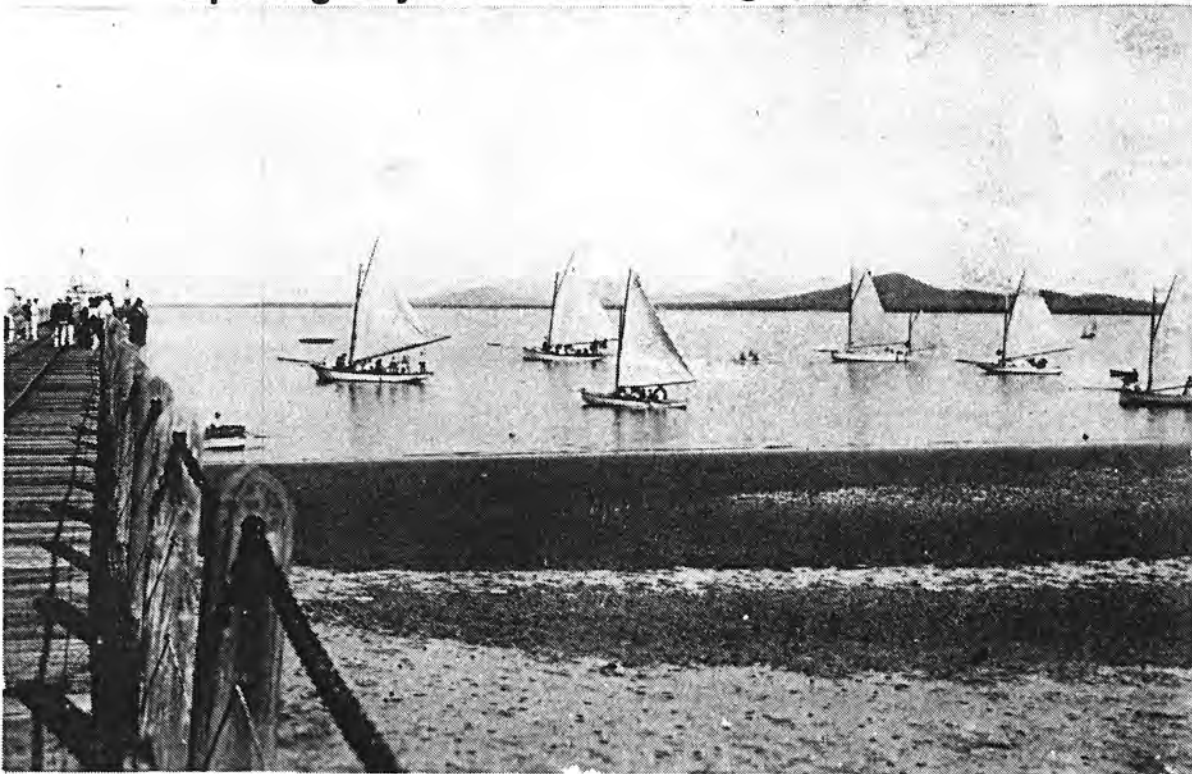


The Port Denison Sailing Club Story



(By Claude Darwen, Life Member, Trustee, Commodore 1952-1976)

Opening Day of P.D.S.C. Sailing Season 1918



Boats, left to right: Faith, Reliance, Denisona, Gulnare, Irene and Ruby.

How the Queensland Sabot Movement Commenced

Bowen gave the lead

The following article appeared in Seacraft, the national sailing magazine, some 14 years ago and will be of interest to local parents of our present saboteers.

You are not getting them young enough,

You have no cradle

These sentiments were expressed by the late H. R. (Dutchy) Miller to the writer on the occasion of the 1950 Easter Regatta held at Bowen at that time, as for years past Northern clubs had worked hard to encourage teenagers into sailing and for a period each club would have a healthy register of junior boats and a season later half the fleet would stay on the racks.

The late 'Dutch' Miller, having grown up with the writer and fooled around in boats since boyhood days, pointed out that almost every senior sailing skipper present at the regatta had been sailing since boyhood. He instanced the Schultzs, Darwens, Smiths, Hansens, Ashworths, Mawhirs of Bowen; the Taylors, Butlers, Walshs, Venns of Townsville; the Tredreas, Boltons, Blacks, etc. of Cairns; the Zemeks of Mackay, all of whom stayed in the game since boyhood.

Introducing teenagers to sailing, particularly on a rough day in a trainee dinghy, was never very successful, particularly when he spent his first few



The first prototype Sabot, BILLY DEE. David Steen (skipper), with brother Ron, Bill Darwen and Phillip Kirk (crew).

Sundays in the 'drink'. Most of them soon drifted away to the beaches and were lost to the game.

