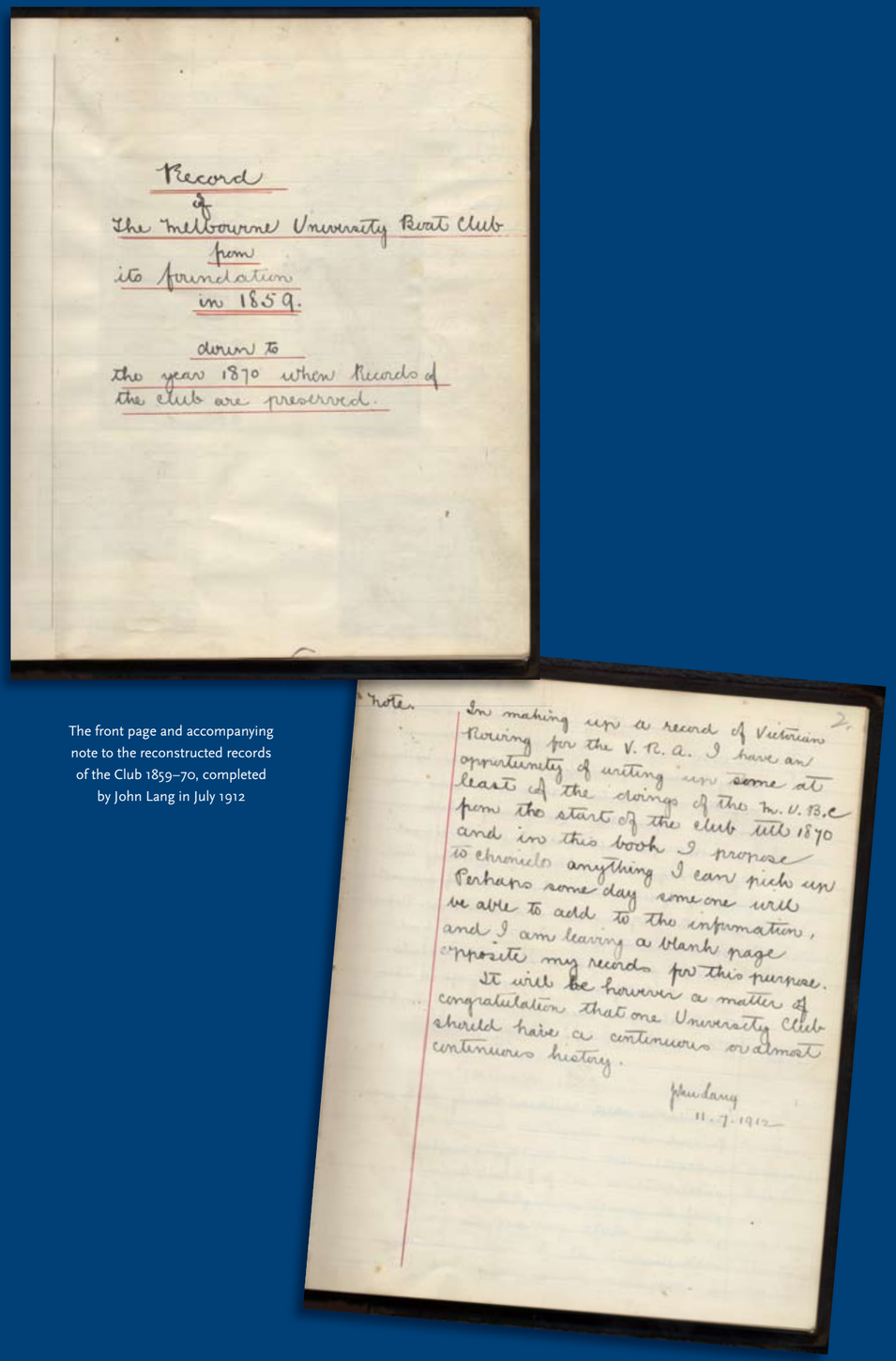


Record
of
The Melbourne University Boat Club
from
its foundation
in 1859.

down to
the year 1870 when Records of
the club are preserved.

Note. In making up a record of Victorian Rowing for the V. R. A. I have an opportunity of writing up some at least of the doings of the M. U. B. C from the start of the club till 1870 and in this book I propose to chronicle anything I can pick up. Perhaps some day some one will be able to add to the information, and I am leaving a blank page opposite my records for this purpose.

It will be however a matter of congratulation that one University Club should have a continuous or almost continuous history.

Thursday
11.7.1912

The front page and accompanying note to the reconstructed records of the Club 1859–70, completed by John Lang in July 1912

Well Rowed University

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB

THE FIRST 150 YEARS

Judith Buckrich

M·U·B·C· Melbourne University Boat Club Inc.

CHAPTER TWO

Growth and Glamour 1880–1904



'Boat builders sheds on the Yarra River, below Princes Bridge, including James Edwards & Sons Boat Builders' c.1888 Photographer Charles B Walker. The signage on the building on the right (closest to the camera) reads 'University' and 'Civil Service Rowing Clubs RS Fuller Boat Builder Est. 1858'
State Library of Victoria picture collection

1880 and 1881 were interesting years at Melbourne University. Redmond Barry died in 1880, bringing an era to an end. 1881 legislation brought reforms to the University, including the admission of women. This confirmed a decision previously made within the University after a long and bitter battle. At first women were confined to Arts, the first woman graduate being Bella Guerin in 1883. In 1887 women were admitted to Medicine.[1] Women were also allowed to be non-residential members at both Trinity College, which had been established in 1872, and the newly formed Ormond College in 1881. With the establishment of the Trinity Women's Hostel (later to become Janet Clarke Hall) in 1886, Trinity admitted women as resident students, making it the first university college in Australia to do so.[2] The establishment of Ormond College was of particular significance to the Boat Club because it enabled competition with Trinity.

The colleges

There are now relatively few students living in colleges at Melbourne University in comparison to the entire university population. So it is perhaps difficult to understand the significance of colleges at the time teaching commenced in 1855. But it is best explained by the simple fact that seventy-five (quickly reduced to sixty) of the 100 acres of the University site were set aside for residential colleges, to be founded under the auspices of the churches. Ten acres each were allotted to the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches, the remaining area being reserved for sporting facilities. The Anglican Church was the first to accept the offer, with Trinity College opening in 1872.

At the end of August 1877, Alexander Morrison, Headmaster of Scotch College, received a letter from the Director of the Victorian Education Department, proposing that if the church did not mean to take the land for a college, that it be sold and the proceeds divided equally (half each) between the church and the state for University purposes. This spurred Morrison into action. A subscription list was opened, with a target of £10,000; on this list Francis Ormond's name appears against a donation of £3000. The foundation stone of the College was laid by the Governor of Victoria, His Excellency, the Marquis of Normanby, on 15 November 1879. The formal opening of the College took place on 18 March 1881. At the opening there were twenty students, which soon grew to twenty-four.

The establishment of Ormond College led to a greater change in the rowing habits of members of the Boat Club than any preceding event. The competitions between colleges became the major events. Trinity was closely connected to Geelong Grammar, Xavier (in the years preceding the establishment of Newman College) and Melbourne Grammar, and Ormond was associated with Scotch College.

Steve Fairbairn

The affiliation of schools and colleges meant that young men entering the University often had plenty of rowing experience. One such young man who would become a world famous oarsman, coach and administrator was Steve Fairbairn (b. 25 August 1862), who rowed briefly for the University in 1881, before travelling to England to read Law at

Jesus College, Cambridge. During his seven years at Geelong Grammar (1874–80), he excelled at cricket, football and rowing; was a champion athlete, swimmer and gymnast; helped edit the school 'Quarterly'; and was librarian, dux in mathematics and English, and senior prefect.

During his brief time with MUBC he rowed in several races at the Geelong and Melbourne Regattas on 23 and 26 February 1881. In fact, he rowed in every event in which MUBC participated except the maiden sculls. In the stroke seat for all races except the maiden eight in Geelong, where Professor Irving took that place, it was noted that throughout he 'rowed splendidly & deserves great praise.'[3] Fairbairn made such an impression in the short period he rowed for MUBC that the annual report for the 1881–2 season stated that 'the Club had been ... weakened by the loss of two good men, Messrs Graham and Fairbairn, who had both gone home'[4] (i.e. had returned to England). Although Fairbairn returned to Australia many times, he never rowed for the University again. However, Club records show that he co-coached the intervarsity eight with T Crosthwaite in the 1901 intervarsity race on the Yarra. They took a very close second place behind Sydney over a three-mile course specially chosen to row past Melbourne's main city landmarks beside the river in order to popularise the event (although very few spectators turned up, to John Lang's chagrin).[5]



Steve Fairbairn
Courtesy Geelong Grammar School

Fairbairn's fame and brilliance continued to grow throughout his life and he eventually wrote a series of 'Chats on Rowing' and 'Rowing Notes' that were edited by his son. He wrote his autobiography *Fairbairn of Jesus* in 1930 (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his wry commendatory to the autobiography, stated: '... let it pass with no more than a sigh that the author has chosen to entitle this book *Fairbairn of Jesus*. There seems, if I may say so, just a little too much of a claim.'[6]) A style of rowing was named after him and his fame was not restricted to England but extended throughout the world of rowing.

Geelong Regatta 23 February 1881 (Steve Fairbairn competes for MUBC)
'For the Junior Four Messrs S Fairbairn (st) H Hopkins, J Lang [a former Captain of the Club and not the same person as the later John Lang], MJ Ryan and Prell cox represented us. In the preliminary heat we met the Ballarat crew. An interesting race ensued resulting in victory for us by about a length and a half. This victory would have been a much easier one for us had not Lang unfortunately allowed his seat to slip from the slides early in the race. He was thus compelled, at great personal inconvenience, to travel during the rest of the journey on the bars. We all highly appreciated his powers of endurance and determination.' [The final was won by Yarra Yarra by a length]
From the Club's Record Book, vol 2,. pp.111–2

Intercollegiate rowing

The 1881–2 season officially began in May 1881 with the historic first race between men of Ormond and Trinity Colleges. Rowing was expensive, as evidenced by the Club's constant arrears. Boats had to be replaced on a regular basis. The private schools had the resources to participate. It soon became evident that colleges would follow suit and intercollegiate rowing would become a highlight of the rowing calendar.

The intercollegiate course was from the Baths Corner to Edward's Shed on the south bank of the Yarra (near where the present boatsheds are located) and was rowed in four-oared gigs. Both crews had been practising for months and both looked for victory, but Trinity almost immediately took the lead by a length and finished three lengths ahead.[7] The records proclaimed that 'Dr Allen judged the race excellently, his firing of the pistol at the winning post being the theme of universal acclamation!'[8] The race was immediately assumed to be an annual event and was repeated on 27 May 1882. Already on this second occasion there was 'a goodly throng of spectators, the number of ladies on the banks being especially noticeable.'[9] The crews were Trinity: WC Guest (bow), FW Edmonson (2), AP Chase (3), HR Salmon (4), HH Brind (cox); Ormond: F Cole (bow), WS Macarthur (2), P Learmonth (3), B Langton (4), C Simson (cox). This time, the course was from the Botanic Garden's Bridge to Fuller's Shed, on the north side of the Yarra, and

The Oarsman's Song

The willowy sway of the hands away
And the water boiling aft,
The elastic spring and the steely fling
That drives the flying craft.

