

# Classic Yacht Association

## O F A U S T R A L I A

[www.classic-yacht.asn.au](http://www.classic-yacht.asn.au)

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*Our aim is to promote the appreciation  
and participation of sailing classic  
yachts in Australia, and help preserve  
the historic and cultural significance of  
these unique vessels.*



CORIO VERTUE - V99  
ANDY INDRANS

When I bought Corio Vertue back in 2003 little did I realize what I was getting into with the ownership of a 50 year old wooden boat, not so much the restoration and maintenance work but her history and the people associated with her.

I knew of the myths and epic voyages undertaken by Vertues and had been lusting after one for years but never expected to find one in Australia. So when I came across CV for sale in Sydney I just had to go up and have a look. Having read volumes of Classic Boat magazine I thought I knew everything about the pitfalls of buying an old wooden boat that could become a project that never actually concludes with the boat reaching the water. Consequently, I went prepared with an extensive check list that I would follow assiduously before committing to classic wooden boat ownership.

On first seeing CV I was smitten – my first view of a Vertue other than in photographs. I followed my check list and discovered quite a few issues but the boat seemed quite sound. After nearly 2 years on a mooring she was a bit of mess down below. My heart said make an offer but my head intervened and I organised for a surveyor to go over the boat and flew back to Melbourne.

To say I was shocked with the 8 page surveyor's report would be a bit of an understatement. However, I was not going to let CV go that easily and discussed the major issues with the surveyor. What really mattered was that the hull was sound and any issues above the waterline I could fix myself. After working out what it would cost to have the problems fixed, and new fittings installed I made a ridiculously low offer to the broker. After about an hour I got a phone call saying I was the new owner of CV.

As CV was not in a fit state to be sailed from Sydney to Melbourne I had her trucked down to her new home at Westernport Marina in Hastings and immediately set about sorting out the good and bad, and removing all wiring and plumbing. I had not been going very long when a chap approached and asked for the name of the boat. When I replied "Corio Vertue" you could not believe my absolute surprise when he said that he had sailed in CV in the mid 1960's and hadn't seen her since. After introducing himself as Rob Stott the next couple of hours were spent talking about Rob's times on the boat and about Wil Heard the first owner and builder of CV.

A couple of weeks later Rob came into the boat



Corio Vertue Not long after her launch



Photo: The Advocate 31/12/1965

The 25ft Geelong sloop Corio Vertue, outright winner of the Queenscliff- Devonport yacht race, pictured at Devonport with its crew. Corio Vertue, the smallest yacht in the field also gained first placing in the second division of the race. The trim sloop took 51 hours 55 seconds for the Strait crossing. Crew members are (from left), Darrel Morrison, Jack Stewart, Wil Heard (skipper) and Robert Stott. (Photo Caption)



Wil Heard and his crew display some of Corio Vertue's silver.

yard and presented me with some newspaper cuttings about CV's win in the 1965 Queenscliff – to Devonport yacht race. As Rob related the story the boat did not win by boat speed but sheer cunning. The race fleet was close to the entrance of the Mersey River when the wind died and the race fleet started drifting backwards with the tide. CV was close to shore and Wil Heard dropped the anchor and watched the fleet drift past him. Once the wind picked up CV was ahead of the fleet and crossed the finish line first!

With CV came some historical documents including her racing history as documented by Wil Heard, and a record of sale from each owner of CV of which I am the ninth. In the ten years of racing out of the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, under Wil Heard, CV had 85 placing's of which 32 were firsts, however Wil Heard wrote this note at the at the bottom of the her race history: "If I'd owned her again I would not bother with racing. Too much trouble and one ends up back in the rat race."

In 2009 I entered CV in the Skandia Geelong Week Regatta. After a challenging long beat in 20-25 knot westerly winds 'Corio Vertue' made it to Geelong for the Skandia Week regatta. Sails often in the water and crew soaked by waves, after 12 hours we decided to abandon racing in order to get to the marina before nightfall. Even though we were the last boat home, and were very wet and weary after our slog, I felt a great sense of pride and emotion in bringing CV back to her home in Corio Bay, and was sure Will Heard was looking over her.

CV's glory came on the last day of racing where with some cunning strategy, and uncanny boat handling skills the skipper got CV a first place on corrected time - CV had won her first trophy in our ownership!

