

Wooden Boat

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The AMERICA's Cup Jubilee

by Nic Compton Photographs by Benjamin Mendlowitz

“We’d just tacked and brought in the yankee when we hit three big waves in a row: one, two, three, and bang! The mast came down,” says Matthew Barker, owner of the 64’ sloop THE BLUE PETER. “All those months of planning and 2,500 miles to get here—and it was all over in less than two hours!” The 1930 Alfred Mylne design, usually based in the south of France, was one of seven boats dismasted during the first day of the AMERICA’s Cup Jubilee in Cowes, England, last August. The regatta, hosted by the Royal Yacht Squadron, was several years in the planning, and attracted boats from all over the world—they raced in classes that included 12-Meters; J-class yachts and 23-Meters; vintage, classic, and tradition inspired boats; as well as modern Cup-class IACC boats, and contemporary racers.

With 30- to 35-knot winds sweeping through the Solent on that opening day, many yachts retired, dozens of sails were blown out, at least two crew fell overboard, and one sailor lost his thumb in a winching accident. It was a dramatic start to one of the most talked-about yacht regattas in recent history.

Apocryphal tales instantly sprang up around the

Sunday carnage—a sure sign that it would achieve legendary status by the end of the week, as the details were colored and woven into compelling stories at every pub in Cowes. The newly restored New York 40 MARILEE, one of 32 boats shipped across the Atlantic under the aegis of the New York Yacht Club, broke her boom jibing before the last mark but carried on to win second place in her class. An eight-sided, unfaired replacement was quickly made at the yard of famed sparmaker Harry Spencer, and MARILEE was racing again by the third day. Despite a collision with the heavy old Victorian cutter PARTRIDGE in the following race, she eventually won her class overall for the regatta. By then, Harry Spencer’s rough-hewn spar had been transmuted into a telephone pole, according to the local grapevine, and the crew of MARILEE were being heralded for their superhuman stoicism. It wouldn’t be long surely before a chanty was penned in their honour.

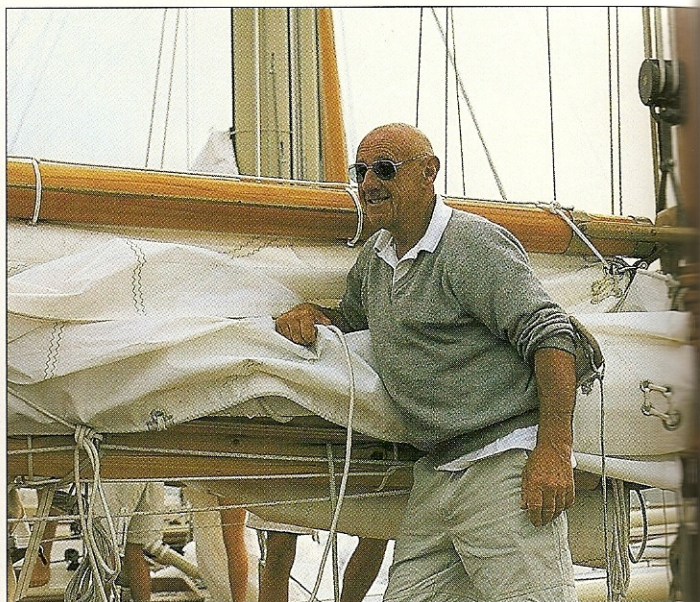
But not everyone was happy with this version of events. “It’s the crew’s fault MARILEE broke her boom,” grumbled one disgruntled English sailor. “Then the owners pay someone a lot of money to fix it and are declared



Celebrating history—and making it, too



Opposite— The L. F. Herreshoff ketch TICONDEROGA holds course as the steel-hulled N.G. Herreshoff schooner MARIETTE crosses her bow. **Above**—The New York 40 RUGOSA chases BELLE AVENTURE in the Vintage Division 1 class. Owned by Halsey Herreshoff, descendant of N. G., RUGOSA was one of two U.S.-based New York 40s at the Jubilee. Sister MARILEE was transported to England by ship; RUGOSA sailed to the event. **Left**—Two 12-Meters approach the Nab Light. ONAWA (nearest) was designed by Starling Burgess and built by Abeking & Rasmussen in 1928; she was restored for the Jubilee. The other, NORTHERN LIGHT (of Newport, Rhode Island), was designed by Sparkman & Stephens and built by Nevins in 1938.



