

Background Information

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Introduction

The sport of sailing has a long history of contributing to the social and economic structure of Britain as befits its island status. With so many activities requiring fast vessels, developments in the sport have translated into improvements throughout its history, such as:

- fast yachts bought in as revenue cutters or naval support vessels
- the development of design algorithms and tank testing to improve hull form and rig efficiency
- materials development and engineering solutions
- improved navigation instruments
- water-jet propulsion now used on fast ferries
- kite-propelled vessels currently challenging for the water speed record and being developed to power-assist commercial vessels

And, of course, many public figures and celebrities have been involved with the sport through their sporting successes or philanthropy.

During the period of commercial sail, yachting provided considerable employment for crew and a support infrastructure that developed the skill base and craftsmanship in our yards to the extent that Britain became the foremost shipbuilding nation in the world. Developments to improve yacht performance advanced the design and seaworthiness of all types of vessels and the development of innovative equipment improved boat handling and crew efficiency. The quality and prestige of major yacht-building projects enhanced the reputation of Britain's yards and enabled them to compete world-wide.

Yachting has also contributed significantly to war efforts with experienced crew and navigators as well as vessels. For instance, when Germany was not allowed a Navy, a fleet of yachts were built to train seamen and airmen, especially in navigation, a fleet that was subsequently brought back to Britain as the "Windfall Yachts" and used to train our servicemen around the world.

As an equipment-based sport, even now the sport of sailing, sail and power, contributes £5.85 billion to our national economy through industry and regional and economic benefits (BMF, 2007), with a significant export contribution, and is still pushing the boundaries of the capabilities of new materials and their application.

And, the sport continues to excite as our sailors compete widely in International Championships and the Olympics making no small contribution to National pride.

The legacy of over two hundred years of yachting is a vast collection of material of historical importance reflecting the innovativeness that is characteristic of this community. The British National Yachting Archive has been established as a virtual archive, to provide a window on this resource and to ensure the proper preservation of documents and artefacts. As it is not an established collection, it is dependent upon the museums, physical archives and private collectors to update the information and tools are provided on the web site for this.

However, it is also apparent that some material does not have a natural home, and the Archive will endeavour to either place it with a suitable host organisation or provide suitable archival storage. There is concern that material is being lost as businesses close and storage demands become too great, so an alert system is provided to "rescue" such material. Similarly, we are at a time when those who were a part of the pre-war community and the huge post-war growth in sailing and have been extremely influential in their

time are aging rapidly and much of their knowledge needs to be obtained by interview so we are embarking on a programme of obtaining oral histories.

The reason for developing the Archive is to consolidate what is known about the community - it has impacted every part of Britain and, although "National" in its formation, sailing has always been very international with designers, builders, owners, etc. combining from across the globe so "British" material could exist almost anywhere. The Archive will enable researchers and educationalists to make best use of the material without spending unnecessary time tracking down something that may or may not exist. To this end, the longer term aim is to provide on-line access through the digitisation of material to improve retrieval by users. Resources will be added to assist projects such as school projects researching local history as well as assisting researchers with more academic intent.

Overview

The Archive will always inevitably be incomplete but will expand indefinitely as more material is discovered and identified and as time inexorably adds yet more history, and this can only be achieved with the co-operation of those who are aware of its existence. Building from scratch, the aim is to:

- identify collections
- catalog the contents of collections
- digitise the content to enable on-line viewing
- and, capture history in the making

The first priority is to find out where material is held and what is in each collection. Some will be well documented, others less so and about which little may be known. There is considerable concern that material is being lost as individuals and organisations dispose of old material. To this end, this web site provides a number of tools:

- **Directory:** describes each known repository of collections and is built from input forms that identify the general nature of the collection and its profile, along with contact details. Contact details will not be published for private collections unless permitted by the owner, but requests will be passed to owners if someone is interested.
- **Catalogue:** describes each item in a collection. If a catalogue already exists, we will endeavour to either interface with it if available on-line, or publish it. If not available, we will provide an on-line inputting system so that a catalogue can be built or try to provide resources to do so.
- **Alert System:** if anyone is aware of material that might be at risk, a notification system is provided and we will endeavour to "rescue" it and find a suitable home. Access to these facilities may be provided for collections where there is concern that the existing storage conditions are inadequate for archival purposes. Although actual boats are out of scope, we will maintain a register of boats at risk and encourage restorers to take on key projects.

The digitisation programme will be initiated once sufficient resources are available. Meanwhile, selected collections will be reviewed and tests undertaken to develop appropriate formats and interfaces.

Research

The BNYA will undertake research projects as and when project funding is available by providing grants to qualified researchers. The first initiative is to collect **Oral Histories**

Given that much of what happens on and off the water, if not the stuff of legend, is at least based on anecdote and personal interactions that are not usually documented. It is our intention to capture the memories of those involved through recording "oral histories" - that is to interview sailors, designers, boatbuilders, sailmakers, etc. to piece together the stories of major events such as sailing events, technical

breakthroughs, policy decisions, etc.. Many people we would like to have interviewed are sadly no longer with us and we have a growing list of people we would like to interview fairly soon. It is these stories that add colour and social interest to the bare historical facts.

To do this, we need to acquire suitable video recording and editing equipment or facilities and be able to cover the expenses of interviewers. Our first **appeal** is for donations to get this started.

