Chapter XII
EARLY YACHTING IN SCOTLAND

Photo by Ware and Son. 'NEPTUNE,' *ex* 'MIRIAM,' *ex* 'NEPTUNE,' *ex* 'ZAMPA,' 50 TONS.
Messrs. P. E. Perquer and G. Palyart. Designed as a Cutter by Mr. W. Fife, Sen., in 1875.

It is now impossible to discover who was the first Scottish yachtsman, or what manner of craft he employed. To employ a popular paradox, there was no first yacht and no first yachtsman. It may be assumed that the pastime was evolved from the pleasure which the early Scottish traders derived from sailing their own trading smacks. It would appear, however, that the centuries of war which so closely affected the Scot prevented his considering his beautiful coast and rivers with any but the strategist's eye. Tradition has it that there was yachting of a sort in the middle reaches of the Clyde about the close of the eighteenth century, but the same uncertain source suggests that the pioneer yachts were not objects of admiration.

The first one of which there is any note seems to have been popularly known as the *Auld Soo*. Save her rather offensive name, nothing would appear to be known of this craft; but, from the fact that the older Clyde fishermen spoke of a boat 'by the head' as being like a stuck pig, it may be reasonably assumed that this early specimen of yacht architecture put her nose rather freely into the sea.

A little later we have more detailed reports of yachts built and sailed on the Clyde. There were the *Lady Montgomerie*, belonging to Lord Montgomerie, of Skelmorlie Castle; the *Aurora*, a wherry-rigged boat of some 9 tons, built for Mr. Cunninghame of Craigens; and another wherry-rigged boat, the *Heroine*, belonging to Mr. Hutcheson, of Fairlie. All that is known of those early yachts is that they were of short and barrel-like design; and the *Heroine* was planked with oak, the *Aurora* ended her days on Fairlie Beach, while the *Lady Montgomerie* went 'into trade.'

The *Heroine* probably took form at Fairlie, while the likelihood is that the other two were built at Greenock, in the yard which has gradually grown into Scotts' great shipbuilding and engineering works. For about a hundred years before yacht-building was introduced on the Clyde the Scotts were building boats at Greenock, and it was in their yard that the first Clyde yacht of which there is any written history was built. This yacht was launched in the early summer of 1803; and, judging by the pomp and circumstance of the event, we may conclude that Colonel Campbell, an Argyleshire gentleman for whom the yacht was built, was anxious to popularize the new pastime. Strange to say, the name of this boat is not discoverable, although it was bestowed by Lady Charlotte Campbell to the music of a military band. Of about 40 tons measurement, the yacht was well designed and well built, and was certainly the finest boat launched on the Clyde up to that date.

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The Scott family - now the sixth generation in succession - still carry on their work at the yard which was the cradle of Scottish yacht-building, and the family has always been more or less devoted to the pastime. During the last twenty-five years there were few better known yachtsmen than the late Mr. John Scott, C.B., of Halkshill, Largs, Commodore of the Royal Clyde Yacht Club; and the late Mr. Robert Sinclair Scott, of Burnside, Largs, Admiral of the Mudhook Yacht Club. Yet another, the late Mr. Colin W. Scott, of Eversly, Skelmorlie, was the secretary of the Mudhook Club from its foundation. Strange to say, these three members of this family who were largely instrumental in founding the Mudhook Yacht Club died within a few months of each other.

John Scott, the grandfather of these yachtsmen, was at the head of the famous yard when yachting on the Clyde took concrete shape, and he turned out some of the best remembered of the early clippers. For himself he built the *Hawk* and *Hope*, and for Mr. Robert Sinclair, a brother-in-law, and early member of the Royal Northern Yacht Club, he turned out the *Clarence*. Both the *Hawk* and *Hope* measured about 20 tons, and the *Clarence* was one or two tons less. The *Hope* had little racing reputation, and one wild night she broke from her moorings and drove ashore in Largs Bay. At this time ballast consisted of cobble-stones, but in the *Hope* Mr. Scott substituted copper ore—a small point, perhaps, but one which suggests the line of thought taken by this early designer. The *Hawk* would appear to have been a yacht of average merit, but the *Clarence* was a remarkable design of perfect balance. The latter was the first Clyde yacht to attract attention by reason of her excellent sailing. In all she won about thirty prizes for Mr. Sinclair, and in her best season she was not once defeated. Unfortunately, a bit of rigging with a heavy block at the end of it broke adrift one day and struck Mr. Sinclair, breaking his jaw. In spite of three operations (without anaesthetics), he never recovered sufficiently to race his clever yacht again.

