

CRUISELETTER

MAY 2026 | ISSUE NO. 430



Our beautiful Lake Macquarie
recently taken at Croudace Bay

What's on this month

- **Annual General Meeting: 18th May 2026, 7:00 pm; Bridgedeck Room**
Guest Speaker: Simon Turpin, Discover Sailing Program, LMYC.
- **Outing: Port Stephens & Broughton Island Cruise: 8rd May - 12th May has been cancelled.**
Now a lake cruise starting Friday 8th May. Ralph Asquith coordinator.

<u>Contents:</u>	<u>Page:</u>
Skipper's Report:	2
April Guest Speakers:	3
Local Weather Stations::	3
What's Happening at LMYC:	4
Safety Snippet:	5
Lake Matters:	6-9
Easter Outing Report:	10
Vale Bill Ratcliff:	11
Club Information:	12



Vale Bill Ratcliff. Tony presenting Bill with a certificate in 2019 recognising his 50 Sydney-Hobart yacht races (see p. 11).

SKIPPER'S REPORT

Greetings fellow CD members,

I would like to thank Ken Archer and the CD committee for their efforts in keeping things running so smoothly whilst Cath and I were away exploring Southern Africa. We had an amazing time visiting wildlife parks and reserves across five countries and will be quite happy to never see another impala or zebra, especially from behind!

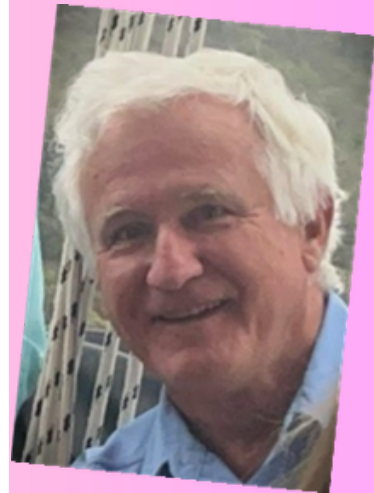
We were all saddened to hear that one of our past members passed away last month. Bill Ratcliff, along with his wife Lee, had been active members for many years after moving from Sydney to Gwandalan. Bill was a very serious sailor who competed in fifty Sydney to Hobart races. Despite being an elite racer he was always happy to share his knowledge and experience and many of us are grateful for his guidance. On your behalf we have passed on our condolences to Lee and the family.

It has been an 'interesting' time on the lake with highly variable weather, an ever-worsening problem with bio-fouling of our boat hulls and a somewhat late start to our (hopefully) last interim channel maintenance dredging program. Hopefully we will see the 'permanent' dredging program begin later this year. Fingers crossed!!

Recently, we have had many members leaving the lake to cruise down to Pittwater and Sydney Harbour to enjoy the magnificent autumn conditions. We have also had a bit of a 'first' for the CD with Ralph inviting several members to join him on a private cruise to Lord Howe Island and several of the outer reefs that lie to the north. Ralph and his crew have safely returned to the Lake and by all reports they had a fantastic time. It was not without its challenges but everyone thrived on the experience and we now have a much expanded cadre of 'blue water' sailors who feel competent to lead longer coastal cruises. For those who know Ralph's background it should come as no surprise that he came back with his fridges overflowing with fresh fish. The Mahi Mahi was delicious!

Our next meeting (Monday 18 May) is a combined General and Annual General Meeting. Please do not panic – there are no elections this year so it safe to attend! We will have the usual annual reports but also two guest speakers – Simon Turpin talking on the LMYC Sailing Program and Ralph giving us an outline of the Lord Howe Island expedition. There will also be an opportunity for members to raise any issues of concern and to offer their suggestions for future CD activities both ashore and on the water so come along and have a great time!

Best wishes and safe sailing,
Tony



TONY AUSTIN

Note: CD memberships are now due: Annual fee is \$25 or \$70 for 3 years. Ralph has sent out reminders to all members who are due to pay this year. This is a final notice.