The steely spring and the musical ring
Of the blade with the biting grip,
And the stretching draw of the bending oar
That rounds the turn with a whip.

And the lazy float that runs the boat,
And makes the swing quite true,
And gives the rest that the oarsman blest
As he drives the blade right through.

All through the swing he hears the boat sing
As she glides on her flying track
And he gathers aft to strike the craft
With a ringing bell-note crack.

From stretcher to oar with drive and draw,
He speeds the boat along.
All whalebone and steel and a willowy feel –
That is the oarsman's song.

Tim Young, 1980 Australian representative at the Moscow Olympics, points out that this poem, attributed to Steve Fairbairn, certainly contains echoes of the poetry written by the famous Geelong Grammar School teacher of Classics during Fairbairn's time there, JL Cuthbertson (although penned perhaps without quite the same panache and elegance as in Cuthbertson's *Barwon Ballads*). Whatever the literary merits, however, it encapsulates much of Fairbairn's theories of rowing, coupled with the re-creation of the 'feel' of a racing shell on song (with poetic licence allowed for modern technique, equipment and participation by both genders), in a manner that still resonates delightfully with the modern rower.

was again won by Trinity. Trinity rowed in a new four-oared gig, built expressly for them, and Ormond rowed in the Scotch College gig. Both boats were built by Fuller.[10]

From the start, races between colleges were reported in the Melbourne newspapers though sometimes these were simple descriptions, for example, the 1883 competition which stated that 'Trinity took the lead from the start and maintained it to the finish.'[11] Ormond had been much handicapped in the race by a coxswain who weighed three stone more than the man coxing for Trinity. The race was rowed 'as usual in string-test gigs with fixed seats'.[12] The reports were a little more exciting for 1884 when a letter to the Hon Francis Ormond from the secretaries of Trinity and Ormond, ES Hughes and B Langton respectively, was published in its entirety, with the reply from Ormond. During his life and willed after his death, Francis Ormond contributed thousands of pounds to Melbourne institutions including St Paul's Cathedral, the Workingman's College (now RMIT University), Melbourne Hospital, the Benevolent Asylum, Orphan Asylum, Deaf and Dumb Asylum, Blind Asylum (Ormond Hall), Sailors' Home, Alfred Hospital, Children's Hospital, Geelong Hospital, Geelong Orphan's Asylum, Ballarat Hospital and Ballarat Benevolent Asylum. He also contributed £1000 each to St George's Presbyterian Church, Geelong, and Toorak Presbyterian Church, and £3000 towards the cost of the original building of Ormond College at Melbourne University.[13]

The three-hundred-guinea trophy

In 1884 Francis Ormond offered a three-hundred-guinea trophy 'to be competed for annually by crews from Trinity and Ormond Colleges in 1886 and the two following years, and thenceforward by a third institution to be named by yourself.'[14] The colleges declined for three reasons:

> First, the generally expressed wish that the colleges should continue to row as heretofore, merely for the honour of victory; second, the responsibility that the custody of so costly a trophy would entail upon its possessors for the time being; and third, the feeling that owing to various difficulties the rowing will not, at any rate for some time, reach a standard which would justify the college in rowing for so valuable a prize.[15]

The 1884 race proved that the men were indeed not up to competing for such a trophy, despite the race's popularity with the public. A steamer *Rescue* set to follow the race was packed with more than 250 passengers and the race was 'the hardest and closest struggle'. Apparently the rowing was good but the 'common mistake was made of not bestowing sufficient attention upon the coaching of the coxswains.' At the beginning ... the Ormond coxswain 'kept boring his opponent out of his proper water, and towards the end the Trinity steersman went right into the direct course of the other boat.'[16]

Colleges bring a social scene to university rowing

Much attention was now focused on the spectators who gave 'deafening shouts to cheer their college' and the ladies who were 'mustered in force'. The course of the race was later changed to the Lower Yarra from the end of Humbug Reach to the Gas Works, which was a



Unknown gigs at the finish of a race opposite Edwards boatsheds (collection of Albert Linblade, a prominent Mercantile member and bowman for Scotch College in the last four-oared Head of the River race in 1899). The race may be either an intercollegiate or a public schools Head of the River race *Courtesy www.rowinghistory-aus.info*

great improvement on the winding course of the Upper Yarra, despite having to cope with other river traffic such as the Geelong Ferry, and the steamer was therefore able to follow.

> The crews made their appearance at half past 3 o'clock, Trinity conspicuous by their sea-green singlets and caps, and Ormond, clearly distinguishable by their white singlets and yellow and black caps ... they looked in splendid condition ... the gigs, both by Fuller ... also came in for their share of admiration. Trinity won by a length and a half, and both crews were loudly cheered.[17]

From 1881 the colleges were informally affiliated with the University Boat Club. A special general meeting (with a very meagre attendance) was held on 14 July 1881 to consider the proposal that two extra members of the committee be elected from among the students of Trinity and Ormond Colleges. An intermediary agreement was arrived at that the Colleges be represented on the MUBC committee by men chosen by their respective colleges who were members of MUBC. They were to discuss the issue again at the next annual meeting.[18]

The 1882 annual meeting was attended by forty members, '... students from Trinity and Ormond being represented in great force.'[19] There was the usual discussion about 'forgetful members (who) had gone to Europe leaving their subscriptions unpaid.'[20]



OPENING OF THE ROWING SEASON: THE PROCESSION OF BOATS.

'Opening of the Rowing Season' *The Australasian Sketcher*, 4 December 1880
State Library of Victoria picture collection

'It is the custom of the Melbourne rowing clubs to celebrate the commencement of the boating season by a procession on the Upper Yarra of racing boats manned by eight-oar and four-oar crews. This year the celebration took place on November 13. All the clubs on the river or in the suburbs were fully represented, and not less than 250 men could have taken part in the display. A large number of spectators visited the banks of the Yarra, a considerable number being distributed at the boathouses, Baths corner, and Botanical-gardens-bridge, besides at other advantageous places for viewing the crews as they passed. The afternoon was not so pleasant as could have been desired for the purposes of a procession of light boats, the wind being strong and gusty. The boats were, in consequence, rendered difficult to manage, and to obtain anything like a good line was out of the question. Notwithstanding this drawback, however, the affair was very successful, and the scene very picturesque and animated. All the crews turned out in full rowing costume, the variety of the colours making the display bright and attractive. At the time appointed for the start, the commodore, Mr A. Nichols, embarked in an eight, and gave the signal for the crews to move up the river. During the progress of the boats up stream, Allan's band, in their shallop, accompanied them. On arrival at the Church-street bridge, the crews took up their positions on either side of the stream, and the commodore called for cheers for the Queen, which was very heartily responded to, the band playing the National Anthem. Cheers were then given for the commodore, and the boats returned to Melbourne. The pace down the river was quickened, and several spurts (not down in the programme, however) occurred between several of the crews. The pride of place in the procession was taken by the Footscray crew, as winners of the Clarke Challenge Cup at the last Melbourne regatta. The Melbourne eight-oar crew came next, and then the Civil Service, the other clubs following according to their performances, either last year or in seasons gone by. No accidents happened of any moment during the afternoon, and everything passed off as satisfactorily as was possible, considering the strong wind blowing during the afternoon. Our view of the event is taken from Brander's Ferry, looking towards Melbourne.'

Opening of the Rowing Season: The Procession of Boats, *The Australasian Sketcher*, 4 December 1880, p.199

There were so many of these recalcitrants that £27 16s 6d was owed (£87 13s 6d had been paid). There were fifty members listed on the Club's roll. As customary, the chief items of expenditure were £75 for boats, oars, repairs and rental to Fuller. The next large item was the £10 annual subscription to the Victorian Rowing Association.

Finally, at the end of the meeting, a motion was put by HR Salmon, one of the Club's better rowers, to allow students to pay their subscription for half the year at half the annual subscription.[21] This was obviously a good way to get Ormond and Trinity men to join, as well as preventing the usual failure of members to pay their subscriptions. However, it proved not to be successful in the case of Trinity, for reasons which do not surface in the Club's records until later.

The colleges brought a new social aspect to the University Boat Club. The numbers of spectators at the annual intercollegiate race was a key feature of this. But from this time MUBC participated in fewer regattas and events outside University term. The public reasons for this decline in activity emerged later.

The 1882–4 seasons

On reporting the 1882–3 season, the Club's Secretary, WP Forlonge, noted the year had been a quiet and prosperous one. The new rule permitting members to pay their subscriptions for a half year brought many new members but, he noted, 'the Club has, unfortunately, done nothing to distinguish itself when in competition with other clubs, but races that have taken place between various crews of the University have been well contested and ... productive of much interest.'[22] Numbers had increased to such a degree that the committee was increased by two Vice-Presidents and a Vice-Captain, and Forlonge advocated that new members to the committee be students who would better represent the membership. Forlonge felt that until this happened, the Club would not be properly regarded as part of the University.

There was little improvement in the actual state of the Club in 1884. The half yearly subscriptions did not in fact increase revenue, and there was so little interest in the Club itself that at the annual meeting, Shew, the Club's Hon Secretary, moved 'it is time to put an end to the Club's existence'. It is unlikely that he was truly serious about this, but the Club was at a very low ebb, and he was trying to frighten members into action. Forlonge moved 'in a fervid oration' an amendment to the motion 'that the club should be carried on as heretofore but, if possible, with greater energy on the part of the committee.' This motion was carried with acclamation.[23] Again, the reasons for the decline in activity were not publicly expressed. Obviously, however, there was ill feeling over some unspoken issue bubbling beneath the surface.

The 1885 intercollegiate race, the change to eights

The 1885 intercollegiate race brought rowing an unprecedented amount of publicity, but it was not the race that attracted attention, despite the switch from fours with fixed seats to eights with sliding seats. The competition for the best place from which to view the race was what the newspapers focused on. There were so many spectators expected that each college engaged a steamer to follow the race. Ormond hired the *Rescue* and Trinity the *Albatross*, but they then discovered that the steamers could not go abreast and a dispute

erupted about which one would go first. The dispute was so serious that it looked as if the race would not go ahead. The *Argus* reported the dispute a week before the race, though the reporter was sure that good sense would prevail and the race would go ahead. On the Friday night before the race the matter was still unresolved and it seemed the contest would have to be called off. To everyone's relief on Saturday morning, Trinity, who had refused to resolve the question by drawing lots, consented to allow the Ormond steamer to go first.[24]

No doubt, the knowledge that many famous spectators would be present for the race on the Harbour Trust steam launch *Commissioner* affected Trinity's decision. These glitterati of their time included Lady Loch (wife of the Governor of Victoria), Sir William John Clarke (politician and philanthropist of the famed Melbourne property 'Rupertswood', who donated £5000 to Trinity College) and his wife, Janet Lady Clarke. Sir George Verdon (who would become Australian Director of the ES&A Bank and, with the architect William Wardell, build the beautiful bank building on the corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets) was also a spectator. On the afternoon of the event:

> ... it was evident that some time must elapse before the crews would be ready, and as a stiff cold northerly wind was blowing across the river, the *Commissioner* ran around to the Saltwater River to keep those on board interested and to give them the opportunity of seeing the cutting for the canal across Fishermen's Bend. She returned in ample time to the starting post at Humbug Reach, where the other steamers also awaited the appearance of the contestants. As the *Commissioner* steamed past the *Albatross* and *Rescue* loud and hearty cheers were given for Lady Loch, who graciously bowed her acknowledgements from the roof of the cabin, where the greater number of ladies stood in order to obtain a better view of what was going on.[25]

Trinity rowed in the *Janet* which had been presented to them some weeks before by Janet Lady Clarke and Ormond in the *Davy* kindly loaned to them by Electric Telegraph Rowing Club. The wind was so strong that the steamers found it hard to keep back and clear of the banks in this narrow part of the river and the starter, Mr Henderson, had to officiate from the deck of the *Commissioner*, but even from there, he found it hard to make himself heard. Finally the boats got off to an even and flying start. Although neither crew was really prepared for the change from fours to eights, Ormond was much less confident than Trinity and from the start their coxswain made too much use of the rudder. While Trinity was rating a smooth fast 42, Ormond at 38 'were very uneven and unsteady'. Even before they began the race their style seemed '... very stiff ... At the end of the stroke heads were jerked back in a most unusual manner. The swing forward was very slow, and the boat rolled a great deal; the feather was high and irregular, and there was a great tendency to cut down the stroke and chop into the water.'[26] One report simply stated that there was 'little life in the [Ormond] boat'. As the race proceeded they lost ground. The situation worsened for them opposite the bone mills where a steamer came in sight and even though it slackened off so as to raise no wash and left room for both boats to pass on the north shore, the Ormond coxswain did not see and lost ground by going off on the other tack. From this time—about three quarters of the way through the race—Ormond, despite working hard to do so, never caught up.