Of the *Clarence* a good story remains. Racing in Dublin Bay for an Irish trophy, she was defeated by *Hawk*. It was somewhat characteristic of the race that the Clyde yachtsmen, anxious to get the trophy home as quickly as possible, slipped it on board the *Clarence*. Luck, however, was still against Mr. Sinclair's yacht, and the winner arrived at Greenock long before the cup-bearer. The cup was set up on a specially prepared platform by its proud owner in his own yard for his workmen to see. Needless to say, the victory was enthusiastically, if intemperately, celebrated by all who had helped to construct the victor.

It is impossible to go into details concerning all the races of even this first of historic Clyde racers, but a summary of her racing during two of her best years may be given with advantage:

Prizes won in 1833 by Scottish-owned yachts belonging to the Royal Northern Yacht Club

John Scott's *Hawk*, Anglesey Cup, Dublin, July 2.
James Smith's *Amethyst*, Stewart Cup, Greenock, July 29.
Andrew Rankin's *Dream*, Greenock Cup, Greenock, July 29.
Major Morris and John Allan's *Emma*, 20-tonners' Cup, Helens-burgh, July 3o.
John Crooks' *Sylph*, Portland Cup, Largs, August 1.
John Maclver's *Rattlesnake*, 15-tonners' Cup, Largs, August 1.
James H. Robertson's Imp, 10-tonners' Cup, Largs, August 2.

Andrew Rankin's *Dream*, Ardrossan Cup, Ardrossan, August 5.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, Ladies' Cup, Oban, August 21.

Prizes won in 1834 by Scottish-owned yachts belonging to the Royal Northern Yacht Club

James Meiklam's *Fanny*, Kingstown Cup, Dublin, July 17.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, Dublin Cup, Dublin, July 17.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, Adelaide Cup and Booth Cup, Dublin, August 21.
John Scott's *Hawk*, Helensburgh Cup, Helensburgh, July 28.
James Meiklam's *Fanny*, Greenock Cup, Greenock, July 29.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, Stewart Cup, Greenock, July 29.
William Kerr's *Elf*, 10-tonners' Cup, Greenock, July 29.
James Meiklam's *Fanny*, Dunoon Cup, Dunoon, July 3o.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, 15-tonners' Cup, Largs, August 1.
John Crooks' *Sylph*, Portland Cup, Largs, August 2.
James Smith's *Amethyst*, Largs Cup, Largs, August 20.
William Kerr's *Elf*, 10-tonners' Challenge Cup, Largs, August 2.
Robert Sinclair's *Clarence*, 20-tonners' Cup, Dunoon, August 4.
Henry Gore-Booth's *Gleam*, Inveraray Cup, Inveraray, August 21.
James Meiklam's Fanny, Callander Cup, Inveraray, August 21.
William Kerr's *Elf*, 10-tonners' Cup, Inveraray, August 21.

Although the Clyde had only one club in those days, it will be seen from these statistics that the more popular stations were almost as well catered for in the matter of regattas as they are now.

So generously did the Royal Northern scatter its race meetings throughout the Clyde centres that yacht-racing quickly gained in popularity. It was probably this fine missionary spirit which gave yachting and yacht-racing that warm place in the hearts of Scottish men and women, to so many of whom the sea never calls in vain.

After Mr. Sinclair's death the *Clarence* never shone again with her old brilliance, and, as if missing the vanished hand, gradually sank into insignificance. Having gone into the pilot service, she was ultimately run down by a sailing ship while cruising between Arran and Garroch Head on a stormy night.

Some six years ago the *Hawk* was in existence (perhaps is still so), a living example of sound workmanship. At that time Mr. John Scott, the grandson of her builder, discovered her with the Stornoway fishing fleet, and opened negotiations for her purchase with the intention of mooring her at Hunter's Quay as a monument to old-time yachting—negotiations which, unfortunately, fell through.

Accurate data is not obtainable of the other Clyde clippers of this time. The *Fanny* was a Cowes-built yacht, and the *Gleam* was the first racing yacht built at Fairlie. In all probability the others were built at Greenock and Fairlie.

