

THE SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE December 2025

Lindsay May OAM

In introducing Lindsay May OAM, Vice-President, Rod Binsted pointed to Lindsay's record achievement of participating in 50 consecutive Sydney to Hobart yacht races, his three wins, achieving line honours in 1997, his high standing internationally as a skipper and navigator, and his contribution to the Australian community including through the National Maritime Museum.

In his introductory remarks Lindsay spoke of his competing in four Fastnet races and of the first Sydney to Hobart race which took place in 1945, with the winner taking more than 6 days to complete the event!

Lindsay then spoke of:

- His admiration for the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, including the world leading safety standards it has set.
- As a navigator, having helpful external sources of reliable weather information for the several days of a race.
- The ability of smart, NZ developed software (*Expedition*) to optimise the course for a particular sized yacht, the forecast wind speed and direction, and the currents.
- Exploiting phenomenal current and wind conditions, combined with excellent crew work, enabled his yacht to win the 2006 race, on corrected time, by 2 hours!
- The four starting lines now needed to accommodate the 100 or more yachts competing in the Sydney Hobart race and the worldwide interest in this extraordinary Boxing Day spectacle.
- Maxi yachts being capable of 30+ knots; smaller yachts 7 knots, hence the requirement for handicapping. (Lindsay showed some dramatic pictures of maxi yachts surfing down large waves at 20+ knots!).
- The need to continually trim sails to optimise performance and it being very demanding work for the crew using manual coffee grinder winches.
- A lack of wind at night and in the morning resulting in the race effectively re-starting at the entry to the Derwent River!

Lindsay then showed dramatic pictures of yachts that had been severely damaged, including broken masts, in horrendous weather conditions.

In responding to questions Lindsay explained:

- The calamitous weather and damage to *Winston Churchill* contributed to the death of 3 crew members.
- The difficulties and risks faced by skippers when main sails split and his having retired from 10 of the 50 races in which he competed.
- Seasickness can be the cause of retirements. An effective strategy (tongue in cheek) is to identify, through the pre-race trials, crew that are prone to seasickness and recommend them to a competitor! Antacid tablets seem to work but a tried and true solution is to sit under a tree for half an hour!

In proposing a vote of thanks, The Honourable Stephen Robb commented that given his own ocean racing experience, he regarded Lindsay May's achievements as being "beyond amazing" and that we have been honoured to have him address us.

After the meeting, Lindsay pointed out that his win in 2006 was on the 33 year old *Love & War* and that the win enthused owners around the world, with "Grandfather" clauses adopted in handicapping rules, to go racing again in boats they had previously considered uncompetitive!

Alan Locke