

The Victory Class 1934 – 1984

Z'Moya to Zinnia

Preface

This record of the first fifty years of the Victory Class, risen like the Phoenix from the ashes of the thirty year old Bembridge Sailing Club boat first built in 1904, has been partly compiled by Brian Snook, yachting correspondent of The News Portsmouth. He has made considerable research into both the origin of the boat, and its design and how and why the class came to be formed, with details of its progress, from its formation in 1934 until the outbreak of war in 1939, much of which has until now been shrouded in the mists of the past. This has involved Brian Snook in visiting the club at Bembridge, making painstaking enquiries, searching the archives, to unearth factual information, which cannot have been an easy task. In doing so he has rendered a service to the class, and those interested in it, and its past, for which they are most grateful.

The other part of the account has been written by David Childs, whose task has perhaps been simpler, because he has been sailing with the class for almost 30 years, was for a time racing secretary and through family connections, and living and working in Portsmouth for many years, has a good fund of local knowledge. He has also had the advantage of seeing available class records, though he was disappointed to find that the minute book up to 1939, which might have provided additional background, failed to surface after the war.

We are grateful to Messrs. Beken of Cowes, Yachting World, The News Portsmouth and Graham Bremer for their kind permission to use photographs, which have greatly enhanced this publication.

We are also much indebted to Bill Bishop, a member of the class, for his delightful illustrations both here and in the jubilee dinner menu.

IAN MEAD

The Victory Class 1934 - 1984

The Victory class, the sturdy, black-hulled dayboats which sail regularly out of Portsmouth harbour to flee off Southsea on summer evenings and week-ends, are the result of a demand for increased sailing facilities and events in and around the harbour which built to a head just 50 years ago.

The Situation in 1934.

In 1934 there were more than 200 small craft of varying size and form kept in the harbour, few enough by standards of the 1980's but regarded as a considerable number then, which led to poor comparisons with scattered groups of half a dozen or less to be found competing in a stretch of water encoding to ten square miles at high tides.

To some extent the reason lay in the nearest of the Solent's fabled cruising grounds and sailing men seemed understandably reluctant to interrupt a week-ends pleasure for a race which would probably be poorly attended.

Where vigorous racing did exist, said an Evening News report in the growing disquiet in January 1934, it came in the one-design classes in the harbour, where a good number of competitors started and raced together on level terms.

“The Porchester Ducks class is a fine example and some half dozen former Bembridge one-design class boats of about 20ft overall, which race regularly in the harbour during the week and at weekends, are generally to be found in one or other of the Solent ports” added the report. The Concept of the P.H.R & S.A.

It was against this background that about 40 local yachtsmen met at the George Hotel in Old Portsmouth with the idea of forming the Portsmouth Harbour Racing and Sailing Association to unite and promote all the sailing interests in Portsmouth harbour.

The idea, it was said later, was born in the mind of a retired naval lieutenant-commander, J.G. Kimber, who lived at St. Edwards Road Southsea

The object of the association was to be ‘the encouragement of good racing and the development of facilities for sailing, notably in the introduction of a harbour one- design and in the sore question of moorings’. The ex-Bembridge Sailing Club one-design came to mind.

There were visions of the future, some but not all of which turned out a little fanciful, in the more detailed, long-term aims, a series of regattas by affiliated harbour clubs, Solent port-to-port raced in the one-design class, a powerful body to sort out the moorings problem once and for all, an association bulletin, and a system for handicapping boats according to performance instead just of length.

The 1904 Bembridge Sailing Club Boat

This boat had been adopted at Bembridge 30 years before with an eminent Solent designer, Alfred Westmacott of Bembridge, playing the role to give the craft a certain pedigree from the start.

Design Competition

To find the right design the club launched competition through a national magazine, The Yachtsman, and the results were published in its issue of January 28th, 1904. From 35 entries submitted and ten shortlisted, the Bembridge committee selected Beneaped, a design by B.C. Cockburn ironically a Bembridge club member.

The length overall, it was stated, was well below the stipulated maximum but the committee was largely influenced in its selection by the practical consideration of cost.

The Selected Design

The design was closely examined by the committee of three, headed by Alfred Westmacott, who also ran the Bembridge yard of Woodnutt and Co., and designed other Solent keelboats in the X-boat and Sunbeam. The other members were Cockburn himself and CT Ricardo. They adapted it to a joint view of club requirements but Westmacott, the professional, was regarded as the major influence in developing the final lines and is recorded as the boat’s designer.

Qualities of Hull and Rig

She was a 20ft 4in part-decked gaff-rigger with a stubby, lifting bow to ride over short and steep seas, capable of being driven by a moderate spread of sail - about 200 sq.ft - and had an 11 cwt iron keel to enable her to carry her sail in a breeze. She was quick in turning, had roller reeling on fore and main, a shallow draught and a board which lifted through a slot in the main keel enabling her to sail over banks and shoals near Bembridge.

Apropos the mention of banks and boats with shallow draught, a few years ago a novice prospective purchaser of a well known shallow draught centre board type of Solent cruising yacht asked the salesman if the yacht drew much water. The salesman is said to have replied "Oh no, you can usually get across Ryde sands as long as they are moist".

For 30 years the Bembridge boat was used successfully for club racing, popular for an exhilarating performance and yet good in seaway. She was regarded as a difficult boat to capsize, but one who managed to do so, as the story goes, was Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe, who settled in the Island and used to sail at Bembridge in the years after World War 1.

Dispersal of the Fleet

By the 1930s however, the club turned to another Westmacott one-design for its club boats and sold off the 1904 fleet, Five or so became Portsmouth-based, brought across the Solent by naval establishments or individuals for a reputed £25 purchase price - and the scene was set for the formation of the Victory class.

Formation of PHR & SA and adoption of the ex-Bembridge O.D. Boat

Once the need for the Portsmouth Harbour Racing and Sailing Association and a Portsmouth one-design class had been recognised, events moved quickly.

The Association was founded at a meeting at the George Hotel in January 1934, with the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, Admiral Sir John Kelly and the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth (Alderman Sir Harold Pink) as Patrons and Mr. Harry Brickwood, a prominent X class helmsman, who lived at the Boom Tower, Portsmouth as President. He was the moving spirit in the idea of adopting the ex-Bembridge boat as the prototype of a class at Portsmouth and continued to be deeply interested in the class until his death.

As well as the others already mentioned the principal object was still the promotion of one-design racing. With boats from the same moulds and having the same allowance for sail area and with strict control over modification, slipping and scrubbing, exciting racing with the first across the line the winner, was expected.

The boats had to be fast enough to give good sport, safe enough not to drown a novice on his maiden cruise to the Isle of Wight, and to have some capacity for sleeping aboard even if only under an impromptu tent.

