

Commerce and sport in Aden Harbour.

Yacht Sailing in Aden

SUNDAY morning yacht racing in Aden is an institution. Shortly before 10 o'clock there is activity in the boats moored off the Union Khorsmaksar Club Headquarters and off the Post Office Pier; while yachts of various rigs and designs, from the Command Services Club moorings in the bay below Ras Tarshyne, appear round the arm of the breakwater. They jockey for position up and down the line opposite the Club ready for the start of yet another Aden Yacht Club race.

Little is known of the history of the Aden Yacht Club before 1928, although it seems that sailing was popular in Aden as far back as the early years of the century. The Aden Sailing Association was certainly in existence well before the first world war, for the Lamington Cup, presented by the late Lord Lamington, was competed for in 1907, while the Association's Average Cup was sailed for in 1911. Possibly due to the war, yacht racing at Aden appears to have stopped in 1915, and it is not until thirteen years later, in December 1928, that we hear of the old Association being affiliated to the Yacht Racing Association in the United Kingdom, under the name of the Aden Yacht Club. Since then racing has been carried out under Yacht Racing Association Rules.

At a time when enthusiasts in the United Kingdom are busy fitting out their yachts for the coming summer's sailing, those in Aden are thinking of laying up their craft; their season is during the cooler months, from October to the end of April. Unfortunately, there is no single class, and the yachts are of miscellaneous design.

The pattern of Aden yachting is much the same as that of other sailing centres—much enthusiasm, prohibitive costs, little money and in consequence relatively few boats, a dozen or so being an average turn-out for a club race.

Aden craft fall roughly into three categories: the *Seabird* class with an overall length of 21ft.; the fast, light, 15ft. 6in. sharpies rigged with Longström masts; and the somewhat heavier and slower miscellaneous designs.

The original *Seabird*, which sailed under this name, was brought from the United Kingdom more than twenty years ago by the Eastern Telegraph Company. In 1934 she was part-owned by the present Air Officer Commanding, then Flight Lieutenant Macfadyan, who had with him as crew Air Commodore Portal, now Viscount Portal of Hungerford. A few years later she became the property of Mr. J. R. Kynaston, many times vice commodore of the Club. Under the ownership of Commander Ryan, R.N., she was shipped in 1940 to Massawa.

When that Red Rea port was in Italian hands, she met the tragic and ironical fate of being sunk in the harbour by No. 8 Squadron R.A.F., based on Aden.

The *Seabird* class still afloat has no such history, although it is worthy of record that *Seagull* and *Curlew*, imported in 1932 and 1934 respectively, continue to race regularly and to retain their places among the winners. This is particularly noteworthy when the harsh climatic conditions during the long laying-up periods are



The beauty of bellying sail in Aden Harbour.

taken into consideration. The waters of Aden, too, are generally unkind to hulls, and maintenance presents a continuous problem. *Seagull* was owned for a long time by Mr. G. R. Waddell, whose wife was a helmsman whom newcomers were well advised to watch and follow. Knowledge of local conditions is always invaluable in yacht racing, and can normally be learnt only the hard way.

Curlew, originally Bermuda rigged, was at one time the property of Viscount Portal of Hungerford, but since 1935 has been owned by the Royal Artillery Yacht Club in the United Kingdom and

is on loan to the Royal Artillery Yacht Club in Aden. Newcomers in this class are *Fulmar*, built in Cochin and imported in 1948 by Mr. Jack Harley, and *Osprey*, built in the Aden Port Trust workshops for H.E. Mr. Tom Hickinbotham, the present governor. With her tall Bermuda rig and relatively narrow sail plan she is particularly graceful.

