



Where did their boats go?

Following on from our articles about CA members who died in the Great War, many people asked what happened to the boats they owned. **Ted Osborn** has been through the archives

We published an article in June last year describing the yachting background to the first World War and a follow-up article in December with as much information as we have about the 12 CA members known to have been killed in the war and who are commemorated on the CA War Memorial. A number of current members have now asked if we know anything of what happened to the yachts that those members owned, what sort of boats were they and whether any are still afloat and used today?

This is a difficult call but some facts are known. At the time there were no marinas or harbours where boats could be kept, and few places where yachts could be taken ashore and stored. The great majority were normally kept on swinging moorings and in many places these were cleared away immediately in 1914 by the Admiralty to make space for naval vessels. We think that most of the CA yachts were probably placed in mud berths, at high spring tides where possible, covered up where feasible or simply left afloat somewhere.

The luckier ones would have settled well into the mud and floated only at high water. The less lucky ones would have remained partly afloat until the ravages of time and lack of attention opened up the seams of their planks and water came in. All the boats were of wood construction, some clinker built, some carvel built. All had gaff rig and cotton sails. Removal of masts, sails and rigging

was probably only for the fortunate few. Rot was a continuous problem even on well-maintained vessels and must have become rife. Running rigging was manila or hemp. It had to be replaced frequently in normal use and undoubtedly, if the boats remained rigged, would have rotted. Standing rigging, certainly on the larger boats, was galvanised wire. It would have lasted longer but required regular oiling and would certainly have suffered unless protected.

If still in existence all the boats would now be more than 100 years old. Many required paid hands to keep them in working order and help sail them. Not many had engines. All those which survived the war would have emerged in very poor condition into a different world where small crews, reliable engines and easy sailing were expected. The most enormous amount of repair and restoration would have been required. That most did survive, at least for a time, is remarkable: they were obviously strong boats, very well built. Some would have been likely to become classics in their own right. These yachts wanted to live and often succeeded.

The search for them has proved difficult: we have the CA Yearbooks which help where they remained with CA owners; most were registered at Lloyd's and we have their Register records up to the 1990s. Even Google has been of some help, particularly if the yacht has classic status, but for some we have drawn a

complete blank. Almost none were sold within CA but it would be most helpful if members who know anything further about them could get in touch.

The following lists the CA vessels for which we have some information, in the date order that their owners were killed. Most were cutters with bowsprits and often also with bumkins. These were very variable length items and we therefore quote the size of vessels by hull length between stem and stern.

Acushla was owned by Victor Jacob, killed September 1914. She was a 25ft Itchen Ferry style cutter originally named *Mowgli* and built in Limerick in 1898 to a Helyer design. On the declaration of war, Victor Jacob immediately volunteered for army service and passed half-ownership to his brother Ellis. Following Victor's death only a month later (he was the first CA member to be killed) Ellis took full ownership and may have based her in London for a time before moving her back to Cork in Ireland. He kept her only until 1919, after which ownership passed through a succession of owners until 1936 when she may have returned to England and then passed through the hands of many more owners before disappearing from the records in the early 1960s.

Wayfarer is something of a mystery boat. CA records have her as being owned by Oswald Hanson who was killed October 1914. It seems she was a 3 ton sloop with



Witch in 1914. She is the only CA yacht whose current whereabouts we know, and is owned by Martin Nott. Photos from the National Maritime Museum archives



a bulb-fin keel (rare in those days) and a tender named *Barnacle* but there are no other records. She was not registered to Hanson by Lloyd's although they did have a similar boat with the same name shown at the same time as owned by Perrot or Foster. We can only assume therefore that she did not survive the war. Hanson, of course, was the brother of Herbert Hanson, one of the CA's founders and so he probably did most of his sailing on Herbert's boat *lanthe II*.

Viola was the last of three boats owned by Charles Burnett, killed June 1916. She was an 8-ton cutter and not to be confused with another *Viola* of the same period which was a genuine Fifer, cutter rigged and built in 1908 for TM Hunter by Fife at Fairlie. Nothing is known of Burnett's *Viola* or what happened to her.

