

September 2023 Forecast History Locker Article

The Flying Fifteens.

by Janis Cummings

In January 2024 LMYC will again host the Flying Fifteen National Championships on Belmont Bay with the expectation of at least 25 entries competing from across Australia.

LMYC has in the past a unique history when it comes to this one design sailboat. This legendary keel boat continues to flourish around the world despite its design dating back to the 1940's. Designed by Uffa Fox in England, the original yacht concept was to be built at home by amateurs, from timber or marine plywood around stringers. As time passed the hulls were made from fibreglass using a mould. The one design class caught on in Australia in the 1960's, the first on the LMYC register in 1969 "Currawong" FF#583 owned by C. Wilson.

The "Fifteen" can be thrilling to sail, especially in heavy conditions when it can certainly plane. Manned by a crew of two, it has a simple two sail plus spinnaker rig. It can be easily transported to events on a trailer, and sailed by young and old alike. Originally a few Flying Fifteens began sailing in 3rd Division at LMYC. An enthusiastic group of about 20 sailors who wanted to race competitively without outlaying a lot of money and relying on a large crew to sail set about achieving their goal. Club members Rolly Davies and Brian Allen purchased a Flying Fifteen mould from Dulmisons at Wyong. The boats proved easy to construct in fibreglass and inexpensive to make. Over two years, during the winter sailing recess of 1975 and 1976, the group of twenty built no less than 20 "Fifteens" in John Jarvie's boat yard at Warners Bay.

Out of such enthusiasm, LMYC's Flying Fifteens gained state "fleet status". Forecast of May 1978 reported in the *Flying Fifteen News*, "*this fleet continues to grow with its register now numbering 25 boats. With the national titles being held here in January, it has been a full year of sailing, with a number of successful social events, and much good comradeship. We like to think we have a closely knit group within our old established club and we continue to enjoy our good course and racing facilities*".

Over a period of 20 years, no less than 50 Flying Fifteens registered with LMYC. Many current club members will recall being part of the fleet during its hey day. The LMYC fleet had all but vanished by 1990 as newer, faster and more expensive Flying Fifteen models contributed to the demise of fleets of older boats. Only two Flying Fifteens now race regularly with the club. FF#4062 "Up Ships Creek" owned by Mark Holmes and Chris Villa was purchased in 2020, rekindling their teenage years interest in the class. They are now active participants in the class racing circuit nation wide. Paul Van Ruge can be seen sailing his Fifteen on Wednesdays.

Our Forecast History Locker feature this month comes from March 1987 with Glen Coulton on the front cover.

Following the Flying Fifteen National Titles held at LMYC in 1986, an international qualifying team consisting of Mark Holmes and Chris Villa, sailing "Hot 'Ta' Trot", Glen Coulton and Grant Schultz in "Instant Replay" and Noel Davies and Brian Allen, in "Saturday Matinee" accompanied by Team Manager Vicki Villa set off to compete in the 5th Flying Fifteen World Championship in Hong Kong in November /December the same year. Much excitement erupted from the auditorium of LMYC when it was announced that Glen Coulton and Grant Schultz had come from behind in the last heat to win the 5th Flying Fifteen World Title. LMYC's first World Champions. An unbelievable and remarkable achievement considering their young ages and the adversity of sailing in foreign waters can impose. The stories told after the event about sailing conditions were incredible to believe. It makes one appreciate what amazing sailing grounds we have here with Lake

Macquarie on our doorstep. A full report of the preparation, lead up to the event and details of each race can be found in the March 1987 edition of Forecast makes for interesting reading

We welcome visiting sailors to LMYC in January for the Flying Fifteen Nations with the promise of our hospitality, excellent facilities and renowned sailing waters.