1885 Melbourne Regatta

1885 brought some success for MUBC in the Melbourne Regatta, where they participated in the maiden eight and came second to a much more experienced Footscray Rowing Club. The Regatta was located on the Saltwater River where Footscray regularly practised. They trained for the whole year and were always the favourites. On this day, the race turned into a fiasco because of a foul at the beginning. The oars of MUBC and Albert Park were locked together, and when finally freeing themselves, they were again held up by a foul toward the end of the race involving South Melbourne, Melbourne and City that allowed Footscray to forge ahead, which made it impossible for University to catch up. They came second.[27]

In his exemplary notes for 1885–1919, record keeper John Lang observed that the *Melbourne University Review* of 30 May 1885 recorded that Fuller had built a new boatshed on the Yarra to be used by the Boat Club. The new boatshed was necessary because the Yarra was being reconstructed and Princes Bridge was being rebuilt.[28]



Princes Bridge pre-1884 (being the predecessor to the current bridge, which was built in 1888) and St Kilda Road, with the Edwards and Fuller boatsheds on the south (far) bank, the Edwards residence on the north bank and buildings related to the railway in the foreground. The river is much narrower than today, and a large expanse of lagoons and swamps can be seen on the low-lying southern side
Courtesy www.rowinghistory-aus.info

1885–7, the Club's doldrums continue

The only events of note in the 1885–6 season were the Trial Fours and the intercollegiate race. The Club was unable to send a crew to any of the regattas 'on account of the inconvenient times at which they took place.'[29] Even the intercollegiate race was a disappointment, except as a glamorous Melbourne event:

> The match between the eights of Ormond and Trinity Colleges came off this afternoon on the Lower Yarra, on the two-mile course from Fishermen's Bend to the Gas Works [i.e. upstream from the Maribyrnong River junction to just below Spencer Street Bridge]. The paddle steamer *Albatross* took down an enormous load of sympathisers, belonging to the upper class of society, and including many ladies who sported the colours of Ormond, yellow and black, or Trinity, green and white, in common with the students ... Trinity soon led and no description can be written of the race, except that Trinity continually kept boring forward and won easily by half a dozen lengths. Frantic excitement was displayed on the steamer. Trinity party kept on roaring all the way back, and quite startled people among the shipping. Ormond had gone in with great confidence, so that the result seems to be unexpected. The number of carriages waiting at the wharf for the steamboat's return showed how profoundly stirred the higher circles were by this even more ... than the match between Scotch College and Church of England Grammar School.[30]

One reporter noted that 'everybody was astonished at the poor figure [Ormond] presented as they came down a river, exhibiting in an exaggerated degree the very faults their coach had been drubbing out of them for the past eight weeks.'[31] The reporter with the pen-name 'Visor' thought they may have been made more nervous by the fact that they had a new boat, which they had only rowed in for a few days. He felt that they had never rowed more poorly since they had first taken their seats in the eight. But he did not have a high opinion of either crew. He also thought that their rowing was much worse

The making of Coode Island and the Coode Canal

At the time of European settlement in 1835 the Yarra was abundant with fish and waterfowl. Around the area of the present-day boatsheds, the banks of the river were steep and covered with vegetation. Aboriginal groups camped nearby in what is now the Domain and fished for eels round the lagoons that would be drained for the Botanic Gardens. A small reef at the present Queen Street prevented salt water travelling further upriver and a basin just below it provided the first natural turning basin for small ships coming up the river. After Melbourne's streets were marked out in 1837 the area beyond Spencer Street began to be used for all kinds of rank industries, abattoirs, fellmongering works, soap making, tanneries and other highly polluting works soon changed the pristine river. By the 1850s goldrush period when lighters by the hundred wend their way up river, animal carcasses were seen floating and wild pigs dug around the muddy edge of the river. The river regularly flooded despite partial removal of the reef and it was not until the dredging of the Coode Canal in the 1880s that the present course of the river was created.

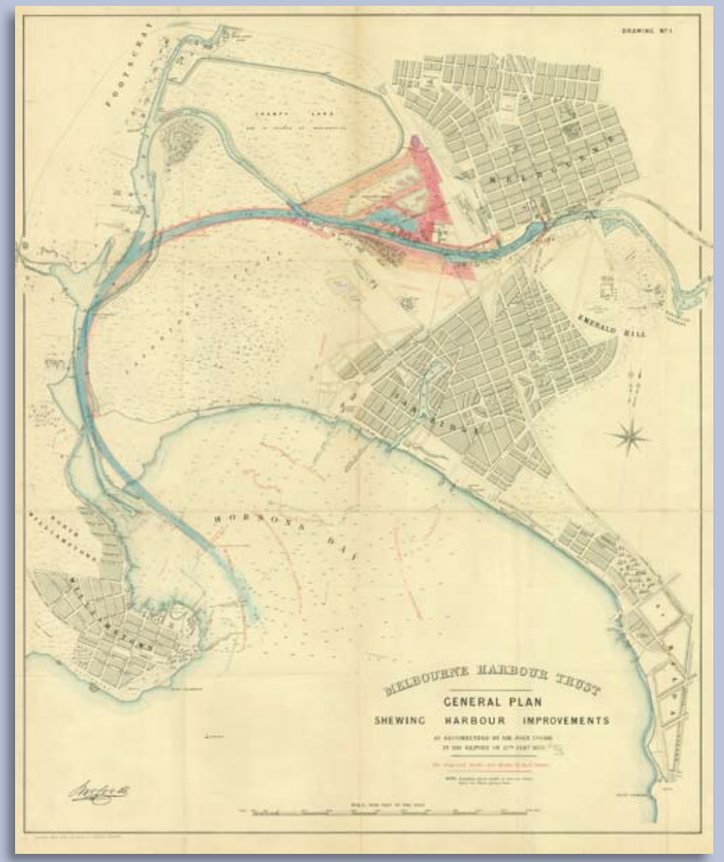
The new Yarra was the brainchild of Sir John Coode, an English engineer employed by the Melbourne Harbour Trust which paid him 5000 guineas to make an exhaustive report on the River Yarra, Hobson's Bay and on the best means of supplying wharf and dock accommodation. The idea was to form the river into a much smoother and shorter curve and avoid the meanderings of the Yarra around Fishermen's Bend. The Yarra was to be dredged to at least twenty feet and broadened to 300 feet wide.

More rock was raised at Spencer Street and then at Queen's Wharf. The rock removed from these reefs was basalt or bluestone, and it was used to pitch and metal the wharf roads, for sea wall work and to line the Coode Canal cutting.

The new route of the Yarra was opened on 11 September 1886 by the Victorian Colonial Governor, Sir Henry Brougham Loch. He 'raised the sluices, by which operation the water was let in gradually, and by the 17th the channel was full level with the river; the work of removing the embankment at each end of the channel, which hitherto prevented the river flowing in, had yet to be done.'[32] The river was also widened and deepened above Princes Bridge and the lagoons filled.

Despite the closing down of the boiling down works by the Board of Health the Yarra remained unsavoury, especially beyond the Saltwater—later Maribyrnong River—where toxic industry coloured the water bright orange even in the 1960s. It was not until the 1980s that a continuing effort was made to clean-up the river.





than school crews he had seen. He could not understand why the colleges did not follow the example of Oxford and Cambridge and have crews put through a 'proper course of tuition in tubs, pairs and fours before permitting them to row in an eight.'[33] 'Visor' too commented that the most pleasant part of the race was the 'interest it appeared to awaken.'[34]

One bright spot for the Club was that in 1887 the relationship between University and the schools involved with rowing was cemented further by the granting of privileges to Scotch College boys. They were able to use the boatshed the Club rented from Fuller, one four-oared tub and one two-oared tub, when MUBC did not require it to be used for coaching only. They were to pay a subscription of 12s 6d for the season.[35]

OPPOSITE TOP: 'Hobson Bay and River Yarra Leading to Melbourne' Commander HL Cox RN, 1864 (Admiralty chart no. 624) London, Admiralty 1865 *State Library of Victoria map collection*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: 'Melbourne Harbour Trust General Plan Shewing Harbour Improvements', as recommended by JW Coode, Drawing no. 1, London, Kell, 1879 *State Library of Victoria map collection*

Professor Irving retires—temporarily

In 1887 Professor Irving resigned his almost thirty-year presidency of the Club. The 1887 minutes of the annual meeting held on 28 March record that his resignation was reluctantly accepted, and Dr Bird's motion 'that a hearty vote of thanks be tendered to Professor Irving for his long and valued services as President of the UBC' was carried unanimously.

He had become Vice-Chancellor of the University. His appointment was a culmination of service and activity: 'As a councillor from 1875–1900 and Vice-Chancellor from May 1887 to May 1889 Irving was an ardent university reformer. In the senate and council of the University he led a 'caucus', composed mainly of schoolmasters, who constantly challenged the administration of the Chancellor, Sir Redmond Barry. During Barry's absence overseas, Irving attempted in vain to unseat the Chancellor and not until Barry died in 1880 were new chairs instituted in Natural Philosophy, Engineering, Pathology, Chemistry and English, French and German languages, while the addition at matriculation of natural science subjects and an honours standard marked the culmination of ten years agitation.'[36] The new MUBC President was Professor Allen.

The schism with Trinity College

An even bigger bombshell than Professor Irving's resignation emerged at the 1887 annual meeting. In a loose sheet of paper (which appears to be a report read to the meeting), reference is made to the winning of the sixth intercollegiate race by Trinity in May 1886. The report continues:

> The fact that the winning College still belongs to an outside rowing Club is much to be regretted. Your committee has no doubt that had the Trinity men not deserted their Alma Mater in the hour of need, the University Club would now be able to hold its own upon the river, & would also be in a prosperous financial condition.
>
> Your committee under these circumstances feels it to be politic to make overtures to Trinity College with the object of inducing them to return to their allegiance to this Club; with this view your committee has adopted a letter which they will submit to this meeting.