But the story continues. While CV was moored at the Geelong Yacht Club she had a couple of interested visitors.

- The first was a person related to Gil Allbut, the boat builder, and knew of Gill's fondness for CV.
- The second was from Darrel Morrison who sailed with Wil on his trips to Tasmania, and was the commodore of the Queenscliff Cruising Yacht Club.

Feeling a bit intoxicated with CV's success and the people who I had met I had a need to visit the gents at the Geelong Yacht Club and was minding my own business when a quite inebriated chap rolled up next to me and asked me about the time I had with the regatta. It turns out that this chap was the race officer for the classic fleet (of two yachts) had adjudicated CV's win



and had raced against Wil Heard in the 60's & 70's and had a soft spot for CV.

As is often the case one coincidence leads to another. I had been posting to the Wooden Boat forum regarding the progress of CV's restoration and by pure chance one of the forum members sent me the following email:

*Hi Guys,*

*The Corio Vertue was my Grandfather's yacht, he was the first owner, he raced it before I was born. We did some sailing together, but not enough. We never talked much until he got really old and we started talking about ocean racing, International Dragons, Etchells, a friend's teak Cheoy Lee (Marco Polo) that I borrowed a few times and of course the Geelong Footy Club. I'm in Sydney now and he cherished my calls.*

*When he passed away he left me the trophies, a brief log, photos and a model (to scale) of the Corio Vetur. I see the Corio Vertue everyday it's in my lounge room (don't laugh I'm a tragic). The Devonport trophy and photos, (I scanned) and gave to my Mum.*

*So when I tripped over Andy's Web page and this forum I was amazed. I had given up on the yacht ever being restored; I heard you raced it in the Geelong regatta.*

*There are many stories, about how the keel was laid up, running repairs, beating Lou Abraham's (46 timber SS Vittoria) and more. Andy if you want the original race medallions there all yours, they belong on the yacht not under my house in a box.*

*She is a narrow girl....but it will go anywhere, Andy well done, the yacht looks brilliant. If anybody know's how to get in touch with Andy please do.*

We eventually got in touch with each other and

as Stuart was coming down to Geelong for Christmas I invited him and his father to come and see CV at Westernport Marina. Stuart brought some of the medallions and race pennants he was talking about, and also his father's scrapbook of CV. We spent a lot of time talking about CV and Wil Heard and I still keep him posted on CV's exploits.

During 2011 CV returned to the Geelong Week regatta and was last across the line with 2 minutes and 37 seconds to spare whereas in 1966 she came first in her division for the same race. There were no race victories this time around, however an amazing photograph of CV was taken by professional photographer Alex McKinnon – a copy of which is hanging proudly at home.

That same year I visited the Hobart Wooden Boat Festival (without CV) and was hosted by Michael Vaughan who I met on the Internet as he owns a Mark II Vertue – Island Vertue. We met up at the Royal Tasmania Yacht Club and got into a conversation with a passer-by who commented on Michael's good looking yacht. I'm not sure how it came about but CV's name was dropped and the passer by amazed us with the fact that his father's yacht was built next to CV at Gill Albutt's Queenscliff boat yard in 1960!

Having had these encounters with people who have been associated in some way with CV has given me a whole new perspective on boat ownership. Yes, she has all the virtues of a classic yacht which is reason enough for boat ownership, but the fact that CV has a history and is well remembered is something quite different. The best I can come up with is that CV has soul which seems to come alive when I sail in her and think of Wil Heard and how he would sail her.

There is plenty of work still to do on CV however she is a boat that wants to be sailed and therefore restoration work is limited between the CYAA winter and summer race series. CV's racing exploits around Port Philip Bay and across Bass Strait gained her and Wil Heard a reputation of being a very competitive racers and I will try to uphold that status within the CYAA racing series'. We may not be able to compete with the ocean greyhounds and the zippy Tums in light airs, but watch out when the wind picks up!

News Flash Dec 15 2013

Corio took on Melbourne's Classic Yacht racing fleet and handed out a stern chaser sailing lesson in the pursuit race that wrapped up the 2013 (CYAA Victoria) Cup Regatta.

Photo Alex McKinnon ajmck2008@live.com



Corio Vertue in race winning form. 2012 Geelong Festival of Sails