

Champagne

& Rosebowls?

Well, not rosebowls, exactly, but ashtrays and other fine china for the winners at the 1998 Hermès Mumm Trophy regatta. The first weekend in June saw Cowes awash with Champagne and Classic Yachts. **Barbara Day** packed her foul weather gear, a little black dress and a notepad...

Six years ago two of the greatest French names came together to sponsor an event in which two of the world's most beautiful classic yachts raced for the honour of becoming the first winner of the Hermès Mumm Trophy Race. Eight years later, there are still two sponsors, but almost eight times as many yachts vying for this prestigious trophy.

The first Hermès Mumm Trophy Race, held in 1992 and organised by the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes, was raced for by two yachts. *Bloodhound*, formerly owned by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, was helmed to victory by Sir

Peter Blake against *Drumbeat*, once the property of Sir Max Aitken. By 1994, the word had spread, and the Royal Yacht Squadron welcomed six yachts to Cowes. *Bloodhound* once again stole the show, taking line honours and the Hermès Mumm Trophy for the second time. She returned in 1996 to race against five other yachts, and again walked away with the trophy firmly in her grasp. The challenge had been issued, albeit indirectly, someone had to beat *Bloodhound* in 1998!

Realising the potential of this event, the organising committee extended it to become a two day event with Class 1 for non gaff rigged yachts racing under CHS, and Class 2 for gaff rigged yachts. It was decided to include the event as one of the eight regattas in the International Classic Yacht Association's European Grand Prix '98 calendar. This faith was not ill placed; by mid May the record seventeen entries included *Moonbeam III*, *Solway Maid* and *Madrigal*, who would all be making the trip from the Mediterranean, and who would then go to Scotland for The Fife Regatta two weeks later. British based entries included yachts such as *Corrie*, Class 1 winner under handicap in 1996, and *Cetewayo*, who was second to *Corrie* that year. Interesting new entries included the two pre-1900 yachts, *Thalia*, built in 1889, and extensively restored, and *Rona*, built in 1895, and competitor in many tall ships races. Of the fourteen yachts who made the event, five of them were designed by William Fife, a good sign for the forthcoming Fife Regatta. The only disappointment was the last minute withdrawal of *Tuiga* who hit bad weather leaving Brittany, and felt it prudent to turn back.

The weekend was kicked off in style on the Friday evening with a party hosted by Ratsey and Laphorn Sailmakers at Northwood House. The juxtaposition of bangers and mash and Champagne Mumm added a piquant flavour to the evening, and it was an excellent opportunity for the crews to ease themselves into the weekend. Compliments must be extended to the wives, girlfriends and friends of R&L

who battled with refractory ovens and a shortage of cooking utensils to provide the substance for a fantastic party.

Despite the oceans of champagne consumed the night before, almost everyone turned up in time for the briefing at the Royal Yacht Squadron. Held in typical Squadron style - no beating around the bush! - the only quibble was the race committee's suggestion that, in the absence of *Tuiga*, *Moonbeam* should be allowed to sail in Class I. This issue was duly resolved and the race committee dispatched all competitors with a warning that protests were more than welcome - provided the perpetrator would foot the bill for the champagne!

Sailing conditions on the morning of Saturday 6th June were not ideal. A light south easterly breeze, visibility of half a mile, and tide going against the direction of the start caused a few of the yachts to drift backwards and prompted Anthony Matusch, Race Officer for the Royal Yacht Squadron, to postpone the starts of the first race. Seconds after he had ordered the postponement, *Moonbeam*, who was rather on the late side, stuck her nose out from the marina. Rumour has it that the Race Officer was then heard to declare, 'Oh Lord, now everyone will think I delayed the start for *Moonbeam*!'. Despite the initial postponement, the Class 1 start was free of incident. *Solway Maid* was first off the starboard end of the line whilst *Bloodhound* powered through to leeward, no doubt due to the expertise of ex-America's Cup skipper Harold Cudmore and his hand picked crew. Marginal reaching conditions had most of the yachts wondering whether or not they could hold their spinnakers, but after *Bloodhound* had hoisted hers and taken the lead many of the others followed suit. *Bloodhound* maintained her lead throughout the race to take line honours, but came fifth under CHS Handicap, with *Hiltgund*, *Cetewayo* and *Pangur Ban* taking first, second and third.