The choice clearly fell on the ex-Bembridge-boat, partly, no doubt, from the convenience of having several of the boats already in the harbour, and partly because it had been designed for the same needs and conditions that now had to be met at Portsmouth - a boat for really keen sailors to use in all types of weather and sea conditions of a normal Solent season and capable of being produced at a figure "to accommodate the moderate means of most prospective owners, especially those in the three services".

Formation of the Class

This was accordingly carried by a meeting of the f association the idea also being backed by Charles Nicholson, of Gosport, Britain's leading yacht designer of the day, who was to have an important role in establishing the new class by designing a new rig. The Victory Class was born.

Progress after Formation

By March 23rd, when the Evening News reported the association's adoption of the old Bembridge hull for the Victory class, much work had already been done.

The original drawings had been lost and a naval architect, Sidney Graham who became the class's official measurer and technical adviser, took the measurements off the Bembridge boat. Class records show he was paid ten guineas for this work and for preparing lines, and a-Chief Joiner Pommery was paid £5 11s 4d for nine days work and materials in making templates under Graham's supervision which was done in the Shipwright's shop at HM.S. Dolphin.

The Navy's involvement in the early days was immense. One of the leading lights was Commander - later Captain - H.M. Denham, the Executive Officer at Port Blockhouse, (later HM.S. Dolphin,) who had done much sailing with naval crews in whalers at Solent events including Cowes week. He became the first class captain a post which included responsibility for the construction drawings and templates as well as the placing of contracts with builders, iron founders, fittings manufacturers and sailmakers.

Other founders and members of the class committee, which handed ownership of drawings, template and keel-mould to the association, were P McAllen, of High Street, Portsmouth, who became Vice Captain. J.G. Kimber who became hon. treasurer, and Horace Stride, subsequently class secretary Charles Nicholson, supervised the design of a Bermudan sail plan, for the class, There were, in fact, several boats on order by the end of March, which gave rise to hopes that a fleet often to twelve boats would be racing during the coming season.

Bermudan-rig yachts and the original Bembridge built-gaff-riggers raced together in the earliest days, but the older boats were quickly converted to the new rig.

The result of all the planning was a 20ft 9in long boat with beam of 5ft 10in, draft 2ft 6in, carrying 195 sq.ft. of sail and with half a ton of ballast on the keel. The original lifting keel had been replaced by 2cwt of trimming ballast inboard, and roller reeling gear for main and foresail was carried, ' the finest, safest and sturdiest racing boats in the world" said the Evening News.

Price of Boats

The price of new yachts was fixed by the association as in the region of £75, though this was soon amended to "not exceeding £85".

SCRA Recognition

The new class was accepted by the Solent Classes Racing Association, which allocated the letter Z as its sail mark. From the start hulls were painted in black, with boot-topping coloured to indicate the owner's club - Royal Albert Yacht Club green, Portsmouth Sailing Club scarlet, Naval Sailing Association white, and Royal Air Force, Y.C. sky blue. Class membership was only open to members of associated clubs of the RHR.and S.A.

Conditions of Acceptance into the Class

Rules were strict and boats could not race as Victory yachts unless owned by members of the class. They had to be built by approved builders to the official templates and to be open to measurement by the official measurer throughout the construction and passed by him as eligible to race. But he was in no way responsible for the quality of material or workmanship.

The official measurer's fee was £4 4s and the fee to the class for the use of templates was £1 1s.

If rules were not followed yachts were in danger of being de-classed and only re-assessed on certain conditions. New masts and spars had to be made according to specification - the mast of solid wood

and in one piece - and any hull modifications required a certificate that design had not been materially altered. New sails must come from the class sailmaker.

A light bamboo cane, not more than 6ft, or a lead line could be used for sounding. The length of tiller and position of the mast were not fixed but the tiller had to be of wood though any form or material of extension could be used.

A dodger to standard pattern and mainsail battens as on the sailplan were allowed but the round of the leach could not exceed specification.

Paid hands could be carried in racing, but yachts were not to be out of the water more than 50 hours in all during any fortnight - without the leave of the class captain in a special case Subject to that bottoms could be scrubbed as often as the owner wanted.

Commencement of Racing

Victory class yachts had their first race on Saturday, June 2nd 1934, which, it turned out, was a notable debut day in more ways than one. At the same time Endeavour I - designed and built at Gosport by the same Charles Nicholson who designed the new Victory rig and destined to come closest to taking the America's Cup from the Americans until the Australian succeeded 49 years later - made her bow in a big boat regatta at Harwich.

The Solent classes were having their first races of the season under the burgee of the Royal Albert Club at Southsea, and the Victory class was there.

Only two of the new boats being built for the class were ready - Colonel WH. Barrell's Z11 Bien Aimee and Commander Denham and Mr. W Watson's Z12 Waterwitch. They were joined by five of the old Bembridge one-designs - P McAllen's Z1 Z'Moya and 72 Magpie, Z3 Jackdaw, Z4 Rook, and Z5 Raven, all sailed by Naval Officers from Whale Island.

The fleet was set two circuits of the swashway course, just over six miles but in the event the very light airs meant the race being shortened to one round. The Evening News report on the day recorded that the two new boats were too far behind the line to make a good start and were left tacking in a dropping wind.

The race was spoiled by three of the Whale Island boat leaving out No. 4 buoy and being disqualified after finishing well. Two of them - the records do not specify which - finished first and third. That apart, however, the new boats must have recovered well for Commander Denham to win the first Victory race in Z12 Waterwitch in 2hrs 39mins 50sec from Zi Z'Moya (2-49-50) and Z11 Bien Aimee (3-2-7). Was it a triumph, one wonders, for the new Bermudan rig?

As well as the honour of winning Race No Z12 Waterwitch collected 30s first place prize money the second boat earned 15s and third 10s.

Racing During the Remains of the Season

The first season settled into a pattern of Saturday races until Thursday July 5th, when the first mid-week race as started - only to be abandoned an hour later due to lack of wind. But Friday, July 13th, brought the best race of the season with a fresh westerly wind, but rain. Z12 Waterwitch was again the winner.

A schoolboys' race was tried in early August but had a disappointing entry which drew some criticism.

On August 9th the Victory fleet was at Cowes. Z1 Z'Moya winning a race off the Shraper, though it is recorded that the order was considerably influenced by early mishaps on the rocks off the Green. It must have been a heavy weather Cowes week for the following day a squall hit the dinghy fleets in Thorness bay and caused havoc. Among those who had to be rescued were Uffa Fox and Stewart Morris who had been sailing Uffa's International 14 - Prince of Wales cup winner.