When over 200 yachts race together there are bound to be some accidents. **Above, left**—HAVSOERNEN (with stub of mast) and THE BLUE PETER (no mast) were two of the seven boats dismantled on the first day of the regatta.

Above, right—But it meant good business for some; the famed sparmaker and rigger Harry Spencer was kept busy. "I'm 76, but still going up and down masts," he said cheerfully. "No good worrying, or you'll lose your hair!" **Right**—MARILEE was particularly unlucky, breaking her boom on the first day (Harry provided a temporary replacement) and colliding with PARTRIDGE four days later. She went on to win her division and come second overall in class.



heroes for winning the race. We cracked our bowsprit on our way here and had to rush out and buy some epoxy to fix it before the race started. But no one says we're heroes!" Every boat, it seemed, had a story to tell. Who could forget, for instance, the sight of half a dozen men working feverishly in a pool of light at two o'clock in the morning, while on the darkened street outside revelers stumbled toward the nearby nightclub? The workers were the French crew of the 1896 William Fife racer NAN, who had broken their topmast on the third day of racing and spent two nights making a new one at the historic yard of Clare Lallows. By the end of the week, the ACJ rumor factory was saying that NAN had replaced her topmast using a dismembered spar from one of the boats damaged earlier in the week. Nice story, with a lovely poetic logic, but not true. It was actually an old spar long since abandoned at Lallows' which they discovered and reclaimed.

But whether it was a chance to get on joking terms with

one of the great characters of U.K. yachting—Harry Spencer, who else?—or to work on the same soil that generations of Cowes shipwrights have trodden, the result was the same: a deeper contact with the bedrock of British, and indeed world, yachting. No such consolation for those on board the dismantled boats. The crew of the 16-Meter sloop HAVSOERNEN were in no mood for conversation even three days later, as they disentangled their splintered rig, broken just above the lower crosstrees. The Laurent Giles motorsailer BLUE LEOPARD, on the other hand, continued racing gamely throughout the rest of the week despite losing her mizzen, suggesting to some the advantages of a two-masted rig, though others insisted she looked better under her "jury" cutter rig. "Bet the mizzen crew had an easy time of it after the first day!" quipped another.

Upriver in East Cowes, where many of the smaller boats were moored, skipper Iain McAllister was out of sight and reportedly heartbroken after losing the top of SOLWAY



Above, left—Charles Nicholson’s famous Fastnet-winner, the 1936 BLOODHOUND, once owned by HRH Prince Philip, was sailed by New Zealand’s AMERICA’s Cup boss Sir Peter Blake during the Jubilee. *Above right*—The 1930 DORADE was the yacht that made Olin Stephens’s name, when he was just 21. The boat was recently restored at the Cantiere Navale dell’Argentario in Italy (see WB No. 160). *Left*—The 1925 Morgan Giles Eight-Meter SIRIS rounds a leeward mark. One of the few classic Eights based in the U.K., she was pristinely restored by Fairlie Restorations (see WB No. 157) in 1999.

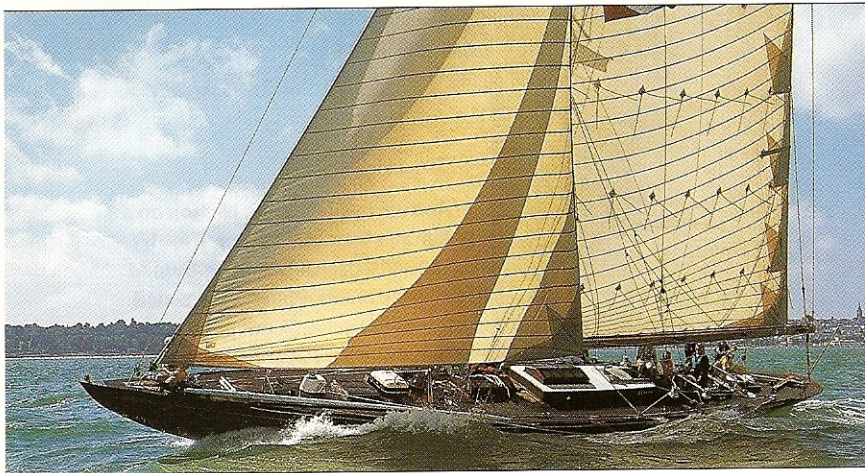
MAID’s mast in Sunday’s debacle. The 1940 William Fife sloop, the last yacht to be launched at the revered Scottish yard, was probably the most original Fife in existence—including, until then, her 61-year-old mast. Now a perfect length of spruce will have to be tracked down to make up the difference, but another small piece of history has been lost for good.

