

THE YEAR - 1012

Before we look back on 2012 let's look back at 1012 to the *Dharawal* people of the Port Hacking. They were the first to sail the Hacking. Imagine if we could sit in on the sailor's gatherings back then. Perhaps their stories are still being carried forward by word of mouth embellished with the distortions derived from countless retellings. What a treasure their facts and myths would be. I suggest if you put your mind to it you will hear their murmurings seeping out of these very cliffs. On this very piece of land here lived a family called the *Bartergal* who, as fishermen, weavers of grass shades for their caves for a millennium, went on to invent channels for blinds, and become a "master" and hold a unique place in the history of sailing on this waterway.

The broad peninsular (*Illawong*) between Botany Bay and The Hacking was particularly affluent then, as it is now. Life was so easy the fortunate *Dharawal* and *Bartergal* people had much idle time on their hands and engaged in many pastimes that enhanced their lifestyle and enabled them to hone their sea hunting skills and sailing.

Peace reigned for eight centuries until one day a strange little vessel entered The Hacking under sail. Within a decade the *Dharawal salties* were gone. All 3,000 wiped out by smallpox.

All that remained were the spirits of the *salties*. From the cliffs and caves that line The Hacking these spirits watch over today's sailors on a weekly basis and observe the trickery of modern day sailors. There is not a current skipper that has not experienced the influences of these old *Saltie* spirits.

You may ask how we know the spirits of the *Dharagal salties* of old, join us in the RMYC to listen to our versions of racing incidents and muse at how much better our stories become with each retelling. And you ask how do we know that they gather around their flameless camp fires nightly to relive similar experiences back through the millennia whilst shaking their heads in frustration at 'how come them white fellows get it so wrong'? Can any of us explain all the things we know and how we got to know them?

Let's leave the year 1012 when the whale (*Gawura*) was the totem of the *Dharawal Nation* and to sight a whale was a sign of favour from the *Rainbow Serpent*.

Today the cat and "*Trim flag*" is our totem and if not flying from your mast will attract much scorn from our *Bartergal* master.

THE YEAR - 2012

Evidence of Dharawal spirits to this day.

*** How else could you explain why *Chinook* tee-boned our sponsor *Jellybeans*. The facial expression of Ian moments before impact could have been used to market a Shakespearian Tragedy.

*** Ken was at it again! Called 'starboard' and 'buoy room' when *Impossible Dream* was coming last by 5 boat lengths. The *Dharawal* called it Marker fever.

His Libby tells of the puzzled looks on other drivers' faces when Ken approaches a roundabout with caravan in tow calling 'starboard, buoy room'. She recounts incidents in Canada when he's caused absolute pandemonium as he goes around the roundabouts the wrong way calling 'starboard, 'buoy room'. They need those trips away in the caravan to relieve his stress from having to deliver others "tweaked-for-convenience" sailing accounts at presentations.

*** The spirits mused when *Mica* towed the starboard start mark halfway up the first leg without touching it. Really!! Many skippers chased him up the course to cross the runaway starting line.

*** It seems that Jim and his Ginny on *Rhumb Line* annoyed the *Dharawal* spirits somehow. Their revenge was to place a new reef off Jibbon Point which Jim discovered. It is now called Jim's reef. To this day Jim retaliates to those who laugh at Jim's misfortune, and they now suffer a close inspection of out-of-date Betadine during safety checks.

*** The spirits were not happy with *Frisky Two* barging at the rounding marks, so they positioned *Aeolus* at the mark one day to take the collision and in so doing, spared six other yachts.

*** What is it with multi hulls and the spirits? The spirits in times past only allowed one hull to round a mark at a time. *Wind Song* has two hulls so has problems,problems.

*** *The Crow* (*Wugan* in *Dharawal*) endured another season of frustration of the spirits, fickle winds, wrong sail selection, and other yachts who failed to stay out of Jim's way and give him clear passage around the marks. He also suffered at the hands of the *Bartergal* handicapper for the umpteenth season in a row.

*** Talk is that John Barter (of *Batergal* fame) is engaging Qantas Cabin Crew to give buoy retrieval and stow away demonstrations from the fore deck of *l'attitude*, as the yachts cross the line to appease the spirits. This may bring an end to the practice of slowing down at the finish to avoid losing handicap minutes, and having to retrieve a mark and risking public humiliation in a clubhouse dressing down.

*** A clarification of what "J" stands for in *J Force*. In *Dharawal* times "J" means the force applied to a foreward hand when standing on the bow when a yacht hits the sandbar propelling said foreward hand into the water to inspect the said sand bar. Not to be confused, albeit similar, with the "*G*" force, Gillard going forward.

*** The *Dharawal* whilst good at spirits had never seen beer. Today *The Waugh Ship* allegedly promotes a mythical beer in Queensland however it has never been sighted by his RMYC *salties* in the Hacking.

*** It was rumoured that in one race the spirits were tired and wanted to retire for the day so they arranged the finish line to be picked up and taken to "**Endless Summer**" so we all could go home.

*** Concerns for Ross (the-conditions-don't-suit-us-today, but keeps on winning) Hetherington in *Migaloo*. Appears to be going down with a bout of Ken's marker fever late in the season. On top of that, now that Ross is assisting Ken in presentation duties, he may need to talk to Libby about caravanning. Stress relieving, for some!

So - What do the Dharawal Spirits have in store for us "Salties" this year?

Australia Day 2013

As related by the Dharawal spirits to Tony Parker and Peter Roचाix