Stewart Morris, who was to become an Olympic sailing medal winner in the Swallow class in which he still competes was closely connected with the Victory class in its early days and was put down as a potential member. He brought an Oxford and Cambridge Sailing Society squad down for a team race in September and won, sailing Z7 Hawk, though victory class took overall honours, 18pts to 8. O.C.S.S. helmsmen, wrote the class statistician, were the better helmsmen but they were unfortunate in having two boats disqualified.

There was another team race against Emsworth Sailing Club, who won 12pts to nine, and a further important event that year was the passage race to Yarmouth and back. Eleven entrants had to close-reef due to strong winds on the outward passage which took four hours, Commander Denham's Z12 Waterwitch crossing the line first 40 seconds up on Captain Caffyn's Z9 Dolphin with Z1 Z'Moya third. After entertainment by the West Wight YC. the boats started the return trip at about 1530hrs and arrived at Portsmouth within two minutes of one another at about ten o'clock.

Results and Awards

There was keen racing throughout the season in class events, regattas and passage races, and the most successful, undoubtedly, were Z12 Waterwitch and Z1 Z'Moya. They were regularly among the honours, though in watching each other closely they sometimes let others through. Z12 Waterwitch took the Presidents Shield for the top-scoring boat, the S.C.R.A. Medal, the top prize money of 75s 6d. Her helmsman, Commander Denham, took the Helmsman's Cup, but, having himself presented the Passage race trophy he let that go to second-placed P McAllen.

The awards were presented at the first annual dinner at the George Hotel in October, when speakers referred to a successful season with the fleet growing from seven boats to fourteen, with several more building. The sentiments were echoed at the annual meeting at H.M.S. Vernon in October, when it was reported that admission of the next member, the 21st would mean the initial outlay of £25 on class expenses had been covered. It was agreed that in future the one guinea fee for use of the moulds could go to the association and not the class treasurer.

Introduction of Spinnakers

One development agreed was that spinnakers could be carried in 1935, though they could be prohibited in a race on the initiative of the class captain and subject to mutual agreement.

Progress in the Following Season

Twenty-one boats were available when the second season started and the racing quickly settled into the pattern that was to be followed in the years before and immediately following World War II.

The racing programme has gradually changed over the years and in the early days was geared to some extent to the naval officers' off duty periods. Racing took place on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons with passage races to local ports on Sundays.

The number of local regattas greatly exceeded today's number and each was a colourful half fun. half serious event with a varied programme of aquatic sports from rowing and sailing to swimming and greasy poles. The class supported many of these in places like Hill Head, Lee-on-Solent, Bembridge, Seaview, Porchester, Fareham and Hardway.

Passage races to local ports such as Cowes, Wootton. Chichester and Hill Head, to name but a few, were held but Bembridge was probably the favourite because the association president, Harry Brickwood, would entertain the crews at his home there.

Originally the Passage Race cup had been presented by Captain HM, Denham for a series of six passage races or for a race round the Isle of Wight being started and that was in June 1935, when it was abandoned through lack of wind. The passage races gradually lost their popularity and in 1968 it was decided to award the cup for a single race to Yarmouth. This is now the most popular race of the season with an overnight stay to enjoy the hospitality of the Royal Solent Yacht Club.

Present Day Racing Programme

However, nowadays the class races on Saturday afternoon's and Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The races are for various trophies namely the Helmsman's cup, President's shield and Saturday trophy all held on Saturdays and two series of races on Tuesday and Thursdays during the summer when the evenings are light. Other individual trophies include the Royal Albert Perpetual challenge cup raced for at the club's regatta, the Harry Feltham Memorial trophy for an extended race in the eastern Solent, the Hamper trophy presented by Fareham Sailing and Motor Boat Club and competed for at the combined harbour Club's regatta, the Woodcock trophy for a single handed race when happily the use of spinnakers is barred, and the ladies race and crews race. Other individual trophies are raced for at Cowes.

Team races are sailed against Oxford University Yacht Club, and Oxford and Cambridge Sailing Society. This year's events were double celebrations as the university club this year celebrates its centenary and the society its golden jubilee. In past years the University match between Oxford and Cambridge has twice been sailed in Victory boats.

Class Personalities

Z12 Waterwitch never had another season of success like the first. She did not race during 1935, after which she was sold to the Royal Artillery YC. After that she was used by a series of owners, one of whom, Michael Mills, had six wins in 1957-8, but she was laid up in Portsmouth in the late 1970's and sold to the Gibraltar fleet a year or so ago.

Commander Denham had his own boat, Z22 Judita built for 1935, won nine races out of twenty one and he took the Helmsman's cup and the S.C.R.A. medal again. By 1938, however, Z22 Judita was missing from the class lists.

P. McAllen continued his association with the class for several years, still vice-captain in 1938, and won five trophies before the war brought an end to racing for the time being.

The growing class attracted some well known personalities and kept strong naval links for a time, Rear-Admiral R.R. Turner, of HM. Dockyard, who had Z26 Windspit built for the 1936 season, became class captain. Four boats were kept by H.M.S. Excellent, one by H.M.S. Dolphin, one by H.M.S. Vernon, and the Royal Naval Barracks' Z8 Arenbee won the President's shield and S.C.R.A. medal in 1936.

Colonel W.H. Barrel, who was also a prominent member of Hill Head S.C. continued to race Z11 Bien Aimee until the war. Alderman A. Bosworth Wright and John Glanville owned and sailed Z23 Zephyr. R.G. Leaf of Alverstoke, became class secretary and Horace Stride, one of the founders and owner of Z30 Zest took over the duty during the war years.

Lieutenant Woodcock RN

One of the most poignant episodes in the Victory Class story started in 1937, when a young naval lieutenant, Sam Woodcock was given a surprise 21st birthday present by his father, Percy Woodcock - a Victory boat, Z35, which was promptly named Surprise. With her, Sam dominated the class that year winning 15 races and getting three seconds in 20 starts and still retains the distinction of being the only helmsman to win all races during Cowes week. He won all four trophies, the Helmsman's cup, Presidents shield, Passage Race cup and the S.C.R.A. medal.

Naval commitments no doubt, took a hand when Surprise had only eight races in the next two years, though the talented Sam was still sailing and represented the Royal Navy at Kiel in the year before the war,

Sadly he lost his life in the sinking of H.M.S. Barham in the wartime Mediterranean campaign. His father subsequently presented Z35 Surprise to the RNSA. who have raced her from time to time though she has not had a start since 1978.

Interruption of Activities by the War in 1939

There was a full programme of races in 1939, the last of which took place on 26th August. On the racing secretary's copy of the notice the race for 2nd September, there appears a note "Not sailed - war imminent". Racing was then suspended until after the war.