Certainly the *Rattlesnake* was a Greenock yacht. She was built on the lines and to some extent from the constructional materials of a noted French smuggler which frequented the Clyde. She was rigged as a three-masted schooner, and possessed great reaching and running qualities. It is interesting to learn that the builder of this yacht, one John McNicoll, put no bulwarks on her, merely finishing the tops of the timbers with an elm rail—truly there is nothing new under the sun. Although this interesting yacht is

given (in the foregoing table) as the property of Mr. McIver, she was built for Mr. James H. Robertson, of Bagatelle, Greenock—a well-known member of the Royal Northern Yacht Club. Mr. Robertson was a most enthusiastic sportsman in the earlier half of last century. At coursing, shooting, rowing or sailing, he was always ready and anxious to make a match, and with Major Morris, of Moorburn, Largs, he sailed race after race with the greatest skill and spirit.

Major Morris, who was an officer of the Renfrewshire Militia, was such another as his rival—an all-round sportsman of great accomplishments. He was the first Clyde yachtsman to make a study of match-sailing. So successful was he in the results obtained that his influence may be noted to this day among amateurs and professionals alike.

In those early regatta days yacht-racing was made the occasion of much social intercourse. Dances and dinners followed the various water-sports of the day, and the home of every local yachtsman was for the nonce a club. In the matter of hospitality Major Morris was always to the front, and Moorburn was the scene of many a bright gathering. It was at one of these gatherings that the eminent Scot and man of letters, Christopher North, made a famous speech on yachting, which deeply impressed many guests, who unfortunately died without leaving any but a traditional record of it. He was at the time the guest of his friend Mr. James Smith, of Jordanhill, on board his cutter *Amethyst*. Christopher North, who was one of the finest all-round sportsmen of his time, never had a yacht on the Clyde, but on Windermere he had as many as eight boats of one kind and another at one time.

It would appear that there was much appreciation of all this old-time hospitality and gaiety. Mr. Solomon Darcus, of Lame, a regular visitor with his 20-tonner *Viola*, was in the habit of withdrawing early from the racing in order to be the better prepared for the festivities ashore. This same Irish gentleman would appear to have been one of the social stars of the shore side of many of the Clyde regattas, and many good stories are handed down of his gallantry. Having on one occasion had his ingenuity somewhat taxed by the great beauty of a smartly-dressed dance partner, he expressed the opinion that never were the lilies of the field so arrayed. 'No, nor Solomon in all his glory,' retorted the witty girl.

These old Clyde yachtsmen seem to have been distinguished by an insatiable love of sport of all sorts. Not content with the racing of their yachts, many of the famous owners of those early times kept crack oarsmen in their crews, and many a rowing race was held in which the owners themselves took part. Indeed, one of the most famous gig's crews of the time had in it Mr. James Robertson, owner of the *Rattlesnake, Imp, Gazelle*, and other yachts ; Mr. Scott, of Greenock; and Mr. Campbell, of Glendaruel. Against boats from as far as the Mersey this crew was victorious, and many a contest they had. At this time rowing was largely catered for by the Royal Northern Yacht Club, and in the Clyde and Belfast Lough it became extremely popular amongst yachtsmen. A crew of Clyde professional yachtsmen, consisting of Robert McKirdy, Billy Blair, Matthew Houston, and John Morris, was on one occasion backed by Mr. Robertson against a crew of English yachtsmen for a considerable sum. In spite of the fact that the visiting crew had a new boat built for the occasion, they were beaten over a six-mile course—but only by two lengths.

In 1846 Messrs. Cato, Millar and Co., of Liverpool, launched the *Echo*, a 34-ton iron yacht designed by Mr. John Audley. This is supposed to have been the first yacht built with a long sharp bow, and, after some Mersey trials, she appeared on the Clyde. Ever ready for a match, Mr. Robertson backed his cutter *Gazelle* against her, and a course was

laid from Greenock round the Skelmorlie Bank Buoy and back. To give her every chance in what to her crew were foreign waters, William Clark, of Greenock, a noted yachtsman and marine painter, was allowed to sail her. The result was an easy victory for the Liverpool yacht, and she also defeated *Falcon, Wave*, and *Meteor*, three of the Clyde cracks.

Mr. Robertson lived to the good old age of ninety-one, and till he was eighty regularly shot over the moors. Throughout his lifetime he had been a celebrated shot, and when seventy-five years of age he defeated a well-known English marksman in a pigeon match.

