

They were purchased by members for the National Boy Scout Regatta held in 1964. After the regatta, 10 boats were donated to the club. This was a very important step for the club as it kept the interest in the sport by introducing young people to sailing. Several graduates of this program continue to be active yachtsmen and members of the CYC. In 1964, the National Boy Scout Regatta was held at the CYC. This created revenue not only for the club but for the town as well.

Throughout the 1960's, powerboats greatly outnumbered the sailboats, and from 1964 to 1966, the Three Tides Waterski Club was formed and operated out of the CYC. During this period, club spirit was great. Luncheons were put on by the Ladies "Ox" on Wednesday afternoons. Also on occasion, they would prepare suppers for the members on Wednesday or Friday evenings.

In the mid-1960s, the Yacht Club underwent some renovations, and work to strengthen the wharfs was also carried out at this time. Around the time of the renovations, Art Love and Henry Peterson started the bar at the CYC. Since then, the bar has been a major source of income for the club.

The early 1970s saw a growing interest in sailboat racing. The number of sailboats increased dramatically and the racing program, as it still exists, was developed by members. Throughout the 1970s memberships ranged from around 150 to 200 members at a cost of approximately \$20 and up.

In 1979, the Hambly's were introduced to the CYC

through family membership, and the purchase of a 24-foot sailboat. At this time, there was quite a large membership, although funding to cover increasing costs of maintenance continued to be a struggle. Repairs to the east and west wharfs were once again critical. Resodding of the lawns and paving of the parking areas were also thought to be necessary.

Although the club was not all that glamorous, the club spirit was tremendous. The majority of the members were very enthusiastic. Pre-season work bee's to prepare the CYC always attracted a large number. An active racing program under the direction of Ron White gave way to lively competition and set the stage for many post race social activities. Many members also participated in Northumberland Strait Yachting Association events. The ladies also worked closely together through the Ladies "Ox" and were responsible for preparing the Yacht Club for luncheons, suppers, dances and other activities. Helen Love was often instrumental in the co-ordination of these activities. The warmer weather also turned many sailors' attention to organized family cruising.

1982 was a great year for the club and the club morale. Dr. Bob Midgley, as commodore, put forward a tremendous effort in running the club and encouraging club spirit. At that time, the boats were primarily on moorings with a tender service offered by the club. The tender, the "Whizbang" (somehow appropriately named), was an old open wooden boat with an inboard engine which constantly required attention. It was replaced by a new tender called the "Fred Small" in 1983. It was called this since Fred was the honorary commodore at that time.

A key issue facing the CYC in the early part of the 1980's was whether or not they should sell their property to the Charlottetown Area Development Agency for the development of the Harbourside Project. It was discussed for a couple of years whether or not the club house should be torn

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## NO WORRIES.

Worry about the tide? Sometimes.  
Worry about the wind? Always.  
Worry about my Retirement Financial Plan? Never.

ALLAN MORSE

**FORTUNE**  
FINANCIAL  
Member-Mutual Exchange and CIP