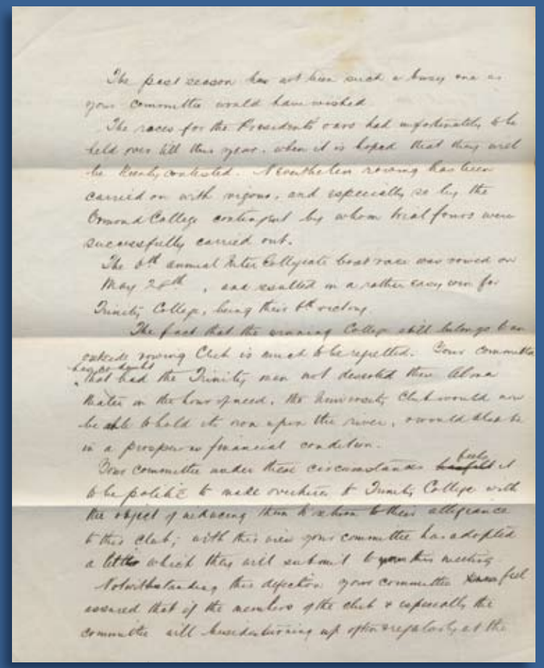
> Notwithstanding this defection your committee feel assured that if the members of the Club and especially the committee will besides turning up often & regularly at the river, make the Club known among the undergraduates & freshmen, the Club will reach again the proud position which it held in the past—the head of the river.[37]

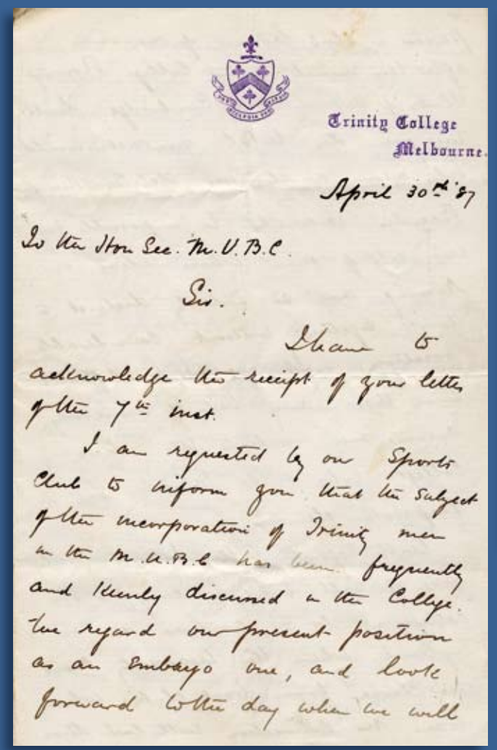
The minutes of the annual meeting refer to the fact that a draft letter read to the meeting by the Hon Secretary and addressed to the sports committee of Trinity College 'urging members of the College to rejoin the UBC' should be referred to the new committee for action as soon as possible. There is a fragment of what appears to be a draft letter, written in the hand of the Club's Hon Secretary, Mr Freeman, loose in the minute book at the page for the minutes of the following committee meeting held on 6 April 1887. This incomplete fragment refers to the fact that:

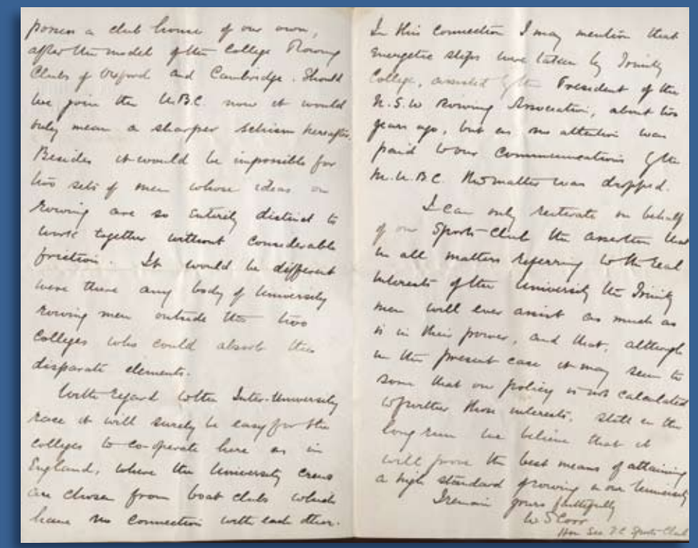
> It would have argued more spirit to have endeavoured to repair deficiencies than to find in them a justification for secession … the University Boat Club feel that their present request is only right and just … They feel that they have scarcely a claim to their title while an integral part of the University holds aloof. They feel that their position on the river is unnecessarily weakened, and that with regard to other clubs they stand at a painful disadvantage. Both Sydney and Adelaide Universities have made overtures for inter-university boat races. These the University Club will never undertake unless it can claim to fully represent the University.

If this was indeed the draft of MUBC's letter finally sent to Trinity, the response from the Hon Secretary of Trinity's Sports Club, in a letter to MUBC's Hon Secretary dated 30 April 1887, was most revealing about Trinity's then view of the world:

> I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th inst.
>
> I am requested by our Sports Club to inform you that the subject of the incorporation of Trinity men in the M.U.B.C. has been frequently and keenly discussed in the College. We regard our present position as an embargo one, and look forward to the day when we will possess a clubhouse of our own, after the model of the College Rowing Clubs of Oxford and Cambridge. Should we join the U.B.C. now it would only mean a sharper schism hereafter. Besides it would be impossible for two sets of men whose ideas on rowing are so entirely distinct to work together without considerable friction. It would be different were there any body of University rowing men outside the colleges who could absorb the disparate elements.
>
> With regard to the Inter-University race it will surely be easy for the colleges to co-operate here as in England, where the University crews are chosen from the boat clubs which have no connection with each other.
>
> In this connection I may mention that energetic steps were taken by Trinity College, assisted by the President of the N.S.W. Rowing Association, about this years ago, but as no attention was paid to our communications by the M.U.B.C. the matter was dropped.
>
> I can only reiterate on behalf of our Sports Club the assertion that in all matters referring to the real interests of the University the Trinity men will ever assist as much







LEFT: Report by the Hon Sec MUBC to the 1887 MUBC Annual Meeting

BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: Letter from Trinity College regarding joining MUBC, April 30, 1887

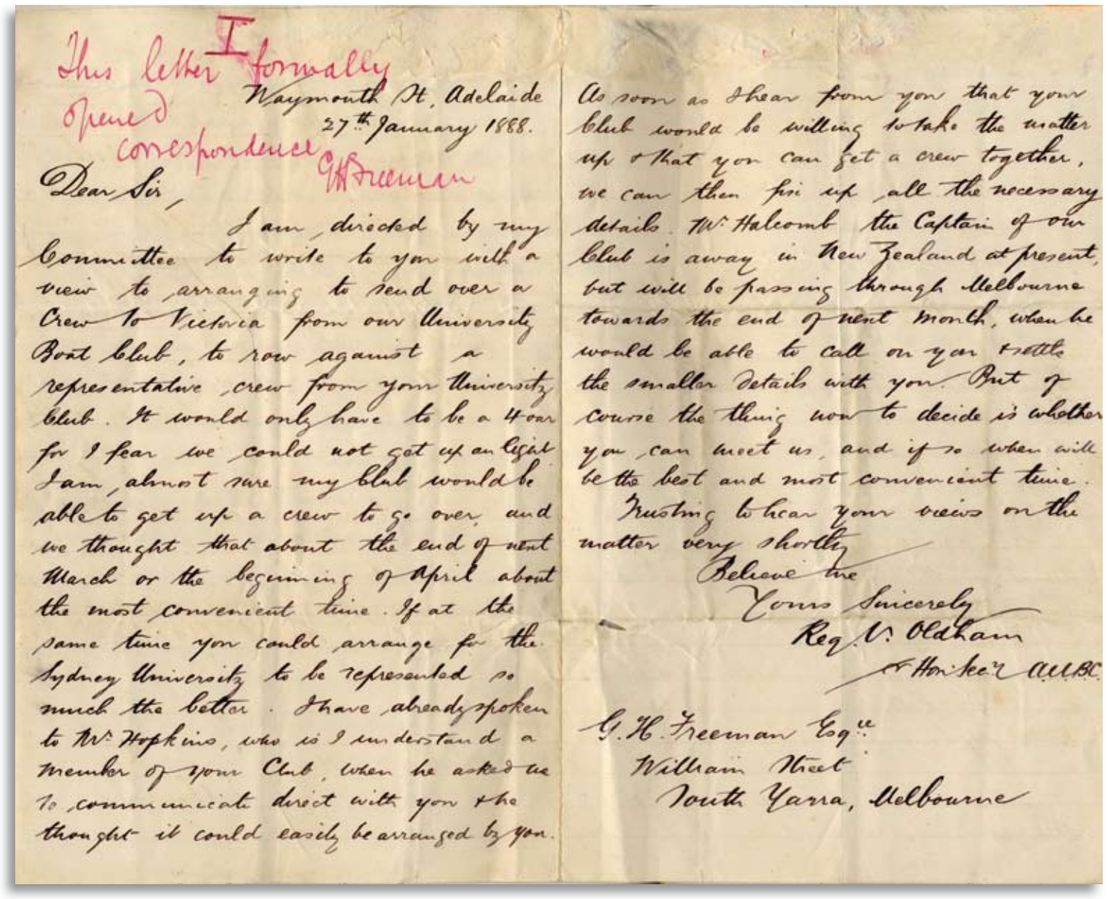
as is in their power, and that, although in the present case it may seem to some that our policy is not calculated to further those interests, still in the long run we believe that it will prove the best means of attaining a high standard in our University.

I remain yours faithfully

WS Corr Hon Sec T C Sports Club.[38]

A subsequent letter from Trinity indicated they would meet with the University Boat Club to discuss the matter further but it is not known what the immediate outcome was. However, it is now clear that in 1887 Trinity had its own boats and rowed from the Melbourne Rowing Club. This was clearly a most important factor in the lack of Club regatta activity, and it accounted for at least some of the gap in intervarsity rowing between 1872 and 1888, as well as expressions of discontent at various Club meetings.

Letter to GH Freeman, Hon Sec MUBC from RN Oldham, Hon Sec, Adelaide University Boat Club, suggesting the holding of the first eight-oared intervarsity race in 1888



This letter I formally opened correspondence G H Freeman

Waymouth St. Adelaide
27th January 1888.

Dear Sir,

I am directed by my Committee to write to you with a view to arranging to send over a Crew to Victoria from our University Boat Club, to row against a representative crew from your University Club. It would only have to be a 4 oar for I fear we could not get up an 8 oar. I am almost sure my Club would be able to get up a crew to go over, and we thought that about the end of next March or the beginning of April about the most convenient time. If at the same time you could arrange for the Sydney University to be represented so much the better. I have already spoken to Mr Hopkins, who is I understand a member of your Club, when he asked me to communicate direct with you & he thought it could easily be arranged by you.

As soon as I hear from you that your Club would be willing to take the matter up & that you can get a crew together, we can then fix up all the necessary details. Mr Halcomb the Captain of our Club is away in New Zealand at present, but will be passing through Melbourne towards the end of next month, when he would be able to call on you & settle the smaller details with you. But of course the thing now to decide is whether you can meet us, and if so when will be the best and most convenient time.