The *Fanny* was the first Cowes-built and English-manned yacht to appear at a Clyde regatta. She was a yacht of 75 tons, and the property of Mr. James Meiklam, an East Coast yachtsman, who had previously owned the 52-tonner *Rob Roy*. Besides being a prominent member of the Royal Northern Yacht Club, Mr. Meiklam was one of the first Scottish members of the Royal Yacht Squadron, having been elected in 1829. In the thirties there were three members of this family in the Squadron. In addition to James, there was John, who owned the *Amulet* (the first Scottish-owned yacht to win a royal cup) and the *Alarm* in 1841, and Robert, who owned the *Crusader* and *Talisman*.

William Fife, who founded the Fairlie Yard, took his son William—then a mere lad—to see the famous Cowes yacht, and expressed the greatest admiration for her. The founder of the famous Fife dynasty was a shrewd observer, of broad mind, and the *Fanny's* good points were closely noted, to be presently utilized. It is now about a hundred years since boat-building was first undertaken by the first William Fife at Fairlie, and ever since work has been continuously carried on—after his death by William (ii.), his son, and to-day by William (iii.), his grandson. No business was more heavily handicapped at its outset ; few have been more successful throughout a long career. The founder of the firm had to teach himself the art of which he subsequently became such an exponent, and in choosing the isolated village of Fairlie he selected a most unlikely spot for his enterprise. Fairlie Beach is a particularly flat one, and even to-day a yacht of any size has to be launched by means of a pontoon. In spite of all the drawbacks, however, the Fifes of Fairlie have written their name on the yachting history of our country in no uncertain manner.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, John Fife, a Kilbirnie mill- and wheel-wright, left his native parish and came to Fairlie to better his fortune. The emigrant soon found employment on the Earl of Glasgow's estate. Employed with him in the pursuit of his calling was his son William, who bore the reputation of being an observant and deft-handed mechanic. Fairlie Roadstead was then a favourite anchorage for homeward and outward-bound ships, and the sight of them coming and going quickly fascinated the inland-bred lad. To study more closely the great ships so new to him, William Fife decided to build a small boat in which to row himself out to the visitors. So skilfully did he construct this his first venture in naval architecture that she was purchased as soon as completed. Her place was immediately taken by a second, which, however, was as quickly acquired by the appreciative seafaring people who saw her built. When a third as quickly left him, it was little wonder that the thoughtful young man seriously contemplated the situation. Fortunately for posterity he decided that the making of wheels was not his vocation, and, in spite of his father's opposition, he commenced boat-building as a means of earning his livelihood.

For some time the beginner had an uphill task, but it was not long before his fine fishing-smacks attracted attention, and a small yacht or two appeared. So well were these

first yachts constructed that William Fife soon became known to all the Clyde yachtsmen of that time, and in 1812, Mr. James Hamilton, of Holmhead (near Glasgow), gave him his chance by commissioning him to build a 50-ton yacht. The *Lamlash* was the result, and she was made doubly historical by becoming the first flagship of the Royal Northern Yacht Club when that institution ceased to be a joint Scottish and Irish one, Mr. Hamilton, or 'Holmhead,' as he was often called, being the first Commodore. While only tradition credits the *Lamlash* with success under racing colours, her cruising feats are worthy of note. She was the first Clyde yacht to go to the Mediterranean, and no small stir was created by the daring voyage which Holmhead and a few friends undertook on the new yacht. Undoubtedly the guests provided the greatest sensation of the eventful voyage, the strange surroundings so acting on the mind of one of them that it became deranged for a time. Fortunately the seizure was but temporary, and all the ship's company arrived in the Southern sea safe and sound, both mentally and physically.

This same 'Holmhead' was a man of striking personality. One of the last of the old type of Scottish laird, he was kind and hospitable to a fault. His punch—at the brewing of which he was an adept—was a feature of every regatta meeting on the Clyde, and many a convivial meeting did the open-hearted sportsman preside over. Of one of these an amusing anecdote remains. Jimmy Tait, who doubled the parts of steward and valet to Holmhead, might have been the prototype of Caleb Balderston, and if he had more regard for anything than the indulgent master he served so faithfully, it was for the punch which that master so skilfully concocted. After a particularly enjoyable cruise the famous punch was brewed, and when not attending upon his master and his guests, Jimmy contrived to get so much of it that, when the old Commodore called upon him to undress him for the night, the luckless servant was found happy and at peace with all mankind, but quite incapable of action. By no means indifferent to the charms of his own punch, 'Holmhead' contemplated the slumbering valet: 'Weel, Jimmy, I daur say it would scarcely be becoming o' me to do anything in the way o' flytin the noo ; but really after this we maun try no baith to get fou at the same time.'