And that is what this regatta was all about: living history. It was almost tangible in the air around the main yacht basin where the thirty-seven 12-Meter boats were moored—the largest gathering of Twelves ever—including four AMERICA’s Cup winners. Their names were straight out of the history books: TRIVIA, NORTHERN LIGHT, FLICA II, NYALA, COLUMBIA, INTREPID, FREEDOM, KOOKABURRA III, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, and of course the infamous AUSTRALIA II. On the other side a smaller fleet of AMERICA’s Cup Class boats, the type designed specifically to race for the AMERICA’s Cup since 1992, made a dramatic contrast with old Twelves. But who

could not feel a thrill at seeing in real life such brutal racing machines as LUNA ROSSA, IL MORO DI VENEZIA, and AMERICA³—not a splinter of wood in sight, of course, but nevertheless an inextricable element of the ACJ story.

Alternatively, you could simply stand at the top of the pontoon and watch living history walk past you: Olin Stephens, Ted Hood, Dennis Conner, Sir Peter Blake, Ted Turner, Alan Bond, Russel Coutts, Ian Murray, and Patrizio Bertelli—they were all there. It must have been a particularly proud hour for Olin, with so many of his designs among the 12-Meter fleet and two of his boats, the newly restored STORMYWEATHER and ZWERVER, heading their respective classes in the vintage and classic divisions.

The entire team of the 1983 AUSTRALIA II challenge turned up too, looking a little wizened and gray at the edges, but still putting up a good fight. And if that wasn’t enough to pluck at the heartstrings, before every race the “boys” played their original theme tune, Men at Work’s evocative anthem “Down Under,” full blast from their



support boat—just as they had in 1983. It was enough to bring on a serious case of goose bumps.

Remarkably, AUSTRALIA II was extracted out of the mothballs of the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney specially for the event. But while the museum conceded to loaning the boat, they insisted that a replica rig be installed to make sure that no original bits were broken at Cowes. She must have been the only boat sailing at the race whose every part is catalogued as a museum artifact. Living history indeed.

And so on the 10th hour of the 22nd day, exactly 150 years after the schooner AMERICA came to Cowes and sparked off the longest running challenge in sporting history, 201 yachts gathered on the Solent to once again race around the Isle of Wight. But what would John Cox Stevens, commodore of the New York Yacht Club in 1851 and AMERICA's original owner, have made of this pandemonium? As the various classes started, with 10 minutes between them, hundreds of spectator boats milled about around the start line, at least eight helicopters roared overhead, a police boat screamed down the start area, siren wailing to keep spectators clear, and the water was white with the wakes of dozens of RIBs weaving in and out of the fleet. More impressive than the start of a Whitbread race? Of the Sydney-to-Hobart? Or even of a real AMERICA's Cup? "Hell, it was way worse than that!" said one seasoned commentator. "It was like a scene out of *Apocalypse Now!*" Inevitably the mighty J class attracted the most attention, with a swarm of

speedboats surrounding each one as they sliced majestically eastward, dipping their toerails into the incessant wash. It was an unforgettable sight, verging on the insane, and it seemed a minor miracle that nobody was crushed or killed with the sheer volume of boats careering around such a small stretch of water. The organizers must have been clutching their insurance contracts in sheer terror.

