

## HISTORY OF BRONTE HARBOUR YACHT CLUB

The original formation of the Burlington Yacht Club came about when some members from the Hamilton Yacht Club, a mixture of Power and Sail, left and formed their own club. The site at that time was in the area of Spencer Smith Park as it is known today. Then, owing to a shortage of space, launching facilities etc., it was moved into an area on the South shore of the Bay, West of the canal, and a club house was built there.

At a later date, when the Skyway Bridge was built, the property was expropriated and the club house was demolished. At this time the members decided to look for another location and as there seemed to be none available in Burlington or Hamilton, they began to look towards the Bronte area. The Bronte Creek at that time had a few fishing boats and some dockage for pleasure boaters and at one time a saw mill down by the bridge and because of the fishing fleet the Government used to dredge the harbour. The area across the creek was marsh land full of bullrushes, with just a few mooring buoys.

The first meeting of interested people was held in the sail loft of Metro Marine with about twelve people attending, mostly members of BYC plus a few boaters who had Metro slips at that time. This was in the fall of 1960 and the meeting produced enough interest to proceed. The second meeting was held in Bronte Town Hall and interest and attendance were very good so plans were made for a third meeting to be held in the Oak Room of Oakville Arena to show plans for a future Club House. At this time City Service Petroleum Company put up \$60,000. on certain conditions. They have since sold out to B.P. Fuels who hold our present mortgage. Conditions for the money put up were that BHYC get 100 members to guarantee \$600. each if the Club failed its obligations or went bankrupt.

The first regatta was held using a marquee as a Club House and the first Sail Past consisted of approximately fifteen keel boats.

The Town of Oakville leased us the property where the Club now stands for the token sum of \$1. per year for X number of years. As the site was originally a garbage dump, some problems arose when the steel pilings were driven down. It cost the club extra to get into solid footings and a number of loads of fill to cover garbage, refuse and even an old barge. The towing bits which were sticking up were left to support our mast until they eventually rotted away. The present mast stands over the same spot.

This was one of the reasons for never completing the balcony which was to be installed on the South side of the Club.

The Club House was completed in 1962 with a mortgage of \$40,000.00, the first tender being \$80,000. with balcony. The first Commodore was Bob Crewson; Secretary-Treasurer Harold Sellers; Rear Commodore Power George Green and Rear Commodore Sail Al Black.

Metro Marine leased us the property where the launching ramps and crane are now situated, with the provision that it was used for Junior Sailing programmes.

At this time we ran our own bar with members filling in as bar tenders. Everyone pulled his weight and it was a very happy Club.

There were no committee boats at this time and power boaters would use their boats in this capacity for regattas, sail pasts etc. Fred and Elsie Lowe operated the Vick Vance to start the Wednesday and Sunday races and Elsie kept times.

The Burgee was designed by Peter Coslett, Harold Sellers and Bill Sargant and was in line with the historic names of the area depicted. (See Appendix #1). N.B. Peter Coslett was Commodore for two years and Harry Sellers was Commodore for one and Vice Commodore for two.

At the time the Burgee was designed it was Nelson Township, Trafalgar County and the Village of Bronte, all taken from Nelson's background. The stripes were angled in order that a crown could be put in the upper tack if we were ever granted a Royal Charter. However, since Royals are no longer granted, it has been suggested that a Maple Leaf for a National could be put in this space.

Note: The pattern for the Burgees was given to Elsie Lowe and she made all the Burgees for the Club for sixteen years at cost, donating her time and effort. She also designed and made ties for members and Racing Signal Flags.

When Hurricane Hazel hit the area it sank a barge at the dock and deposited the one previously referred to on the shore.

The ship's helm which is over the fireplace came from the Burlington Yacht Club. It had been damaged in a fire and was taken apart, refurbished and put together again by Wally Pollard. A clock helm which was over the bar was made and donated by George Green who used to be Sheriff of Bronte and was an original member of the Club.