April Meeting's Guest Speakers

Unfortunately, our intended speaker for the evening was unable to attend, so we asked Phil to give a short presentation on weather Apps he recently looked at, and for Natalie and Eleanor (pictured) to provide a report on their attendance at the Women Who Sail Australia's Gathering on the Bay event at Port Stephens. A full written report was published in the last (April) edition of the Cruisletter.



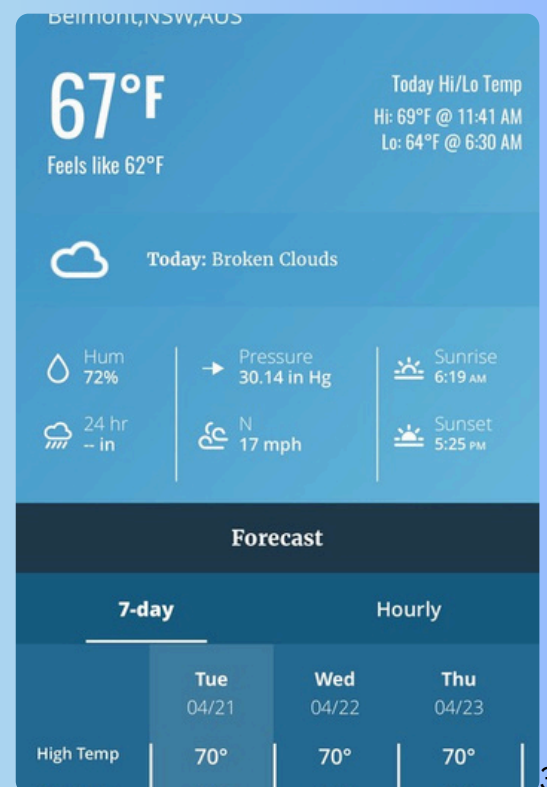
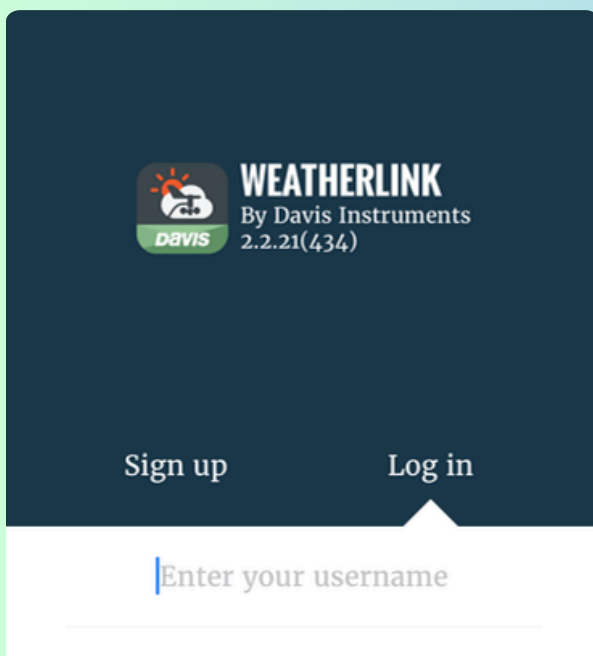
Local Weather Stations

Davis Weather Station at LMYC

At the April general meeting, Phil gave a brief overview of the LMYC's Davis weather station which is located in the starting box on the LMYC marina, with a readout display on the wall to the RHS of the club's bar. This facility is probably not well known amongst our members. Real-time data are also available from a Davis App which can be downloaded on a smart phone. You will have to create an account with a password to initially log in. The initial data will probably be in Imperial Units. Click on the person shaped icon (top RHS of display) to set up for your preferred units of measurement.



The Davis weather station data display in the LMYC clubhouse; the Davis App and the first page of data displayed on your phone (below).