Resumption after the War

When activities were later resumed Harry Brickwood continued as president until his death in September 1950. He was succeeded by J.G. kimber, who was treasurer until his death in about 1955. P McAllen another of the founders who had been vice-captain just before and after the war, continued in the capacity of official measurer to the class at least until 1957. Horace Stride, one of the earliest members held the office of class secretary for altogether 8 years after the war. So the class was well served by those who had planned it and brought it into existence in the years before the war.

Class Officers

In 1949 Howard White became captain of the class and held that office for 28 years until 1976. He was a good administrator and a good captain who regularly sailed with the class during those years. He was followed by Dr. Kenneth Childs who had been vice-captain for 25 years. Incidentally it was announced during Cowes week 1982 that Z41 Puffin, which had entered the class in 1947 and was sailed by Ken Childs had competed in 1,000 races in the class, the first to do so. Ian Mead who became captain in 1980, had been vice-captain for 3 years and before that racing secretary for 17 years. Leonard Kirkpatrick was class secretary for 9 years up to 1982 and Percy Jackson was treasurer for 21 years until 1975. So it will be seen the class has never lacked a stable management with a record of long service.

Continuation of the Fleet

Of the 29 boats shown in the records as being with the class in 1938, 25 raced that season. 3 were original Bembridge Sailing Club boats, Another, Z4 Rook, rejoined the class after the war for several seasons and then disappeared again. She was finally located on the Medina River in the Isle of Wight and acquired by the class, but proved beyond repair and was broken up. Z5 Raven had appeared in class records in 1934, but not again afterwards. There is reason to think she may have gone to Gibraltar. Ex-Bembridge boat Z1 Z'Moya originally belonged to P McAllen and was exchanged by him in or about 1938 with Dr Murray Stuart at the latter's request, because he

considered that his newly built Victory boat Z28 Zena, which joined the class in 1936 did not perform as well as he had expected. The exchange was on the basis that the boats exchanged numbers and names, so the new Victory boat became Z1 Z'Moya and the ex-Bembridge boat Z28 Zena. Dr. Murray Smart may have been right, because the records show that in 1938 with 23 starts in the class Z28 Zena had 6 firsts, 5 seconds, and 3 thirds while Z1 Z'Moya with 21 starts had 4 firsts, 1 second and 5 thirds.

Z28 Zena (formerly Z1) and another ex-Bembridge boat Z2 Magpie were converted to cruising use. In recent years nothing has been heard of Z28 Zena but Z2 Magpie is now sailing in Southampton Water. Z3 Jackdaw is lying at Newtown Creek, Isle of Wight, in a dilapidated condition. The remaining ex Bembridge boats Z4 Rook and Z5 Raven are no longer with the class, the former having been broken up as mentioned above. Z1 Dizdaine (formerly Z1 Z'Moya and before that Z28 Zena) however is still with the class.

The last boat built before the war in 1939, was Z37 Beacon (formerly Devorgilla) and the first after the war was Z38 Minx. During 1947 5 more joined the class, another 7 in 1948, 3 in 1949, 2 in 1950, 4 in 1951 and 1 in 1952. Between 1952 and the present day only 5 more have been built for the class, making a total since the war of 28. It should be remembered that for a long time there has been a fleet of Victory boats at Gibraltar, mostly gleaned from the class and a few built specially. Of the 32 boats numbered Z6 to Z37 built before the war, 3 (2 immediately on being built) went to Gibraltar before the war and 9 after the war. Of Victory boats built after the war numbered Z38 to Z69, 11 (5 immediately on being built) have gone to Gibraltar. Thus of 65 Victory boats built altogether and 5 ex-Bembridge boats, 37 are still with the class, 23 have gone to Gibraltar, 3 have been converted and 1 reconverted, 3 are known to have been broken up and 4 have been declassified or lost track of. It is perhaps of interest that one of the Victory boats at Gibraltar is personally owned by the Governor, Admiral Sir David Williams, a keen yachtsman.

Ownership of Victory Boats

The pattern, of ownership of individual boats in the fleet, and of the racing, has changed over the years.

Of the 29 boats forming the fleet in 1938, 9 were owned by service establishments or service clubs and 6 by service officers. This left 14 or just under half owned by civilians.

The 15 service owned boats made 51 starts in 1938, whereas 14 civilian owned boats made 205 starts. It is therefore apparent that at that time the civilian owned half of the fleet raced 4 times more often than the service half. This may have been accounted for by what are known as the exigencies of the service, particularly at that time of national crisis. Today out of 34 boats sailing with the class, 4 are owned by service and associated establishments or clubs, and 2 by civilian organisations. The remaining 28 are all owned by individuals or in partnership.

Incidents Concerning Members

Speaking earlier of Dr. Murray Stuart, he was a jovial man who was full of good humour and enjoyed a joke even against himself. He had come from Birmingham, where he had been in practice as a surgeon, but due to deteriorating eyesight had to give that up, and took to a different branch of medicine. It was he who arranged for the class to hold a fixture with the Midland Sailing Club on a reservoir at Edgbaston which was adjacent to a main road. On their return the team complained that during the race they had been blanketed by passing tramcars! How the doctor ever managed to navigate his Victory boat without frequent collisions is a mystery. In fact he did occasionally have a collision, once heavily with a channel marker post during a race in Portsmouth harbour which he had entirely failed to see. He was however not the only one who has failed to see obstructions when sailing. In the less distant past an elder member of the class attempted to sail his Victory boat,

named after a sea bird short of stature, under Pneumonia bridge' at Haslar, either having failed to notice its presence, or thinking perhaps that the mast was collapsible, which in a sense it was! A story is also told of Murray Stuart, that one day when racing at Cowes, his spinnaker fell down into the sea, in full view of the Royal Yacht Squadron castle, when a voice came over the loud hailer "I suppose you know trawling is not permitted off the castle!"

A few years ago on a misty Saturday when racing was off another Victory boat was taken for a potter to that no-man's-land east of South Parade pier at Southsea. In view of the poor visibility close contact was kept with the shore. On the return, a short tack was put in to clear the end of the pier, when the breeze quietly took off and the boat was sucked unceremoniously broadside on to the middle of the pier by the strengthening west going tide. After about 2 hours a passing motorboat plucked the Victory off without damage, except for ignominy suffered by the owner, from passers by on the pier, and particularly by the remarks of small boys, who seemed to find the situation more interesting and amusing than their fishing. He was however encouraged by the broad grin and sympathetic remarks of the comedian (Wakeyt Wakey!) Billy Cotton, who was doing a short season on the pier while living aboard his own cruiser and happened also to walk by.

A few years earlier this same owner had suffered farther ignominy. It was in the days when reefer jackets and yachting caps with snowy tops were considered to be 'de rigueur' and he, feeling particularly pleased with a new acquisition from Morgan's at Cowes was waiting at the foot of Ryde pier to welcome a relative, off the steamer, when a confounded fellow came along and asked him the time of the next boat back to Portsmouth.