Chloe May, winner of the Victor Laudorum at the 1996 Hermès Mumm Trophy race, led the gaff rigged Class 2 boats off the line. Despite her start, she



Corrie and *Hiltgund* under spinnaker racing past the Cowes green and the Royal Yacht Squadron



The magnificent, gaff-rigged, *Kelpie* revelling in typical Solent sailing conditions. She was flying in the second race when she hit Gurnard Ledge forcing her to retire with a damaged keel. *Bloodhound's* skipper, Cowes based Harold Cudmore, could have told them a tale or two about that ledge!

was no match for fifty two foot *Tigris*, who had come second in Class 2 in 1996, or for the beautiful *Kelpie* who sailed her way to a convincing and well deserved first. With *Tigris* in second place, *Chloe May* settled for a creditable third.

Saturday afternoon saw a marginal improvement in weather conditions, as the fog cleared and the wind settled, blowing about a force 3 from the West. *Bloodhound* again stormed off at speed, but it was becoming clear that *Hiltgund*, owned and skippered by Peter Wilson, more usually seen in his *Dragon*, was going remarkably fast for the conditions. Again *Bloodhound* took line honours, but had to concede to *Hiltgund* on CHS. *Hiltgund* again took first place with *Bloodhound* in second. *Cetewayo* took third, and *Corrie*, the lovely 1908 Fife designed sloop, owned and raced by the Robertson family, received her second fourth place. *Moonbeam*, sailing with the Class 1 yachts despite being gaff rigged, was putting in a creditable performance until the final leg. Her rig design, which has been modified since she was designed by William Fife in 1903, makes it difficult for her to head downwind, so whilst the other yachts were running along the shore under kite, *Moonbeam* was forced to do two very long gybes into the centre of the channel and back. This unfortunate manoeuvre cost her many minutes on corrected time.

Class 2's second race

definitely brought the excitement to the afternoon. *Tigris* and *Kelpie*, who had provided such an interesting battle in the morning were again battling neck and neck. The awesome sight of two such beautiful yachts passing within inches of each other commanded everyone's attention, and clearly had the same effect on the sailors themselves... So intent were the crews on the tactics of the race that they evidently forgot to pay attention to the navigation. *Kelpie*, holding off tacking for as long as possible, hit Gurnard Ledge at speed, coming to a complete halt. Not to be outdone, *Tigris* followed her inshore, and she also grounded briefly but was able to sail off. *Kelpie* was eventually hauled off the bottom by the press boat and, not surprisingly, retired to head back to the marina for emergency repairs. This was a great shame for *Kelpie* and her crew; not only is she a beautiful and elegant craft,

she was also very much in contention for the overall Class 2 prize. *Kelpie's* misfortune left *Tigris* free to coast into first place, with *Chloe May* in second.

The prizegiving for the first four races was held on Saturday evening on the lawn of the Royal Yacht Squadron, accompanied, of course, by 'refreshment' kindly provided by Champagne Mumm. At this stage, *Hiltgund* was leading under CHS with only two points, with *Cetewayo* on five, and *Bloodhound* on seven. They could not afford to relax, as *Corrie* and *Pangur Ban* were on eight each. *Solway Maid*, skippered by Paralympic Gold Medallist and local yachtsman Andy Cassell, was still in contention with twelve points. Class 2 was led by *Tigris* on three points, with *Chloe May* on five. Despite her unfortunate altercation with Gurnard Ledge, *Kelpie* was third with seven points. *Jenny Wren* and *Thalia* brought up the rear with twelve points apiece.

To keep the crews out of trouble, the Saturday prizegiving was followed by a blazer and tie buffet in the marquee on the lawn of the Royal Yacht Squadron. Unfortunately, some of the crew were doing their best to get into trouble; despite a surprisingly laid back squadron relaxing the dress code to allow team uniform, some were caught out by the continuing ban on jeans, and were left to their own devices in Cowes. The weather, which brightened during the afternoon, had clearly lulled us into a false



Blood Hound and *Cetewayo* were joint winners in Cowes under CHS handicap. *Bloodhound* retained The Hermès Mumm Trophy for her elapsed time victories and is still unbeaten in this event.