A brass starting cannon was made by Charley Goddard who had a Thunder-

bird called "Jesters" and was donated to the Club. However it disappeared a number of years ago and couldn't be located. That year we had thirteen breakins at the Club.

When we put a \$5.00 monthly minimum assessment on the bar in 1976, we lost a number of Senior members who objected and handed in their resignations. These were accepted and these former members formed the Burlington Sailing and Boating Club on Hamilton Bay in Aldershot.

We had an excellent Ladies Auxilliary for a number of years which helped the Executive in many ways, putting on social events and helping out at regattas etc, when we couldn't afford caterers. They also bought dishes and equipment for the kitchen.

The anchor at the front of the building was donated by Mr. Wilf Locking (See Appendix #2).

A number of years ago the entrance was changed and put in its present location and this was a vast improvement over the steps which used to be at the front of the building. Then in the fall of 1981 renovations took place again and the stairs were redirected and a wall erected and the bar area changed to give the main club area substantially more space. The air conditioner which was installed by club members was another great improvement.

Blue Water, a steel hull power boat, was purchased as the committee boat in the year 1967. It had been refurbished several times during its years with our Club until its sale when a new Blue Water was bought recently.

Our Junior Sailing Programme was started by Ed Breckon in 1963 and it has gained ground each year. This was greatly responsible for getting members who became interested in sailing to join the Club.

In 1968 we closed the parking lot to cars and turned it into a storage area for the centre board fleet. This again helped our Club membership to grow, until we had, as of last year, approximately 200 Senior members and 50 Social members and one of the most active Clubs around the lake, in all four seasons.

Takeover by the Town of Oakville has brought about more changes in the area surrounding the Club. Finger docks have been removed to make room for more boats. A retaining wall has been built. Water and electricity are being replaced, parking area has been expanded and grass has been planted. The Club has taken over winter storage which adds to our income.

Today the throbbing of power boat engines and the wind in the stays of sailing craft have brought back the nautical atmosphere of Twelve Mile Creek and the Village of Bronte. If Nelson were to tack into Bronte Harbour today, he would feel right at home and welcome to visit BHYC where "You are a stranger but once".

BRONTE HARBOUR YACHT CLUB - ITS NAME & BURGEE

In the early part of the 19th Century, Napoleon Bonaparte had so threatened and terrorized Europe that he was known as the "Bogy Man". (the original use of the term). Kingdoms were falling left and right as the victorious French Army swept across the Continent. Napoleon then wanted to start to expand French influence outside Europe & chose to attack Egypt.

When the nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea heard that Bonaparte had set sail from Marseilles with his invasion fleet they were terrorized. None had the political stability or military muscle to oppose him.

The French fleet besieged and took Malta on its way to the mouth of the Nile. After disembarking the Army, the fleet was at anchor with more than half of the green ships' companies ashore scrounging for various items. It was at this moment that Nelson's fleet attacked.

Nelson had ordered his Captains to attack as soon as the French were sighted. The Battle of the Nile was long and fierce. The French fleet was defeated and sighs of relief and silent prayers rose from the Kings whose nations bordered the Mediterranean.

The King of Corsica who was so overjoyed on hearing the news of Nelson's victory, awarded the Admiral the title of Duke of Bronte.

When the final threat of the "Boogy Man" was removed, first at Trafalgar and then Waterloo, everyone was relieved and ecstatic. So happy were the British people, they named various places after the two victorious leaders, Nelson and Wellington.

This brings us to Upper Canada and the Oakville area. The Village of Bronte now is part of Oakville. In this locale Naval veterans settled and gave their Admiral's name, title and victories to the environs. Thus we have the Village of Bronte with its fishing harbour, the townships of Nelson and Rrafalgar, the once major thoroughfares in Oakville of Trafalgar Road and Navy Street and later Nelson Secondary School.

In setting up the Bronte Harbour Yacht Club and its Burgee, the Charter Members of this Yacht Club knew the historical ties and Naval traditions of our area. So the Burgee carries three stripes on a blue field. The blue field is the ocean and the three white stripes symbolize the three victories of Lord Nelson: Copenhagen - Nile - Trafalgar.

