



If it goes near the water, sell it with AFLOAT
Boats for Sale, Marine Classifieds, Marine Business Directory

[LOGIN to your account](#) or [REGISTER a new account](#)

 GO

AFLOAT Magazine

MARINE Directory

BOATS For Sale

CLASSIFIED Advertisements

BOATING Weather, Tides & Maps

DISCUSSION Forums

AFLOAT Gear & Subscriptions

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

2009 2008 2007 2006 2005 2004 2003 2002

December 2008



Front cover:
Hobart fleet converges at the rounding "Mark Zulu" east of the Heads before heading south to Tasmania.
Photo by Rolex/Daniel Forster.

- ▶ Editor's Column - Afloat is still the one
- ▶ Letters - Children's Radio
- ▶ Queensland's Biggest Oil Spill - The Oceanic Grandeur saga by Alan Lucas
- ▶ The very long tale of Nelcebee - The first 125 years!
- ▶ Bobbin Head - the Empire fights back by Gregory Blaxell
- ▶ The Sydney to Hobart 2008 by Patrick Bollen
- ▶ NSW Maritime News - Sydney's Aquatic Events - A Boater's Guide
- ▶ Harbour Happenings
- ▶ On the Waterfront
- ▶ Latitude 28 - Queensland News by Ian Grant
- ▶ Weather with Malcolm Riley - Changes in Bass Strait
- ▶ Boat Electrics by Gavin Sorrell - 240 Volt Charging
- ▶ Galley Gourmet with Captain Chaos - Rolling, Rolling, Rolling down a Mountain
- ▶ Fishing
- ▶ Books reviewed by David Colfelt and Paul Talbot
- ▶ Marine Trivia Quiz 148
- ▶ Afloat Xword 61
- ▶ Rogues Yarn with 'Arry Driftwood
- ▶ Product & Industry Review



The Empire Marinas' Bobbin Head facility, 2008.

Bobbin Head and the hiring of Halvorsen cruisers seems almost synonymous to many Sydneysiders – especially those of the immediate post-Second World War generation.

The cruisers were slow, powered by petrol engines, fairly uncomfortable with an impossible head but, to would-be 'skippers' taking over their maiden command, they had glamour, charm and something indescribable but akin to mild-megalomaniacal euphoria. They were great!

But Bobbin Head is much older and much richer than this ephemeral image. Its name (and I bet you, like me, thought it was English and something to do with the weaving trade) is, in fact Aboriginal. The Aborigines that occupied the area were the Guringai (the Guringai-speaking people). This name, when written by Europeans, became Ku-ring-gai.

They named the place *Bobbin* meaning 'a place of smoke' referring to the radiation fog that is often a feature of parts of the Hawkesbury basin. I have been caught in this 'fog' and have tried to follow the shoreline to make any headway. It's usually a hopeless task; much better to wait until it lifts and then you *know* where you are.

On one occasion in such a fog on Berowra Waters, I sped up the waterway (full of confidence and perhaps a tad of something else) and turned round to note that some six or seven boats were following this obviously capable and knowledgeable 'local'.

Suddenly through the mist, I found my boat surrounded by stakes. I was in the middle of an oyster lease. I stopped and waited at least an hour until the fog lifted. I'm glad I wasn't around to hear the yelps and squeals and colourful language of those following.

Near the office of Empire Marinas, the owners since 2006 of the Bobbin Head facility, is Bobbin Rock. As part of the interpretative signage, there is a photograph of Eccleston Frederick Du Faur (1832-1915) sitting on this rock. He was the man who, more than anyone else, was responsible for the establishment of Ku-ring-gai Chase, dedicated as a national park in 1894 with Du Faur as the managing trustee.

Du Faur arrived from England and went to Bendigo in February 1853. He survived the 'gold fever' and typhoid and came to Sydney and joined the Railways in 1856. In 1858, he returned to England. He

Featured Boats



[more boats >>](#)

Featured Classifieds

<><>No items found.

[more classifieds >>](#)

Advertise with Afloat

Boat-for-Sale

Print and online from just \$99

Marine Classified

Print & online from just \$34.50

Marine Directory Listings

FREE for basic listings - enhanced listings from just \$144/year

Complete price list

How to place an ad

To place, edit, renew or cancel an ad, please [login](#) (existing users) or [register](#) (new users) first.

Upcoming Print Deadlines

- ▶ Feb '09 issue - 12 January
- ▶ Mar '09 issue - 9 February
- ▶ Apr '09 issue - 9 March
- ▶ May '09 issue - 14 April
- ▶ June '09 issue - 11 May

Calendar



Advertisement for hiring a Halvorsen's cruiser c.1960s.

arrived back in New South Wales in 1863 when he joined the Surveyor-General's Office as a draftsman. He moved to the Occupation of Crown Lands Office where he

initiated the systematic surveying and mapping of runs available for selection. He was their chief draftsman when he resigned from the public service in September 1881.