Madrigal sailing in the seas and winds for which she was designed. As the wind got up so did she.

sense of security. As the guests made their way towards dinner in the marquee, the heavens opened, making trips to the bathroom across the lawn more suitable to wellies and oilskins than high heels and short dresses. (*Worn by the crews, eh? - Ed*)

Sunday dawned bright but very, very breezy. Those who had bemoaned the light conditions the day before were probably eating their words in the face of an increasing force 5. With conditions so different from the previous day, it would be interesting to note how the performance of the different yachts varied in such changed conditions. The Class 1 boats, preparing for their third race, made an impressive spectacle. There is something about the grace and fluidity of a Classic that looks so right, and cannot be translated into modern fibreglass designs. With the start of the race, it soon became evident that the bigger boats with heavier keels had an advantage in the increased wind strength and choppier waves, particularly upwind. *Bloodhound* again powered her way to the front of the fleet, closely followed by *Moonbeam*. *Bloodhound's* decision to hoist the kite would surely have given her an advantage had she managed it properly. A slow hoist and a twist slowed her down, and while attention was diverted, *Moonbeam* slowly crept up from behind. *Bloodhound*, however, once she had straightened herself out, kept the distance between herself and *Moonbeam*, and in the end took line honours and first under handicap. The finishing positions were pretty much determined from the first mark, as the yachts bore off for the long downwind legs. *Hiltgund*, who had come fourth over the line in the first two races clearly found the breezy conditions harder to deal with. From the first mark, she was in seventh position, which was maintained for the duration of the race. On handicap, *Bloodhound* was followed over the finish by *Cetewayo* and *Hiltgund*. *Madrigal* and *Moonbeam* knotted up their best results to date with a fourth and a sixth respectively.

The results from Class 2's third race

remained in keeping with the results of the previous day. *Tigris*, fighting fit after a second and a first, clocked up another first, and so looked in excellent shape to win the class. A patched up *Kelpie*, happily back in the water, fought bravely but couldn't quite get past *Tigris*. *Chloe May* received a comfortable third, with *Jenny Wren* and the venerable *Thalia* in fourth and fifth respectively.

A steadily increasing breeze the last race an exciting prospect. The Class 1 start again saw the positions established fairly early on. *Moonbeam's* second over the line in the previous race was a one off, and she ambled around the course in the middle of the fleet. *Solway Maid*,

despite blowing an MPS, was close enough to *Bloodhound* and *Cetewayo* to be a worry, but in the end came third to *Bloodhound's* first and *Cetewayo's* second under CHS. *Madrigal*, evidently happier in stronger winds, sustained her much improved performance, and was awarded another fourth. After viewing the conditions as they started Class 1 the Race Committee in the Royal Yacht Squadron decided to abandon the race for the gaff rigged Class 2.

This probably came as welcome news to the 109 year old *Thalia*, whose owner restored her over a period of

five years in his garage, and who would like to add some more lead to her keel. *Jenny Wren* and *Chloe May*, also struggling slightly in the increased wind, were no doubt equally relieved to avoid injury.

The prizegiving on Sunday afternoon, held on the lawn of the Royal Yacht Squadron, and preceding the owner's dinner, saw *Bloodhound* again run off with the Hermès Mumm Trophy for Line Honours. She was first equal on points with *Cetewayo* in class 1, with *Hiltgund*, whose promise in light airs had not been fulfilled in the breeze, taking third. In Class 2, *Tigris* had won by a large margin, with *Chloe May* in second. *Kelpie's* crew were no doubt disappointed by the abandonment of the final race, as this



Thalia, 109 years of age and still nipping about the ocean like a youngster.

would have given her a chance to make amends by for her retiral. As it was, she came third. Other prizes awarded were to *Madrigal*, the Best Foreign Entry and to *Thalia*, the Oldest Yacht. Roger Sandiford makes every effort to keep *Solway Maid* as close to her original state as possible, and so as arguably one of the most 'classic' classics there, she thoroughly deserved the Prix d'Élégance.

That the event ran so smoothly is a credit to the Race Committee at the Royal Yacht Squadron. The decisive and authoritative manner displayed by the Rear Commodore, Anthony Matusch, at the briefing was a reflection of the general organisation. It was delightful to see such a historic and traditional establishment as the Squadron in unusually relaxed circumstances, and it was a privilege for all the competitors to have such extensive use of the grounds and clubhouse.

Thanks must also be extended to the sponsors, Hermès and Champagne Mumm, without whose continuing support the event would not be possible. We hope that the relationship between two of the greatest French names and the grandest form of yachting is one which will continue for a long time. Finally, Ratsey and Lapthorn Sailmakers must be thanked for their welcome supper which set the atmosphere for a wonderful and enjoyable weekend.



Winner
Bloodhound

CHS Class 1
1st = *Bloodhound & Cetewayo*
3rd *Hiltgund*

Class 2
1st *Tigris*
2nd *Chloe May*
3rd *Kelpie*

Prix d'Élégance
Solway Maid