APPENDIX "B"

Some time ago some of the members of B.H.Y.C. wanted to know where the anchor on the front lawn came from.

It is from the Canadian Steamship Liner "Dalhousie City" which was a pleasure boat sailing from Toronto to Port Dalhousie during the twenties, thirties and early forties.

When the boat was put in dry-dock, the anchor was acquired by a Captain Ruddel, and upon his death he willed it to his step-son Wilf Locking, who donated it to the Bronte Yacht Club.

## HISTORY OF BRONTE HARBOUR YACHT CLUB BERGEES

B.H.Y.C is situated on land that is steeped in history going back to the days of Admiral Lord Nelson. Trafalgar county, Nelson township and Bronte were all significant names in the life of this great leader. With this thought in mind, your first executive designed our burgee to reflect the sagas of those years.

The three white stripes commemorate the three battles of Nelson: Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar. They were slanted in such a way to allow for the addition of a crown in the upper corner of the tack, if and when the Club ever became fortunate enough to be granted a Royal Charter. Sad to say the Royal Charters are no longer issued.

Thanks to Fred and Elsie Lowe

(Excerpt from February 1971 Bronte Flyer)

### WHY THE NAME BRONTE?

The Oakville-Bronte area of Southern Ontario was settled after the Napoleonic Wars by retired Royal Navy types. The names these settlers chose for their new homes were selected from the events and people that shook and shaped their history. Nelson and Trafalgar were natural selections for the townships. But why choose Bronte?

Well, in 1798, Napoleon mustered a fleet at Marseilles to launch his Egyptian Campaign. Not having enough men to crew the fleet necessitated his pressing many French farm labourers into service. He then sailed to Egypt via Malta which he attacked and took. Word flew about the Mediterranean that Nelson was on sea with an army and no country which bordered on that body of water was safe from his potential attack.

Nelson and his battle fleet were sent to pursue and destroy this French force but the English had no idea of the ultimate destination of Napoleon. A prolonged game of cat and mouse followed. The results of which caused the French to reach Egypt safely, the English to gnash their teeth in frustration and the numerous monarchs along the Mediterranean coasts to wet their pants in anticipation of the Napoleonic army popping up and pulling their shakey thrones out from under them.

Then, on the evening of August 1, 1798, the English fleet reached Aboukir Bay near the mouth of the Nile where they found the French in proper harbour defensive positions. That is, each French ship's bow was moored to the next ship's stern with anchor chains and lines strung between the ships to prevent enemy vessels from passing in between. The French fleet was moored in this manner in a wide arc around the bay with all guns facing the sea.

In effect it was a floating fortress.

Nelson was so angry and frustrated at not catching Napoleon at sea that he ordered an immediate attack. This was contrary to Eighteenth Century Conventions of War which felt that "gentlemen" waited until their opponent was ready to come out to fight the next morning in the customary line astern position.

Horatio had so inspired his captains to fight that upon receiving the order to attack they did so with speed and claw. Each captain was anxious to be the first to engage the enemy. It wasn't an orderly advance, but a wild, helter-skelter race, with all sails set right into the midst of the anchored French fleet. The ensuing battle was a knock down, dragged out, toe to toe, eyeball to eyeball, good ole' Eighteenth Century slug fest. During this wild melee the French Flagship exploded with such force and violence that it stunned and overwhelmed both sides so completely they stopped firing and watched the conflagration for five minutes.

Finally the French were completely shattered and the day, or rather the night went to Nelson.

Why were the French defeated?

More than half of their crews, these French farm boys, were ashore looking for water and stores and were unable or rather unwilling to rejoin their ships. So they stood on the shore and watched!

What's all this got to do with Bronte?

Remember those wet pant monarchs I mentioned? Well, one was the King of Corsica who was so delighted at Napoleon's defeat that he bestowed upon Nelson the title **Duke of Bronte**. Bronte is just another word for Nelson.

(excerpt form November 1971 Bronte Flyer)