Organisations

The types of organisations that may be expected to have material relevant to the Archive includes:

Maritime Museums	mainly based around the coast or on major waterways, they may have a focus on subjects other than yachting, but may include some relevant material. A few will have major collections.
Local Museums	may be expected to have accumulated material of local interest
County Archives	act as the main repository of historical material, although they may have had a discretionary policy as to the types of material they will accept
Libraries	mainly those with a maritime section and includes private libraries and rare book collectors/sellers
Yacht Designers	incl. marine engineers. Very important and may contain substantial resources. Some of historic importance and no longer functioning may have been lost already or broken up and distributed.
Yacht Builders	very important and may contain substantial resources. Some of historic importance and no longer functioning may have been lost already or broken up and distributed.
Yacht Brokers	will have some history of yachts they have had on their books
Yacht/Sailing Clubs	very important. Few clubs have appointed archivists and some have already disposed of old documents, etc.
Equipment suppliers	incl. manufacturers, chandleries, etc
Publishers	of books, magazines, etc.
Photographers	incl. image/film libraries
Private Individuals	many people will have acquired relevant material including top sailors,

We will be contacting all these organisations to find out about their holdings, although we would encourage any of these organisations or individuals to register on the web site and at least enter a short description of their holdings so that the availability is known - it is by this means that public access may be provided.

Subject Areas

The type of material that should be logged in the Archive includes:

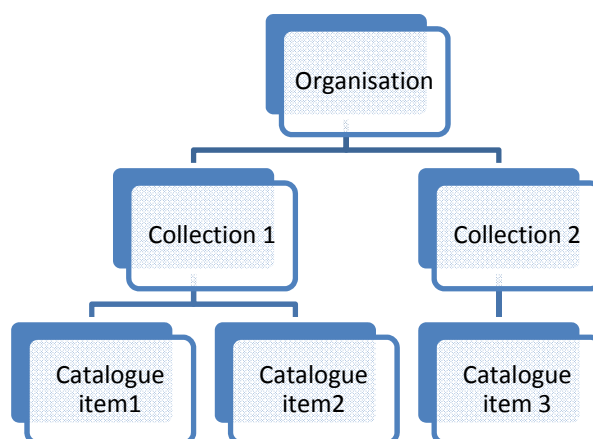
Manuscripts:	Minutes of meetings, letters, race results, race reports, membership lists, yard/owner/designer correspondence, etc.
Print:	Books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, etc.
Photo/Film:	Glass plates, negatives, celluloid, original prints, etc.
Artworks:	Paintings, prints, etchings, illustrations, cartoons, etc.
Artefacts:	Instruments, specialist tools, boat parts, prototypes, etc. (especially if associated with significant boats)
Drawings and Technical documents:	Exceptionally important, along with calculations, materials lists, yard lists, etc.
Models:	incl. full models, half-models, designers working models, tank testing models
Boats:	Much of the information needs to be connected to individual boats or class of boat. Some boats are held in collections, although most should be operational and will be in private hands, or will be lost. An "at risk" list will be maintained

Directory

All information is held in a database off-line - information provided is checked and imported then published to the web. It is by this means that the database can be protected from spam and the validity of the data can be maintained. The web site at present contains a skeletal structure with a few random records used for testing and will be populated as quickly as information is provided and resources can be made available to edit it. The structure will expand to accommodate the increased scale of information and facilitate navigation and a longer term ambition is to develop innovative search capabilities to facilitate locating information.

The structure of the directory is hierarchical and extensively hyper-linked to facilitate navigation.

There is a separate book directory so that users can identify which organisations hold copies of any book.



Organisation

The Archive has been established as a member-based charity in order that membership fees can be used to fund the work and contributions may be sought from donors and grant-awarding bodies.

It will be managed by trustees, three of which have been appointed during the formation stage and more will be added in due course. The current working party includes:

- David Elliott*, project co-ordinator, author of the MetreWiki
- Rees Martin*, Sec. British Int'l Six Metre Assn
- Michael Campbell*, High Sheriff of Hampshire; past-Vice Commodore, Royal Yacht Squadron
- Maldwin Drummond, past-Commodore Royal Yacht Squadron, Chairman Association of Yachting Historians
- David Chivers, RYA Measurer
- David Henshall, Writer and Dinghy Historian
- Ian Dear, Writer and Early Period Historian

*Trustees. David Elliott and Rees Martin are also members of the organising team for Cowes Classic Week.

Since there are many individuals with an interest in the development of the Archive, we have established an **Advisory Council** which will meet “virtually” to provide advice and guidance and physically on occasions to debate key issues. This needs to expand to include wider representation of the range of skills required, but currently includes: Roy Clare, CEO The Museum, Libraries & Archive Council, past-CEO National Maritime Museum; Janet Grosvenor, past Sailing Sec. RORC; David Glenn, IPC representing the publishing sector; Jackie Reid, RYA; Peter Burt, Royal Motor Yacht Club, representing power-boating.

ENDS

Contact: David Elliott, BNYA Chairman: david.elliott@bnya.org.uk

It would be appreciated if you could forward any reports that are published – thank you.

This information and the logo may be downloaded from <http://www.bnya.org.uk/press>