

Alfred Mylne the First

by Ian Nicolson

The celebrated Scottish yacht designer Alfred Mylne set up his office in 1896. Over the next five decades, he drew a range of yachts, mostly sail but some power, and many to the International Rating Class Rules. Apart from International 12-Meter craft like JAVOTTE (1909) and her recently built sister-ship KATE, he designed 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-, 10-, 12-, 15-, and 19-Meter yachts. He also designed boats to the Scandinavian Square-Meter class rule. In addition to these racing yachts, there were innumerable cruisers of all sizes, not to mention 15 one-designs, dinghies of all shapes and types, and commercial vessels such as launches and ferries. It's a magnificent life's work. He handed over his firm to his nephew of the same name in 1945.

From 1892 to 1896 Alfred Mylne worked for the Scottish yacht designer G.L. Watson, who is widely credited with being the first person to use science extensively when designing small craft. In 1895 Watson took his young protégé to New York to observe the AMERICA's Cup races, when the Watson-designed VALKYRIE III was beaten by the Nathanael Herreshoff-designed DEFENDER. In later life Mylne was only once asked to design an AMERICA's Cup yacht, but the request, from Sir Thomas Lipton, was withdrawn a few days after it was made, so not even a preliminary design sketch exists.

Alfred Mylne's skill and speed on the drawing board were demonstrated in 1908 when he produced two 12-Meter racing yachts, a 10-Meter and a 7-Meter. Bearing in mind that the general rule for a complete design time



was about 600 hours in those days, this shows a great ability to focus and to work far into the night and all through successive weekends—though, admittedly, draftsmen were employed to help with the workload.

When JAVOTTE, KATE's older sister, was designed, Alfred Mylne the first was bound by the Lloyd's Rules for International 12-Meter yachts. These rules were devised by a group of experienced yacht designers and surveyors, who made it their job to ensure that the resulting racing yachts were strong and therefore long-lasting. This explains why there are plenty of pre-1939 Meter yachts

“That boat was a good boat,” he recalls. He built an identical one in St. Kitts, and he and his then-wife match-raced them. “The idea was eventually to do a ‘Jamaican Bobsled Team’ type thing for the AMERICA's Cup.” In other words, Philip Walwyn was going to build a Twelve-Meter class sloop and in it make an underdog tilt at yachting's greatest prize. “I don't know how I would have swung it,” he said, suggesting relief at being freed from this ambition by the stormy politics of the AMERICA's Cup of the late 1980s. Those stormy politics resulted in the creation of a new class of AMERICA's Cup boat—the IACC, or International AMERICA's Cup Class—whose size and complexity were out of the financial reach of a grassroots campaign from St. Kitts.

With the lure of the AMERICA's Cup gone, the 12-Meter dream fell dormant. Walwyn and his wife eventually divorced, and the twin Six-Meters tacked away from each other with their respective skippers. Walwyn again looked

seaward. He decided to compete in the 1992 Observer Singlehanded Trans Atlantic Race—the fabled OSTAR—in a 30' monohull; at the urging of his designer, the boat carried a newly in-vogue rig that incorporated the jib and mainsail into a single, rotating, carbon-fiber unit that spun on the mast's heel. In the race, it proved to be a disaster.

The rig weighed 660 lbs, when it should have weighed closer to 200. The boat was given a canting keel to compensate for the rig's weight. This didn't cure the boat's ills. “I did two solo trips across the Atlantic on it,” said Walwyn. “I got about two days out on the OSTAR and dropped out.” He declared, upon returning to England, that he would sell the boat for one British pound sterling to the first person to walk down the gangway and make this offer. Being a man of his word, he did just that. He had the equivalent of \$250,000 invested in the project.

“I said, ‘I'm never going to sail again. Ever.’” This edict,