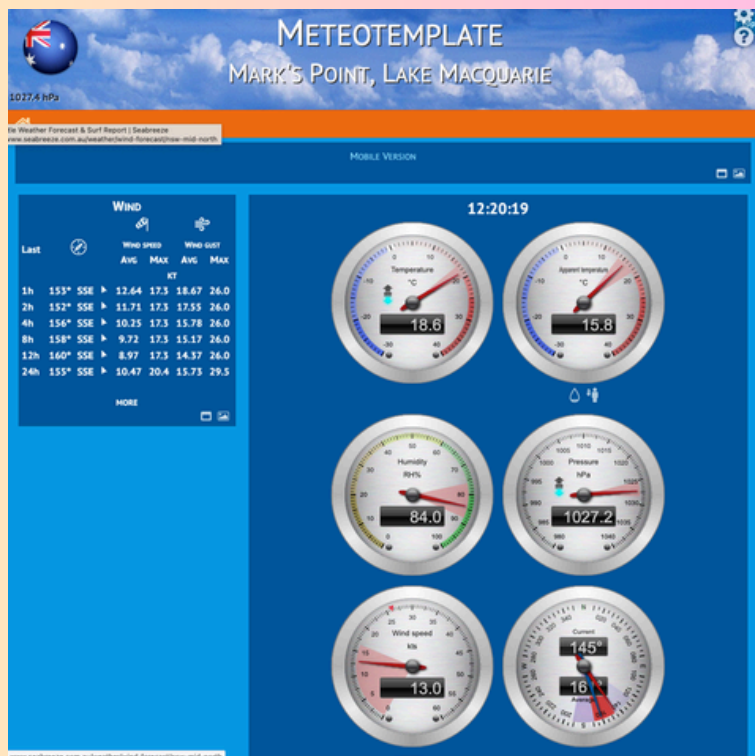


Marks Point Weather Station.

Another weather station is located at a private residence on the top of Marks Point, and real-time weather information is available from this station through the LMYC website at:

<https://www.lmycmeteo.com.au/template/indexDesktop.php>

The first page of data from this website is shown below. More data are available on the website by scrolling down. (Note: You will have to enter the website address).



What's Happening at LMYC?

- Members should be aware that membership renewals for the LMYC are now due. You can pay on-line. Likewise, membership of the CD is also due for by May. In both cases, you can opt for a 3-year membership at a discounted rate.
- The southern side of the Club's carpark has been closed for repairs.
- A number of LMYC yachts took out prizes in the recent Sail Port Stephens regatta.
- Also enter these 2026 dates into your diaries:
 - **Friday 8th May:** Trivia Night for LMYC Discover Sailing Centre.
 - **Tuesday 26th May:** LMYC AGM.
 - **Friday 12th June:** Degustation with Crusoes on the Lake.
 - **Friday 24th July:** Christmas in July Long Table Dinner.
 - **Friday 7th August:** Commodore's Ball, raising funds for Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie.

Download the latest editions of "Forecast" to catch up with all the entertainment and other activities you can enjoy at your Club.

Safety Snippet

LPG Gas on Boats

At our March general meeting, Dean Gainey from Durable Gas Services, gave a presentation on LPG gas safety on boats. He subsequently agreed to participate in an inspection of gas installations on members boats. This was undertaken on April 9th at the LMYC marina, and 6 boats took part.

