

THE CLASSICS

By David Orton, Secretary of the BCYC



"Yachting in the Solent, with Cowes at its centre, has a long, glorious and well documented history, so racing there held a special fascination for us aboard Mariquita, and for the other visiting classics. The regatta, organised by the BCYC, exceeded our expectations and provided a 'Best of British' week, even down to the glorious weather. The competition was exciting, with some great course choices, and the evenings were sociable and well organised. We all enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere of the event and came away impressed by a sense of understated, very English, style. We'll be back again!"

Jim Thom, Skipper of Mariquita



At the end of the America's Cup Jubilee Regatta in Cowes, two classic yacht owners sat aboard one of their boats and discussed what a fine time they had had, and why it was that such events seemed to be well liked, but had never generated an annual Classic Week. They reasoned that the prime problem was that there was no continuing organisation in the UK behind which the owners of classic boats could cohere. Warming to their theme, they envisaged a sailing club, specifically for the owners of the beautiful classics, which would give them a voice, advice, camaraderie and regattas to race in. Thus the British Classic Yacht Club was founded. One of the skippers was Tim Blackman, who became the first Commodore, and the other was David Murrin, who became the Club's second Commodore at the end of last year when Tim





has been lost from many other events.

An interesting consequence of the event has been that each year the owners have looked at the best kept, most beautifully varnished examples and over the next winter laboured to reach similar standards. Thus the standard of the boats has risen. Visitors have been impressed by the boats they have seen, and some of them have gone away to scour the graveyard end of the boatyards for classics to resurrect.

This has been beneficial to boatyards that preserved the wooden boatbuilding skills, and encouraged new entrants to the industry to acquire those skills. It is particularly pleasing that many owners boatyards that specialise in wooden boats have become members or associate members of the Club.

PRESERVED

Many of the boats that have been preserved, and which come to the regatta, come from the great British Racing tradition. Boats such as Clarion of Wight, Drumbeat, Morning Cloud II (now Opposition), Yeoman XIV (now A Day at the Races), and Sceptre, the British entrant for the America's Cup in 1958.

The BCYC has also been pleased to welcome boats from France, Belgium and Germany, including Stiren, the winner of the 2008 Transat Classique, which is returning to Cowes again this year. Tim Blackman, the founding Commodore, always had the hope that some of the big boats sailing in the Mediterranean CIM circuit could be attracted to sail in the BCYC Cowes Classic Week. Tim went to the Mediterranean regattas for several, successive years, made friends with the owners and skippers and seeded the idea of those boats coming to Cowes. In 2008 this work came to fruition, assisted by the attendance of many of these boats at the Fife

decided that his yacht *Infanta* would be one of the three BCYC yachts to sail in the Transat Classique. That race left Douarnenez for St Barts, via Agadir, last autumn.

BRITISH

In 2002, the first British Classic Yacht Club Cowes Regatta was held, and enjoyed by all those who took part. From the beginning the racing was competitive and taken seriously, but a combination of protective feelings towards their boats, and the camaraderie between owners and crews produced racing which was not overly aggressive. This style of racing, together with a liking for congenial parties, has characterised the BCYC Cowes week ever since. Feedback consistently shows that participants in the BCYC Regatta particularly enjoy the conviviality of this style of racing which they feel



Photography by Chris Boynton

Regatta in Scotland. Mariette, Mariquita, The Lady Anne, and Tuiga came to Cowes and competed in Class Zero. The huge Adix came and acted as mother ship to The Lady Anne. The impressive sight of Adix dominated the view of Cowes Roads for the week.

In a dreadful summer we were all very fortunate that the weather for the 2008 Regatta was excellent: bright sunshine and plenty of wind. The Monday race round the Island was especially memorable. The race officers had deliberately started Class Zero later than the main fleet and the big boats passed on the fetch between Bembridge and St Catherine's in crystal clear sunshine and force three to four.

The visitors from the Mediterranean accepted the weather with pleasure. They

favourably contrasted the interest of the sailing, tides, and actual winds to contend with against their usual experience in the Mediterranean. They also particularly enjoyed the geography of the area, especially the south side of the island.