During the next couple of years, the problem of keeping interest in the junior fleet was ever before the Northern clubs and it was at the North Queensland Yachting Association annual conference held at the Bowen Easter Regatta in 1953 that the writer moved on behalf of the P.D.S.C. that a Sabot class be adopted for North Queensland. This motion was seconded by Kelly Zemek of the Mackay Regatta Club whose members had been thinking along the same lines. However, the conference decided that it be left to the individual clubs to make their own decisions on the class.

At the farewell function of the regatta over a convivial drink, Dr. P. R. Delamothe O.B.E., Attorney General and Minister for Justice at the time, and then Treasurer of the P.D.S.C., Joe Zemek, Commodore of the Mackay Regatta Club, and the writer discussed the sabot position and the 'Doc' gave Joe an order for one to be delivered for the following season, and a second boat was also donated by Mr. Bill Moule of the Grand View Hotel.

The following article is taken from the files of the "Bowen Independent" on June 12th, 1953.

The Sabots

"The first of the Sabot type of sailing dinghy was put on the water on Saturday last. Launched by Club Commodore Claude Darwen and christened "Billy Dee" after its owner, 3½ year old Bill Darwen, it was handed over to 13 year old skipper David Steen and crew mate Phillip Kirk, godson and nephew of the Commodore, for its trial run. The lads were the envy of all the young lads about the place. David had the right qualifications for a successful sailing career, his dad, Bob Steen, having served his time before the mast as for'ard hand in the skiffs Ozone 1 and II, Victor II, the Rater Gee Whiz and was co-for'ard hand with 'Dutch' Miller in the 18-foot Scandal. With this help from his dad, plus the sea fever inherited from his late granddad, Bob Hall, and uncles Bob, Eric and Cecil, all of whom passed through the ranks of the P.D.S.C. as skippers, David just couldn't miss. His crewmate Phillip Kirk also has that dash of salt water in his blood being a grandson of the late W. H. Darwen (who registered his first boat with the P.D.S.C. in 1894) and will in time be appointed skipper of a sabot still to be built."

It was at this time that Mr. Ern Johnson, newly arrived in Bowen, saw the boys sailing Billy Dee and on hearing of the scheme to teach boys to sail in sabots aid, "This may be the answer to my problem, I have a 13-year-old boy at a loose end and this may interest him."

And again quoting the from the Bowen Independent file of July 10th, 1953 under the heading "Another Sabot Dinghy":

"Mr. Ern Johnson, Queens Beach plumber, and son Arthur attended the P.D.S.C. on Wednesday night and notified members that he had completed a sabot named Goofy for son Arthur. Members were surprised at the news as Mr. Johnson only became interested in the class three weeks earlier.



TOM THUMB, Arthur and Rob Johnson.

First Sabot Race

The above race took place on the opening day of the 1953/54 season on September 20th, 1953. The race was won by sabot Goofy with Billy Dee second, and in the afternoon event the positions were reversed.

The two little craft continued to race together until December '53 when Ern Johnson built Tom Thumb and then Little Toot for David Steen, and Tonizone and Grand View joined the fleet. The club purchased Goofy and the class was away to a good start. By Easter 1954 there were six boats in Bowen and a similar number in Mackay and the first unofficial N.Q. Championship was held at the Mackay Easter Regatta in 1954 to be won by Tonizone sailed by Phillip Kirk. At the Easter conference held at the Regatta, the N.Q.Y.A. again refused to adopt the class with Townsville and Cairns, with the President's casting vote, voting against it.

The visit to Townsville Easter Regatta in 1955 of 12 sabots from Bowen and Mackay created so much interest that dozens of kids lined up for a ride with the visitors. The Townsville Sailing Club provided twenty-four trophies which gave all skippers and crews a thrill when they were called up to receive their prizes. Commodore Bill Caldwell said that he had officiated at a lot of presentations and had seen all shapes and sizes of skippers, but never had he seen them so small. The six local sabots were Little Toot (David and Alan

Steen), Goofy (Johnny Doyle and 'Puddles' Poole), Billy Dee (Eddie and Syd Bullemor), Grand View (John Eyles), Tonizone (Phillip Kirk), Tom Thumb (Arthur Johnson).

The class continued to grow in Bowen and Mackay and six from each club were sent to



LITTLE TOOT, David and Alan Steen.



PETER PAN, Eddie and Sid Bullemor.

the Townsville Easter Regatta in 1955 where they created great interest and again the N.Q.Y.A. refused to adopt the class with the same voting as at Mackay.

However, by the end of the following season Townsville and Cairns were becoming aware that they were 'missing the boat' and that Bowen and Mackay now had a big pool of youngsters to draw on for their junior and senior fleets.