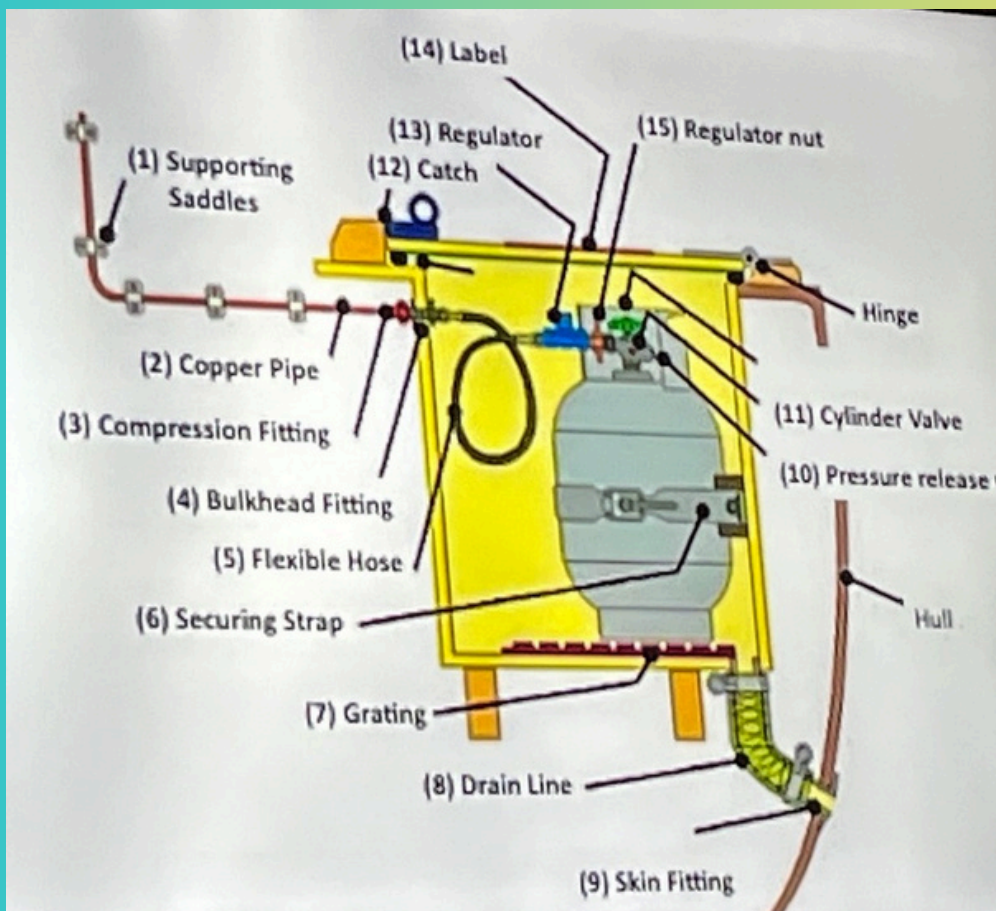
It was telling, that most of the boats inspected had some issues with their gas installations, so it is a fair assumption that a reasonable proportion of boat owners in general, have potentially unsafe and/or non-compliant gas fittings on their boats.

These issues ranged from the need to replace some specific relatively minor fittings, to requiring a complete refit of the gas supply system to comply with Australian standards for the issuing of a compliance certificate. Of particular concern was the use of old, non-compliant regulators which if they malfunction, could cause gas bottle pressure at the burners.

In some circumstances, existing fittings which are acceptable in other countries, and may be quite safe, need to be replaced for a compliance certificate to be issued.

While some of the work is quite expensive, the potential consequences of a gas fire is not a risk worth taking.

A typical gas bottle fitting out diagram is shown below.



Lake Matters

Overview of the Proposed Dredging Program for Swansea Channel

The poster shown below is on display at the LMYC clubhouse and details can also be found on the NSW Government website at:

<https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/swansea-channel-dredging>.

The following information has been sourced from the website and a larger version of the details on the poster are shown on the following page.

Background

Swansea Channel connects Lake Macquarie to the Pacific Ocean and is the only entrance to the popular boating area in the Hunter region. Lake Macquarie is twice the size of Sydney Harbour and the largest saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere.

The history of Swansea Channel indicates that this is not a natural continually open navigational channel into Lake Macquarie. Since 1970 Swansea Channel has been dredged 24 times.

Interventions such as the construction of the Lake Macquarie Entrance Breakwaters in the late 1800s were built to allow larger vessels in for industry purposes. Due to the dynamic nature of Swansea Channel there will be continual need for interventions such as dredging to maintain the channel.

While there is good access to the lake for the majority of users with boats on trailers that can launch from one of the many boat ramps around the shoreline, maintaining access to the ocean through the narrow Swansea Channel is of major importance to recreational boating in the region, particularly cruising yacht clubs.

Transport for NSW

Swansea channel dredging

November 2025

A joint initiative by the Australian, NSW, and Local Governments has committed to deliver safe and reliable access to Lake Macquarie, improving navigation for boaters.

