



# Etchells Bill Steele Cup

5-8 February 2022

## Regatta Wrap-up

By Chris Pratt



Geographe Bay Race Week is one of Western Australia's premier yachting regattas and this year featured the racing of the inaugural Etchells Bill Steele Cup.

Once called the Opium Pipe Ashes Trophy, the Cup was originally raced for in teams racing in Etchells with representatives from the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, Royal Perth Yacht Club and Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club. After the death of Etchells Class legend Bill Steele the trophy was renamed the 'Bill Steele Cup' and the new event established to be held outside Perth. Hence Geographe Bay and joining Geographe Bay Race Week.



For the intrepid Etchells travellers from Perth, Geographe Bay and the venue turned out to be all that was promised, and more. Not only were the waters pristine and conditions varied, but the marina was first class and the restaurants and Club hospitality were great.

At the final presentation the fleet voted, and we're coming back next summer. There were still a number of crews back in Perth and they'll grow the fleet next year.

With a very steady performance in all conditions, Martin Webster and his crew Grant Alderson (Flying 15 World Champ), Chris Smith (match racing tactician) and Ella Clarke (420 World Champ) representing Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club won the Etchells Bill Steele Cup, and OMG they came out with all guns!

It wasn't long after arrival that we all realised that teams had brought their A-game of crews and equipment.

A feature of the racing was our course robots. The "MarkSetBots" are GPS guided self-propelled autonomous marks which are remotely controlled from an Ipad or Iphone. Many thanks to Mark Crier and Andy Feathers for making these available and a success. They enabled the event with minimal infrastructure and volunteers and without being a burden on the Club. Mark Crier did a great job organising the marina services too.

Kim Laurence (RO), Rob Rooke and Andy Feathers ran the races and we are very fortunate to have such great professionals who focus on making regattas about competitors and the competition. They were really challenged on day 2 when winds peaked out at 28kts but they picked a break in the weather and we got a race in. It was epic! Big gusts and we could have been foiling downwind!



The 'kids' up early and ready to race



Ray Smith (Azure bow) wanted to go play with the kids!

The upcoming Warren Jones 2022 Perth Youth Match Racing Cup regatta attracted a number of youth entrants too. Ethan Prieto-Low (Swan River Sailing Team) teamed with past WA Etchells State Champions Grantham Kitto and Brad Moore, Chris Smith with Martin Webster and then Marcello Torre, Kai Colman and Richard Maher (all from Columbus Match Racing Team) became the honorary Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club representative sailing Bill Steele's old Chelsea Lady thanks to its current owner, James Arnold in Hong Kong.

Organisers clearly had objectives around inclusiveness, achieving best racing conditions, youth development and having a great time in the process – all in International Etchells – and that's what we had.





Webster (L) versus Ahern (R) – from day one

Day 1 practice races in very light conditions had Azure winning both races and the jinx that comes with winning practice races!

Day 2 was in perfect Etchells conditions and a left bias course forebode the final podium places with Highlander, YO! and The Rat dominating.

Day 3 and the breeze was really in. Session 1 was abandoned and session 2 took us to the edge of our limits. Downwind with great waves and flying gybes were big highlights.

By finish we had gusts of 28 to 30 knots, but all boats except Chilly Bin (who broke their boom) finished without damage.

Since we only had one race, the tough then took to touring!

Day 4 and the points on the leader board were close. The weather changed completely to a light 5 to 8 knots. Three races only and the first four boats found their drop races. Forte had their best scores. Azure won the day but not by enough, and the standings remained the same with the drop races determining the outcome. The spoils and the glory went to the Highlander team, and well deserved.

Day 1 was also the opening at the Geographe Bay Yacht Club, then off to the 'Great Wall Chinese Restaurant' to honour Bill Steele and to tell the story to competitors and supporters.

After day 2's championship races we were off to sponsors 'Shelter Brewing Company' at the foot of Busselton Jetty. The chilly mussels were outstanding and so were all their beers.

Day 3, with the racing blown out, we were off touring - Cape Leewin Lighthouse, Windmills, Castle Rock and ending up at Eagle Bay Brewing Co down near Dunsborough for more excellent food and beer.