Trusting to hear your views on the matter very shortly

Believe me

Yours Sincerely

Reg. N. Oldham

Hon Sec'y AUBC

G. H. Freeman Esq.re

William Street

South Yarra, Melbourne

Ormond finally has its day

Ormond won the intercollegiate race for the first time in 1887. Although Trinity were the favourites, by one report at least (perhaps helped by hindsight), 'Ormond were tall, broad shouldered, strapping fellows, sitting well up in the boat, whilst Trinity were rather small-framed and thin-limbed, especially the forward oars, and the correctness of the published weights, which gave them the heavier average, was at once doubted.'[39] The social aspect was once again the focus, with a large number of spectators on the Lower Yarra, as well as the steamer *Albatross,* 'the lady friends of the competitors being particularly conspicuous both by their numbers and the lavish display they made of the colours of their respective favourites ...'[40] Others onboard were Bishop Goe, Mr Cain (the Mayor of Melbourne) and Francis Ormond.



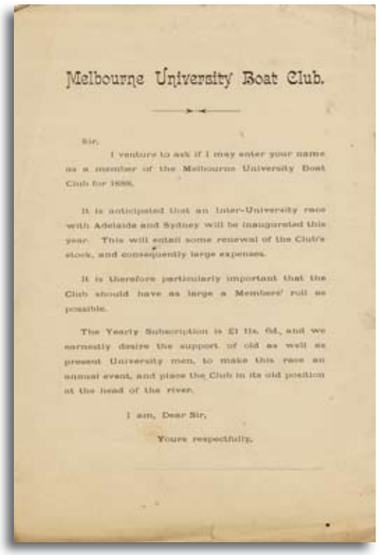
'Ormond College boat crew supporters'
University of Melbourne Archives

Reinstatement of the intervarsity race in eights, 1888

On 8 June 1881 a special MUBC committee meeting was held to try and reinstate the intervarsity competition. It was suggested that letters be sent to Adelaide and Sydney Universities to ascertain their opinion, with 'some members of committee upholding & others vehemently opposing the "proposal"'.[41] When the committee finally voted on the idea at an adjourned meeting the following month, the motion was lost, but no explanation for the vehement opposition appears.

Overtures initiated by Adelaide University Boat Club 'with reference to arranging inter-university races with that colony' were discussed at the Club's meeting of 1 June 1885. The minutes of the following meeting which discussed the adjourned agenda item simply noted that the Secretary 'should receive names of those men who were willing to row and pay their own expenses.'[42] This appears not to have elicited any response and the records of the Club are silent on the subject of intervarsity competition until early 1888.

After the outburst at the 1887 annual meeting referred to previously, in which Trinity was blamed for the Club's refusal to agree to participate in intervarsity competition, the committee meeting of 7 March 1888 decided that MUBC would participate in an intervarsity race subject to agreeing to terms with Adelaide and Sydney. The race would be rowed in eights and held in Melbourne on the Lower Yarra course used by the intercollegiate race.[43] The initiative for this came from a Dr W Fleming Hopkins, a Master at Scotch College and member of MUBC. He had suggested to the MUBC Hon Secretary, GH Freeman, in December 1887 that he would speak to Adelaide University Boat Club about it when he arrived in Adelaide for holidays. In January of 1888, the Hon Secretary of the Adelaide University Boat Club wrote to Freeman suggesting they would



Melbourne University Boat Club.

Sir,

I venture to ask if I may enter your name as a member of the Melbourne University Boat Club for 1888.

It is anticipated that an Inter-University race with Adelaide and Sydney will be inaugurated this year. This will entail some renewal of the Club's stock, and consequently large expenses.

It is therefore particularly important that the Club should have as large a Members' roll as possible.

The Yearly Subscription is £1 1s. 6d., and we earnestly desire the support of old as well as present University men, to make this race an annual event, and place the Club in its old position at the head of the river.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours respectfully,

ABOVE: 1888 invitation to join the Club as members

BELOW: Commemorative oar from the 1888 intervarsity race



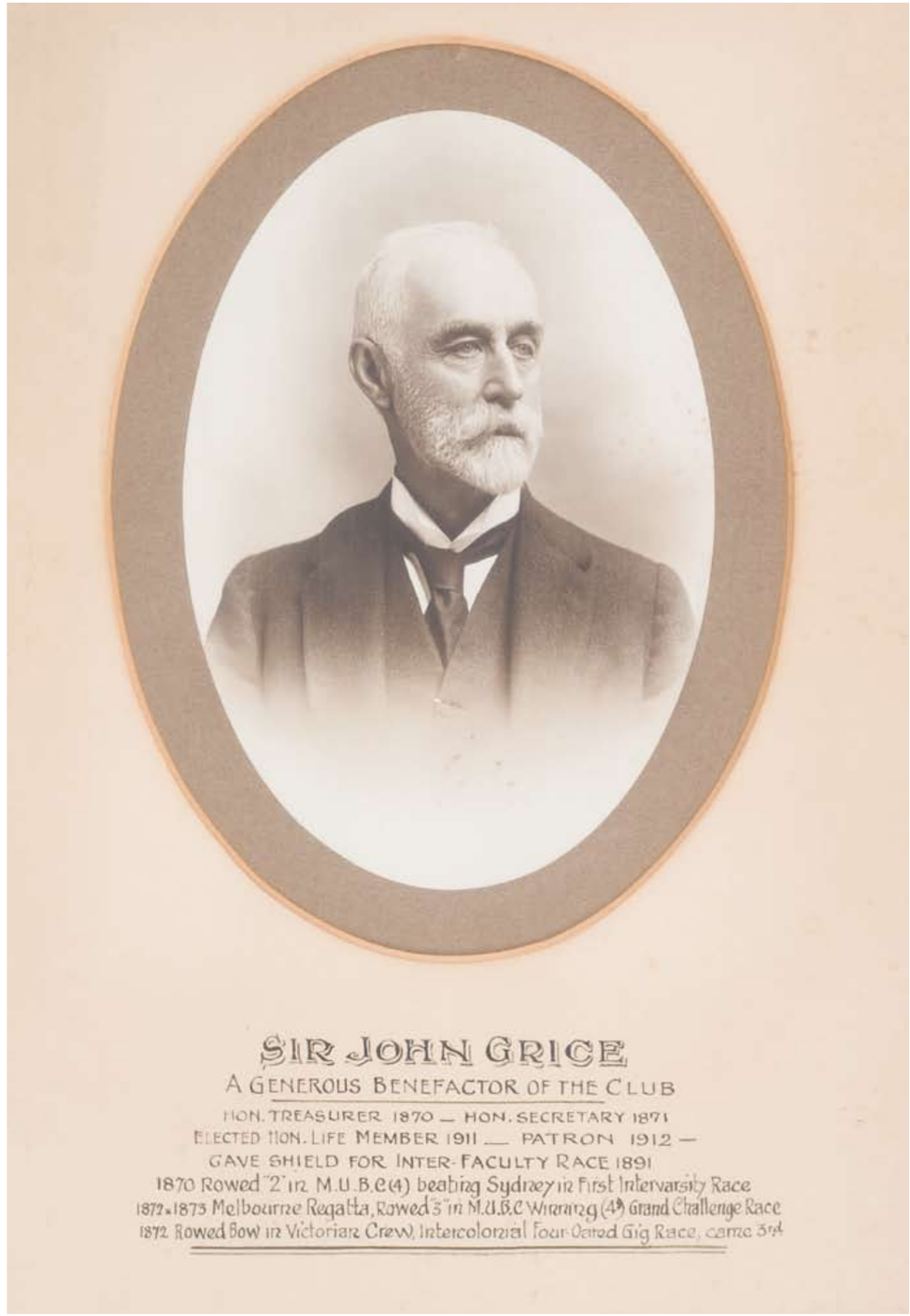
John Grice

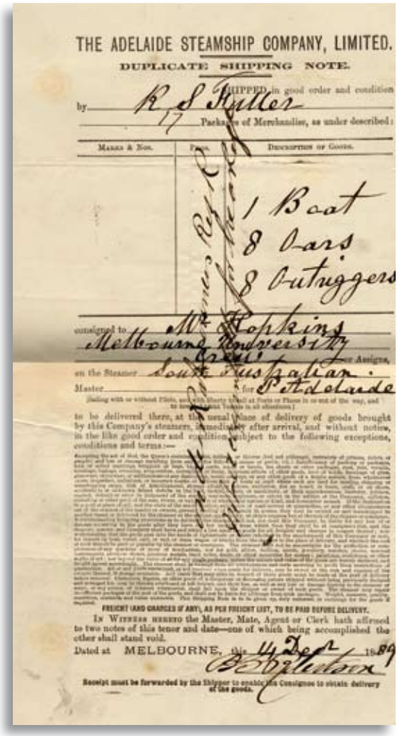
1850–1935

OARSMAN, PRESIDENT, PATRON AND BENEFACTOR

John Grice was the first ‘native born’ member of MUBC to make a great contribution to the Club and rowing in Melbourne. Educated at Melbourne Grammar and Wesley College, he attended Melbourne University from 1868 to 1872 and rowed in the first intervarsity race against Sydney University in 1870. His involvement in the family business, Grice, Sumner & Co (later John Grice & Co) kept him in South Australia for nine years, but from the time of his return to Melbourne in 1882, he was an active member of the Club, contributing as a committee member, giving trophies and strengthening the Club’s reputation in Melbourne and Australia. Grice was a member of many boards and was involved in the bank crisis of the 1890s through his membership of the board of the National Bank of Australasia.

He was elected to the Council of the University of Melbourne in 1888 and became Vice-Chancellor in 1918 when the University had financial problems. During World War 1, he was the first Honorary Treasurer of the Victorian branch of the Red Cross and was knighted in 1917. He was also active in the management of the Royal Melbourne Hospital. He retained an enduring interest in and support for the Club, and remained a Patron right up until 1934, the year before his death.




THE ADELAIDE STEAMSHIP COMPANY, LIMITED.

DUPLICATE SHIPPING NOTE.

by R. S. Fuller

SHIPPED in good order and condition

Packages of Merchandise, as under described:

Marks & Nos.	Nos.	Descriptions of Goods.
		1 Boat 8 Oars 8 Outriggers

consigned to Mr Hopkins

Melbourne University Crew

on the Steamer South Australian

Master for Adelaide

to be delivered there, at the usual place of delivery of goods brought by this Company's steamers, immediately after arrival, and without notice, in the like good order and condition, subject to the following exceptions, conditions and terms:—

FREIGHT (AND CHARGES IF ANY), AS PER FREIGHT LIST, TO BE PAID BEFORE DELIVERY.

In Witness hereto the Master, Mate, Agent or Clerk hath affirmed to two notes of this tenor and date—one of which being accomplished the other shall stand void.

Dated at MELBOURNE, the 4 Dec 1888

Receipt must be forwarded by the Shipper to enable the Consignee to obtain delivery of the goods.



TOP: Shipping Note for transportation of boat and oars on the Adelaide Steamship Company from Melbourne to Port Adelaide for the 1889 intervarsity race

BOTTOM: 'First Varsity Eight on Torrens Lake, 1890'. Despite the official caption it is believed that this may be a photograph of Adelaide University's first intervarsity crew of 1888. The race of 1890 was in fact the third intervarsity race

Image courtesy of the State Library of South Australia SLSA: B 42494

like to 'send over a crew to Victoria ... to row against a representative crew from your University.'[44] There was discussion about whether the race would take place in eights or fours, but eventually it was decided that eights would be more suitable, despite the expense of sending such large crews.[45] They would not be bringing boats with them.