Proposed dredging plan map

- Elizabeth Island sand placement:** Sand from the Drop Over will be piped to Elizabeth Island to help attached to the sand transfer station, and it helps support Little Tern habitat.
- Sand transfer pump station:** A small pump inside an existing container sheds sand to Nine Mile Beach. This set up helps to reduce noise and vibration during dredging campaigns and remove work hours.
- Sand transfer pipeline:** A 330mm diameter pipe carries dredged sand to the beach. Most are above ground, with short underground sections near the Pacific Clubhouse.
- Sand placement area:** The dredged sand is pumped to the beach and placed in a lined area to allow the excess water to be removed. Their machinery will spread the sand along the beach to bring it to the water close to the shoreline.
- Dredging area:** The proposed dredging will provide a navigational channel up to 80m wide and depth of 3.0m Australian Height Datum (AHD) in the main channel area.
- Marks Point work area:** This area will be used to launch the dredge vessel which will be needed during dredging campaigns. Campaigns will use Swansea and Barmouth Boat Ramps as an alternative.
- Docker Street work area:** This area will only be used when constructing the pipeline.
- Nine Mile Beach work area:** This area may store machinery needed for sand placement and will be used only during dredging campaigns.

Key

- Sand transfer pipeline
- Sand placement area
- Sand transfer station
- Work areas

Transport for NSW has prepared a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) that will give an environmental approval to dredge when needed for the next 10 years in Swansea Channel.

Lake Macquarie City Council has been provided \$10 million from the Australian Government through the Priority Community Infrastructure Program to deliver a dredge and sand transfer system. Transport for NSW has also secured \$6 million from the NSW Government.

Boating Infrastructure and Dredging Scheme to manage the operations for the next five years. The proposal and REF look at future dredging operations for Swansea Channel. Key details of the proposal are:

- Our dredging operations will use the new Australian Government funded dredge.
- An initial large dredging campaign will provide a channel 60 metres wide and depth of 3.5 metres Australian Height Datum (AHD).
- Once this channel is achieved, we will carry out smaller maintenance dredging campaigns when needed.
- A sand transfer system will be set up to move the sand from the channel to the Nine Mile Beach, near the Barmouth Golf and Bowls Club using a pipeline and pump station.

Have your say on the 10 year Swansea Channel dredging plan and REF by Sunday 21 December 2025.

For any questions or more information please contact

- Phone: 1800 271 100
- Email: swanseachannel@dredging.transport.nsw.gov.au
- Website: transport.nsw.gov.au/Swanseadredging
- Swansea Channel Dredging, 33 James Craig Road, Russell NSW 2039

Dredge and sand transfer project.

Lake Macquarie City Council has been provided \$10 million from the Australian Government through the Priority Community Infrastructure Program to deliver a dredge and sand transfer system. This would allow for more frequent and reliable dredging of Swansea Channel and improve navigation and access to Lake Macquarie. Transport for NSW has secured \$6 million from the State Government from the Boating Infrastructure and Dredging Scheme to fund operational costs of the dredge and sand transfer system for the next five years.

Next steps

2025 - Council has awarded the contract for the dredge and sand transfer system infrastructure.

2025 - Completed Stage 3 maintenance dredging campaign.

2025 - Feedback on the REF and 10-year dredging proposal, has now closed.

Early 2026 - TfNSW will obtain the 10-year environmental approval and publish the submission report.