Particularly impressive on this race were some of the older Twelves such as NYALA, VANITY V, and FLICA II, which finished well in front of several much younger boats in the same class, including FREEDOM, ENTERPRISE, COLUMBIA, and KOOKABURRA. But then, as *The Times* commented back in 1851, "The course around the Isle of Wight is notoriously one of the most unfair to strangers that can be selected, and, indeed, does not appear a good race ground to anyone, inasmuch as the currents and tides render local knowledge of more value than swift sailing and nautical skill." In the end, though, it was the modern Frers sloop STEALTH which made the fastest circumnavigation, finishing in 4 hours, 48 minutes, and 9 seconds—less than half the 10 hours, 35 minutes clocked by AMERICA 150 years earlier. The slowest 2001 boat was the schooner VALDIVIA, which clocked 12 hours, 35 minutes.

Only the Nigel Irens–Ed Burnett pilot cutter type ELEANOR MARY managed exactly the same time as AMERICA—an achievement surely deserving of some prize in itself? My ride for the fourth day of racing was the Fife 23-Meter CAMBRIA, and I could hardly have landed a better boat or better day to go sailing on her.



Opposite page, top left—The 1939 William Fife 12-Meter FLICA II finished third among the classic 12-Meters. **Top right**—On board the 12-Meter ONAWA (see page 71). Crossing on port tack is ERNA SIGNE, Sweden's 1912 Olympic 12-Meter hopeful. She was restored by Walsted's in Thurø, Denmark. **Bottom left**—Another Fife 12-Meter, the 1926 ZINITA was restored for cruising in the Netherlands. **Bottom right**—It was the largest gathering of 12-Meters ever: some 37 attended from around the world. Here, VALIANT chases a fleet of more modern sisters during the last leg of the Round-the-Island Race. Her hopes would be dashed, as soon after this photo she grounded. **Above**—The Joel White-designed W-76s (see WB Nos. 144 and 150) are being campaigned for the whole Prada circuit this year, following the introduction of the Spirit of Tradition class. The racing circuit brings under one umbrella regattas from Porto Cervo to Saint-Tropez, passing through Monaco and Cannes.

Built in 1928 to challenge for the AMERICA'S Cup as a K class, she was thwarted when the Americans, controversially, changed the class from K to J. Rerigged to rate as a J, she never performed as well and dropped out of racing, being converted to cruising in 1933. After languishing for years in Australia, CAMBRIA was bought by her current owner, John David, in 1995 and given an extensive restoration under the supervision of AMERICA'S Cup veteran Ian Murray.

Purists will squeal at much of what was done then, including sheathing the hull in fiberglass, covering the deck with plywood and overlapping this with teak, and extending the mainmast with carbon fiber. But one crucial goal was achieved: the original structure was stabilized and preserved. As a result, most of the hull is still original, including most of the riveted iron frames; the original pine deck is still there under several protective layers of plywood, fiberglass, and teak; and most of the interior is unchanged. Even the original chromed bronze deck fittings were all carefully stowed away in boxes in the lazarette.

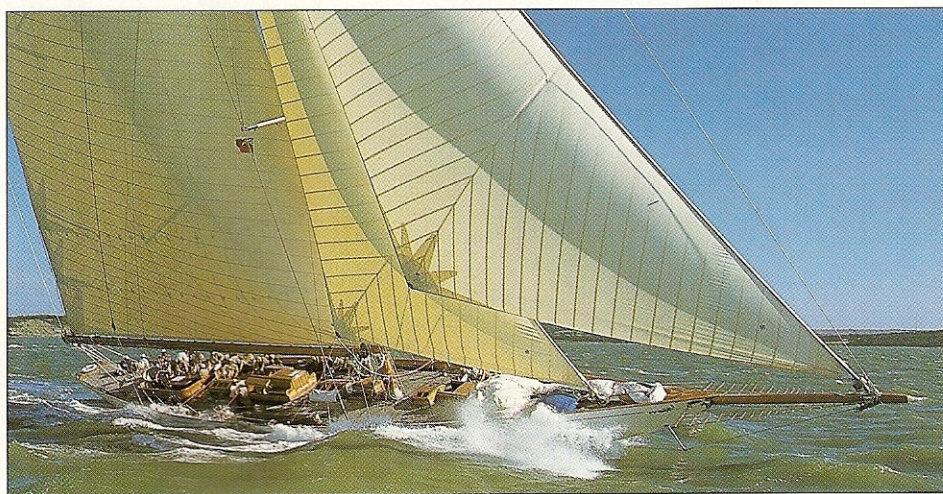
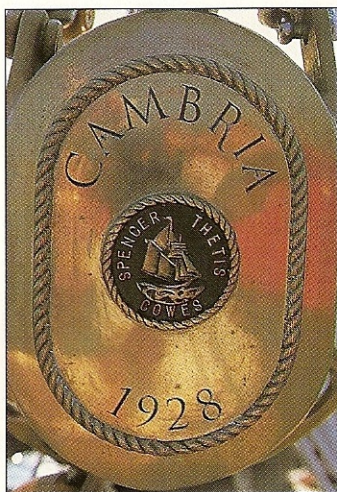
"It was awesome to find her like this," said skipper Peter Mandin, who took over the boat four months before the Jubilee. "She's 90 percent original. We just had to pull the old fittings out of the boxes and have them rechromed. Then we found the old holes on the underside of the deck and drilled them out and put the fittings back exactly where Mr. Fife had them." The yacht was also converted back to cutter rig for the regatta, with a complete new wardrobe in a synthetic canvas lookalike from North Sails and new rigging from Harry Spencer. The