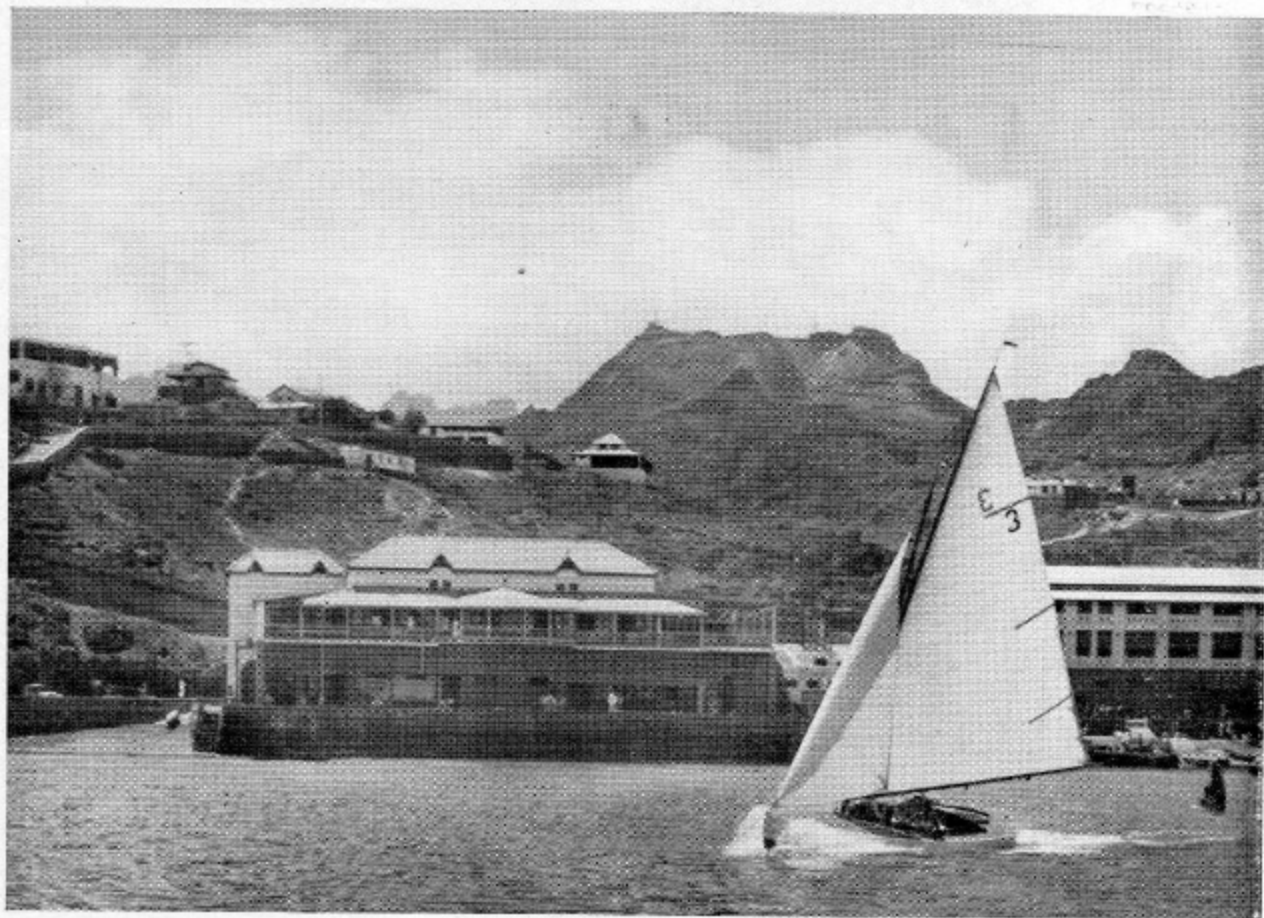
His Excellency is himself no newcomer to the Colony, and his name on the club files records his active enthusiasm in sailing in Aden over a number of years. For a considerable time he owned and

sailed a dhow-class boat named *Nur el Bahr*, which, if somewhat handicapped in confined waters, was often able to show a clean stern to all other craft when reaching. As far back as 1935 he argued with Air Commodore Portal that a dhow-class boat could compete on equal terms with a *Seabird* on a course half Inner and half Outer Harbour. The result of this challenge was a fifteen-mile race which, sailed in heavy weather, was won by *Curlew* by three minutes. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and it is sad that the pleasant loveliness of the dhow class is seen no more in these waters. They were especially popular with the Services on account of the large crews often necessary.

A dhow-class boat was once owned by Sir Bernard Reilly, governor for many years, and a past president of the club. She sailed under the name of *Mary Rose*, although the most poignant and lively memory of her sailing activities lies in the fact that she was better known as "Bloody Mary." Every sailing club has its classics, but perhaps the

best the Aden Club can produce is that of L.T.I. Tyson, who, finding himself in a helmsman's nightmare, and collision with a rapidly oncoming steamer appearing inevitable, responded casually to his crew's somewhat anxious inquiries with the remark, "You can always shove off."