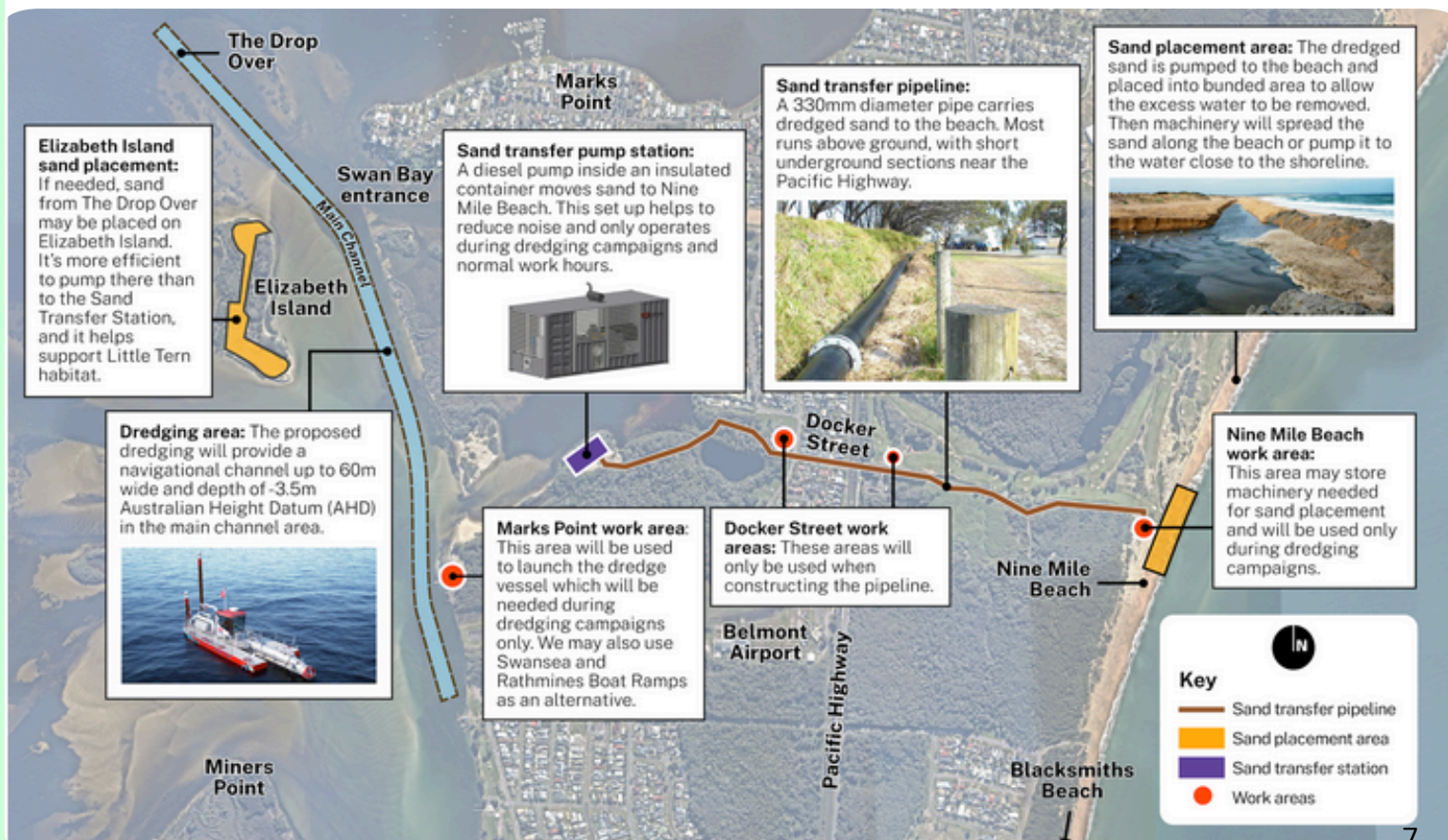
Early 2026 - Lake Macquarie City Council will manage the construction of dredging Infrastructure.

Late Feb 2025 - Carry out our fourth maintenance dredging campaign.

Early 2026 - publish the submissions report and obtain environmental approval.

Mid 2026 - Start of large dredging campaign using the new dredge and sand transfer infrastructure.

Late 2026 - Finish the large dredging campaign.



Latest Information on the Dredging program.

The following is the latest information from Department of Transport's website:

April 2026 – Start of Stage 4 maintenance dredging.

