

THE "STARS AND COMPASS" TROPHY

To encourage the use of traditional navigational skills by yachts at sea.
Donated by Richard Hawkins in 1998 (the International Year of the Oceans).

This magnificent hand crafted timber and glass trophy was donated to the club by one of our cruising members Richard Hawkins, author of "Creeks and Harbours of Port Phillip", "Creeks and Harbours of Western Port" and "Creeks and Harbours of The Gippsland Lakes and Eastern Gippsland". It is a perpetual trophy designed to encourage the use of traditional navigational methods, such as by sextant, compass and seamanship, so that these arts are not forgotten and continue to be practiced, despite the availability of modern electronic methods like computerized charts and satellite navigation.

Originally donated in 1990 to the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria, the trophy has now been donated, with a less restrictive Deed of Gift, to Royal Brighton Yacht Club who intend to foster the trophy's aims.

The Club will select a suitable candidate and award the trophy at the Club's Presentation night on Friday 6 July 2001.

Background to the "Stars and Compass" Trophy – by Richard Hawkins

"The concept for this trophy began in 1988 when, after visiting the yacht "Steinlager", following her bicentennial circumnavigation of Australia, I realized that electronic navigational aids, such as computerized charts and satellite navigation, were taking over from the traditional skills of celestial navigation and position fixing by log, sextant and compass. It seemed likely that these skills might fall into disuse through lack of practice and might not be remembered should the electronics fail.

These views were expressed in a letter published by the Australian Nautical News in March 1989 under the heading "Racing Back to Basics". In this letter I advocated that a race or races should be organized in which the use of specified instruments would be disallowed in order to encourage the skills and seamanship employed by the navigator of former years.

A "ready made" trophy did not reflect the philosophy of the "back to basics" proposal. In searching for an alternative, glass seemed to be a more preferable material than silver for several reasons, particularly since glass making is a very ancient craft. Also it doesn't tarnish and a glass trophy can be both decorative and useful.

This trophy was specially made and crafted by designer/glass maker Leisa Wharington, a member of a well-known yachting family on the Mornington Peninsula, who have been friends of ours for many years.

The designs around the trophy include a compass rose, a yacht, the stars of the Southern Cross and a pair of dolphins. The latter, being frequent and much loved companions to yachtsmen and women as well as good navigators, were thought to be an appropriate way of completing the fourth sector.

The wooden base was made from celery top pine by my friend Stuart Calder of Mt. Martha, and the rope handle of the case has been made by another friend, Arthur Woodley of Crib Point, whose fine rope and splice craftsmanship has assisted the restoration of the "Polly Woodside".