In August 1888, as evidence of some kind of informal rapprochement between MUBC and Trinity, the MUBC committee invited three Trinity College men to make themselves available to row in the race—S McCulloch, SF Mann and W Robb responded and were in fact selected. McCulloch ended up stroking the crew.

The race, which was also the first intervarsity competition for eight-oared crews, took place on 6 October 1888. Sydney, coached in Melbourne by W Greenland, used a Mercantile Club boat, while Adelaide, coached by W Sneddon, used a Banks Rowing Club boat. Melbourne was coached by EI Robson. The starter was TH Young, the umpire E Carlile and the judge, J Colville. Adelaide were dressed in white with black facings and black and white caps, Sydney in Cambridge blue with their university badge in gold on the left breast, and Melbourne wore white guernseys with the blue and black facings worn by all Melbourne University competitors for all sports. Sydney was on the north station, Adelaide in the centre and Melbourne on the south. The course was the eastern end of Humbug Reach to opposite the Gas Works. The distance was two and a half miles.

> The Sydney crew struck the water first but their boat appeared to hang at the beginning. Melbourne and Adelaide dashed off with a lead. Melbourne striking 38 and Adelaide 39. The Adelaide coxswain commenced steering wildly. McCulloch stroke of the Melbourne boat put in some vigorous strokes and got their bow in front. Then he settled down to a good steady swing. Adelaide was rushing a bit and checked the way on their boat. Melbourne gradually drew ahead and at the entrance of the new canal had a lengths lead on Adelaide with Sydney 2 lengths astern. At no. 14 shed [Goods sheds were numbered along the Yarra] Adelaide were 3 lengths behind. Cox, the Adelaide stroke, spurted again and again, but the only effect of his efforts was to widen the gap between his crew and Sydney. Near the gas works no. 7 in the Sydney boat struck the water in feathering and split his blade—the fragment hung on by the copper binding for some time and disconcerted the crew. Melbourne won the race well in hand by 4 lengths from Adelaide with Sydney 6 lengths behind the Adelaide boat. Time 13mins 5secs.[46]

Melbourne's victory was a surprise, but according to the *Leader* newspaper, they had never rowed 'in better form and with more effect than in the first three-quarter mile in which they gained a commanding lead.' The Melbourne crew were JK Jackson (bow) 10st, A Jenkins (2) 10st 12lbs, RS Thompson (3) 10st 4lbs, B Langton (4) 11st, W Robb (5) 11st 10lbs, SF Mann (6) 12st 10lbs, A Christie (7) 10st, S McCulloch (stroke) 12st and E Bray (cox) 8st 5 lbs. J Bell, who originally rowed in the 5 seat until a few days before the race and whose name appeared in the 1911 program, 'had to give up his seat owing to an accident.'[47]

At the celebratory dinner on 13 October 1888 the Captain, EI Robson, reminded members that the success of the Club depended on rowers joining the Club. The dinner was held at Parers Crystal Café. John Grice suggested that the crew be presented with their oars. He covered the considerable expense (£18) of doing this.[48]

1889 intervarsity in Adelaide

EI Robson's entreaties to University men to join the Club to ensure Melbourne's representation at intervarsity seem to have been heeded. In August 1889, the Hon Secretary of Trinity College sports committee wrote to the MUBC committee asking whether the Club 'would be prepared to receive 20 or 30 members of Trinity College at a reduced subscription ... because the members of Trinity College felt that they should belong to the University Club and support it.'[49] This proposal was accepted, although the Trinity request to house their eight *Janet* at MUBC sheds free of charge was refused because Ormond College paid Fuller (from whom the University rented their shed) £6 a year for housing their racing boats.[50] There were continuing arguments (some of a serious nature) between the colleges and the Club over such matters as the rate of subscriptions, the payment of fees for the storage of boats and the voting rights of college representatives on MUBC's committee. But at least Melbourne intervarsity crews were greatly strengthened as a result of the regularisation of membership of college men in the Club.

The intervarsity race of 1889 was to have taken place in Sydney, but Sydney University did not manage to get a crew together, so Adelaide University invited MUBC to row on the Port River. The race took place on 21 December 1889. Adelaide had Melbourne at a disadvantage because most of their crew consisted of graduates, while most of MUBC's crew was undergraduates. It was a further drawback that Adelaide insisted on rowing against the tide—something MUBC's crew was not used to doing. When confronted on this point, Adelaide 'admitted it was not fair to ask the visiting crew to row against the tide', but said that MUBC should have brought the matter up earlier.[51]

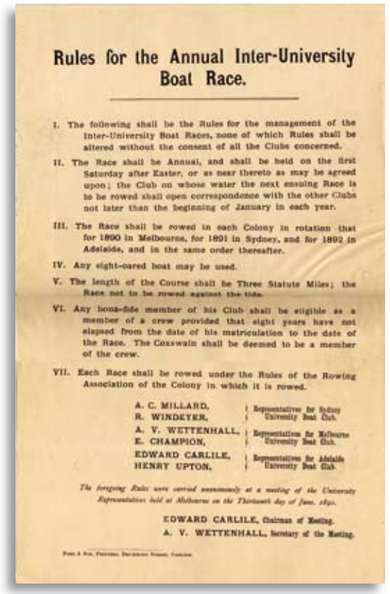
There were crowds of spectators despite the squally weather. Melbourne kept up with Adelaide for the first 300 yards, but then the heavier and more experienced Adelaide crew drew ahead. The race from then on was Adelaide's, despite efforts by Melbourne to draw alongside. They won the two and a half mile race by three lengths in a time of 18mins 6½secs—a very slow time for the distance owing to the tide and headwind. Melbourne shipped its own boat and oars with the Adelaide Steamship Company—it had been built by Fuller for the Intercolonial Race of 1886: 'It suited the crew well.'[52]

New Club rules in 1890

At the annual meeting of 16 August 1890 amendments were made to the rules of the Club making provision for it to be composed of four sections: Ormond, Trinity, Queen's and a section for those not in colleges, referred to as Extra-Collegiate. The annual meeting would go on as before in its election of a President, Vice-Presidents and a Captain, but there would also be representatives from each section. These would be appointed by the sections themselves. After this the committee elected from among themselves a Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer and Vice-Captain. The subscription remained the same at £1 10s.[53]

1890, a busy year

1890 was a busy year for the Club. The intervarsity race was in Melbourne and was rowed over two and a half miles on the Lower Yarra from the Falls Bridge (now Queen's Bridge)


Rules for the Annual Inter-University Boat Race.

I. The following shall be the Rules for the management of the Inter-University Boat Races, none of which Rules shall be altered without the consent of all the Clubs concerned.

II. The Race shall be Annual, and shall be held on the first Saturday after Easter, or as near thereto as may be agreed upon; the Club on whose water the next ensuing Race is to be rowed shall open correspondence with the other Clubs not later than the beginning of January in each year.

III. The Race shall be rowed in each Colony in rotation that for 1890 in Melbourne, for 1891 in Sydney, and for 1892 in Adelaide, and in the same order thereafter.

IV. Any eight-oared boat may be used.

V. The length of the Course shall be Three Statute Miles; the Race not to be rowed against the tide.

VI. Any bona-fide member of his Club shall be eligible as a member of a crew provided that eight years have not elapsed from the date of his matriculation to the date of the Race. The Coxswain shall be deemed to be a member of the crew.

VII. Each Race shall be rowed under the Rules of the Rowing Association of the Colony in which it is rowed.

A. C. MILLARD, R. WINDEYER, | Representatives for Sydney University Boat Club.

A. V. WETTENHALL, E. CHAMPION, | Representatives for Melbourne University Boat Club.

EDWARD CARLILE, HENRY UPTON, | Representatives for Adelaide University Boat Club.

The foregoing Rules were carried unanimously at a meeting of the University Representatives held at Melbourne on the Thirteenth day of June, 1890.

EDWARD CARLILE, Chairman of Meeting.

A. V. WETTENHALL, Secretary of the Meeting.

Rules for the intervarsity race, 1890







TOP: 1890 First interfaculty eight oared race won by Articled Clerks (standing left to right): E Macarthur (3), IS Tait (5) CG Kennedy (4); (seated left to right): R Ramsay (2), AV Wettenhall (7), RR Lewis (stroke), T Crosthwaite (6) and L Buckland (bow)

CENTRE: The John Grice Shield, presented annually from 1891 to the winners of the interfaculty competition

BOTTOM: 'University Boat Race – the Finish' *Illustrated Australian News*, 1 May 1893. The finish of the 1893 intervarsity race on the Lower Yarra course won by MUBC
State Library of Victoria picture collection

to the half-mile post in the Coode Canal. The race was won by Sydney by three and a half lengths and Lang remarks 'the Sydney eight was the best eight that had contested this race and was one of the best eights from N.S.W. that has rowed on Melbourne water'.[54] The race was held on 14 June. There were large numbers of spectators on the wharves as well as three crowded steamers following the race despite terrible weather. The *Leader* newspaper devoted three columns to the race.

Although Adelaide did not manage to bring a crew, they were represented at the first Post-Annual Inter University Boat Conference. The conference set new rules including: 'Any bona fide member of the boat club should be eligible provided eight years had not elapsed since the date of his matriculation.' According to Lang, before this rule was adopted, 'in some of the crews that had competed, some of the rowers had not attended lectures for years'.[55]

The interfaculty race, which had not taken place for some years, was re-established and rowed in eights on 14 August with Medicals, Engineers, Arts and Articled Clerks crews competing. Articled Clerks won.

There were eleven crews for Trial Fours in July.[56] The Club also competed in various metropolitan and country regattas with mixed success [57]

Club colours

When the Sports Union was established in 1905 it adopted colours that MUBC had used for at least fifteen years before. The minutes of a meeting held on 14 March 1890 noted the following alteration in the colours of the club: 'I. the cap in future to be Oxford-blue II. For the Inter University crew, the colours shall be, white trousers, Oxford-blue jersey with blue & black facings and Oxford-blue cap with black trimmings and monogram.'[58] The final colours were to be Oxford blue and black.

Queen's enters the intercollegiate race

Queen's College had been founded by the Rev William Quick on 16 June 1887 on the piece of land granted by the Victorian Government to the Methodist Church. The College was named Queen's in honor of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign celebrated in that year. The College opened its doors on 14 March 1888 with eighteen students. Its first Master was the remarkable English clergyman, Dr Edward H Sugden, who remained in office for forty years (1888–1928).[59] They participated in the Intercollegiate Boat Race for the first time in 1891 and came third, behind Ormond and Trinity.[60]

John Grice Trophy

As well, 1891 was the first year that John Grice presented a trophy for the winner of the interfaculty race. The course for this race was under a mile and in this year the first heat was between Engineers and Medicals, and the second, between Arts and Articled Clerks. In the final, Engineers beat Arts by one and a half lengths in a closely fought race.[61]

1891 intervarsity

The 1891 Australian Universities Boat Race (as it was now officially called) was held in Parramatta on 4 April: 'The weather was perfect. There were crowds of spectators on the shore, on the steamers and on boats.'[62] Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney Universities were all present, and Sydney won the race comfortably by four lengths, rating 44 at the start and finishing the course at 37. At the dinner held after the race, it was first publicly announced that the Old Blues of Oxford and Cambridge Boat Clubs intended to present a perpetual trophy for the Australian Universities Boat Race.