There is reason to believe that at one time Captain Oswald, of Scotstoun, was associated with 'Holmhead' in the ownership of the *Lamlash*. Scotstoun was at that time a delightful estate on the banks of the Clyde near Glasgow ; to-day it is covered with wharves and storehouses, and on part of it stand the works of the great family of Clyde yachtsmen and shipbuilders, the Connells.

About this time the great deeds of the British Navy still rang clear in the ears of all Englishmen, and on many of the larger yachts the pattern set by that arm of the service was closely followed. On the *Lamlash* Captain Oswald stuck to the letter of the law. All operations on board were done according to official instructions, and at sundown the second jib was set, no matter how fine the weather. From the fact that an umbrella was sometimes handed to the man at the tiller when it rained, it is to be gathered that Holmhead and Captain Oswald had every consideration for the welfare of their crew.

Writing of the sail plan of this old yacht, a chronicler states: 'The old *Lamlash*, for instance, carried besides mainsail, gaff topsail, foresail and jib, a ringtail on her mainsail, squaresail on a "cro " jack yard, with "stin" sails and jib topsail.' First, second, and third jibs were used in her day, as were reaching jibs. The spinnaker does not seem to have been in use at this time, but fishermen on their smacks boomed out a big jib somewhat on the lines of the modern spinnaker.

The building of the *Lamlash* synchronized with Henry Bell's successful application of the steam-engine to marine work. This event, which was to revolutionize the Clyde, Scotland, and indeed the world, attracted the attention of the Clyde population. Fife was soon approached by some speculators, and, joining issues with them, he set about the building of a small steamer in 1813. In the following year the *Industry* was launched, and was among the first half-dozen steamers. So carefully built of native oak was this ship that she lived to be the oldest steamer in the world, and so durable was her structure that at eighty years of age she had to be broken up owing to the obsolete design of her sound hull. The first engine of the *Industry* was built by Thomson of Tradeston, and the second, which Caird of Greenock made, now stands as a monument in Kelvin Grove Park, Glasgow. The *Industry* was 68 feet long by 17 feet beam, and was 8 feet deep, with a gross tonnage of 69 tons. Her first boiler was of copper, but was soon superseded by an iron one. Owing to a peculiar grating noise caused by the spur-wheel gearing, the *Industry* was long known as 'The Old Coffee Mill'. So successful was this first steamer of Fife's that his supporters in the enterprise strongly urged upon him the necessity of giving up what they were pleased to term his crazy notion of becoming a yacht-builder, and with their help devote himself to the construction of commercial craft.

It was not, however, towards the mercantile marine that Fife's ambition lay, and, with the true artistic instinct, he sacrificed gold for the art he already loved with the passion of the enthusiast. Yachts 'fast and bonny' he would build, and nothing else. To attain his end much had to be sacrificed. Men who were with him at the starting-point of the great shipbuilding industry of the Clyde founded colossal works and amassed great fortunes ; Fife stuck to Fairlie and his ideal. In spite of his innate genius and wonderful industry, the first Fife had a long and uphill struggle. Orders came slowly, but every one which he received Fife treated with the loving care of the artist. He studied his art, and consulted the best obtainable opinions on every point; and, at a time when the rule-of-thumb method was practically the only one in vogue, Fife spent his evenings in studying the laws of Nature which he had to combat or call to his aid. In this latter occupation Mr. Smith, of Jordanhill, long one of the foremost men of the Royal Northern, and the first Commodore of the Royal Clyde Club, was of great assistance to the designer. Being both a yachtsman and scientist, Mr. Smith was a man well able to discuss and investigate the laws which governed Fife's art, and the two enthusiasts thrashed out many a problem.

Meanwhile yachts were being turned out of the little Fairlie yard. The most famous of those early Fife yachts was the 30-ton cutter *Gleam*, built for Mr. Gore-Booth, an Irish yachtsman. Although defeated on her first appearance by Mr. John Crooke's *Sylph*, the *Gleam* was gradually improved until she became the crack boat of the Clyde, and, more especially to windward, was a fast yacht. She was subsequently purchased by Mr. Cross Buchanan, and, raced by a Cardross skipper named Barr, she made a wonderful reputation for herself.

