

Centennial Celebrations

ROYAL PAPUA YACHT CLUB

LIFE MEMBERS

IRENE WARDLEY



Irene Wardley was born in Stockport, England, during World War Two. As an only child, she loved to read adventure stories, her favorite being Coral Island, perhaps a foretelling of her future life, on the other side of the world.

Adventures with her own family were conducted closer to home; caravanning, holidays on The Isle of Mann staying at Mrs. Smythe's Boarding House and fossicking on the beach at Blackpool. At school she enjoyed netball, tennis, and swimming (she still has her 17-yard swimming certificate carefully stored away) and was captain of the netball team (a fact her daughters never knew until reading this profile).

Irene met her husband, David at the Stockport Reference Library, where she was studying for her A levels. Her first reported sailing effort was on their honeymoon in the Norfolk Broads. Leaving work as a journalist at the Stockport Express newspaper, in 1972 Irene and David, with their first two daughters in tow began their journey across the world, with stints in Hong Kong and Sydney, before settling in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

The family arriving in Rabaul in September 1979 with three daughters, very soon to be four, as the youngest was born at Vunapope Mission Hospital in Kokopo in December of that year. The family were warmly welcomed and quickly embraced the tropical island lifestyle, buying a small fishing boat and becoming entrenched members of the Rabaul Yacht Club and Game Fishing Club. Irene busied herself stitching brownie uniforms and ballet costumes became Brown Owl for the local Brownie organization and taught Learn to Swim classes at the Rabaul Pool. Once the youngest children were out of nappies (and the eldest two dispatched to boarding school Down South), she joined the team at Touche Ross to look after the Corporate Registers. Irene was an active member of the Rabaul Hash House Harriettes and stunned herself and family members by competing in and finishing the Kokopoto Rabaul Marathon one year. The entire family became entrenched members of the Rabaul Yacht Club and Game Fishing Club. Some sailed, others fished, and broke records left, right and centre. The youngest two, Tiffany and Liz were rarely seen without a fishing rod or Johnny Lau lure in hand. Volcanoes and work demands saw the family packing their bilums and relocating to Port Moresby in 1989, and there Irene began her association with the RPYC. At first Irene was involved with the Moresby Game Fishing Club as the family fishing boats were upsized, she eventually became Treasurer and spent many a Friday for years counting the joker receipts, as the two clubs worked together to fund raise for the new club house and marina.

Irene was later elected to the RPYC Committee and served as Honorary Secretary during the building of the new marina and yacht club and was involved in the early development of the club we have today. The Wardley family were marina residents on their much-loved boat, MV Tusitala, and were among the first members to support the long-term lease project and the first boat to berth in the new marina facility. The entire family lived and breathed the RPYC with both Irene and David on the committee and FAB respectively; their eldest daughter Tamzin, back from overseas studies and now the Hobie Fleet Commodore and Captain Sail; 2nd daughter Nicola employed as the Club Administration Manager (operating from a hut before the new clubhouse was built) and 3rd and 4th daughters Tiffany and Lizzie out on the water every day after school, fishing, and sailing. Irene was part of the committee that changed the Club forever, shaking it out of its dormant state and sharing the vision to raise funds, take on bank debt and build the club house and marina we have today. This vision was not shared by all the members as many were scared that the project was too big, and the club would not survive.

For a few years things were quite heated, but the committee stood firm and delivered the facility we have today. In 2007 Irene retired with her husband David to the small coastal town of Toogoom, in the Wide Bay area of Queensland, where she has renewed her passion for orchid growing and takes early morning walks on the beach rather than the bund walls of the marina. She now volunteers at the local community hall and stitches quilts for children in hospitals around Queensland.

Irene was awarded Life Membership in 2008 for her hard work and commitment to the RPYC over her 18-year association with the club.

A sincere thankyou to Irene and to Tamzin and Nicola for assisting with this profile.

