

## **Sailing at Jewfish Point and Oatley Park Baths**

**1960 – 1995**

### **Jewfish Point Sailing Club 1960 - 1976**

Three fifteen year old sailing enthusiasts, residents of Jewfish Point, decided to start up their own sailing club in 1960.

Michael Turner, Terry Walker and John Cooper, unable to legally drive found that having to travel to other established clubs was a chore when they had the river on their doorstep.

Starting off modestly with their own boats, some home built, they gained permission to use a boatshed at 60 Marine Drive Oatley as their temporary base. As time went by the membership swelled to over fifty young people from the local area racing their boats on Saturday afternoons during summer. The fleet of craft included some ten Moth Class, three VJ's, other varied sailing craft as well as a support motor boat.

### **60 Marine Drive Oatley**

#### **Temporary Jewfish Point Sailing Club Site**



For the both boys and girls club members it was a wonderful time in their lives, sailing and socialising. Many a young romance eventuated.

A sailing course between Como Bridge and Oatley Park Baths was registered with the NSW Maritime Services Board as well as affiliation with the National sailing bodies.

During these early years permissive occupancy from Hurstville Council was applied for and granted upon the Reserve at Jewfish Point with approval to build a Boat Shelter. This reserve still shows the work the young members did in the off season. The reserve is now named “The Darcy McMahan” Reserve.

Funds were raised through various means, parties at member’s homes, dances, etc. The local boat shed at 28 Marine Drive was a great supporter of the young people.

### **Jewfish Point Reserve**

#### **Site of original council approved Sailing Club Site 1960**



#### **Maritime Services Registered Sailing Course**

#### **Oatley Baths to Como Bridge**

**1960**



Looking back in hindsight the three young initiators of the club were quite naive but gained a great deal of experience and a wealth of knowledge as they grew to maturity. Over the time the club was active many trips were undertaken down the river to Towra Point generally coming home late, with the tide in ebb and often being towed by local oyster farmers. The girl’s fathers would regularly

gather at the top of 60 Marine Drive ready to berate the late home comers , all in good sport as they did support us well.

Around 1970 the club went into decline due to other interests by the members, namely opposite sex and cars. The local “Jewfish Point Peninsular Society” who had been trying for years to remove the club from Jewfish point because they were concerned with “Car Parking” succeeded in having the permissive occupancy rescinded in 1976, hence the demise of the club. (Car parking on Jewfish Point now is a nightmare of resident cars). But the registration of the sailing course on the river was maintained.

Quite a number of local youth went on to become national sailing champions having been exposed to sailing at Jewfish Point.

### **Georges River Water Activities Centre – Oatley Park Baths 1980 - 1995**

A meeting was held in June 1972 between the founding members of the Jewfish Point Sailing Club and the Georges River District Scouts. At this meeting a proposal was accepted for the Scouting District to take over the registered sailing course in their endeavour to establish a Scouting Water Activity Centre operating out of the Oatley Park Baths.

This took a number of years to gain approvals from Hurstville Council with the requirements to open the activity centre to all comers. Hence the Georges River Water Activity Centre was initiated using some old sailing club members as instructors backed by the Scouting District. Open to youngsters, eight to thirteen the GRWATC over the years had many hundreds of girls and boys participating.









Every Saturday morning volunteer parents would gather all of the trailers which housed the more than twenty boats, kayaks, motor rescue boats and other assorted gear and transport them to Oatley Park Baths.

To participate each child paid \$2.00 and had to be accompanied by an adult. Most of the mothers would make hamburgers in the Oatley Swimming Club shed to gain extra revenue to support the centre. All of the boats were sponsored by local businesses but other expenses like insurance was the responsibility of the GRWATC.

As the trailer storage was not a great option GRWATC applied to the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation for a grant and were granted \$12,500 towards the building of a floating boatshed.

A concrete barge was purchased from Quibray Bay Oyster Farmers. Towed to Neverfail Bay a structure (Shed ) was built upon the platform with a front section drawbridge and rear access door. Second hand caravan windows completed the creation.

The craft was moored on a Maritime Services Board approved mooring at Jewfish Point, located where the previous commercial boatsheds had been.

It was no longer a chore on Saturday mornings to transport all of the gear from the punt across the bay.

One of the fathers, Reg Lawler, rigged up a multiple towing line so that all of the craft could be towed from the open drawbridge across Jewfish Bay simultaneously.





Each Saturday began with sailing lessons inside the baths. Much enjoyment was had by all. Once the participants were judged ready they were then able to participate in the afternoon race on the registered course out on the river. Every individual young person was presented with a trophy over the season. Hurstville Council provided a sandy beach at the southern end of the swimming baths to enhance the activities.



The GRWATC was closed down in 1995 due to lack of viability brought about by insufficient membership and rising costs. All sailing craft and Aluminium punts were handed over to the Connells Point Sailing Club. Other craft as well as funds from the sale of the floating storeroom were given to the St. George Area Scout Association.

People of note: John and Margaret Brodie, Reg and Joyce Lawler, Jan Walker Laurie Derwent and all of the supportive parents over the years.

Terry Walker PSM