'A Desperate and Close Affair': The 1892 Australian Universities Boat Race

According to John Lang, the 1892 Australian Universities Boat Race 'was the most desperate and close affair between Melbourne and Sydney. In this way it is the most famous of any race rowed up to 1911.'[63] Held on the Port River in Adelaide, the weather was fine on the day with a light breeze and 'a great crowd assembled for the event.'[64] The crews were all stroking 40 to the minute soon after the start, outpacing the steamers and leaving them far behind. Throughout the race the crews kept up a cracking pace and Sydney was only half a length behind Melbourne at any time, with Adelaide 1 to 3 lengths behind Sydney. At the second beacon, the Marine Board launch which was keeping the course clear went directly in front of the boats, stirring up a great wash. Adelaide felt the effect first and their boat turned almost broadside on, rolling horribly, then Melbourne hit it and seemed to have the longest time in the wash, but the highest waves reached Sydney while they were drawing up on Melbourne. The Sydney boat almost stopped at this point. When the boats cleared the wash Melbourne was about half a length in front. The men had rowed at such a pace that they were now exhausted and with half a mile left to the finish line, Melbourne's stroke AR Morrison stopped rowing for at least 12 strokes. Responsibility to keep the boat moving was now on the 7 man, Harold Irving (Professor Martin Irving's son). He took it on heroically and forced the crew on. Sydney was level, but Morrison pulled himself together, and in the last 400 yards of the race the two eights fought it out, stroke for stroke. When they crossed the line, the judge declared that Melbourne had won by 6 feet. Adelaide 3 or 4 lengths behind.[65]

Challenge Cup, 1893

Although the 1893 Boat Race was not as exciting as the previous one, it was highlighted by the presence of the 'Challenge Cup', having recently arrived from London, and on view during the period of the race: 'This fine trophy was presented by the Old Blues of Oxford and Cambridge Boat Clubs. Dr Warre, late headmaster of Eton College, was mainly responsible for securing the handsome and interesting trophy, which is held as a perpetual trophy for the race, and is kept by the winning boat club for the year in which it is Head of the River.'[66] Warre was a friend of Mr F Halcomb of Adelaide University Boat Club.

According to the *Leader*, the Cup was 'of Grecian form with four panels. On the left-hand front panel is a view of Magdalen College, Oxford and on the right-hand panel is





TOP: The Oxford and Cambridge Cup presented by the Old Blues of Oxford and Cambridge Universities for the winners of the Australian Universities Boat Race for men's eight-oared crews. First presented to the winning crew, MUBC, in 1893
Rod Maule collection

BOTTOM: The Oxford and Cambridge Cup medallion presented annually to all winning crew members of the winning crew in the Australian Universities Boat Race for men's eight-oared crews
Paul McSweeney collection

Sir Henry Wrixon, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, 1897–1910.
Wrixon's most admired characteristics were his sincerity and eloquence. He never quite reached the top in politics, partly because he refused to lobby and partly because he lacked driving willpower and the vigour of dogmatism. Although a prominent leader of the 'Conservatives' in the 1880s and early 1890s, he differed from most of his colleagues on issues of class privilege.

Wrixon consistently stood for political equality: he supported the Hare system of proportional representation as early as 1873, advocated female suffrage, strongly supported the abolition of plural voting, and condemned the class basis of the council, but he did not support payment of members. He was founding President of the Education League in 1872 in support of the principles of the Education Act.[72]



1899 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Lower Yarra): (standing left to right) GE Broughton (3), RA O'Brien (5), PC Hunt (4), W St G Sproule (2), (seated) HE Bullivant (6), WH Gosse (stroke), GE Upward (coach), JA Wallace (7), H Brasch (bow), (front) H Miller (cox). The coach George Upward was a legendary stroke of early Victorian intercolonial crews.

Trinity College, Cambridge. On the reverse side are King's College, Cambridge on the right-hand panel and High St, Oxford on the left. In the upper panel is a view of Temple Island, Henley-on-Thames. On either side, above the panels, are two figures supporting the coat of arms of Oxford and Cambridge respectively. The handles have designs on them of the rose shamrock and thistle with eucalyptus blossom introduced. The lid of the Cup is surmounted by a figure of *Victory*. The Cup is of silver and stands about two feet high.'[67]

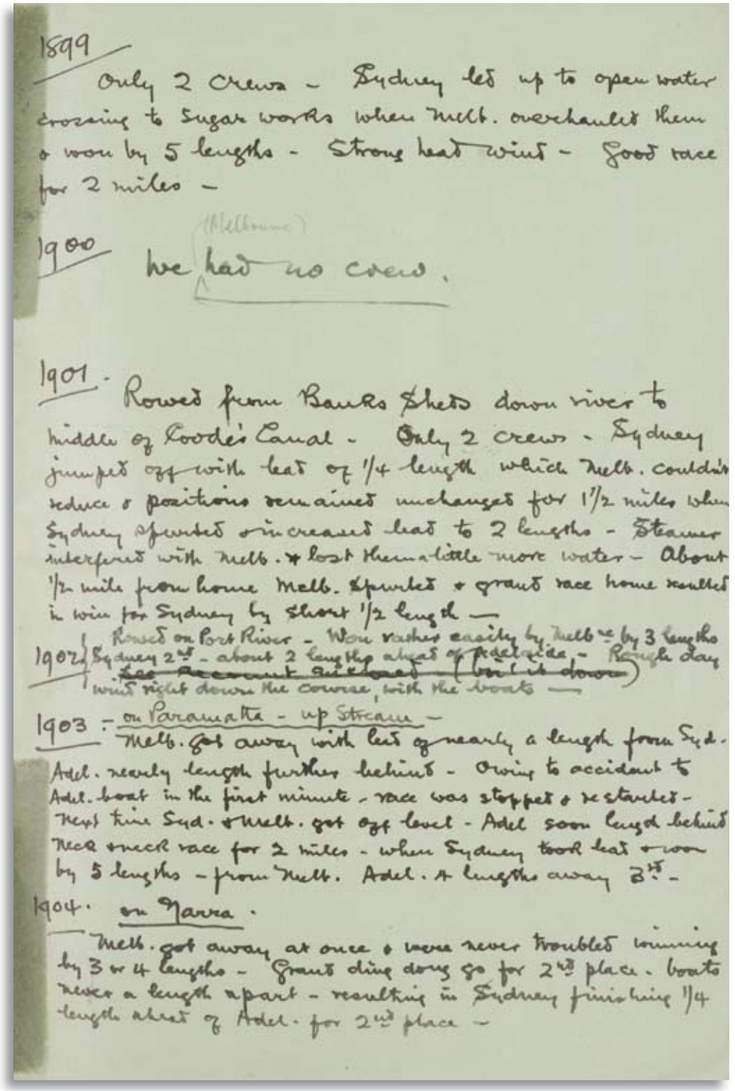
Additional rules for the race were implemented on 7 April 1893 to govern the holding of the Cup.

1. The Australian Universities Challenge Cup presented by the Old Blues of Oxford and Cambridge shall be held as a perpetual trophy of the Australian Universities Boat Race.
2. The Cup shall be held by the winning University until won by one of the other Universities. In case of two Universities being unable to row, the challenger if any shall be judged the winner.
3. Each winner shall insure the Cup against possible loss to the full value.
4. The Cup shall be suitably mounted on an ebony pedestal to which a shield shall be affixed each year by the winning University, inscribed with the date and names of the competing universities in order.
5. The Cup shall be delivered to the University on whose water the race is to be held not less than one week before the date of the race.[68]

The race itself was in Melbourne and rowed on the Saltwater River. At first, it looked as if Adelaide and Sydney would draw away from Melbourne. However, about a mile into the race Melbourne passed both boats, but not before clashing with Adelaide. Although the Sydney crew kept up the challenge to the end, Melbourne won by nearly three lengths in a time of 16mins 5secs. The time showed the Melbourne crew to be the best that had rowed in these races.[69]

Regular intervarsity success

Melbourne University won the race against Sydney on the Lower Yarra in 1899; in 1902 (against Sydney and Adelaide in Port Adelaide); in 1904 (against Sydney and Adelaide on the Lower Yarra); in 1906 (against Sydney and Adelaide—the first time Sydney had been beaten on the Parramatta); in 1911 (against Sydney and Adelaide in Port Adelaide); in 1912 (against Sydney and Adelaide on the Parramatta); in 1913 (against Sydney and Adelaide on the Lower Yarra); and in 1914 (against Sydney and Adelaide in Port Adelaide).[70] The race during this period up to the First World War was considered to be the most important of the university season and the rivalry with Sydney and Adelaide Universities was intense. Among the memorable intervarsity incidents were the sinking of the Melbourne boat during the 1896 race, the non-participation by Melbourne in the 1900 race 'in view of the alarming incidence of the Bubonic Plague in Sydney'[71], and the stroking of six successive Melbourne crews in 1901–1906 by HJ Whiting for three wins, two seconds and a third place.



1899
Only 2 crews – Sydney left up to open water crossing to Sugar works when Melb. overhauled them & won by 5 lengths – Strong head wind – Good race for 2 miles –

1900
(Melbourne) We had no crew.

1901 – Rowed from Banks Sheds down river to middle of Goode's Canal – Only 2 crews – Sydney jumped off with lead of 1/4 length which Melb. couldn't reduce & positions remained unchanged for 1 1/2 miles when Sydney spurted & increased lead to 2 lengths – Steamer interfered with Melb. & lost them a little more water – About 1/2 mile from home Melb. spurted & grand race home resulted in win for Sydney by short 1/2 length –

1902 Rowed on Port River – Won rather easily by Melb. by 3 lengths Sydney 2nd – about 2 lengths ahead of Adel. – Rough day ~~for account Sailboat~~ but it drove wind right down the course, with the boats –

1903 – on Parramatta – up Stream –
Melb. got away with lead of nearly a length from Syd. Adel. nearly length further behind – Owing to accident to Adel. boat in the first minute – race was stopped & restarted – Next time Syd. & Melb. got off level – Adel soon lagged behind Nice smart race for 2 miles – when Sydney took lead & won by 5 lengths – from Melb. Adel. 4 lengths away 3rd –

1904. on Yarra.
Melb. got away at once & were never troubled winning by 3 or 4 lengths – Grand ding dong go for 2nd place. boats never a length apart – resulting in Sydney finishing 1/4 length ahead of Adel. for 2nd place –

HJ Whiting was one of the University's foremost oarsmen of the turn of the century era, having rowed in the Victorian eight in 1905 as well as stroking six intervarsity crews. Recently uncovered in the University's archives are Whiting's handwritten notes of the outcomes of the various intervarsity races he participated in, written on one of the early intervarsity programs. This fascinating material was discovered by accident by another intervarsity oarsman of a later era, RB Lewis, who was given the notes during a chance meeting with Whiting's sister who lived in England.