Du Faur was a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales (1873), a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1875), the founding Chairman of the Geographical Society of Australia (1883) and took a particular interest in the influence of the Antarctic Polar cap on the weather of Australia. By 1910, he was a committee member of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science that helped raise funds to support Mawson's expedition to the Antarctic.



Photo NSW State Records

Eccleston Du Faur sitting on Bobbin Rock, 1899.

He was also a dynamic catalyst on the artistic life of Sydney. In 1906 and 1907, he published his translations of several of Horace's Latin verses. He had land at Mt Wilson where he was a member of an artistic circle that included the artist William Charles Piguenit and the photographer Joseph Bischoff and together they made many forays into the surrounding valleys. His name is commemorated by the Du Faur Rocks at Mount Wilson.

In 1871, Du Faur was a foundation member and trustee of the New South Wales Academy of Art that changed its name in 1883 to the National Gallery of New South Wales. He served as President 1892-1915.

He was twice married, first to Augusta Louise Crummer in 1866 (d. 1867) and in 1878 to Blanche Woolley, a daughter of Professor John Woolley (1816-1866) of Sydney University (and after whom the John Woolley Building in Science Road is named).



Photo Illustrated Sydney News, Dec. 1866, State Library of NSW

Collecting wildflowers for the Sydney Flower Markets from Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

In 1890, he built a Horbury Hunt designed home, *Pibrac*, on his Turramurra land but sold that and built *Flowton* in North Turramurra in 1895.

He focussed his attention on the beauties of the Hawkesbury River and Cowan Creek. In 1901, he was largely responsible for the building of a roadway from North Turramurra to Bobbin Head.

Du Faur was intent on Ku-ring-gai Chase being a conservation area but one that attracted visitors through the building of walking tracks and wharves and employing staff to carry out essential maintenance work.

However, he was conscious of the potential for the destruction of much of the natural flora especially the Christmas Bush and Christmas Bells around Christmas time.

There existed the possibility of the wholesale destruction of saleable wildflowers as many tourists came to the area specifically to pick large bunches of these flowers.

Du Faur often remarked on the difficulty of policing this pilfering as this task involved both shore and water patrols.

He was reported in the *SMH* of 18 December 1894: The last tree ferns were being cut down, the rock lilies torn away by the roots and hundreds of Christmas bush trees of 50 years' growth and upwards were being felled, merely to lop off the top branches for decoration of butchers' shops and others.

But as the area became better known, the number of tourists increased. Both Windybanks and

the Newcastle & Hunter River Steam Navigation Company ran regular ferry services to Bobbin Head in the 1890s.

As early as 1886-7, Edward Clarke Windybank made Cowan Creek his home at a place he called Waratah Bay and was the first settler to build on the waterway. His boatshed was located about 6kms north of Bobbin Head. From there, he hired rowing boats and stationary houseboats but the disadvantage was there was only a walking track from Berowra Station to Waratah Bay.



Windybank's ferry, a frequent visitor to Bobbin Head.

Edward Windybank died in 1928 but the boatshed continued with the family until it was sold in 1959. The old houseboats sank at their moorings and the boatshed was burnt down by a bushfire in 1972.

In 1899, Du Faur employed the Government photographer to take photographs all around the Chase, including Pittwater. In all, 70 plates were taken. It is clear that Du Faur was very involved in the documentation of the on-going work and the development of Ku-ring-gai Chase. Ku-ring-gai is Aboriginal in origin and chase is a European word meaning an unenclosed park.

In 1896, a Mr Shaw sought permission to hire boats and also to erect a cottage and a landing stage to facilitate his business. In 1901, he was granted permission to rent up to 16 boats on a three-year lease. Up until then, the only way to reach Bobbin Head overland was on foot or horseback.

In 1905, Sainty's opened and operated a boatshed and boat hire business and added a shop that sold refreshments especially during holiday times. There was the first mention of a Bobbin Inn in February 1905 and also a telephone, to be located at Sainty's boatshed.

There had been a roadway to Bobbin Head since 1901 and in 1903, a new roadway was built from Mt Colah railway station to join the Bobbin Head Road. In 1911, land was reclaimed and the wharf extended. Parklands were actively promoted in the early 1920s.



Sainty's Boatshed c.1920s

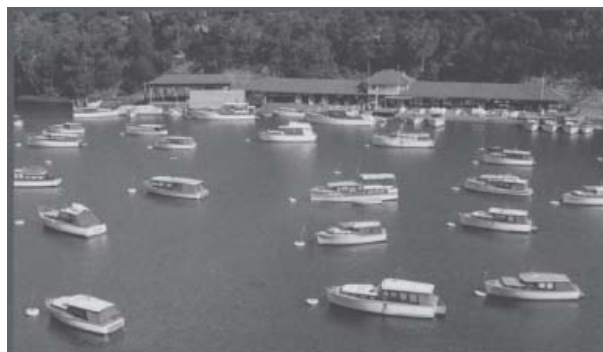
In the 1930s, the period of the Great Depression, most of the facilities at Bobbin Head were developed and built, including Orchard Park, the Bobbin Head Boatshed and the Bobbin Inn. The Bobbin Inn is now the local headquarters of the National Parks and Wildlife

Service who took over responsibility for the park in 1967.

