

DID YOU KNOW

The late Ben Lexcen designer of the famous “winged keel” on “Australia II,” was an RQYS Member from 1961 to 1968. When skippered by John Bertrand in 1983, “Australia II” became the first non - American yacht to win the America’s Cup in its then 132 year history.

Bill Kirby

FLYING DUTCHMAN CLASS/BEN LEXCEN/BOB MILLER

In 1958, the Royal Queensland Yacht Club introduced the International Flying Dutchman Olympic Class two - man dinghy into its fleet. Commodore the late John H “Jock” Robinson announced in his Annual Report for the year that the striking of a levy to assist Australian Olympic Yachting at the 1964 Games at Naples had been approved unanimously.

The 1961 – 1962 Australian Champions in the International Flying Dutchman Class were Squadron Members Craig Whitworth, skipper and Bob Miller, forward hand sailing in the “AS Huybers.” The boat was made available for Craig and Bob to sail via efforts of the late Past Commodore Alf Huybers, a well - known businessman of the time in Brisbane and proprietor of Queensland Pastoral Supplies.

I was told recently by Bill Wright of Norman R Wright & Sons that Bob Miller was apprenticed as a Sailmaker to his Uncle, Norman J Wright, at the Florite sail loft run by George Manders and seamstress Mrs Lauman. Norman J Wright taught Bob Miller basic yacht design and they teamed up to design the first 3 Man 18 foot skiff “Taipan.” That was closely followed by the World Champion 18 Footer, “Venom” and I was also told by Bill the rig plan of “Taipan” and “Venom” closely followed that of a Flying Dutchman.

In partnership, Bob Miller and Craig Whitworth started the Sail Making and Chandlery business “Miller & Whitworth.”

After ceasing his business association with Craig Whitworth in the early 1970s, Bob Miller changed his name to Ben Lexcen and went on to design boats commissioned by Alan Bond, including “Australia II.” As they say, “The rest is history.”

Craig Whitworth remained a Member of RQYS until 1974.

When Bob Miller and Craig Whitworth stopped using the “AS Huybers,” it was sailed for a number of years at Manly by two of the late P/C Alf’s grandsons, Gerald and Bob Brown. While Bob is no longer a Member, Gerald is a regular participant in WAGS.

Five Squadron Commodores sailed in the Flying Dutchman Class. P/Cs Wal Bishop, Denis Land and Tony Love were skippers and John Miall and I were forward hands.

It was a great era!

Bill Kirby