old mizzen was cut down to make the boom, which tucks in inside a standing backstay, unlike the original which hung out 10' over the stern.

The result is an imperfect restoration, but one which goes a long way to returning the original feel of the yacht while preserving as much as possible of the old structure. With her elegant, off-white sails, many found her more beautiful than the three Js, with their modern rigs and superyacht finish. Plus there was, of course, the usual British fondness for the underdog or, as one spectator described her, "the odd-one-out"—at a mere 112', she was several feet shorter than even the smallest J.

CAMBRIA behaved nothing like an underdog the day I sailed aboard her, however. From the moment she crossed the starting line, she barely did a thing wrong. As expected, the Js tacked up to the first mark well in the lead, ENDEAVOUR followed by VELSHEDA followed by SHAMROCK V. Once around the mark, however, SHAMROCK V strayed to the south side of the Solent and got stuck in dead water, while we stuck firmly to the north side. It was to prove a decisive move. By the second mark, CAMBRIA was already five minutes ahead of SHAMROCK V, and the lil' J never really caught up.

But what was really noticeable that day was the impeccable coordination of the crew. With six ex-AMERICA'S Cup crew on board, including Ian Murray at the helm and Alan Bond in the cockpit, this was perhaps unsurprising. But whereas VELSHEDA consistently had trouble keeping her spinnaker filled, all but one of CAMBRIA's spinnaker jibes and hoists were timed to perfection, with



"The odd-one-out." The 23-Meter CAMBRIA raced in the same class as the Js and, although usually easily outpaced by them, managed to beat all three of her rivals on handicap during one race. She was brought up from Australia especially for the Jubilee and rigged (by Harry Spencer, of course) as a cutter. The mizzen was cut down for the boom. A new suit of sails was made by North—including a main which weighs one ton. The old deck fittings were rechromed and put back in their old places. The helmsman's "throne" isn't original, but apparently it makes steering a lot more comfortable.



barely a crease showing in the sail. "Well done, the Clydesdales!" as first mate Johnny said to the eight crew running up and down the foredeck like workhorses with the bit—or spinnaker sheet—in their teeth.

And it paid off. As the breeze faded on the last leg, there was an overwhelming sense of anticipation on board. SHAMROCK V was still well behind and fading into the fleet of smaller boats, while ENDEAVOUR was rounding up after the finish line with VELSHEDA three minutes behind and CAMBRIA just three minutes behind her. "We've got to have beaten at least one of them on handicap," said John, bright-eyed and suddenly looking a good decade younger than his 71 years. In fact we'd done even better than that, as the applause and "three cheers" from the ENDEAVOUR crew confirmed when we motored up to our mooring. CAMBRIA had not only beaten SHAMROCK V by six minutes over the line but had beaten all three of her bigger sisters on handicap. It was only the second race she'd won in her entire career, and it was greeted with near euphoria at the prizegiving that night.