At the Cairns Easter Conference in 1956, the class was officially adopted and has since never looked back.

When in Brisbane for the 1959 Australian 16-foot skiff championships, the writer found the same problem facing the various skiff clubs down there and urged each club to introduce the sabot.

Most interested person was Bill Tetzloff of Sandgate Skiff Club who asked that the plans be sent to him and through his efforts Sandgate Skiff Club built six sabots to introduce this mighty little trainer to the Brisbane area.

The growth of the movement since has been phenomenal and the happiness it has brought to hundreds of children is something money can't buy.



GOOFY, John Doyle and Puddles Poole.

The Sabot movement boomed in the years that followed up to 1969 when the Nth. Qld. Yachting Association handed over the Sabots to the National Sabot Movement and from that time the number of N.Q. sabots dwindled each season. This was due to the inability of parents to build their backyard boats up to the strict regulations laid down for the National Sabot and to the introduction of One-up Sabots which prevented the training of the extra crew members. It is interesting to read the recorded number of boats at N.Q. Regattas since 1963.

Townsville 1963	33
Cairns 1964	26
Bowen 1965	45
Townsville 1966	88
Cairns 1967	34
Bowen 1968	79
Townsville 1969	54
Cairns 1970	34
Bowen 1971	47
Cleveland Bay 1972	55
Cairns 1973	no record
Bowen 1974	41
Townsville 1975	36
Cairns 1976	25

The Port Denison Sailing Club, Whitsunday Sailing Club and Gladstone Sailing Club encourage youngsters to sail by the purchase of sabots which are leased out to parents unable to afford their own. P.D.S.C. and Whitsunday also bar 1-up sabots which keeps kids on the beach. P.D.S.C. with fifteen starters last season looks forward to gaining more boats and crews to man them for the new season which will see Bowen stage the 1977 Easter Regatta.



SLICK CHICK — Rob Jamieson, Roger Pollard.

Footnote

It is interesting to know how the original Sabot skippers fared in later life. David Steen is now Assistant Manager of Royal Hayman Island; Arthur Johnson joined the Navy Fleet Air Arm and operated off the aircraft carrier Melbourne; Phillip Kirk, now bank manager in Papua New Guinea; John Doyle, owner Doyles Servicenter Ford and Bowen Toyota; John Eyles, Sydney master plumber; Terry Pilcher, Big Red Fruit Stall; Gordon Fellows, owner High School Store; Peter Caldwell, Lt. Commander R.A.N., Rob Jamieson, Chief Engineer Sarina Sugar Mill.



UNITY, sabot sponsored by Waterside Workers, sailed by Marilyn O'Regan.



TONIZONE, sponsored by Sir Peter Delamothe, O.B.E., and named after son Tony. First N.Q. sabot champion, sailed by Philip Kirk.

John Eyles has recently won the 1984 Sydney/Hobart race in his yacht Indian Pacific.

Other early sabot were Thumper (J. Eyles), Nippy (T. Pilcher), Revel (K. O'Regan), P.K. (N. Payn), Unity (Marilyn O'Regan), Kathleen (P. Caldwell), Mickey and Minnie Mouse (Bill, Gwen and Denise Paulsen), Jolly Roger (Alan Ashworth), Popeye (John Fruiterer), Tom Thumb (Brian Doig), Slick Chick (Rob Jamieson), Skippy (Tony Caldwell).

At present, P.D.S.C. officials are building up the Sabot fleet with over twenty competing each week under the tutorlege of Lach McLean.



KATHLEEN, N.Q. sabot champion Cairns 1963-64 season, Peter and Tony Caldwell.



NIPPY, Terry Pilcher and P. Peel.



ROBIN HOOD (Brendan Nott, Peter Martin), third in Australian National Titles at Lake Macquarie.

Lake Macquarie 30 December 1984/5 January 1985

Local Port Denison's Sailing Club's Robin Hood, skippered by Brendan Nott, 12, with nine-year-old Peter Martin as crew, gained third place in the Australian National Sabot Titles at Lake Macquarie, N.S.W.

In past years Port Denison Sailing Club representatives in National Sabot Titles have included Lachlan McLean, John McLean, Brad Freeman, Michael McLean, John Martin, Douglas Meecham and Peter Caldwell with

the best performance by Michael McLean who came fourth.

Skipper Brendan Nott paid tribute to Commodore Reid Martin and his helpers who gave their own time for Saturday practice sessions since the Selection Trials in September leading up to the Titles. Brendan said the experience gained was invaluable, and all Port Denison participants in the Titles would have benefited from the training at home. The Port Denison sailors will return fired with enthusiasm for the remainder of the sailing season.