

6. Start and Finish lines

Parkstone YC start line used initially with Bay Races returning up old Main channel. Around 1970 starts moved to Brownsea Line with finish at RMYC. (Race Officers at top of club house took transit at end of old pier. (My father became a regular race officer when I took over our boat The problem with RMYC finish line was the evening sun being in race officers eyes when trying to see sail numbers# -- easier when using spinnakers in SW wind. This was compounded in the early days because the only way of distinguishing a racing boat from a cruiser was a diminutive square mast head flag rather than club burgee)

British boats had a right mixture of sail numbers Registered = K

Training (?)= Y or serial type numbers

PYRA introduced class flags when mast head electronics came in (1960s?)

A consequence of a harbour finish was that many races were lost or won in close quarters tacking up the training bank then negotiating the ferry!

PHC & Brittany Ferries obliged us to move in 1987

When we raced away we usually asked RSYC & ISC & RLYC to finish and re-start our races. (We had/still have reciprocal relations quoted in club handbooks)

7. Destinations & socials

--Yarmouth. In the early days we all rafted up between the piles and used Avon dinghies to get ashore (Yarmouth Harbour Master will know when first ferries came in) The RV was at RSYC in reefer jackets/ blazers and club ties (even 18 foot boats carried the gear!)

In the 1960s all of us would eat together at long tables in the Bugle (rt hand side --still there) When numbers got too great many eat at RSYC or the wealthier at The George

We were barred from RSYC sometime in the 1970s because of bad behaviour/clothing !? Apology letters were sent more than once.

--Lymington. We used Berthan as soon as it opened (In the vanguard of marinas in the UK) but the PYRA captain (Bert Lockyer - Salamander) was privileged to tie up at end of RLYC pier)

We used RLYC for RV and eating until barred in 1970s Like RSYC it was very formal.

--Beaulieu. We all used to be able to afford to eat in the Master Builder restaurant!

--Weymouth. The RDYC (previously on the seafront--now a nightclub) was our RV . It was very formal -- reefer jackets etc.

--Cherbourg. This was always a popular night race despite the time taken to get there >12 hours generally. The motivation was more the duty frees and French atmosphere rather than the racing.

My first time impression (1960 or 1961) was of a poor naval town (dirty buildings and poor shops) full of drunk sailors (national servicemen) and prostitutes on the streets (of an evening) Being a teenager of up-market Bournemouth this was a revelation. However looking back, Poole was full of poor slums at that time!

Our course across invariably included one of three buoys 3 - 5 miles off Cherbourg. CH1 was a residual buoy from WWII whereby months after D Day (when Cherbourg harbour war re-opened) supplies were ferried across the Channel down a buoyed "road" which any one could steer without need of navigation.

Once we arrived in Cherbourg (having hoisted the yellow flag) we crossed the Outer and Inner Rade, passing the beach to starboard and then anchored in the muddy inner harbour with many fishing boats before the bridge. This was a nightmare because we used Avon dinghies to put out kedges and often caught chains and tackle on the very muddy seabed (Some of the funniest sights have been in this harbour) Main anchor buoys were often used because of the need to pull trapped anchors backwards from under chains!

After climbing rusty ladders (up to 30' at low tide) the RV was at the Yacht Club on the East quay close to the Gare Maritime (still operational). It was then a very modern building- glass fronted and single storey. Today it looks very tatty and appears to be a storeroom!

In the evening most people went to the Yalta Bar (looks the same today) because the owner spoke a little English , was in the Resistance, and had bullet holes on an inside wall!! Many went to the Casino - very exotic- because UK did not have!

Returning to boats, whilst drunk was a hazardous affair. Yachtsmen fell off the ladders or missed their footing into Avon dinghies. I had many a laugh.

Duty frees was what Cherbourg was all about --remember tax was very high in the UK. Drink was ordered "out of bond" from Henri Ryst who supplied Atlantic Liners. We all took the maximum legal limit (and the rest went under the floor boards). Henri Ryst staff (normally with a policeman in attendance) carried boxes to the ladders and ensured it went on the correct boats. In the 1960s one or two PYRA captains were taken off to the police station having been observed to transfer bonded stores (they were fined) The only time passports were used was for bonded transactions.

The return to Poole (hoisting yellow flag) always ended in the dark which enabled many boats to pass moored tenders and off-load (!) before tying up at the Quay to clear customs. Clearance took some time because every boat had opened one extra duty free as "ships supplies" and offered a drink to the customs official. Rarely were boats "turned over".

In later years we had to phone Customs at Hurn and wait for 1hour in case they turned up (rarely)

8. Boat Owners & Crew

In the 1950/60s there was a preponderance of professional types amongst boat owners e.g doctors, accountants, vets, company owners (plus Mrs Leigh Duncan -" Moonfleet" - Owner of the Royal Bath hotel -with paid crew) and ex-military officers.

There were proportionately more young crew than today because of less distractions --today's relatively cheaper lasers & windsurfers etc.

However many of the crew /owners were ~40 year old WWII veterans who greatly impressed me with their stamina, ability to drink and stories.

One 40+ crew I met on "Calypso" told me he had been one of the demolition party to blow up a Cherbourg fort on the Outer Rade following 1940 retreat up Contentin Peninsular after Dunkirk.

Very few women sailed with PYRA in 1950/60s

