



## PYRA 'RAMBLINGS'

### 1. Formation of PYRA

PYRA must have been set up in late 1950s because I recall 1959 winning boats coming from various clubs (Tantina from RMYC, Salamander from Parkstone, ? from Poole). Surprisingly Poole Yachting Association was only set up in 1962. I only attended my first PYRA AGM in 1966 (University took priority)

### 2. Type of boats in late 1950s/60s

In the 1950s into 60s most of the boats were wooden with wooden masts, cotton sails (sometimes coloured i.e. "Calypso", sisal/hemp ropes and wooden blocks. In the late 1950s marine ply boats were coming in (see later) along with expensive terylene sails (mainly Ratsey & Lapthorn) and tufnol blocks.

In the very early 60s the first fibre class boats joined PYRA i.e. Pioneers (by Van de Stadt) and terylene sails were starting to take over.

Engines were very unreliable in the 1960s (British!) so owners spend sea time getting them to work. Many a boat was towed home by fellow competitor when no wind! The coming of the Japanese was our salvation.

### 3. PYRA class variations

In the early days there were only class I, II, III and because of the need to accommodate all interested parties there was great variation in types. Class divisions were more related to boat length than ratings (few boats were formally measured)

Class I consisted of modern (albeit wooden) cruiser racers --e.g. SCODS ( i.e. Alan Drake in Beaujolais) winning one-off designs Tantina and Salamander and 8 metre "Plieves of Rhu" & Iyruna (45 foot yawl which- when unhandicapped-started in Class III I) etc

Class II started life with Folkboat = sizes (though Folkboats started in Class III. Later Davis Sadler designs came into this class (David won the RIOW race overall in 1967)

Class III in 1958--1962 included two new self build marine ply 18ft 6 inch Ian Procter- designed Seagull sloops (see later) ("Maysue" Richard Edmonds and "Saluki" Dr John Astbury) taking on (and winning against) Folkboats and other wooden 1940/50s keel boats. Class III went up to 24 foot

### 4. Rating system and on-going debates

Before every race I recall a meeting at Parkstone YC to discuss (a) Course (b) Ratings -especially classIII (Maysue - a fast boat was 5650!)

Few boats were measured/formally rated so reference was made to

"who won most" then increase rating(!) and Portsmouth Yardstick for similarities

(The Seagull sloops had retractable keels used down wind, but were very light in heavy seas)

### 5. Programme and courses

- No booklet in the early days only list of races and dates. Entry form and courses posted weekly on yacht club notice boards

- Actual course announced by loud hailer from Committee boat. Flags and guns used. Air horn came in 1960s. (Parkstone YC used radio first in 1963- source "Golden Dolphin" 1995 centenary issue)

- Despite boats being slower unlike today most Solent courses involved zigzag around Poole Bay active sewage buoys and always Christchurch Ledge.

The annual programme was much fuller in 1950s,1960s 1970s (I have 1975 programme) Cherbourg always overnight. My diary records one Dartmouth overnight race taking 24 hours because fleet had to anchor with no wind in Swanage and drift across Lyme Bay.

In the early days people kept going until the time limit ! (unlike today)