Builders of Victory Boats

The main builders of Victory boats have been Hampers of Fareham. The late Harry Feltham of Bath Square and the late K W Clemens of Broad Street both at Old Portsmouth each built several, and Woodnutts of Bembridge built at least two for Gibraltar. Stan Feltham who succeeded his uncle Harry Feltham in Bath Square and still does work for the class, was apprenticed to Woodnutts, now no longer in existence, but whose yard became the base where hovercraft of Hovertravel, who run the service between Southsea and Ryde, are maintained. Incidentally Harry Feltham died suddenly one evening in 1958 on board Z23 Janet in Portsmouth Harbour during a Victory class race. This was perhaps a suitable if sad end to one who had given his life to building and sailing boats. He had a great sense of humour. Many years ago when racking across Portsmouth harbour in a dinghy approaching a smart steam yacht moored in Camper and Nicholsons tier he explained that the time to come about is not until you see a man running along the deck with a fender in his hand. Once when spotting members of the Childs family rather overcrowding a dinghy in the harbour he shook his fist and said 'I'll tell the Coroner of you!' The latest Victory boat Z69 was built in 1983 by John Perry who himself was apprenticed to Harry Feltham.

W C Lucas & Son have always been closely associated with the class as sailmakers and a few ago were appointed the sole sailmakers.

The Quality of Victory Boats

Victory boats are stable and seaworthy and as far as the class is concerned only four have been known to have sunk, and they were all recovered and sailed again.

It is said that one went down off Lee on Solent before the war in a squall, but otherwise in circumstances unknown, and was recovered. In attempting to pick up a mooring after a race to Porchester in a strong lee going tide and fresh breeze one boat caught her mainsheet on the bowsprit of a moored cruiser. This had the immediate effect of pinning the mainsheet hard with the yacht downtide and downwind.

Two quick broaches filled the cockpit and down she went. As the crew were pulled from the water one wag was heard to ask why they had left their racing flag flying! A third boat racing in the neighbourhood of Egypt Point, one Cowes week when close hauled on starboard tack in a fresh breeze was rammed just aft of amid ship and holed, by another boat in the class which tried to pass under her stern, but the breeze was such that she would not fully answer her helm, without her main sheet being eased, which was not thought to have been done.

The rammed boat sank with her mast showing and was recovered without undue trouble, The fourth occasion was off Haslar wall, near Gilkicker, one evening in a reasonably fresh breeze, when the boat was put about the mainsheet fast and losing way was caught by the wind, on the new tack, before she made way again or the sheet could be eased. She heeled over, filled and sank quite quickly. The top of her mast was also standing out of the water, so there was no difficulty in locating and recovering her in due course.

All this seems to show that in a fresh breeze it should be seen, at all times that the main sheet can be readily eased or let go, particularly when way has been lost. When properly reefed and with plenty of way on, it seems a Victory boat will go through almost anything. Too much water on board can make a Victory boat very unstable. There was an occasion when an owner thought he could get away in a strong breeze without sufficient reefs in, and soon found water above the floor boards. This resulted in very uncomfortable wallowing and when a list was corrected, the water rushed across the floor and nearly capsized the boat on the other side. It was found that the only thing to do was to lower the main, turn and run down wind under foresail until it was possible to rid the boat of unwanted water.

In rather less severe conditions, again off Haslar wall, a rather inexperienced crew was sent forward to collect the spinnaker bag off the stemhead, where at that time it was usually put, when he trod upon part of the deck which wasn't there and went smartly overboard. Fortunately he had the presence of mind to hold on to the shrouds (which rather slowed the boat) but at least enabled him to be recovered without delay This sort of thing brings home the need for life jackets to be worn when appropriate (probably in a reefing breeze) which was not being done on that occasion. Incidentally a few minutes later an uncomfortable split appeared in the main and a certain pride was taken in lowering it, bending on the old one which happened to be in the boat, while gilling along under foresail and getting going again without finishing the race as 'Tail end Charlie'

Spinnakers in Action

Speaking of spinnakers, these can be a hazard, a trap for the unwary and a nuisance. Some years ago on rounding Whaley buoy it became necessary to run the spinnaker fairly smartly, when the crew discovered, that as luck would have it, the spinnaker sheet had somehow got under the forefoot, and was to hand on the wrong side of the boat. First one tried unsuccessfully to clear it, by pulling with all his might, then the other tried, and then they both had a go at it together to be strains of the Song of the Volga Boatmen". After a good bit of this the frustrated, and by that time irascible helmsman spotted that the far end was firmly hooked into the chain plate on the opposite side of the boat, and that if the crew had persisted in their efforts the mast would have come down. Most helmsmen have watched fuming and transfixed most of the way along the down wind leg of a course, while the crew endeavour to comprehend what is wrong, and then what to do, when a knot has carefully tied itself in the middle of the sail making it into a perfect hourglass. Other crews have been known to argue all the way along a down wind leg, as to whether it is really advisable to put the spinnaker up, while boat after boat is passing with those on board grinning their heads off

Racing at Cowes

The class has always taken part in the racing at Cowes and each member has memories of occasions and incidents some of which have been triumphs, which have a permanent place in his memory and

others which have been disasters, which he prefers to forget, but which all told must be counted as part of the fun.

In 1938, 9 Victory boats went to Cowes, in 1983 the largest fleet of 27 took part in the week, but to celebrate this, the jubilee year there was an even higher turn out of 32 boats.

Conditions at Cowes

One of the things which impress a newcomer to Cowes is the sheer number of yachts racing from the largest to the smallest in size. When as occasionally happens they all seem to be sailing in the same part of the Solent together, either in the same direction, or more impressively on courses which converge or cross each other, there are magnificent sights and sometimes hair raising experiences. But as everyone from the largest to the smallest seems to have a fair idea of the rule of the road collisions seldom occur. In alternate years the position is even more impressive when Admirals cup teams, from nearly 20 nations, sailing 3 times as many boats are racing, and ending the week with the start of the Fastnet race, with many more yachts joining in.

There is no doubt Cowes is an exhilarating experience and the highlight of the racing season. The configuration of the coasts on either side of the Solent, the channels, banks and confused tidal streams complicated by the inflow and outflow to and from Southampton Water and the Medina River, make many varying and interesting courses available. It seems that the days are interspersed with strong winds which sometimes cause cancellations, or at least excitements and light breezes or calms which cause postponement of starts or ultimate cancellation, waiting for notice of which can be very frustrating. Very often light weather involves whole fleets lying to kedge anchors at a downtide buoy, waiting for the breeze, with the inevitable chaos, when anchors begin to drag in a strong tide in deep water, or when boats impatient to be off weigh anchor before the new breeze is established.