Maintenance dredging in the Swansea Channel will begin late April after the long weekend, (subject to weather conditions) with the NSW Government continuing its commitment to maintaining safe and accessible waterways in the Swansea Channel. While work progresses on the new dredge and Sand Transfer System Project we will carry out Stage 4 maintenance dredging to keep boats moving. Dredging activities will concentrate on the Dog Leg section of the channel, with an estimated 10,000 cubic metres of material to be removed during Stage 4 and take about two months. The scope of our work will include:

- establishing a temporary work site at the following locations: Elizabeth Island, Rathmines Boat Ramp, Naru Point and on water
- installing environmental controls and a work area on Elizabeth Island to pump dredge sand to this location
- the dredging operation itself at The Dog Leg delivering about 3 metres of water depth in this location (or -3.5 Australian Height Datum)
- demobilising equipment and restoring the temporary work areas when dredging is finished.

For safety reasons, please stay away from the dredging work area shown on the map. Our dredging vessel is using floating and underwater pipes to move sand to Elizabeth Island. Since the vessel moves daily, the pipes also shift daily. These pipes may not always be visible, so we urge all vessel operators in the area to be extra cautious or use the alternative Airforce Channel during our work.



The very latest information on the dredging program is that the dredge has been placed in the channel and is being commissioned to begin operations very soon. Phil Cunningham returned to the lake on 1st May and reported that he was fortunate to have a chat with the dredge operator while waiting for Marine Rescue to get them through the "Dog Leg" due to the very low water level in the lake. He was told that dredging would commence next Thursday 7th May. In the past the dredge has blocked the channel completely whilst operating. This would probably mean many boats will not be able to get in/out of the lake. It is not known if they will be working weekends or if they will move the dredge when not working. **NOTE the advice above to be extra cautious when navigating near the dredge in the channel.**

Additional Lake Matters

The next **LMCC Aquatic Services Committee** meeting will be held on Thursday 21 May. If you have matters that you would like raised please contact Tony Austin or Ross Shirtley.

It is pleasing to see that work on the **Belmont Public Jetty** is progressing well. Hopefully it will be completed in the not too distant future as it is an important lake resource – Marine Rescue use it to get medical cases to Belmont Hospital, visiting cruisers tie up to access the local shops and the sewage pump-out helps to keep our lake waters clean.

The **Blacksmiths boat ramp** is being upgraded.

The annual “**Float-Your-Boat**” festival will again be held this year over the weekend of the winter solstice, 19-20 June. More information is available at: lakemac.com.au/float-your-boat.



CD Merchandise for Sale:

The CD has some “**MUST HAVE**” items for your Club boating needs so avail yourselves of these most desirable items while stocks last!



**CD Shirts: \$30
or 2 for \$50.**



CD Pennants \$10.



**We still have a few 2026
calendars for sale, now at
a reduced price of \$5.**

For the purchase of any items, contact our Treasurer Ralph. Shirts can now be purchased at the LMYC club front desk, and all items are available at Club Meetings. You can now also pay using your Credit or Debit cards.

APRIL EASTER OUTING CRUISE REPORT

While the Easter long weekend is always a popular time to enjoy with family, we decided to hold a short Easter Cruise for those members wishing to enjoy a bit of quiet time on the water.

With the forecast indicating south and SE winds all weekend, the crews of Jodi, Breathe, Isla Breeze and Kimberly Dreaming anchored in sunny (and busy) Browns Bay on the Friday afternoon. A pleasant happy hour aboard Jodi was followed by a quiet night in the bay.

Saturday morning saw the showers arrive as per the BOM forecast and they just persisted on and off all day. We managed to dash across to Breathe to enjoy some morning tea and chocolate without getting too soggy. The afternoon saw us move the boats up north in a light southerly to Croudace Bay, which was also pretty busy.

While the forecast weather no doubt kept some crews off the water, our planned dinner at Valentine Bowling club was well attended. Some eighteen CD members 'took over' the bowling club front veranda area for a very enjoyable meal and social time.

After quite a peaceful night, Sunday morning showed some promise with patches of blue sky. To finish off the cruise, crews from Breathe and Jodi enjoyed a (dry!) walk ashore to find some coffee at the Valentine shops.

Good fun and as always great to catch up with CD friends. Thanks to all those who came along!

Richard.



