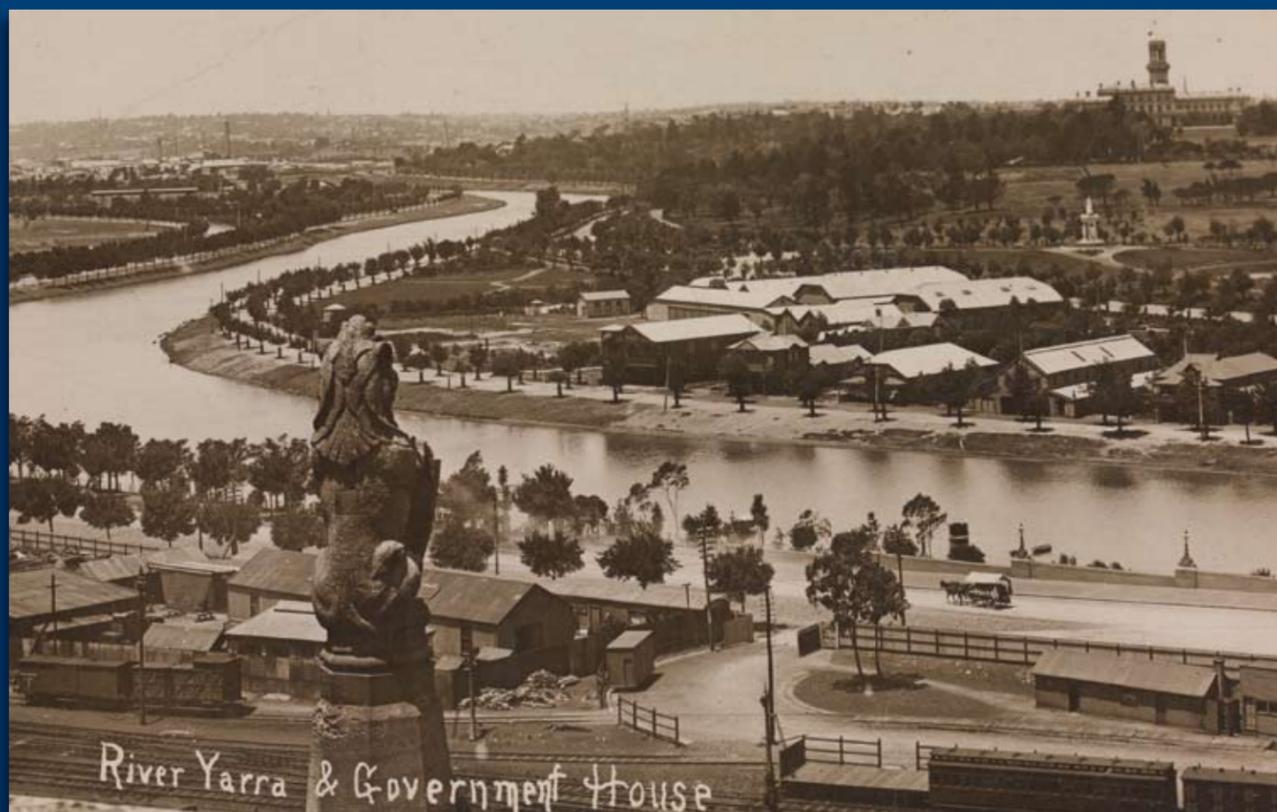




CHAPTER THREE

The fabulous years until the First World War



'River Yarra and Government House' c.1909 Shirley Jones collection of Australian postcards.

The newly erected MUBC boatshed is the last boatshed on the left in the centre of the picture. The large buildings behind the MUBC boatshed are the government engineering works

State Library of Victoria picture collection

University elite become leaders of the Club

The committee bought a large blue and black diagonal striped flag, with MUBC in white lettering on it, and this was unfurled by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Madden, at the Club sheds on 30 March 1904. According to John Lang, this was the first flag of this design ever flown by a university club. The flag went missing and was thought (by John Lang) to have been stolen around Henley Regatta Day in 1910. Mysteriously, an unknown person left a brand new flag of exactly the same design at Lang's office on 12 August 1911.¹ In the Club's records Lang mused, 'Was it conscience or a generous but anonymous donor?'. To his great surprise, the old flag was discovered in 1911, having been inadvertently rolled up with other Henley paraphernalia. To his even greater surprise, he then discovered the anonymous donor was none other than his wife, who was 'induced to confess the gift owing to my telling her how the old flag had been found.'² Sadly, there is no trace of either flag today.

In 1904 the President of MUBC was Professor William Charles Kernot. Kernot was the first qualified engineer graduate of the University, having gained a Certificate of Civil Engineering in 1866. He was appointed Melbourne University's first Professor of Engineering in 1883 and was involved in many projects and concerns, in and out of the University. Kernot was first elected President in 1903 when the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Sir Henry Wrixon, declined to be re-elected. Presidency of the Club was prestigious and many MUBC Presidents and patrons were Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of the University.

Vice-Presidents of the Club at this time were Professor David Orme Masson and ED Ulrich. Orme Masson was Melbourne University's Professor of Chemistry from 1886 to 1923 and instrumental in setting up the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, (later CSIRO). He would eventually have a Melbourne University street and a mountain range in Antarctica named after him. Captain for the season was EP Oldham and John Lang was Hon Secretary.