Witch was the second of Burnett's boats and the only one of the CA WW1 boats definitely known to be still in existence. She was built in Cowes by Charles Sibbick as a cutter of 36ft length in 1902. Burnett sold her to Basil Lubbock, the well-known marine author, just before the war. She was motorised in 1921 with a 2-cylinder Bergius engine and has been re-engined at least twice since. A Bermudan mast was fitted in 1938. She returned to being a CA boat under a new owner from 1929-34. The vessel is now again in Cowes undergoing complete restoration as merits her place on the National Register of Historic Vessels. For a full history see <http://www.witch1902.co.uk>.

Ashorne, the first of Burnett's boats, and possibly still in his ownership on his death, was a Morgan Giles-designed cutter with Cornfield sails, built in 1912 in Fowey. She was 33ft long, registered at 13 tons, had a Seal single-cylinder paraffin engine and was kept in London and Burnham. Following Burnett's death she appears to have languished for three years before being renamed V.O. and bought by Francis de Guingand in 1919. De Guingand was aged only 19 at

the time but eventually became a very successful general in the second World War. He owned her for a couple of years before she was passed to PG Hugh and was last heard of in 1925.

Osprey was owned from new by Walter Garnett, killed September 1916. She was a 5-ton cutter based at Heybridge and possibly built by Lawleys at Boston. At one time, or perhaps subsequently, she seems to have had the name *Idler*. She survived the war but was reported in 1919 as being abandoned in Bergen, Norway, with no known owner. She was removed from the register in 1920.

Black Duck was built as a cutter at Falmouth in 1905 for Ivor Mead, killed May 1917. He soon altered her to yawl rig however but we do not know why. She was 28ft long and had a 2-cylinder Gardner paraffin motor in addition to her Williams sails. After the war she was rescued and bought by Harley Mead in 1919. Harley Mead was a boatbuilder in Falmouth and may in fact have built her and of course Ivor may have been a family member. *Black Duck* then went through a succession of at least nine further owners from the 1920s to 1970s until we lose trace of her in 1977.

Blodwyn, sometimes written as Blodwen, with a tender *Ripple*, originally named *Dorothea* and then *Mayflower* was owned by Gilbert Millar, killed April 1918. She was a cutter of 5 tons register, 23.5ft long and built by Gibson of Fleetwood in 1884. She was thus both the smallest and oldest of the CA WW1 boats. She was bought by AJ Hancock in 1919 and a succession of owners, then may have survived the second world war: she was removed from Lloyd's Register in 1949.

Maud originally had a tender called *Cygnat*, and is possibly still afloat and in use. She was owned in 1914 by Charles Marshall, who died in September 1918. Her original name when built in 1899 for Robert Brown was *Aksenov* and she

is not to be confused with another *Maud* also built by Fife but built in 1908. Marshall's *Maud* was kept in Glasgow. She was ketch rigged, 42ft length and in 1914 was fitted by Marshall with a side propeller driven by a single-cylinder Bergius paraffin motor. When he went to war Marshall shared his ownership with his relation Dr CJ Marshall but the Admiralty immediately requisitioned the boat by compulsory hiring as a "RIM Service" vessel. Dr CJ may have been a woman because the second owner appears in some places as CJ Harrison. If you know how a RIM service vessel was used, we would be glad to know. *Maud* went through six further owners before disappearing from the records in 1957.

Rani IV was owned by Edwin Turner, died March 1919. She was a canoe yacht (double-ender) with a sloop rig and was designed by him for single-handing. Built by Clark's of Burnham in 1901, she had a fin keel with bulb within her LOA of only 26ft. Her rig and fittings were constantly modified to turn her into a really excellent boat. She survived the war to be bought in 1919 by FD Napier and NW Prangnell but soon changed hands many times right up to the second world war. She was removed from the Register in 1947 but we do not know whether she survived the war.

Bevil Quiller-Couch, in 1914 the CA HLR at Fowey, also owned a double-ended canoe yacht but we do not know her name or what happened to her. Humphrey Grant and Bernard Child, the remaining CA Members who died during the Great War, were not yacht owners.

The memorial to these chaps and their boats still requires funds for its repair and proper display. If you have not yet contributed please contact Beryl Chalmers, the CA General Manager, at the CA Office.



Ted Osborn