Cowes Week in Earlier Days

Cowes week has changed. It has always been a series of regattas given by different clubs, in the old days each with its own programme, which had to be collected in advance from each club's premises, with individual starting and finishing lines, sometimes not as distinct as they might be. In one case the programme was seldom available until shortly before the start of the race. There was also the problem of moorings which some members used to lay themselves as best they could. Then there was the question of getting to and from the mooring in individual dinghies for which storage ashore had somehow to be found.

Present Day Arrangements

Now for some years all that has changed. The week has been sponsored successively by several large firms which provide a less Spartan background. Although 6 clubs and Cowes town still provide the regattas there is a combined clubs committee who co-ordinate the racing, with one regatta office at which all business is done, one programme for all races in the week, and all starts from the excellent Royal Yacht Squadron line. Moorings for the class are arranged with the harbour master in advance, and there is a free ferry service to and from moorings. Altogether this is a considerable improvement. In passing it is perhaps interesting to note that the entrance fee for a Victory class race in the Cowes Town Regatta in 1953 was 2/6d and the 1st prize was £1, the 2nd 10/-, and the 3rd 5/-. Today the entrance fee for each race is £350 and prize money is distributed to the class secretary according to the number of starters; for the Victory class being £21 for between 21 and 30 starters.

Management of Races

The starting, finishing and management of races is of a high order. Due to the large number of fleets involved, some years ago an experiment was tried of starting smaller classes from a committee boat in Osborne bay. It was a long way to go to the start, and was on the whole not an unqualified success. However, when a calm prevailed at the start, as it seemed to do that summer, it was a nice place to sunbathe and swim while waiting for a breeze

Now, however, an ingenious system has been evolved of starting races at 5 minutes intervals, small classes inshore, alternating with large classes off shore, using the 5 minute gun of one class as the 10 minute gun for the next alternate class. This enables all classes to be started before lunch, instead of the smaller classes having to wait till the afternoon. There is a separate finishing line for the smaller classes which reduces confusion in the event of a mass finish which sometimes happens. In 1949 one club, in order to deal with the situation, sent 4 classes, including the Victory class, away at the same time but taking note of separate finishes. This meant 60 or 70 boats all going round the course together, an unusual, historic and somewhat chaotic event for those days but not unusual in these days when such a number can start in one class e.g. the "X" class.

Hazards of Racing at Cowes

One of the hazards at Cowes is the strong tide which runs each way through the roads. This can lead to a good deal of close tacking along the shore where there are numerous lumps of rock beneath the surface, especially near Egypt point, and into Gurnard bay, and it is not unknown for boats to run aground on these lumps. One year a Victory boat ran on to and sat up on one of these lumps which was pointed. In the efforts to shake and twist the boat off, the point of rock penetrated the bottom and sprang a plank. A hasty retreat was made to Lallows yard at Cowes, by dint of standing on the upsprung plank, and pumping steadily. A tingle was put on that night which remains in position to this day.

On other occasions enthusiastic but inexperienced crews have been known to leap overboard from a grounded yacht with the intention of pushing the boat off only to disappear from view. What they failed to realise is that the boat is fast on a pinnacle of rock only and that on each side of the boat the water is deep.

Tide cheating off the Green against the ebb tide with spinnaker set used to call for sailing a course almost on the beach. The Grantham pier was an interesting obstruction stretching out from the shore across the course. The pier or landing stage was built in stages with steps down at intervals of about twenty feet. Gauging which stage nearest to the shore had sufficient depth to sail over caused navigators many perplexities. A lucky yacht got it just right on one occasion actually bouncing on the structure as she passed thereby dislodging one of the decking planks. This popped to the surface and temporally lodged between the rudder and keel of the following boat!

Another worry can be the Shrape mud between the breakwater and Old Castle point. Tide cheating often leads to touching bottom on the Shrape, with consequent delay. Usually it is possible to get off again, even by having to go over the side and push off if the tide is not running out too fast. Quite large yachts have often been seen there lying over on their side, waiting for the tide to rise again. One year in light weather with a foul tide along the New Forest shore with large fleets standing practically still for a large part of the day numerous complaints were afterwards heard of the long hours spent in the company of the same flock of New Forest ponies grazing by the beach!

Class Social Activities

These delights of racing are combined with the social side of Cowes week, which in recent years has been well organised for the class by an active social committee. The principal festivities are usually, a cocktail party at the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club, when opportunity is taken to invite and show appreciation to important persons in charge of Cowes racing. There is also an enjoyable class dinner at the Royal Solent Yacht Club at Yarmouth. Both these clubs have very good houses set in delightful surroundings and the class counts it a privilege to be able to enjoy their use on these occasions. In this, the jubilee year of the class, the event was marked by a dinner and ball at Cowes.

In addition to the functions arranged by the social committee at Cowes, they lay on an opening of the season party a pre-Cowes barbecue, a prize giving party at the end of the season and a supper to follow the annual meeting of the class, all of which help to make for a closely knit and enthusiastic membership.

Bath Square

The main base of the class has always been at Bath Square in Old Portsmouth at the entrance to Portsmouth harbour, probably due to the fact that the Portsmouth Sailing Club is located there and a majority of the members of the class have always been members. The harbour entrance is a focal point at Portsmouth, because on the one hand it gives immediate access to the Solent and alternatively there is plenty of sheltered water in the harbour for several miles to Porchester and Fareham both of which are pleasant sails to make. For many years, indeed since before the war, the class rented the yard and sheds at Bath Square, which were originally a depot for Pickfords which ran a service of vessels carrying cargo to Cowes and Newport in the Isle of Wight, from Point wharf in Bath Square (now dismantled).

Point wharf adjoins the well known Quebec House which has a prominent position in the seaward side of Bath Square clad with white painted lap boarding. It dates from the 8th century when it was the Quebec Hotel. It is said that one of the last duels to death took place there, the body being disposed of through a trap door which still exists, into the harbour to be carried away on the full ebb. Next to the wharf is the Customs house and hailing station, the former also of ancient origin but now for several years no longer in use.

In the yard and sheds it has been possible to lay up 8 yachts under cover and another 8 in the open together with dinghies and gear. Masts and spars have been stored in the loft of the nearby PSC. This club also owns the boom yard overlooking the harbour entrance where dinghies can also be stored. The boom yard was the traditional site for the raising and lowering of the boom across Portsmouth harbour entrance to prevent the intrusion of enemy vessels into the harbour in time of war. This concept was historical, but was brought up to date in both world wars as a defence against possible submarine attack. From the boom yard, for many years before the car ferry slip was constructed in the Camber, almost all dinghies were launched from a slipway there, when leaving for the moorings on the other side of the harbour.

