

HISTORY OF THE Y.W. 14FT. DAYBOAT ASSOCIATION

In the October 1949 edition of the "Yachting World", details were published of a 14ft dinghy which Mr G. O'Brien Kennedy, M.R.I.N.A., had been commissioned to design and which was to be known as the "Yachting World 14ft Dayboat". The requirements were a round bilge sailing boat which could be easily amateur built by a number of methods, i.e. clinker double diagonal, seam batten carvel, etc. The boat was to be of robust construction, suitable for family sailing and generally knocking about in open waters, estuaries and rivers. The boat was not intended for racing but should have the best possible performance under an alternative rig of either gunter or Bermudan. She had to be a boat which the crew sat in rather than on and have a reasonable amount of free-board.

By the end of 1950 about fifteen boats had been built, mainly in the Bristol Channel and the Clyde but also in other places where the sailing conditions were difficult. It was discovered that the designer had carried out his instructions well and the boat possessed all the essential requirements. She was an excellent sea-boat, strongly built with plenty of stability, manoeuvrable and with a fair turn of speed.

The plans, which are very complete, were copyright and were for the use of amateur builders only; consequently the class was slow to develop, as many fought shy of tackling a round bilge boat and turned to the easier plywood, hardchine designs. However, there were a number of people who wished to become Dayboat owners but were unable, or had not the facilities, to build, and in 1955 the Y.W. gave permission for professional building under licence.

By this time, there were about thirty boats in the Bristol Channel who were racing together and two clubs had adopted the boat as their official class, but as there were no class rules they differed both in weight and sail area. The weights, in fact, ranged from 290 to 555 lbs., and in consequence the boats varied in performance. In December 1955, a number of owners met in Bristol, under the auspices of the Bristol Channel Yachting Conference, for the purpose of forming an Owners' Association. Consideration was first given to making it a purely West of England Association, but after correspondence with the Editor of the Y.W., in which it was established that there was a demand for a national Association, the Y.W. 14ft Dayboat Association was formed and this was formally recognised by the Royal Yachting Association as the authority for administering the Class throughout the British Isles.

A committee was elected and given the difficult task of drafting Class Rules which would include all the existing boats without expensive alterations, and would govern new boats. The main aim was to keep the Dayboat for the purpose for which it was designed and to avoid the boat becoming solely a racing machine. It was suggested that the class should be made a "one-design", restricted to clinker, but at the time it was thought that the Dayboat would never be used for serious racing, that owners would be older men who would only race occasionally, racing being secondary to the main purpose of providing a boat for the family. A number of "smooth" boats had already been built and it was considered that double diagonal construction was easier for amateur builders. It was thought that provided the boats all had the same shape, any difference in performance would be so slight as to cause little difficulty. It was therefore decided to make the boat a "one design" as regards hull shape and sail area but a "restricted class" as far as construction, decking, fittings and rigging were concerned. The hull was to be constructed by any method in wood only and to weigh not less than 450 lbs. This weight was adopted because it is the approximate weight of a mahogany clinker boat built strictly to the design and this is the most popular version. The Class Rules were finally approved by a Special General Meeting in January 1957.

The Secretary then proceeded to trace all the boats which had been built during the seven years since the design had been published and by the end of 1957 the Register consisted of 103 boats in all parts of the country. In this connection, it should be noted that the earlier sail numbers were issued as the boats were traced, and do not give any real indication of age. Blocks of numbers are not issued to builders as in some other classes and are only allocated after construction has commenced. It has been estimated that there are approximately 35 unregistered boats and this figure added to the latest sail number gives a realistic indication of the total number of Dayboats built.

As the boats were brought into line by applying the rules and racing became fairer, so it became keener and the Dayboat increased its popularity. By 1959, the Dayboat's description of a "cruising boat suitable for racing" could be said to have changed to a "racing boat suitable for cruising", and it became necessary to rewrite the class rules. The revised version was approved by the A.G.M. in August. At the same time a controversy had arisen as to whether the smooth hulls were faster than clinker, and at a Special General Meeting in October two Sections were formed, A - Clinker only, B - Smooth hulls. The two Sections continued to race together on a level footing, but in 1962 the Royal Yachting Association, who had taken over the administration of the Portsmouth Handicapping System, allocated separate Yardstick numbers with

a difference of 2. Unfortunately, the Association had not been consulted and as a previous A.G.M. had already decided that the two Sections should race level in 1962, the two numbers were unacceptable. The R.Y.A. proved unwilling to compromise and the Dayboat was removed from the Tables. This absence created some confusion among clubs organising Handicap events.

Although the records of five Dayboat Weeks showed no significant difference between the two Sections, the Committee, after much deliberation, recommended to the 1962 A.G.M. that separate numbers be adopted but that the R.Y.A. be asked to allocate numbers with a difference of one. They are, of course, subject to revision each year.

In January 1968 changes were made to the Class Rules, with the object of permitting (1) Glass Reinforced Plastic ("Fibre-glass") construction for Section B ("Smooth") hulls only, and (2) the use of metal spars with Section B hulls of any age or construction. A later relaxation of the Rules allowed specified metal spars to be used throughout the Class. The Revised Rules opened the way for development and expansion in the Class without affecting the vast majority of Dayboats, about 90% of which were in Section A.

Late in 1969, the Association decided to re-unite the Class, and to influence all outside bodies, including the R.Y.A. to cease to distinguish between "clinker" and "smooth" Dayboats. All Dayboats now race as one class at Open meetings and at Dayboat Week.

In 1979 the GRP simulated clinker hull was adopted, the object being that, with the Association laying down its own mould, hulls and/or decks could be obtained for completion, or finished boats at very competitive prices.

The class rules were subsequently revised to include all forms of construction and a rationalisation of the measurements was adopted in October 1981 with a further revision accepted in 1987 to bring the rules completely into line with the plans.

In 1991 after an 18- month trial period a new rudder design was accepted by the association as an alternative to the traditional shape.

The Association has publicised the Class as far as it has been able. YW 14' Dayboats have been exhibited at the International Boat Show, the London Dinghy Exhibition, the Welsh Dinghy Exhibition, the Southampton Boat Show and other shows.