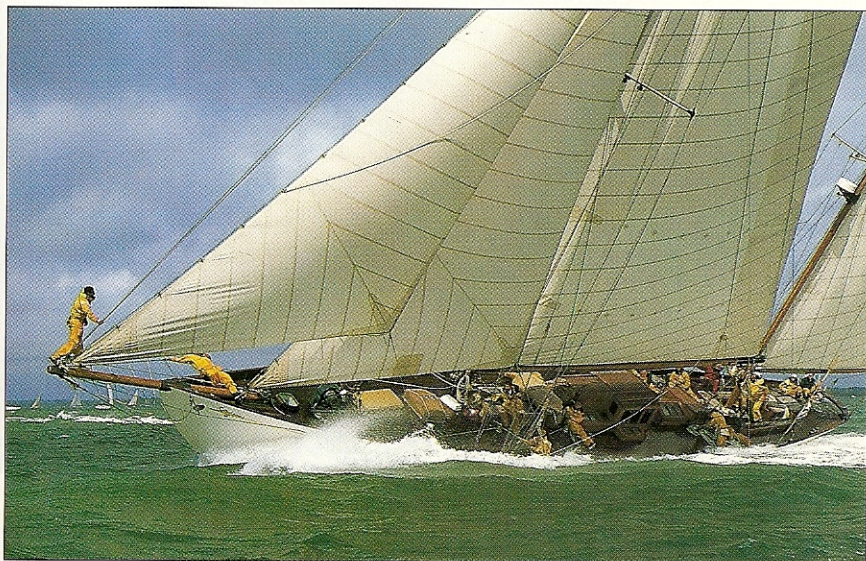
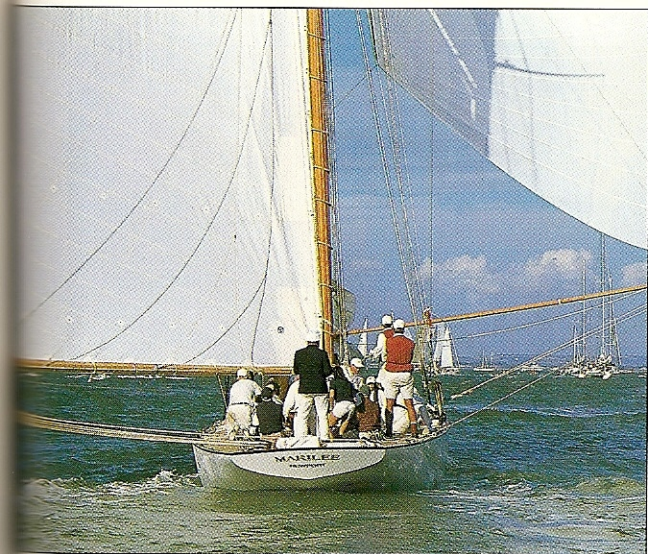
"Lots of Brits don't think us colonials can do this kind of thing," said John. "But us Aussies love being regarded as the underdogs—and then winning!" It was hardly AUSTRALIA II all over again, but with two Aussie boats

featuring as stars of the show, some national pride was understandable.

Another notable entry from Down Under was RANGER, Auckland's legendary racer, unbeaten on the Hauraki Gulf for 30 years and shipped over especially for the Jubilee. "Although she's known as a fast boat in New Zealand, she's never really been tested against European boats," said owner Ian Cook. "We wanted to see how she compared to her counterparts over here." What they hadn't bargained for, however, was the strictness of the rating—which was all done to the CIM rule adopted for the entire Prada Mediterranean circuit.

Under the rule, RANGER's fiberglass-sheathed hull and modern rig are taxed heavily for not being original. "We had legs over all the other boats in our class, especially in really light airs, but the rating killed us," said Ian, barely able to hide his disappointment. Despite consistently being among the top five over the line, and usually one of the first two, RANGER, under handicap, ended up ninth overall in her class.

