

GREG KNOWLER reports on the Southern Hemisphere's largest yacht club



The largest yacht club in the Southern Hemisphere. Inset: The clubhouse on stilts back in 1930

# PYC 100 years old this year

**T**HE POINT Yacht Club in Durban celebrates its centenary this year.

The club's official birthday is on May 14 and a programme of special centenary events has been organised for the year.

Founded in 1892, the club's first premises were in Hospital Road on the lower side of Point Road.

Shortly after that a wood and iron clubhouse was built on a site between the T Jetty and the Victoria Embankment, and here it stayed until shortly after the start of World War I. The Government decided to fence in what it considered to be part of the harbour area and the club was forced to sell the building and furniture by auction for £1 500. For the next few years the future of

PYC hung in the balance with one school of thought suggesting the funds be donated to the Royal Natal Yacht Club.

However, the older members of PYC felt this would destroy the club's identity.

One problem which has plagued PYC over the years is their inability to acquire a lease on the land occupied by the club.

A series of "site-hopping" ensued until the absorption of the fledgling Durban Yacht Club which, although it never had the funds PYC possessed, did have premises in the Herby Spradbrow boatyard.

The present Victoria Embankment clubhouse was opened on August 3,

1935.

In 1940, there were only 336 members and 51 boats but these figures grew rapidly to the present 3 400 members, making PYC the largest yacht club in the Southern Hemisphere.

So influential was PYC in those early days that if someone wanted to run for city councillor of Point they would have had little chance of success without being a member of the club.

And what about the club's future?

Commodore Don Shaw said PYC was running profitably and doing well in spite of the economy's downward turn.

"We will be faced with many challenges over the next few years with our immediate concern being the need to adapt to the changing political scenar-

io," he said.

"One thing we are doing is trying to encourage blacks to sail and will start this at school level."

Something which has hamstrung PYC in the club refurbishing department is the proposed Victoria Embankment development.

Mr Shaw said there were plans to develop the club, subject to members' approval, which would fit in with the concept of tidying up the whole area.

PYC has produced numerous Springbok sailors and the club will also be hosting the Barcelona Olympic trials.

A gala dinner will be held on Wednesday, May 14, at the City Hall to celebrate the club's 100th birthday.