In 1945, Lars Halvorsen Sons bought the lease of Sainty's Bobbin Head Boatshed from E.H. Wheatley for 300 pounds. Halvorsen's saw Bobbin Head as the ideal base for their cruiser charter company.

The company initially purchased cruisers from private owners but most were purpose-built at Halvorsen's Ryde facility. All of them were designed by Harold Halvorsen. They ranged in size from 7.7m to 11m.

At its peak, Halvorsen's at Bobbin Head offered 63 cruisers in addition to many launches and rowing boats.



Halvorsen's Bobbin Head Boatshed after acquisition of the lease from E.H. Wheatley in 1945. This photo c.1960s.

Photo: National Library of Australia

Over time, and with a view to future development, Halvorsen's introduced a 140-berth, floating marina before selling their lease to Empire Marinas in 2006.

Much has happened since the change of ownership. Part of the original Halvorsen family still operates a sales office at Bobbin Head. Their range of cruisers is now built in China.

Empire Marinas have boosted the maintenance capacity of the marina with the installation of a 50 tonne Travelift to transport boats from the water either to an open air or covered hardstand. In addition, all liquid residues, resulting from working on boats' hulls, are passed through a water purifier before being discharged into the sewer. There has been a concerted effort to create an ecologically sustainable environment.



The Interpretative Conservation and Heritage Trail located along the boardwalk, 2008. The Lady Hopetoun, a recent visitor to Bobbin Head, is moored nearby.



The first boat, a 1936 Halvorsen cruiser, built at Halvorsen's Neutral Bay shipyard, being hauled from the water at Bobbin Head using the newly installed Travelift, c.2007.

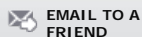
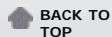
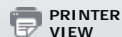
There are also excellent facilities for boat owners. These include security, a fuel wharf, a berthing and tender service, a pump out and waste oil containment facility, a members' lounge, a café and general provisions store and the ready availability of qualified trades people to carry out any repair or restoration work needed by boat owners.

But perhaps one of the most interesting features of this marina is the boardwalk conservation and heritage interpretation trail located along the waterfront and stretching from the marina gates to the restored Halvorsen Bobbin Head Boatshed.

This is done with interpretative signage of acid-etched aluminium plaques set at intervals along the boardwalk.

There are seven plaques that cover four themes of indigenous occupation, colonial development, natural history and the history of the development of the Bobbin Head site. The plaques are supplemented with reference to Aboriginal etchings found on the vertical rock face behind the boardwalk. It is an important advance when a company like Empire Marinas demonstrates its commitment to the development of a sustainable physical environment. It is also very encouraging that the company places a high store on the knowledge and importance of the cultural and natural heritage of the area.

**Gregory Blaxell is an historian and author. He has been boating offshore and in the harbour for more than 25 years. His latest book is The River: Sydney Cove to Parramatta.*



Published by:

AFLOAT Publications Pty. Ltd.
ACN 062 727 477
ABN 12 062 727 477

Managing Director:

Suzy Bekkedahl

Editor:

Robin Copeland

Production Manager:

Peter Webb

Online Commercial Advertising:

Click here for more information.

Contacts:

Lee O'Brien

Ph: (02) 9872 4498

Mob: 0412 117 986

Fax: (02) 9872 4498

leeobrien@afloat.com.au

Phill Terry

Ph: (02) 4782 2092

Mob: 0425 255 495

phillterry@afloat.com.au

Classified & Boat for Sale Advertising:

For questions regarding your online classified, boat for sale or marine directory ad/listing, please contact
webmaster@afloat.com.au

AFLOAT welcomes contributions

from readers. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced and on one side of the paper only. Black and white or colour photos preferred. All material should be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope, if you want it returned.

Editorial:

P.O. Box 709
WILLOUGHBY, 2068
Tel (02) 9417 6499
Fax (02) 9417 8761
info@afloat.com.au

About Afloat:

History
Privacy Policy
Commercial Terms & Conditions
Classified Advertising Terms & Conditions

Secure Online Payment

Afloat accepts VISA & MasterCard via eWay's secure credit card processing

© Copyright 2002 - 2008. AFLOAT Publications Pty. Ltd.

Original content on this website are copyright and the exclusive property of AFLOAT Publications Pty Ltd. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publisher. The comments and views expressed on this site are not necessarily those of the publisher or editor.