The week was won by Tuiga, the flagship of the Yacht Club de Monaco, winning the Ryde Coronation Town Cup, which had



been kindly brought out of retirement by the Royal Thames Yacht Club for the purpose. All the visitors declared they had had a very good time and wanted to return (see the comment above from Jim Thom, Skipper of Mariquita).

The Class Zero boats are invited to return to the BCYC Cowes Regatta in 2010, when it will follow the Westward Cup, and again in 2012, when the BCYC plan to run a Classic Week to celebrate the Olympics.

This year the BCYC have invited Spirit Yachts to compete, and have also invited for the first time yachts smaller than 30ft. In particular the Kim Holman Stellas have their 50th anniversary and it is hoped that a number will attend. The BCYC will be pleased to have the opportunity to help this very successful classic class celebrate their milestone.

A very large proportion of the boats that enter the regatta are members of the Club, but non members are very welcome.

A gathering of fifty or so beautiful classics boats in Cowes is a fine sight, and generates interest every year. The size of the regatta is very comfortable in that it is possible to know most of the entrants. It is also possible for all the crews to enjoy the excellent hospitality and atmosphere of one of the Cowes clubs.

Last year, and again this year there will be a parallel regatta for classic keelboats, and for Metre boats.

While this event is not an intrinsic part of the BCYC Cowes Classic Week, it is to be welcomed as a development for the wider classic movement. Certainly the BCYC are happy for others to add to the Cowes atmosphere during the week they have built up over the last seven years.

The message for prospective competitors for 2009 is, if you want handicap racing (under IRC) enter the BCYC Cowes Regatta, if you want class racing, enter the Metre and Keelboat Regatta.

METRE & CLASSIC KEELBOAT REGATTA - MEETING OF CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

On Friday, 24th April, the organising team for the Regatta from the Royal London Yacht Club met with Class Captains and representatives of classes attending the regatta in order that the event can meet the needs of competitors. It is in the Corinthian spirit that the event is evolving in a way that is totally participative and the level of enthusiasm and support is most gratifying.

Classes involved in the event so far include: Daring (for which the event is now a qualifying event for their annual series), Victory (who are celebrating their 75th Anniversary), 6mR, 8mR, Sunbeam, Bembridge Redwing, Bembridge One Design, X One Design and Tofinou 9.5 (in the spirit of tradition - a new class that sail in the Mediterranean classic events and have adopted this as their first major UK event). In addition, a handicap class is expected to include 22sq.m., Tumlare, IOD, West Solent Restricted Class (who are celebrating their 85th Anniversary), 30sq.m. - all racing classes that exist in limited numbers. It is now looking like there may be over 100 boats attending.

It was agreed that the formula of using multiple race tracks with committee boat starts provides clear water for each race in a relatively quiet Solent and by rotating the fleets between laid and fixed mark courses provides the variety that is part of a regatta ethos. One afternoon will be laid aside for a whole fleet race which provides an optional lay half-day for those that need it or a reserve day if necessary. The Notice of Race has now been posted on the web site and an on-line entry system will shortly be in place.

Looking to the future, it is anticipated that Cowes Classics Week will attract individual participants from classic one-design fleets all round the country and that it will provide a home for celebratory events as these classes reach key milestones in their life. Celebrations due in the next couple of years include: 100th of the X One Design, 75th of the Mylne One Design (based on the Mersey), 75th of the Loch Long (Aldeburgh & Clyde), 75th of the Sq.m. (German Rule) - the boats that became the Windfall Yachts and the 50th Anniversary of the first Cowes-Torquay Offshore Powerboat Race. The Royal London YC have offered their Royal Victoria Cup as an Anniversary Cup to be awarded to any fleet celebrating an anniversary in that year.

The Bartlett Cup - recently discovered in a London attic and awarded to the Metre classes

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The Cowes Classics Week Steering Group includes representative from the Royal Yacht Squadron, The Royal London YC and the Royal Corinthian (Cowes) YC.