The yacht's low freeboard, common among boats in the relatively sheltered waters of the Hauraki Gulf, also presented a challenge in these different waters. With tides apparently at a 125-year high, the currents ripping through



Above left—MARILEE was one of 32 yachts shipped over from the United States by the New York Yacht Club. She was restored in time for the Jubilee, and despite severe ill fortune won her division. **Above right**—Auckland's 1939 local hero RANGER ruled the Hauraki Gulf for 20 years, but she was thrashed by the strict handicapping rules at the Jubilee. **Left**—The 1929 Fife BELLE AVENTURE is a regular on the classic yacht circuit on both sides of the Atlantic.

the Solent kicked up a nasty chop in any wind-against-tide situation. Ian was unambiguous: "The boat was wet—very wet," he said. "And the tides were just as wild as I was told they'd be!"

For some the English tides were just too much—including several English boats. The Herreshoff schooner MARIETTE went spectacularly and firmly aground on the second day of racing, followed the day after by the Jubilee Trust's brand-new sail training ship the TENACIOUS, followed by the 12-Meter VALIANT on the last leg of the Round-the-Island Race. Even the revered Dennis Conner suffered the indignity of having to wait for the tide to lift the modern racer he was helming, which had grounded off the north side of the Channel.

Aside from being a celebration of existing boats, the Jubilee fueled new restorations of its own. Some yachts seemed to have been restored specifically for the event, while others had used the event as a deadline to aim for. "From the outset the intention was to be here," said Todd Conklin, co-owner of the Starling Burgess 12-Meter ONAWA. Originally owned by the Forbes family, she was one of six Twelves built for the New York Yacht Club by Abeking & Rasmussen in Germany in 1928,

shortly before the International Rule was formally adopted by the United States. The yacht underwent extensive reconstruction at the American Shipyard in Newport just before being shipped over to Cowes. "It was a frantic pace to make it here, and there's still work in progress," said Todd. "We only had 12 hours' sailing before we arrived, so we're improving every day. But at least it's more fun than starting off good and then falling back!" With Ted Turner Jr., Elizabeth Meyer, and three-time gold medalist Paul Ricard among their crew and owners, they couldn't afford to fall back too far.

It was a similar story on the old Fife NAN, which had her sail trials crossing the Channel from France after a two-year restoration. "We don't know the boat very well yet," said owner Philippe Menhinick. "We just came to show her." Yet, despite retiring from the first race with rig problems and breaking her topmast in the Round-the-Island Race, that didn't stop her from coming second overall in her class—right behind that other prodigy from across the water, MARILEE from New York.

"We always intended coming here," said Mitch Shivers, one of the five owners of MARILEE. "The Jubilee was always our deadline." Built in 1916, the Herreshoff-designed New York 40 was restored over the past two years at Cannell,



Payne, and Page's American Boathouse in Camden, Maine. Despite losing their boom in the first race and smashing up their toerail in the fourth, her crew had no regrets about their long journey. "It's amazing to see all these boats racing together, and then realizing the people sailing them are some of the best sailors in the world," said Anne Hutchinson. "Watching the Round-the-Island Race, I thought, 'It doesn't get any better than this.' It is literally the experience of a lifetime. We're thrilled we came."

Mitch was candid about their collision with PARTRIDGE. "I was at the helm and port-tacked her," he said. "I thought we'd make it, and we didn't." HALLOWEEN suffered a similar fate at the bow of the hefty ketch RONA, losing part of her toerail and running backstay. And there was carnage among the Twelves on the last day, with the modern ENTERPRISE limping in with a long gouge in her bow and dear old NORTHERN LIGHT having one of her coffee grinders wrenched off by TRIVIA.

In the end, only two days' racing had to be abandoned, both due to lack of wind—though had the race committee waited half an hour before making their decision on the last day they would have had a marvelous afternoon's sailing in a moderate breeze and brilliant sunshine. Luckily for the Twelves and the IACC, they were already sailing before the rest of the races were called off, and, whereas during the first day's high winds they were the only ones

called in, this time they stayed out. Who'd want to be on a race committee?

Many boats went out to play anyway, but for those that didn't there was a festival atmosphere in Cowes, with a tented village set up near the Yacht Squadron and a large stage and beer tent nearer the boats. Most of the shop windows were chockablock with ACJ memorabilia, ranging from the ubiquitous T-shirts and caps to umbrellas, clocks, and paintings. At the art dealers Bonhams & Brooks you could pick up a "fine and highly important" painting by Stephen Dews of the J-class ENDEAVOUR and VELSHEDA racing at the 1999 Antigua Classics—though the gallery assistant couldn't explain to me why it was "fine and highly important."