1904 was a busy year for John Lang. On 24 February, he suggested to MUBC that the Club attempt to secure a site on the banks of the Yarra for a proper clubhouse. The use of Fuller's Shed no longer served the purposes of the Club. Sydney Smith and Ogg were engaged to design a suitable shed.

At a meeting held on 16 November 1905, there was discussion of the design for the 'Honour Pocket'. The design of the figure of Victory was submitted. Members were 'not greatly impressed with the beauty of same but thought it would be a pity to abandon her'. It was therefore resolved to respectfully urge the Sports Union not to discard the present coat of arms in favour of a monogram on the pockets of the honour blazers.³

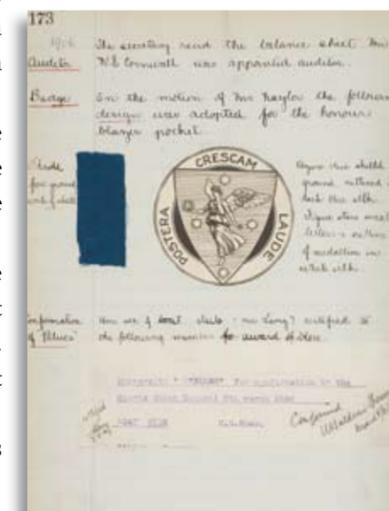
The ball held in conjunction with the cricket club was revived and made £120. This and Henley-on-Yarra were major events in Melbourne's social calendar.

Mixing it with the rest of Victoria

1905 showed a 'gratifying increased interest in regatta rowing among club members.'⁴ A MUBC maiden eight and four participated at Henley-on-Yarra, coming second to



1905 Medical crew, winners of the John Grice Shield by 2 feet from Engineers and Law: (standing left to right) HC Fulford (4), EL Elcoate (5), JW Dunhill (3), J Love (2) (seated left to right) SJ Campbell (6), EP Oldham (7), RNS Good (stroke), J Ward (cox) and JH Anderson (bow)



Design for the honour blazer pocket submitted by the Club to the Sports Union Council for confirmation in 1906
Sports Union Minute Book
University of Melbourne Archives

1905 MUBC intervarsity eight (Port Adelaide): (standing left to right) A Chamley (coach), HJ Whiting (stroke), (seated middle) DW McKellar (4), H Mayo (5), SJ Campbell (6), (seated bottom) KS Cross (cox), JW Dunhill (3), JAH Sherwin (bow), ET Guinness (2), WH Waters (7)



Mercantile in the eights. As well, MUBC had crews in the VRA Regatta, coming second in the maiden eight to Albert Park Rowing Club, and in the Nagambie, Ballarat and Barwon Regattas.⁵ There was an increased visibility and vitality in the Club that was reflected in the popularity of the Boat and Cricket Ball at the St Kilda Town Hall on 27 April 1906, bringing a profit of more than £55 to the Boat Club. One hundred and ninety college members, thirty-nine life members and twenty-five ordinary members attended the 1905 annual meeting,⁶ a considerable number considering the student population of the University was 785.

According to the 1905–6 annual report, the Club came third at the 10 June 1905 intervarsity at Port Adelaide in South Australia. The somewhat disgruntled explanation in the report was that the intervarsity race was ‘a disappointing one as the Melbourne crew, owing to bad advice from a Port Adelaide man, kept to the shallows where the water was dead and the incoming tide of little use to them’.

The Club v the Colleges

Following the uneasy truce in 1889, the annual meeting in 1890 passed amendments to the Club’s rules providing for the Club to be composed of four sections, namely Extra Collegiates, and Trinity, Ormond and Queen’s Colleges. Each section was entitled to appoint representatives to the Club’s committee. Things seemed to settle down for a while, and in the late nineties agreement was reached for payment of a lump sum to the Club by each college, entitling all college residents to enjoy Club privileges.

Quite suddenly, however, a bitter dispute erupted in 1905 over college men voting at the annual meeting, which was allegedly ‘stacked’ to ensure that one particular college’s candidate was nominated as Captain. A special meeting was requisitioned to overturn the Chairman’s original ruling, which had allowed the voting at the annual meeting to go ahead. Proposals were then put forward tying college representative’s votes to the amount of subscriptions paid by the colleges. This in turn provoked a spate of disagreements until a compromise was eventually reached at the 1906 annual meeting.

John Lang, very unusually for him, devoted over five pages in the Club’s records to a discussion of this affair and described it as ‘a dispute that threatened to split the Club up entirely over the question of college voting power at a meeting where a college split had occurred over nomination for the captaincy of the club.’⁷

Consolidation

The 1906 annual meeting was attended by 150 members. It was at this meeting that one of the Club’s best and most successful coaches, Charles Donald, was formally appointed.⁸ Donald rowed for Victoria in intercolonial and (post Federation) interstate championships from 1894 to 1908 and coached the same in 1909 and 1910. He and T Crosthwaite coached the winning MUBC crew at the 1904 intervarsity race on the Lower Yarra.

The Club also won the 1906 intervarsity race in Sydney. The Melbourne crew ‘had the privilege of staying at the Sydney Rowing Club Branch Shed at Abbotsford, a very comfortable place indeed ...’⁹



1906 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Parramatta River): JW Dunhill (bow), VR Bradbury (2), SJ Campbell (3), CG Shaw (4), WH Waters (5), M Hurry (6), RJ Lewis (7), HJ Whiting (stroke), J Ward (cox), inset, Charles Donald (coach) and the Oxford and Cambridge Cup