On August 6, 1865, at the age of eighty, the founder of the Fairlie business died. He left a large family, and his eldest son, William, carried on the business, which was now a most promising concern. Fortunately, its founder lived to see it so. He last crossed his own threshold to see the launch of his son's famous 75-ton cutter, *Fiona*. When that son has also passed away, and this fine ship still watches for the gun, one is tempted to become the moralist rather than the historian.

The second William Fife inherited all the genius of his father, and combined with it considerable business ability. From his earliest years his father's yard was the centre of his

world, and at the age of thirteen he was formally apprenticed to the craft. For years he laboured with his father, designing and working with his tools, and in 1848, when the famous *Stella* was built, the business rewarded their efforts, and entered on its prosperous career.

Prominent among the yachts which made the reputation of the second William Fife were the cutters *Stella*, *Cymba, Cynthia*, *Oithona, Surge, Surf, Kilmeny, Torch, Fairlie, Fairy Queen, Onda, Neptune, Fiona, Cythera, Cuckoo, Foxhound, Moina, Neva,* and *Bloodhound* ; the schooners *Fiery Cross, Any, Amadine*, and *Melita* ; and the yawls *Condor, Neptune, Saxon*, and *Latona.*

Leaving for a moment the history of the Fifes of Fairlie, let us look at another type of the old Scottish yachtsmen whose patronage assured the success of Clyde yachting. Dr. John Cairnie, of Curling Hall, Largs, owner of the 17-ton cutter *Nancy*, was one of the best remembered of the early worthies of the Royal Northern. As fine a curler as he was a yachtsman, this Dr. Cairnie was a typical all-the-year-round sportsman, with unlimited enthusiasm and no mean skill on the rink or on the sea. The dovetailing of his two great sports is of itself interesting. It was Dr. Cairnie who founded the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, and he also introduced the game into Ireland and invented the artificial curling pond. Although so keen a curler, he could not have his yacht out of sight even in winter, and, to solve the problem, he had her drawn up on a cradle close by his curling rink, and as she sat there he entertained his curling guests on board. The little boat would also carry the granite blocks from Ailsa Craig which were to be hewn into stones for the 'Roarin' Game.'

About 1830 the success of Mr. Robert Sinclair's *Clarence* brought about many alterations in the models of existing yachts, and, among others, Dr. Cairnie's *Nancy* was lengthened. William Fife did the work, and, so that the doctor should not lose sight of his beloved little ship for so long a period, the alteration was carried out at Curling Hall. During the progress of the work the second William Fife, then a mite of a child, carried his father's dinner over the three miles which separated the *Nancy's* home from the yard at Fairlie.

In a work which Dr. Cairnie wrote on curling, the following passage occurs: 'We have what we call picnic dinners, where every curler provides his own dish, and brings the drink he likes best. We, last season (1832), had four of these picnics, and the scene of festivity was on board of our cutter, lying high and dry on her carriage by the seaside. The first dinner this season was on November 5, and called forth the thunder of our artillery when the toast appropriate to the day and those connected with curling were given from the chair.'

Against the famous *Clarence* the doctor backed a friend to sail the *Nancy* around the Greater Cumbrae. So worthy was the friend that, to within a mile, there was 'nothing in it' between the two yachts. At that point, however, the wind died away, and both yachts drifted about with empty canvas. A gentle air of wind which played about the flag-boat kept a tantalizing distance from the yachts, until Blair, the skipper of the *Clarence*, with Mahomet--like philosophy, decided to try to get his yacht within its sphere of influence. Presumably to sluice down the decks, he ordered his men to get the buckets out, and so well were they handled that the *Clarence* gradually worked into the breeze before the trusting amateur was alive to the tactics of his opponent. The *Nancy* was a beaten boat, and, as yacht-racing in those early days would seem to have been on the same footing

with love and war, we hear nothing more of the race. Dr. Cairnie, yachtsman and curler, died in 1842, and for him the following Burns-like lament was written:

'Why drops the banner half-mast high,
And curlers heave the bitter sigh ?
Why throughout Largs the tearful eye
Looks bleared and red?
Oh, listen to the poor man's cry,
John Cairnie's dead!'

