

Telstra Press Releases



2355/28 December 1998 Telstra Media Release

Helicopters tonight rescued six members of the crew of the missing yacht Winston Churchill, but three are still missing as the 54th Sydney to Hobart enters its fourth day of drama in the Tasman Sea.

The rescue has culminated the biggest ocean rescue operation in Australian yachting history, with Navy, police and other helicopters lifting 40 people from liferafts after they had abandoned their yachts.

A further six crew were taken on board a fishing vessel yesterday leaving six yachts either sinking or disabled by the violent storm which has decimated the fleet, with only 48 of the original fleet of 115 boats still racing to Hobart.

Still leading the fleet is the US maxi Sayonara, which just before midnight was 25 nautical miles north of Tasman Island, from where the fleet sails its final 40 miles across Storm Bay and up the Derwent River to Hobart, capital of the island State of Tasmania.

Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania officials now do not expect Sayonara to finish before 9am tomorrow, again losing her grip on the race record over the final 100 miles of the 630 nautical mile race.

In a day of drama and sadness among sailors:

- Owner/skipper Bruce Guy and his friend and crew Phil Skeggs died aboard Guy's Farr 40, Business Post Naiad after it was rolled twice in the huge seas. Guy is reported to have suffered a fatal heart attack, Skeggs drowned after being unable to detach his safety line as the boat rolled a second time.
- The search continued unsuccessfully for British yachtsman Glyn Charles who was washed overboard on Sunday night from the 43-footer Sword of Orion. Charles represented Great Britain as skipper of the Star class yacht at the Atlanta Olympics and sailed four times in the Admiral's Cup.
- Four crew members of the veteran timber cutter Winston Churchill, including owner/skipper Richard Winning where winched to safety early this evening from their liferaft, nearly 24 hours after abandoning the sinking yacht some 65 miles east of Gabo Island.
- Late this evening two more members of the crew of Winston Churchill were lifted to safety by a Navy helicopter launched from the frigate HMAS Newcastle after the second liferaft had been sighted by an RAAF Orion during a flare search.
- However, three of the crew are still missing, apparently after being washed out of the liferaft soon after daybreak. Helicopters are continuing the search tonight as all three were wearing lifejackets and one had a strobe light attached.

The crew of Winston Churchill rescued from the first liferaft are: Paul Lumpton, skipper Richard Winning, Michael Rynon and Bruce Gould. From the second life raft John "Steamer" Stanley and John Gibson were rescued tonight.

However, they told their rescuers that three other crew members - Jim Lawler, Mike Bannister and John Dean - had been washed out of the liferaft early today and were missing.

The search and rescue operation is continuing through tonight as all three men were wearing lifejackets and one had a personal strobe light.

"However, it is a much more difficult operation - we are looking for people not a vessel, " a spokesman for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority said tonight.

Generally wind and sea conditions are easing overnight, although smaller yachts in the fleet are still encountering rough seas and fresh winds in Bass Strait.

For further information please contact:
Telstra Sydney to Hobart Media Centre
Ph: (03) 6231 1460
Fax: (03) 6234 1172

For information on rescues, please contact AMSA on 0418 164 901.

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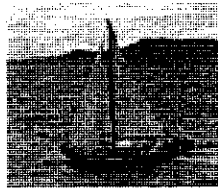


PROFILE

Telstra Sydney to Hobart

Winston Churchill

Sail No.: 27
LOA: 15.000m
Designer: Percy Coverdale
Club: CYC
Year Built: 42



Current Position

Position: Retired
Location: Retired
Dist Made Good
Est. Finish
Sked 4. 28 December 1998 3:05AM

Boat Notes

Built in Hobart in 1942 by the late Percy Coverdale, Winston Churchill competed in the first Sydney to Hobart in 1945 and as raced in the event 16 times since. Present owner Richard Winning undertook a major restoration of the old cutter last year and sailed her to Hobart again last year to bring up her 17th race and has decided to go again this year. Britain's wartime Prime Minister gave the thumbs up to having the yacht called after him.

Crew Listing

Bruce Gould
John Dean
John Stanley
DECEASED - Mike Bannister
Richard Winning
Jim Lawler DECEASED
John Gibson
Michael Ryan
Paul Lumtin

Associated Articles / Photos

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27/12/98 One sailor saved while search continues for another in man overboard incidents
27/12/98 Second Rescue Underway

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Did You Know?

The Margaret Rintoul II and Mark Twain share the honour of having raced in the most Sydney to Hobarts, this is their 21st.

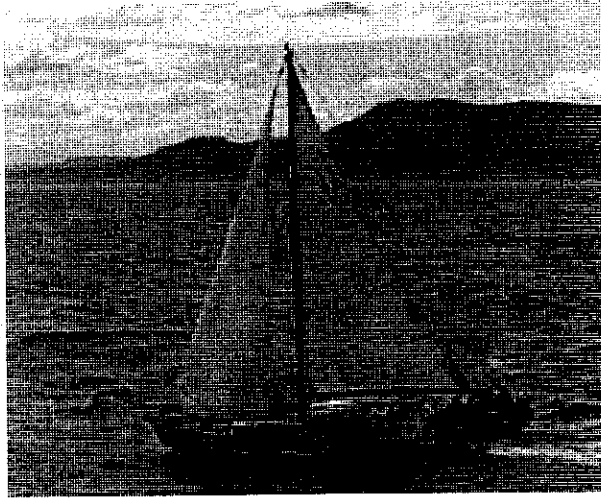
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GALLERY

Telstra Sydney to Hobart

Winston Churchill



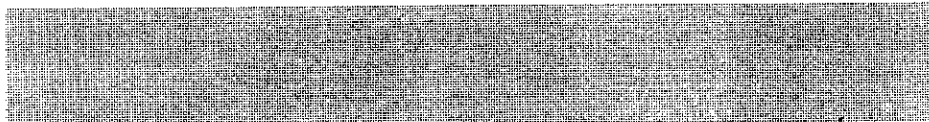
Winston Churchill

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Did You Know?

Koomooloo was once called the 'floating grand piano of Sydney Harbour' because of the 30 coats of varnish the previous owner use to keep regularly applied.

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