

Hegarty's ferry service reaches the last wharf

Emerald Star at No.6 wharf Circular Quay. She started on the run in 1942. Compare with Estelle Star photo – 60 years apart, to the month!

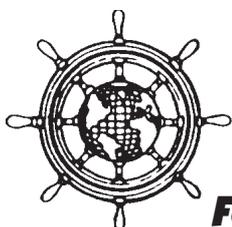
On Tuesday 7 January the Lavender Bay and North Shore ferry service of the Hegarty Ferry Co made its last run. This small ferry company, which has operated on the Lavender Bay and nearby wharves since about 1932 is the last scheduled ferry run on Port Jackson using small timber ferries.

With its demise there will be few traces left of the traditional-style Sydney Harbour so well known for so long.

During the last 100 or more years Sydney's ferries evolved into two distinct types. The larger and more numerous were the double-ended type — used to Manly and around the inner harbour. These became an 'icon' of Port Jackson in the same way as did similar vessels in Hong Kong. Working along rivers and on the smaller ferry routes



Estelle Star was the company's biggest ferry. She is shown at No.6 wharf Circular Quay on November 8, 1938.



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Eagle Star is under completion in the Hegarty's front yard on the starboard bow.

were single-ended craft, originally steam powered but from the early 1900s using internal combustion engines.

Following the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 Sydney Ferries Ltd was indecisive as to which of its many routes would remain viable. Senior company staff quickly closed down routes such as those of the vehicular ferries but made some early decisions they were to regret. With just two days notice Sydney Ferries withdrew from its long-running passenger ferry service to Lavender Bay. SS *Karaga* took the last call early in October 1932.

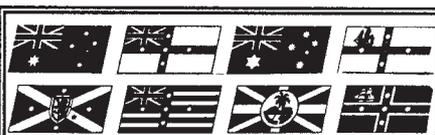
Captain Norman Downard Hegarty had been running small motor ferries from Erskine St, Sydney along Johnstone and White Bays, in addition to a service to Beulah St and sundry charter services. He quickly stepped into the Lavender Bay run and extended it to take in McMahons Pt. He ordered the completion of new and bigger motor ferries and the local people soon professed themselves happy with their new service.

Hegarty had worked in southern New South Wales and in Victoria. By the late 1920s his small fleet included *Ettalong*, *Evelyn* (built in Woy Woy in 1922) and *Mt Pleasant*. The big *Estelle* came along in 1927 and she and the *Ettalong* provided Hegarty's initial Lavender Bay ferry service.

The Hegarty family lived at 32 St George Crescent, Drummoyne where they had a slipway in the back yard. On

this slipway Hegarty's 1936-built *Eagle* was completed, as was the 1942-built *Emerald*, still running on the service.

Prior to the outbreak of WWII Hegarty bought a large steam ferry from Gippsland for use on Port Jackson as a showboat. The large 1909 double-decker *Gippsland* was not suitable for Port Jackson and was soon resold to



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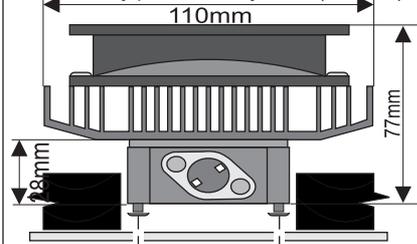
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Hegarty's Ettalong Star is still in use. She is the Wangi Queen, based near Toronto on Lake Macquarie.



Capt N.D. Hegarty with wife Evelyn and daughter Estelle(right) at home.

Brisbane for use as a showboat.

The Hegartys persevered with smallish motor ferries. Prior to WWII the company operated *Evelyn*, *Estelle*, *Kurnell*, *Ettalong*, *Aster* and *Mt Pleasant*. With this fleet Hegarty serviced Lavender Bay, Jeffrey St and Beulah St.

The conversion of the Harbour Bridge construction site into Luna Park and the Olympic Pool created new business opportunities for the Hegarty ferries. This was also noticed by Sydney Ferries Ltd which announced a willingness to come back to the run. SFL's submission to the North Sydney Council was hotly debated with more than 2000 people signing a petition asking the council to support those who

had supported them.

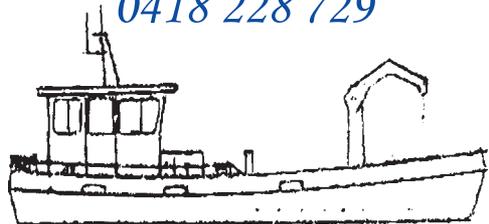
SFL graciously withdrew, stating a newfound unwillingness "... to crush the little man."

During the War *Emerald* was completed and *Evelyn* and *Kurnell* worked on the Cockatoo Is Workers service. Estelle and Evelyn Hegarty looked after the city wharf and did turnstile duties. With petrol rationing fewer people travelled on the Bridge and the Hegarty ferries carried full loads in addition to carrying service personnel as required.

Most of the company ferries carried female names but

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The Hegarty fleet, shown in this pre-WWII advertisement.



Lavender Bay in 1968 with Evelyn Star heading for McMahons Pt.



Eagle Star introduced the streamlined look to Sydney Harbour. Her hull exists on Westernport Bay, Victoria.

the arrival of a son was celebrated by the addition of the word 'Star' to the names of the ferries.

In 1949 Captain Hegarty sold his ferry company to Mr and Mrs A.C. Barber and Miss Jean Porter. Barber and Porter sold the company to John Needham in 1960. J.C. Needham was the manager of the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. He re-sold the company to Stannards in February 1978 and they, in turn, re-sold in November 1987, to Captain Cook Cruises.

Captain Cook Cruises had been working from Wharf 7, Circular Quay and, with an increasing fleet of ever-larger vessels, needed the other side of the wharf, Number 6. As the Hegarty company had the lease of the wharf, it was necessary to fit the small commuter ferries in with the very different needs of the cruise trade. While the lease operated Captain Cook Cruises had to maintain the small passenger ferries' service.

More recently Sydney's authorities, having created a new tourist boat facility in Darling Harbour, have been trying to reduce the vessel chaos of Sydney Cove. This, of course, had come about by the retirement of Sydney's double-

ended ferries – which did not have to turn around, by very beamy low capacity catamarans which have to turn 180 degrees before departing the Quay.

The Sydney Harbour Trust, about 1900, created ferry and tourist wharves on the eastern side of Bennelong Point, thus allowing only scheduled ferry services in Sydney Cove. It is said that history repeats itself because people take little interest in history!

When Hegarty's wooden ferries cease running, it is likely that the government ferries will take over some part of the runs. Whether Port Jackson will be the better for the move remains to be seen. With their departure all Sydney's ferry services will be run by catamarans whose operators do not always bother to give them visible names. The congestion of moorings in Lavender Bay may make it difficult for catamarans to make passage. Time will tell. ↓

Historic notes: Since WWII scheduled ferry services using small, single-ended ferries have been run by Stannards, Nicholsons and Rosmans. Stannards and Rosmans still work such craft in the tourist trade.

N.D. Hegarty was born in 1876 and died at Cowes, Victoria in 1950.

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