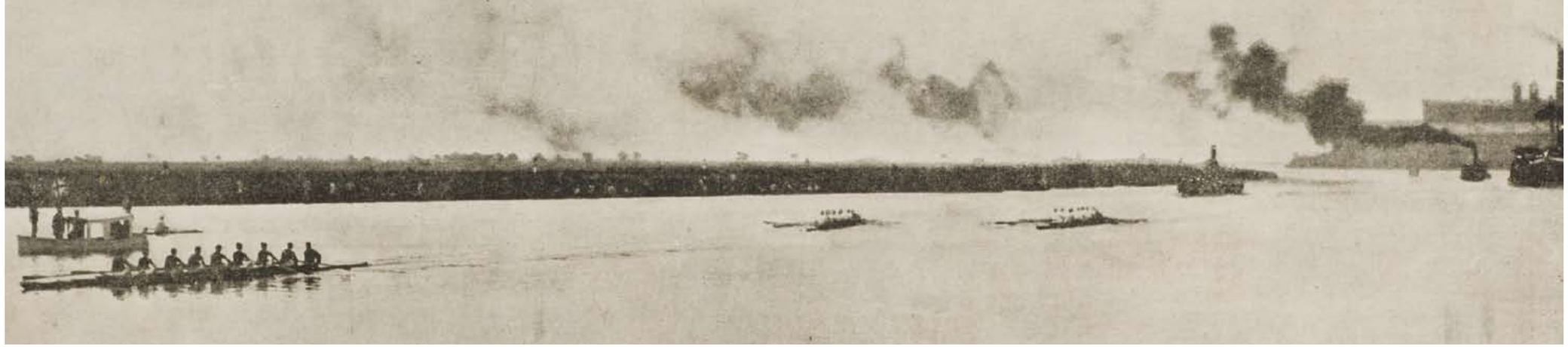
TOP: 1902 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Port Adelaide): (standing left to right) JAH Sherwin (bow), W StG Sproule (4), JA Wallace (7), RJ Lewis (6), MBell (3), (seated left to right) AA Hunt (2), T Crosthwaite (coach), HJ Whiting (stroke), CR Kirkby (5), (front) KS Cross (cox)

BOTTOM: 1903 MUBC intervarsity eight (Parramatta River): (standing left to right) A Hunt, M Bell, HC Fulford, JAH Sherwin, (seated left to right) E James, CR Kirkby, HJ Whiting (stroke), RJ Lewis, (front) JP Fogarty (cox)

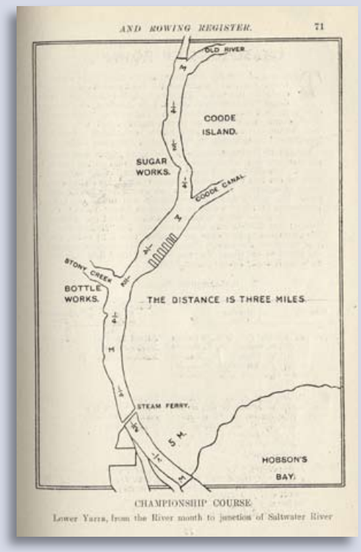
LEFT: HJ Whiting's notes on the 1899–1904 intervarsity races *MUBC papers at University of Melbourne Archives*



1904 MUBC intervarsity eight, coach and mascot as pictured in the 1904 intervarsity programme *MUBC papers at University of Melbourne Archives*



MUBC winning the 1904 intervarsity race by four lengths from Sydney University (right), who finished a quarter of a length ahead of Adelaide University (centre)
MUBC papers at University of Melbourne Archives



Championship Course on the Lower Yarra (3 Miles).
The Victorian Oarsman, p.71

'By inquiry from Metrop Bd [sic] found that from a point 290 feet south of the commencing point of the retaining wall on Port Melbourne side of river bank to a line-between extreme point of the land at junction Yarra and Saltwater and to a point on opposite wharf is 3 miles.'
From John Lang's note 4 June 1904 in Minute Book, vol. 2 p.124

Withdrawing from the VRA

From 1893 the Club was inwardly focused. It withdrew from its membership of the Victorian Rowing Association. It had often found the fee of 5s per member hard to pay. According to a University publication, *The Summons*, one of the consequences of '... withdrawing from the association is the committee will be able to devote more time to the Clubs own rowing events which in the opinion of many are far more important than any events in various regattas.'[73] When John Lang wrote about this decision in his Records of Proceedings, he 'emphatically disagreed' with this policy.[74] MUBC did not rejoin the VRA until 1902.[75]

Some high profile officers of MUBC

During 1893 and 1894, Dr (later Sir) John Madden was the President of the Club and Professor Irving and John Grice were Vice-Presidents (Madden would be President again in the crucial years from 1904). The Captain and Hon Secretary during these years was Professor Irving's son, Harold. In 1895 Professor Irving once more took up the post of President; Vice-Presidents were Thomas Colles and Dr TC Hope, both of whom had been leading oarsmen for the Club. Harold Irving remained Captain. In 1898 Sir Henry Wrixon became President and retained the post till 1903. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1897–1910.

RS Fuller dies

In 1897 RS Fuller, who had crafted many of the university boats and oars and leased sheds to MUBC died. He had been a great supporter of the Club and was often very patient about sums of money they owed him. He was one of Melbourne's best-known boatbuilders and a Yarra River institution.

Ballarat School of Mines makes an offer

In 1899 MUBC was approached by the Ballarat School of Mines with an offer for an eight-oared race against the University, to be rowed annually one year in Melbourne, the next in Ballarat. The University replied that this would be too much of a strain on the finances of the Club, but offered to hold an annual competition in clinker eights over a mile and a half on Melbourne water, open to all MUBC members. The School of

Mines declined. This was the first offer of a competition from a non-university tertiary institution.[76]

MUBC at the turn of the century

Most of the Club's activities during the late 1890s and early years of the twentieth century were centred around the intervarsity races, the annual intercollegiate races and interfaculty races. In addition, there were the intraclub competitions such as the scratch fours, and spasmodic competition in a few of the regattas conducted by the VRA. Subscriptions hovered around the £80 to £100 mark per annum and expenses always seemed to exceed this. After 1898 when the colleges were allowed to pay a lump sum for their own boat clubs, subscriptions decreased enough to cause problems. Money, boats and oars were donated by past members and life members. And from 1900, the Club held a ball with the cricket club that would become one of Melbourne's great social events and provide funds for the Club.

The end of the nineteenth century presented the Club with little outside its set routine, but early in the twentieth century several momentous events occurred, one after another, that affected the Club significantly.

The Sports Union

The most important of these in the long-term was the efforts by John Lang, who in 1904 was Hon Secretary of the Club, to establish a Sports Union at the University. The idea of a sports union originated in Oxford and Cambridge and this was the model that the University aimed to follow. Sydney and Adelaide Universities had formed sports unions in the 1890s. Sport had become a central element of university life and very much a part of college life. Lang was spurred on by conversations during another of the 1904 significant occurrences, the inaugural Henley-on-Yarra on 19 March, with Sir John Madden, Chancellor of the University and President of the Boat Club, and Dr Kent Hughes who was involved in athletics. The three were on a barge watching a Melbourne University crew compete in a maiden eight race. Within a week John Lang had talked to social club meetings at Trinity and Ormond and to the social club secretary of Queen's about forming a sports union. He was soon joined in his cause by cricket club member, EP Oldham of Ormond (who also rowed)[77] and FE Langley, a Trinity resident and prominent member of the Boat Club. Getting the support of the colleges was crucial. Young men





TOP: 1904 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Lower Yarra): (standing left to right) EP Oldham (3), M Hurry (6), R N S Good (5), JAH Sherwin (bow), M Bell (replaced by CG Shaw two days prior to the race due to injury), CG Shaw(2), (seated left to right) T Crosthwaite (coach), HJ Whiting (stroke), RJ Lewis (7), HC Fulford (4), (front) KS Cross (cox)

BOTTOM: Programme for the 1904 intervarsity
MUBC papers at University of Melbourne Archives

The Sports Union

During 1904 all members of Melbourne University sporting clubs with a subscription of 7s 6d were deemed to be members of the newly formed Sports Union. The clubs continued their separate existence, but a provision in the Sports Union Rules allowed any man or woman to join the Sports Union for 7s 6d and this subscription was credited towards any club he or she wished to join. Only nine people across the entire sports sphere joined this way, and seven were women. One of them was Dr Georgina Sweet, the first woman to be appointed to the post of Associate Professor at Melbourne University,[81] as well as Miss Freda Bage, Miss TE Tucker, Miss Derham, Miss Dixson, Miss Hedderwick and Miss Heley. Sweet was given her doctorate in the same year the Sports Union was established; she was the first woman to be given a PhD in Science for original research. Women were less a part of individual sports networks and more likely to seek other ways to engage in university activities.

In 1905 when the referenda imposed an annual compulsory fee of one guinea (£1 1s) for men and 7s 6d for women, the Yes vote was carried. On 6 November the University Senate unanimously passed the Compulsory Sports Fee Regulation. The fee was collected for the first time in 1906. At this time college men still joined the cricket and boat clubs through their social clubs. In 1911 this was still the case for boats but not for cricket.[82]



Meeting to establish the Sports Union held on 19 April 1904
Sports Union Minute Book
University of Melbourne Archives

living in colleges joined the social clubs to give them access to college activities. These social club fees also gave access to the cricket and boat clubs of the University. Formation of the Sports Union would also include the formation of a University football club. Lang already had crucial support from Sir John Madden who had been Vice-Chancellor of the University for ten years before becoming Chancellor in 1897.

Lang's next step was to take the idea to the MUBC annual meeting on 30 March. Here he outlined the scheme to establish the Sports Union with, in his own words, 'the object of getting better financial results through increased subscriptions and other receipts.'[78] He also put forward the idea of establishing a University football club and getting it into the Victorian Football League.

Lang and Oldham pursued the idea and on 19 April at a meeting of about 150 students with Baldwyn Spencer in the chair, they managed to get the idea accepted in principle, but the idea of a compulsory fee to be paid by all students took a little longer to become a reality. The first Sports Union Council was formed on 14 July but rules for awarding blues were not approved or confirmed until 1906. The Melbourne University Sports Union did however retrospectively award rowing blues to all those past rowers entitled under the newly proclaimed rules as of October 1905. Thus even the first intervarsity crews of 1870 and 1871 received their awards (see Appendix XI). The Sports Union also discussed formally establishing University colours and on 31 March 1905, the Sports Union adopted the MUBC colours of blue with a diagonal black stripe.[79] Thus John Lang and MUBC were responsible for establishing a Sports Union, Blues, the University sports colours, and eventually compulsory sports and union fees—a feature of university life until 2006, when the Australian Federal Government abolished compulsory student unionism in all Australian universities.

Henley-on-Yarra

On 19 March 1904, the first Henley-on-Yarra Regatta was held under the auspices of the newly established Melbourne Amateur Regatta Association, formed the previous year, whose brief was to encourage amateur rowing and provide perpetual trophies for amateur boat racing. Key figures in setting it up were George Fairbairn (Steve's elder brother), RO Blackwood and Captain WC Rivett. The President was George Fairbairn. From this first occasion, a feature of the Regatta was the decorated houseboats hired by spectators to better view the races. According to most reports MUBC's houseboat was the best decorated in this inaugural year. Many houseboats were occupied by well-known Melbourne people who entertained their friends onboard. For years people thought MUBC ran the Henley-on-Yarra Regatta and though this was never true, John Lang was certain that it was the involvement of MUBC that made it the 'distinct' social event it was. In 1904 the Governor-General, Lord Northcote, visited MUBC's houseboat, albeit 'unofficially'.[80]

Thus ended an era of establishment for the Boat Club and a period of glamour began in which membership grew, and the Club played an important part in the advancement of the University and Melbourne's rowing culture. John Lang's last year was to be in 1904, but he was persuaded to keep going and took the Club into the modern era. During the next ten years it consolidated its position, expanded its activities and enjoyed its prominence until the Club was tragically decimated by the First World War.



'Melbourne 1905' Laurence William Wilson, artist
State Library of Victoria picture collection