Eighteen members took over the verandah area at Valentine Bowling Club for dinner during the Easter Cruise.

Vale Aubrey “Bill” Evans Ratcliff

21.1.1936 - 25.4.2026

Bill Ratcliff passed away on 25 April, aged 90, following a short illness in Sydney.

Bill and his wife Lee would have celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on 2nd May and had known each other since they were 15. They had five children whom they brought up in in North Bondi. Founder and CEO of the building company, A.E. Ratcliff, Bill built luxury houses in the Eastern Suburbs.

Bill was a keen sailor and was the veteran of 50 Sydney-Hobart Yacht races. He did his first Hobart in 1963 on Don Mickleborough’s Southerly. Throughout the intervening years he sailed on a variety of yachts. In 1983, Bill did the first of 11 Sydney Hobarts on his own yacht, an S&S 34 called Marara. These included the extreme 1984 and 1993 races. In the latter, Bill went to the rescue of others and finished third overall under IMS to win Division D. The same year he became a Rear Commodore of the CYCA.

Later Bill bought the family cruising yacht, Wistarie, which was put to good use. He and Lee did several trips to the Whitsundays on their own and cruised on Lake Macquarie, after leaving Sydney and buying a house at Gwandalan, where they had eventually moved. Bill and Lee were active members of the Lake Macquarie Yacht Club Cruising Division and participated in many club activities including the annual Pittwater cruises.

Bill and Lee more lately moved to the Northern Beaches to be closer to family. Our deepest sympathies go to those Bill leaves behind – wife Lee and children Jenine, Paul, Katrina, Kristen and Luke and their families.

Bill’s funeral was held at 11am on Saturday 2 May at Mona Vale.

Acknowledgement: This tribute was taken from a longer tribute written by Di Pearson, CYC of Australia which can be sourced at:

<https://cyca.com.au/vale-aubrey-bill-evans-ratcliff-2-1-1936-25-4-2026/>.



Bill and Lee at Refuge Bay on a Pittwater Cruise.

Contact Details

Executives:

Skipper: Tony Austin 0416 266 947
 Secretary: Richard Masson 0422 347 875
 Treasurer: Ralph Asquith 0409 318 230

Committee:

Eleanor Cunningham (LMYC Board Rep) 0416 258 461
 Phil Cunningham 0416 078 461
 Ken Archer (Cruiseletter Editor) 0428 785 459
 Angela Asquith 0408 479 228
 Mark Clement 0400 716 756



2Dream's recent cruise to Lord Howe Island - full report next month.

GENERAL MEETINGS - Bridgedeck Room

The General Meetings will start at 7pm in the Bridgedeck room. A table will be booked for dinner from 5:30pm onwards for those wishing to share a meal prior to the meeting. Our meetings are a great way to find out what's happening and to get to know fellow CD members.

For Your Calendar

- May:** GM & AGM*: 18th May -Meeting is postponed a week.
 *Non- election year. -Guest Speakers - Simon Turpin. "LMYC Discover Sailing Program".
 Ralph will also talk about their Lord Howe Island cruise.
- Outing: 8th -10th May -Note: Port Stephens/Broughton Is. Cruise **has been cancelled**. A lake cruise will now be held. Contact Ralph Asquith.
- June:** General Meeting: 15th -Guest Speaker - Damien Boldyrew, International Sailing Judge and Umpire.
 in Pavillion.
- Outing: 20th June -Soup Day
- July:** General Meeting: 13th -Guest speaker - TBA.
 Outing: -Duck Hole campfire. TBC.

THANK YOU!

Many thanks this month to Richard and Jen for running the Easter Cruise and to Natalie, Eleanor and Phil for filling in at the last moment as our guest speakers at the April meeting.

CRUISELETTER EDITOR

Any articles for the Cruiseletter can be sent to the Cruiseletter Editor, Ken Archer, preferably in MS Word format at archerken90@gmail.com (M: 0428 785 459) by 25th of each month.

Please address all letters for the Cruising Division to:

LMYC CRUISING DIVISION
 Ada Street
 Belmont NSW 2280

