



THE YACHTSMAN 1891-1939

THE ASSOCIATION OF YACHTING HISTORIANS PUBLICATIONS LTD WISHES GRATEFULLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE KIND SUPPORT OF ITS SPONSORS AND OF THE VARIOUS INTERESTED PARTIES, LISTED BELOW, WHO ENABLED THE SCANNING AND REPUBLISHING OF THE YACHTSMAN.

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Introduction

During the 1939-45 War the British Government needed to find some means of sourcing paper pulp to allow for the printing of newspapers and the provision of paper required to support the war effort. The usual supply from Scandinavia had been cut off by the German occupation of Norway and shipping from Canada now had to focus on ferrying food-stuffs and war supplies.

As a result, the Government introduced a number of drives to obtain paper salvage in order to try and make good the short fall. Eventually, companies, institutions (including libraries and yacht clubs), as well as private individuals were required to surrender, amongst other things, books and periodicals. This was backed up by criminal sanctions. The result was that a great many collections of yachting periodicals were pulped. Thus, today only a few yacht clubs hold even a partial run and very few public libraries hold anything approaching a complete collection of all the issues. Indeed, even the British Library was lacking some issues. So, tracing the full set of issues has proved to be a long and laborious exercise.

As part of its commitment to make scarce material relating to the history of yachting more readily available to researchers, the Association of Yachting Historians, with the active support of various individuals, libraries and yacht clubs, has undertaken to scan the entire series of *The Yachtsman* from its

inception in April 1891 to the end of 1939 (92 volumes). The total number of pages scanned is in excess of 38,000.

The exercise was further complicated by the fact that in the first 24 volumes the names of the various yachts were printed in italics, a type of print that is not readily searchable within a pdf. We are indeed fortunate that the British Library agreed to run the scans for those particular volumes through their specialised software in order to overcome that problem.

While some owners were happy for their volumes to be unbound in order to enable machine scanning, others could only give consent if their volumes were hand scanned. The result has been that the standard of the scans has not been uniform. There has also had to be a trade-off between the need to provide clear text and a slight loss of quality so far as the pictures are concerned.

History

Until its demise in 1887 *Hunt's Yachting Magazine* had been the journal dedicated to yachting. By the end of its run it had long been overtaken, as the yachting public's preferred "journal of record", by *The Field Magazine*.

However, *The Field* also covered all the sports that a country gentleman and the emergent middle class might be expected to take an interest in, so that the yachting content was, of necessity, compressed.

So, would there be an appetite for a new entrant into the market? The answer would prove to be a resounding "Yes!" What the proprietors of *The Yachtsman* had realised was that readers were hungry, in particular, to see photographs of the latest yachts in their magazine, something *The Field* could not provide at that time.

When it was first published *The Yachtsman* was the only magazine, anywhere in the world, that was wholly dedicated to the sport of yachting. Its weekly issues boasted yachting news and intelligence from yachting centres not only from around the British Isles, but also from Europe, North America, Australia and other parts of the world; detailed reports on yacht races; tips; correspondence; model yachting and canoeing, together with suitable advertisements. Later issues would also feature the development of the marine engine and motor boating generally, as well as the early advance of the seaplane. Above all, each issue featured whole page photographs of the finest yachts of the day, taken by the very best marine photographers. It soon became the new journal of record.

Photographers quickly realised that if their images were selected for publication, additional orders (and sales) would be received. (As time progressed and the cost of including photographs in the text became cheaper, so the use of photographs throughout each issue to illustrate the reports became standard).

When W. H. Smith, the well-known chain of newsagents, announced that they would only stock the magazine on the stalls at railway stations in exchange for a fee of £50, their offer was turned down. Instead the wily

Editor did the rounds of the London stations asking for a copy of *The Yachtsman*. Once it was stocked, he continued to make his rounds, buying up copies in order to “demonstrate” to W. H. Smith that there was indeed a demand for the journal!

What ensured its success was the advent, in 1893, of the finest fleet of First-Class racing cutters that had come into being: the Prince of Wales’ *Britannia*, *Valkyrie II*, *Calluna* and *Satanita* – all built that year to meet the American yacht *Navahoe*, which was coming over to challenge the British in their home waters. This news created enormous interest, well beyond the normal yachting circles. Huge crowds would turn out to watch the First-Class yachts racing each other and their events were avidly read about.

Such was *The Yachtsman*’s initial success that in 1894 *Yachting World* appeared on the scene, copying *The Yachtsman*’s winning formula.

In 1908 *The Yachtsman* could proudly claim on its front page “TO ADVERTISERS. – the sales of THE YACHTSMAN exceed those of all other yachting journals published in this country put together.”

The Yachtsman remains an invaluable source covering the era which has been called the Golden Age of Yachting. In the period from the 1890s to the start of World War I, with the spectacular large racing yachts, the emergence of many small one-design classes and the International Rule of 1907, an enduring foundation was laid down for the worldwide sport. In that period yachting enjoyed unprecedented and never equalled widespread popular interest. In addition, it carried detailed background reports on all the America’s Cup Challenges of the period, from experts in both Britain and the USA. All these wondrously beautiful creations and developments were carefully documented and illustrated in the pages of *The Yachtsman*.

Acknowledgements

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