Temporary use of Square Tower

At one time during the years soon after the war the ground floor of the Square Tower at the bottom of High Street, became available for laying up Victory boats. It had a slipway with rails and a trolley suitable for launching boats into the sea by pier. Before the war it had been used by the Portsmouth Yacht Club, which had its headquarters in the square tower, but the club did not survive the war. The ground floor facility was rented by the class for a short period but as a permanent arrangement, the rental is believed to have been beyond its means and it was taken over by Vospers the shipbuilders, as leisure premises for the employees of their Broad Street yard. This use ceased

when Portsmouth City Council made large alterations and improvements to the walls and made it possible to walk along the bastions from the Round tower past Victoria pier and the Square tower to the Hot Walls.

Purchase of Victory Class Yard

The class has continued to use Pickfords yard until the present day. After Point wharf ceased to be used by British Road Services (the successors to Pickfords) the yard became available for sale and the class bought it in 1983 together with a small piece of open land between the west boundary and the sea. The title of the yard was interesting because two parts were subject to ground leases granted by the Corporation of Portsmouth, one in 1770 and the other in 1776 each for 1000 years, the ground rents in one case being 6 shillings per annum and 2 fat capons to the Mayor at Christmas, and in the other 4 shillings. Two other parts were held on short tenancies.

Arrangements in Connection with the Purchase

In order to effect the purchase and arrange the necessary finance the class became a non profit making company limited by guarantee known as "Victory Class Limited" of which owners are members and the class committee form the board, crew members being associates. A single lease of the whole yard for 150 years at a ground rent albeit somewhat larger than the original rents, has been negotiated with the city council. One of the terms of the arrangement was that a brick wall should be built round the yard and additional land, with a grant towards the cost by the council. The work was completed with expedition. It is a great improvement on the corrugated iron fence which had surrounded the yard for many years. It is intended that as and when funds become available other improvements will be made (particularly to its surface which at present is very uneven) so as to ensure its use as a centre for class activities in the future.

Fitting Out and Laying Up

The fitting out and laying up of Victory boats in the Victory class yard as it is now known is undertaken by owners and their crews. The boats when fitted out towards the end of April each year are taken by trolley from Bath square along Bathing lane and across Broad Street to the old car ferry slipway which has recently been superseded by the new ferry terminal adjoining H.M.S. Vernon. They are launched on the trolley, after which masts are stepped. In earlier days boats were launched with the mast already stepped.

At laying up time in October the process is reversed save that the boats are lifted out one after another by mobile crane. In these operations, crews and friends all co-operate, and lifting boats on and off trolleys, and pulling them from and to the yard is easily accomplished.

Moorings

A concern for the class has always been with moorings in Portsmouth harbour. For a number of years moorings were available in the Cold harbour (formerly the Coal harbour) north of the ferry terminal at Gosport Up until after the end of the last war this was where dockyard coal barges were moored, but was subsequently vacated and partially enclosed by the extension of the oil pier, where Royal Fleet Auxiliary tankers berth. There were also one or two moorings immediately across the harbour from Bath square near the entrance to Haslar lake. The R.A.Y.C. has for some years had moorings in Haslar lake itself, used by members of the class. When Camper and Nicholson's marina came to Cold harbour a few years ago the position there was further restricted and with the large increase in the number of yachts generally and the shortage of moorings overall, for several seasons some yachts in the class had to be moored off the mud to the north of north corner of the dockyard at the entrance to Fountain lake. This was unsatisfactory because of the distance away and the time taken in getting to and from there made it difficult for owners to get to races in time. The

position has now been alleviated by allocation to the class of a mooring area between Haslar lake and the Gosport ferry terminal which the class itself will regulate. This means that nearly all boats in the class can now be moored reasonably close to the harbour entrance outside which practically all races take place.

Starting Line

As regards the starting and finishing of races the position has also changed over the years. In the early days races were started off the boom yard in the harbour entrance and later off T.S. Foudroyant (now probably the oldest ship afloat) which at that time was moored near the entrance to Haslar lake, but that proved unsatisfactory in those narrow waters and arrangements were made for races to be started off Clarence esplanade where there were two signal stations.

RAYC Signal Station

Before the war one signal station was a low wooden building which belonged to the R.A.Y.C. and rebuilt after the war, following war damage. In those days before the war there was a well known local doctor, a member of the club, who was no respecter of persons. He would come in from sailing and watching the faces of the elderly members sipping their gins, in a loud voice would make such outrageous remarks as "I got an enormous hole in my sheet today". One can imagine the spluttering this caused. The new building had a very good flag mast, and transit marks, with well equipped 'monkey island' on top for starting races. Below there were changing and toilet Facilities, and a large lounge and bar with deck in front complete with deck chairs, where racing could be watched in comfort. It became an important social centre, particularly for RAYC. members and their friends. Prize givings, cocktail parties, and even dances were held there, It was also used for RAYC, and other regattas, and regularly several times a season for starting races for the Royal Ocean Racing Club. The RAYC had a very efficient starting team who obliged the class with starts on Saturday afternoons. This team consisted of Admiral Gurnell "Gunner Rowe, "Towser" Garner, Major Penny and Philip Greenhow. From time to time they also used to assist on the RYS. line during Cowes week.

PSC Signal Station

The PSC also had a signal station on the esplanade, nearer to the Clarence pier. This had been inherited from the Royal Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Club, a well known club which had flourished before the war, but which was absorbed into the R.A.Y.C. either during or soon after the war. This signal station was not so well found as the other, but it served its purpose as far as the class was concerned for a good many years. Thursday, and later, Tuesday evening races were regularly started from there.

Changing Conditions

Gradually however things began to change. The R.A.Y.C, joined forces with the Royal Naval Club and the RAYC starting team faded out and were not replaced. In the last few years the cross channel ferry traffic into Portsmouth has increased enormously following improvements to the ferry terminal at Stamshaw and the construction of the motorway into Portsmouth. The PSC.signal station fell into disuse. The death knell of the R.A.Y.C. signal station was sounded when, because of obstruction of the channel into Portsmouth harbour by the large number of yachts taking part in R.O.R.C. races, the club moved its starting line to the naval signal station at Gilkicker point. At the same time pressure was put on the class to move its starting line to the eastward of Southsea castle, out of the way of shipping. This proposition is in abeyance however, because arrangements cannot yet be made with the planning authority for an alternative site for a signal station. Now the RAYC signal station is shared and manned jointly by the class and the P.S.C. as far as class races are concerned it continues to function, but is largely in limbo, because it is doomed. Money is not being

spent on its upkeep, the deck in front has disappeared into the sea, the once popular lounge and bar are derelict, but the starting box and flag signals just about work. For some time, as is becoming usual these days, due to the high cost of ammunition, guns have not been used but an aerosol sounder is used instead.