Before leaving this interesting old yachtsman, a matter which brought him into considerable notoriety may be mentioned. The Scottish Sabbath of to-day is often cited as a model of strict observance, but that of seventy years ago was one of Puritanical strictness and severity. Sunday sailing in Scotland is still a controversial point, and on the Day of Rest many Clyde yachts never leave their moorings. It may easily be imagined, therefore, that the setting out of Dr. Cairnie occasionally on a Sunday did not pass without remark. Even among his retainers the practice was denounced, and one of them, Tom Dyer, who would appear to have acted in the dual capacity of gardener at Curling Hall and forward hand on board the *Nancy*, read him a most effective lesson on the point. The doctor and Dyer were trying one Sunday to work the *Nancy* round the Farland Point in a calm. Ultimately it seemed as if the boat must be washed on to the rocks by a strong tide. Getting alarmed, the doctor ordered Dyer to get the dinghey ahead and tow the *Nancy* to a safe offing. This was just the sort of chance Dyer had been waiting for to put in a shot against the hated Sunday sailing, so, settling down on the bitts, and proceeding quietly to fill and light his pipe, he said calmly: 'I'll tow the cutter nane. If she gangs ashore, she can jist di 't. It'll only be a judgment on you for your Sunday sailing. As I'm not a free agent in the matter, the Lord'll tak care o' me, an' you can shift for yoursel'.' The doctor, who had only one hand, the other having been destroyed by the bursting of a powder-flask, could do little about a boat but steer ; so, after a little heated argument, he compromised the matter by assuring Dyer if he would tow the boat to a place of safety, he at least would not be asked to go sailing any more on Sunday. That being just what Dyer wanted, he soon had the *Nancy* out of danger.

The rapidly increasing popularity of yachting on the Clyde brought several excellent skippers to the front. Among the more prominent of these early masters were Blair, McKirdy, and Matthew Houston, of Largs ; the Whites of Gourock ; the Cochranes and Barrs of Cardross ; and William Jamieson, of Fairlie.

Unfortunately, none of these early Clyde yachtsmen had a chance of trying their skill against their English confreres, and although Mr. Rowan, of Glasgow, was anxious to match McKirdy, his own skipper, in his 53-ton cutter *Cymba*, against Nicholls, the then crack English skipper, on any English yacht, for £500 a side, the match was never sailed. Strange to say, it fell through on account of McKirdy's objection to be interested in what he considered a gambling transaction, and, as he said, being put up 'like twa cocks in a pit.' His attitude was respected by Mr. Rowan and by Nicholls himself. As Nicholls would have steered the *Mosquito*, however, it is much to be deplored that McKirdy's conscientious scruples were not appeased.

Strange to say, Blair of Campbeltown was a tailor by profession. Employed by Major Morris, of Moorburn, as 'orra' man, Blair soon found himself on the yacht of that early Clyde Corinthian, and so quickly did he learn the art of sailing that he was made master of one of the famous Clyde 'Ranterpikes'- three-masted fore-and-aft schooners

which were displaced by steam in the Clyde and Mersey carrying trade. Here was a school to bring out the best qualities of any sailor, and the quondam Campbeltown tailor and Largs yachtsman soon became one of the most famous passage-makers in the trade. There was a strange custom among the owners of these traders that they gave a new hat to the skipper for every spar he carried away. Billy Blair was said to have had the finest collection of headgear of all the skippers of Scotland. In his later years Blair plied the ferry at Loch Ranza, where, by the capsizing of his boat, he was immersed for several hours, from which he never quite recovered.

McKirdy sailed *Stella* and *Cymba*, the two best of the early boats of the second William Fife, who generously testified to his skill.

For fifty years the second William Fife worked at his profession, following an ideal which he set himself early in his career. To make money, if possible, was his desire, but to design and build beautiful yachts was his ambition and great aim in life. In the former wish he was greatly disappointed for the greater part of his time, but the singleness of purpose with which he followed the dictates of his artistic temperament assured success in the latter. He sacrificed nothing to his artistic nature, and even when sorely in need of concluding a bargain he stood firm for his principles. Of this part of his nature the following incident bears striking testimony: A schooner which he had built 'on spec.' was long in finding a purchaser. In a time of pressing need one arrived who undertook to buy the vessel provided she was fitted with bulwarks 3 feet high. Ruefully, Mr. Fife had to decline the offer, and firmly refused to sacrifice the appearance of the boat even for the much-needed cheque. With a dry little laugh he said: "I hae kept her a fang while, but I'll keep her a while yet raither than mak' a common cairt o' her at the feenish.' Fortunately, the would-be purchaser subsequently returned, and a compromise satisfactory to both parties was effected.