Things happen when sailors go travelling!

Day 4 racing, presentation then the road trip – a chance for that junk food you don't get at home.

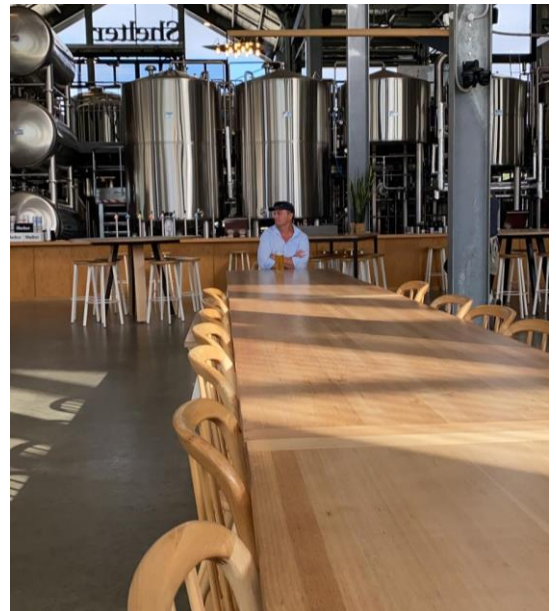
## NEXT - BACK TO THE BAY IN 2023



Great Wall Chinese Restaurant and the telling of the story. Yes, all these mature people did 'dress up'. Andy Feathers won the best dressed up prize. He's always been a fashionista.



Columbus Match Racing Team – 3<sup>rd</sup> in the last race. It must have been Bill's wine glass VMG and Bill sending us a message that he can still take us all on!



Grantham Kitto on post-race forward recon' making sure we got the table at Shelter Brewery. Commitment paid off – rent a crowd arrived.







Deserving WINNERS  
L-R Chris Smith, Martin Webster,  
Grant Alderson and Ella Clarke



Team Sketchy - L-R Dave Riddle, Harry Coulsen, Alex Babel  
Regatta legends. Their boat was immaculate. Something in their choice  
of hats and sunscreen said 'attention to detail' was a team effort.



The marina guys simply 'made it all happen'

## Final Results

Name & No.	Skipper & Crew		Club	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	Total	Drop	Final	PLACE
Highlander AUS 1440	Martin Webster	Chris Smith Grant Alderson Ella Clarke	RFBYC	2	2	1	2	7	6	2	-	22	7	15	1
YO! AUS 1422	Peter Ahern	Gordon Blaauw Nick Gray	RFBYC	3	1	3	1	5	3	6	-	22	6	16	2
The Rat AUS 1462	Grantham Kitto	Blair Spalding Ethan Prieto-Low Brad Moore	RPYC	1	4	2	5	3	2	5	-	22	5	17	3
Forte AUS 1433	Mark Crier	Andrew (Hips) Harry Robby Gibbs	RPYC	4	3	4	4	1	4	4	-	24	4	20	4
Azure AUS 1400	Chris Pratt	Peter Hood Ray Smith	RPYC	5	5	7	3	2	5	1	-	28	7	21	5
Chilly Bin AUS 1320	Dirk Van der Struyf	Luke Paterson Travis Keay	RFBYC	6	6	6	DNF	4	1	7	-	39	9	30	6
Chelsea Lady AUS 1267	Marcello Torre	Kai Colman Richard Maher	RHKYC	7	7	5	6	6	7	3	-	41	7	34	7
Sketchy AUS 1359	Harry Coulson	Dave Riddle Alex Babel	RFBYC	8	8	8	7	8	8	8	-	55	8	47	8



The Rat Pack plus support team



Rob Rooke – this makes great  
race management





Andy Feathers had to beat some strong contenders



Out to show they could find the best angles



When the going gets tough, the tough go ... touring!

Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse is at the tip of at the most south-westerly point of Australia, where the Southern and Indian Oceans meet  
Built from local limestone in 1895 it is still a vital working lighthouse.



**MARKSETBOT**  
There's a better way.



**Shelter** Brewing Co.  
*Cape Cellars*  
**Yacht Grot**