In connection with the starting of class races, special mention must be made of Mike Day, a former helmsman in the class, and ocean racing crew member, who has rendered great service to the class in recent years, by acting as officer of the day regularly not infrequently single handed, but always cheerfully and efficiently. To him the grateful thanks of the class are extended.

On 7th July 1984 the class jubilee race took place in very fine weather off the signal station which was dressed overall for the occasion. Mike Day was once again officer of the day and a cannon was brought into action. There were 32 starters, a fine sight. The course was planned to bring the class in procession from the direction of Southsea castle along the sea front to the finishing line at the signal station. Unfortunately however the wind fell light towards the end of the race and only 10 boats were able to make the finishing line before the time limit expired.

Small Boat Channel

For the past two seasons regulations have been made by the Queen's harbour master that all yachts entering or leaving harbour shall keep to a small boat channel within 50 metres of the west side of the harbour, but when entering, may keep close to the Portsmouth side instead. This has meant that at some states of tide and wind, it is advisable to carry an outboard motor, to push through this channel, unless the crew are enthusiastic oarsmen, which is often not the case. Close contact is maintained with the Queen's harbour master with regard to starts of races and courses.

The waters of Southsea has a complex tidal system and courses involve an understanding of the tidal streams in the harbour entrance and at Spithead and where they meet. This all adds to the skills required to win a race.

With the increased commercial shipping using Portsmouth harbour it has become necessary to avoid using the deep water channel as much as possible and to this end racing marks have been laid on its seaward side. Starting in this area some distance from the shore makes identification of flags and the line itself very difficult although this is more than offset by less interference from shipping.

The use of navigational buoys generally has been reduced and the positioning of more racing marks by the naval authorities has meant that the setting of shorter courses for evening races has become easier by using them. The class is grateful to the Queens harbour master for this facility. On Saturdays however marks such as Kemps, Browndown, Saddle and North East mining ground are used and unless the wind direction is particularly unfavourable a good windward leg exceeding three miles can be achieved.

Although in recent years the traditional south-westerly seems to be frequently usurped by an easterly wind one still tends to consider the south -westerly as the prevailing one. When it blows from this direction the class is fortunate to have an excellent stretch of water providing a windward leg about one mile long. Being under the lee of Haslar wall the sea is reasonably smooth in even the roughest conditions. It also has many variables and no one has yet mastered the question of when to stay close to the wall and when to stay away.

Yacht fund

During the past few years the class has instituted a yacht fund, subscribed to by members, for the purchase of boats at market price, when owners wish to sell, for resale to those wishing to race with the class, In this way boats, which might otherwise have gone elsewhere and be lost to the class, are

still racing with the class. Another has been reconverted from a cabin cruiser and is also again with the class.

Maintaining the One Design Characteristics

The class has always been keen to see that the fleet remains a strict one design so that racing may be on level terms. Likewise it has taken care to prohibit the use of expensive gadgets, which could adversely affect member's pockets. To that end class rules and the specification of boats and rigging have been strictly controlled and only altered with the consent of the class generally. The class has also been mindful of the need to improve the sailing performance of the boats and over the years improvements to the rig and sail plan and the specifications have been made.

Proposed Naval Signal Station

The latest suggestion for keeping racing away from the main channel into the harbour is for the navy to install a signal station for starting races for small yachts (including the class) on Haslar wall. This means that starts would be well out of the way of all traffic particularly now the Ryde passenger ferries, and the car ferries are no longer permitted to use the inner swashway along the wall. One difficulty may be getting the starting team to that point, though presumably this would somehow be overcome.

Change of Sail Plan

Until 1960 the rig was the same as when the class was formed in 1934, namely a large mainsail and comparatively small foresail, with adjustable runners, set up to windward, and no standing backstay. The spinnaker was a small flat sail with a long pole cupped to the mast. The sails were of cotton.

In 1960 following the advent of a new materials not available in earlier days new sails were authorised, the mainsail and foresail in terylene with a modern nylon spinnaker in colours to owners choice and a shorter pole. This improved performance and added much to the appearance of the class when racing. It is interesting to note that at that time a complete suit of new sails cost £55 whereas in 1983 the cost was £320.

In 1969 the running backstays, which were inclined to be a nuisance to set up when changing tacks, were replaced by a standing backstay, at first not to be adjusted during a race, but subsequently permitted to be freely adjustable. To make this change possible the main boom had to be shortened, the mainsail slightly cut down and the foresail enlarged to compensate.

Centre mainsheeting has been introduced as an optional alternative to the original transom sheeting. Ratchet blocks within limits may also be used.

To maintain the ever changing position with regard to fittings a technical sub-committee was formed a few years ago. This committee now considers suggestions concerning any aspect of the boat's rig, sails and fittings etc., and makes recommendations to the class.

One of the principal considerations behind any decision is the cost and its effect upon members.

This committee has recently had to consider amendments to the specification regarding the use of woods where those specified are no longer available. Without the amendments Z69 Zinnia could not have been built in 1983.

For several seasons radial head spinnakers have been permitted and the class is now assessing tri-radial spinnaker with a view to its introduction if considered appropriate.

All the alterations have considerably improved the balance of the sail plan, made the rigging easier to adjust, and have made the sailing performance of the class better.

By bringing rig and sail plan more in line with modern standards younger owners and helmsmen have been encouraged to join the class with the result that helmsmanship and crewing is far more efficient and competition far keener than in days gone by.

Constitution of the Class

For some time it has been apparent that the PHR & SA under the auspices of which the class was originally founded and to which it was affiliated, has gradually faded out, and is more or less defunct. As a result the class has become more independent and is now for practical purposes self regulating in all aspects. The position has become more established since the class was incorporated as a limited company.

Getting To and From Moorings

In the past it was usual for each boat to have as a tender an 8 or 9 foot wooden dinghy for getting owners and crew to and from moorings. These were built as small as possible to save weight and reduce the effort required in getting them to and from the water to a minimum. They were usually powered by 1½hp outboard motors, which could also be used on Victory boats themselves in calms or adverse tidal conditions. With the advent of fibreglass, 12 foot dinghies of approximately the same weight as the small dinghies became popular. These powered by 3½ to 4 hp motors, which together make crossing the harbour less hazardous and more expeditious.

The latest development however, is the use of the PSC rescue boat, which carries 12 and ferries owners and crew to and from moorings at a small charge. This is popular and obviously here to stay. At the same time it helps with the expense of running the rescue boat.

Conclusion

From the above account it will be seen what a success the Victory class has been for 50 years, its strength not impaired, but increasing. On present form the omens are that if the right policies are followed there is no reason why the class should not survive for another 50 years.