Farther along the main drag the famous photographers Beken of Cowes really were selling fine and highly important photographs from their archive dating back to 1888—remarkably, despite their global reputation, they still inhabit the same modest building they moved into in the 1970s, when they sold off the original chemist shop opposite. Meanwhile, at the other end of town, Beken & Son the chemist (now no relation) had more prosaic concerns, with a sign in the window reading: "We sell headache (hangover) tablets."

And indeed, a lively social scene was planned for the week, the highlight being the £175-a-seat Moët et Chandon




Opposite, top left—Alex Laird restored the 1885 PARTRIDGE over 18 years. **Top right**—The Nigel Irens–Ed Burnett pilot cutter type ELEANOR MARY completed the Round-the-Island Race in exactly the same time as AMERICA did 150 years ago, but at 52' long she was half AMERICA's length. **Opposite, bottom left**—The 1910 Summers & Payne HARDY (ex-KITTYWAKE II) sailed to the Jubilee from the British East Coast. **Opposite, bottom right**—The 1868 schooner VALDIVIA was the oldest craft at the Jubilee. **Above, left**—After Greg Powlesland's definitive restoration a few years ago, the 1892 MARIGOLD is now on loan to a West Country school and was sailed by a young crew at the regatta. **Above, right**—The 1909 Fred Shepherd-designed OWL was restored at the International Boatbuilding Training College in Lowestoft and is now kept by her Italian owner in Brittany. **Left**—The one that started it all... Well, actually, the 1967 Sparkman & Stephens-designed, Goudy and Stevens-built replica of the AMERICA, which attended the Jubilee but did not race.

Ball at Osborne House, the former summer residence of Queen Victoria on the other side of the Medina River. There American billionaire Bill Koch (AMERICA's Cup winner in 1992) vied with Old World aristocrat Aga Khan to bid for a special 31-bottle set of Hennessy cognac, one for each AMERICA's Cup challenge. The New World eventually won, paying \$450,000 for the collection (valued at £20,000)—though the sterling figure of £310,000 for 31 bottles representing 31 challenges has a more poignant ring to it. A clearly ebullient Koch said afterwards: "After spending \$68 million on the AMERICA's Cup, this was rather cheap."

For many it was their first time in Cowes, and even the U.K. Most were impressed at the quantity and beauty of the boats present; the organization of the event was also praised, and even the food wasn't as bad as they'd expected. But where the regatta was truly blessed was with the weather. It almost seemed as if the gods were conspiring to overcome the traditional image of rainy England, and after the first dramatic Sunday there was a week of almost solid sunshine. Okay, it wasn't quite the Mediterranean, but there were moments when the sun hit you in just the right way when, after a glass of white wine spritzer and a mozzarella panino, it was easy to forget that this was ye olde England.

The AMERICA's Cup Jubilee was always intended as a celebration of an historic event, a symbolic tribute to a

great sporting event with an almost tenuous link to its birthplace in Cowes. How much more logical to celebrate 150 years of the AMERICA's Cup in Newport, Rhode Island, where most of the challenges have taken place, said some. It will just be pastiche and kitsch, said others. What few can have imagined, even the most optimistic organizers, was that the regatta would become an historic event in itself. Yet thanks to the miraculously good weather, thanks to the efforts of hundreds of individuals spending time and money making their boats beautiful for the occasion, thanks to some deft and unobtrusive organization, thanks to the unique nature of Cowes itself, and thanks to a spontaneous spirit of appreciation, the Jubilee did achieve historic stature.

In some ways the Jubilee marked the end of an era. Two weeks later, the attack on New York postponed sailing events around the world, and for many life would never be the same again. Suddenly the events at Cowes seemed painfully innocent, almost trivial, by comparison. Yet, just as two world wars failed to remove the memory of AMERICA's visit to Cowes 150 years ago, so the memory of its Jubilee is unlikely to be erased by this latest act of destruction. This international gathering stands as a small sign of hope in the face of despair. 

Nic Compton, the former editor of England's Classic Boat magazine, now roams the globe as a freelance writer.