Winds generally are good, those encountered in the Outer Harbour being truer sailing breezes than those experienced in the Inner Harbour, where the influence of the barren hills and of the ships at their moorings may be felt. The reason is found, of course, in the north-east monsoon, which normally blows at force 6 to 7 on the Beaufort Scale (25/30 m.p.h.). Afternoon winds are usually more constant than those in the forenoon, which is one of the reasons why the Thursday afternoon races of the Command Services Club are so popular. Tides are not unduly strong, having a rise and fall of seven feet or so at springs. Inner Harbour courses, apart from the exciting disregard for the rule of the road sometimes shown by the masters of sea-going dhows, may seem tedious against a



The Yacht Club, Aden

strong ebb, but there is usually ample compensation in the quick run home before the wind and tide.

The Service Sailing Club is the result of the enthusiasm of Commander J. A. B. Willson, R.N. (Retired), who was port officer at Aden for a number of years. His keenness in all matters connected with sailing is almost proverbial and his protests on occasion have become classical. If novices considered that they were sometimes hardly treated by the owner-helmsman of *Mona*, later rechristened *Grace*, they nevertheless learnt the sacredness of the starboard tack, for John Willson never forgot that the avowed object of the Aden Yacht Club is to promote a knowledge of seamanship and experience in racing. Commander Willson's exceptional enthusiasm led to the origin of the Service Sailing Club during the 1945-46 season and to mid-week sailing races.

A word should be said concerning the sailing cups and trophies. They are many, but a few are of especial interest in view of their donors and the circumstances in which they were presented. Mention has already been made of the Lamington Cup and of the Aden Sailing Association Average Cup. The Red Sea Sloops Trophy, a handsome model of a Maltese *Gozo* boat, worked in silver, recalls the days when H.M. sloops, drawn from the Mediterranean Fleet, patrolled the Red Sea to put down the traffic in slaves across that narrow but important water. One of the conditions—now unfortunately not obtaining—lays down that the trophy, sailed for in two races, shall be competed for when at least one of H.M. escort vessels on the Red Sea Patrol is in Aden. The Royal Navy Cup, the Aylmer Cup and the Ausonia Cup also bring to mind the long connection with the Royal Navy enjoyed by the Aden Yacht Club. These trophies are pleasant tangible reminders of past seasons.

The passing of an age is, perhaps, noted in the form of the E.T.C. Cup and the Rhodesia Cup—both presented by the Eastern Telegraph Company—and older members of the club find a certain sadness in the fact that one no longer speaks of the E.T.C. The Reilly Cup, presented to the Aden Yacht Club in 1931 by Sir Bernard Reilly, is one of the most coveted prizes and is competed for over the Club's longest course, covering ten sea miles and embracing Pinnacle Rock and the little islet of Jazirat Salil, both off the rocky (and lee) shores of Little Aden. The America Cup gives Aden yachtsmen a permanent connection with sailing in the United States; it was presented in

1942-43 by Mr. Clare Timberlake, then American Consul in Aden and vice commodore of the Aden Yacht Club. The Phipson Trophy, presented before the war by Lieutenant-Colonel E. S. Phipson, inspires the annual Ladies' Race.

It might seem that sailing in Aden is entirely devoted to racing; this is not so, although it is a dominating factor. The outlying coasts are uninviting to long trips, and there are no neighbouring ports or seaside towns to visit as is the case around the shores of Great Britain. Pleasure sailing is limited to afternoon sailing—the sun is set by 6.30 p.m.—with occasional day trips to the far side of Little Aden. Of recent years, thanks to the governor, the Annual Regatta has been re-instituted and is doing much to teach the Aden Arab and Somali that the Harbour is not only a place in which to earn a livelihood but is also a place for enjoyment. The dhow races, the pulling races and the motor-boat races are greeted with enthusiasm by participant and onlooker alike, and the Inner Harbour on regatta days is a cheerful, colourful place wherein the more serious aspects of life temporarily give way to the pleasant, less exacting joys of sport and competition.

ADEN

GATEWAY TO THE EAST

The Port of Aden, poised at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, holds the key to East-West trade, and offers unique facilities for the transshipment of cargo and the maintenance and repair of ships. One of the largest bunkering stations in the world, some 350 ocean-going ships are refuelled there each month.

Formerly an appendage of British India, Aden is now a Crown Colony. It has an area of 75 square miles with a population of 80,516. It has been under British administration since 1839.