The fact that this member of the Fife family left much of his work to be done on his yacht in frame gave rise to the belief that he was a 'rule-of-thumb' worker, and trusted to his marvellous eye rather than to careful planning. This, however, was not so, for, like his son, he was a clever draughtsman. To-day there are designers who prefer to have some latitude when the model takes form, and Fife's perfecting of the model as the building of the boat proceeded was part of a carefully-thought-out system. Like his father, he was interested in all the scientific research in connection with his art, and he added the experience of practice to the sometimes unworkable suggestions of the theorist.

It was only late in life that the second Fife played the role of designer only, but with such skill did he do so that he finally refuted the argument that he was merely a builder.

The fortunes of the Fairlie yacht-building firm turned with the building of the 35-ton cutter *Stella* for Dr. Hugh Morris Lang, of Blackdale, Largs, a gentleman of independent fortune. Dr. Lang was a medical man by profession, and a banker by inclination. He became a firm friend of Mr. Fife, and his expert advice enabled the yacht-builder to put his business on a firm financial basis.

The *Stella* was built in 1848, but the addition of 6 feet to her fore-body three years later made her one of the finest windward cutters of her day. She was, however, no more remarkable than her skipper, Robert McKirdy. McKirdy was a hand-loom weaver by profession, and, like the majority of the followers of that now almost extinct craft, he was a most reserved and thoughtful man. He had few equals afloat. In the *Stella* he won two Queen's Cups in 1852, one at the Royal Irish and the other at the Royal Cork Regatta.

The Queenstown match of 1852 was a memorable one. Two prizes were offered—a Queen's Cup and an Exhibition Cup, the latter in celebration of the famous Exhibition in London. Several of the yachts were entered for both cups, and it was decided that one gun should serve for the starting of the double event. Thirteen vessels in all competed.

The start was from anchors with headsails down, and the first few miles would be to windward under the existing conditions. Lots were drawn for positions, and *Stella* got thirteenth place, or to leeward of the entire fleet. This bad luck so affected Dr. Lang that he agreed with his guests—among whom was William Fife—that the position was hopeless. Before ordering his yacht out of the race, however, he decided to consult his skipper. McKirdy, usually so economical of speech, was astounded. 'No start !' he cried. 'We'll no be lang under the lee o' some o' that lot.' That settled the matter, and the *Stella* started. Mr. Roe's *Cynthia* was the favourite, and with Starkey, her Irish captain, in charge, she was a likely boat. So far to windward was she, however, that it was not till they had reached the weather-mark that McKirdy, having gradually worked yacht after yacht out of position, shot his fine cutter on *Cynthia's* weather and rounded the mark abreast of her, practically assuring the cup for Dr. Lang. The skill with which the *Stella* was brought into the coveted position commanded the admiration of all, and is still remembered as a masterpiece of sailing.

So confident was Fife that he could beat *Stella* that he laid down a 53-ton cutter without being commissioned. When in frame she was seen by Mr. J. M. Rowan of Glasgow, and so impressed was he with her good looks that he immediately set about disposing of his yacht the *Aquila*, that he might purchase Fife's latest design. He succeeded in both, and *Cymba*, the new yacht, became his. Although sailed in 1853, it was not until the following year that she was finished and entered upon her racing career in charge of McKirdy. *Cymba* was the first of Fife's yachts to have lead ballast on her keel, and she had also wire rigging, then a novelty on the Clyde. Speaking of the *Cymba*, a critic of her day writes: 'She has proved herself a splendid sea boat in very heavy weather, and unites the properties of great speed and seaworthiness to a greater extent than probably any other vessel afloat. She is likewise one of the most elegantly fitted and appointed vessels of her day, and reflects the greatest credit upon her spirited owner, under whose vigilant eye she was built and fitted.'

Opening her racing career at Kingstown in 1854, the *Cymba* won the chief prize of the Royal St. George's Club and a hundred-guinea prize given by the Royal Irish Yacht Club. In the same season the Royal Western Yacht Club of Ireland gave a Grand Corinthian Plate for a race in which the yachts were to be handled entirely by amateurs. These amateurs were to be also members of Royal clubs, and the professional skippers were only allowed on board as 'advisers in chief.' Seventeen amateurs assisted Mr. Rowan in his famous cutter, and so well did they manage in the prevailing heavy weather that she won handsomely. On her return to the Clyde success continued to be with Mr. Rowan and his fine boat, but at the close of the season he decided, on Mr. Fife's advice, to have her lengthened by the bow, and the work was carried out at Ardrossan under her designer's supervision.

Unfortunately her skipper was never to sail again in the famous yacht. On a cholera epidemic breaking out in Largs, he was seized by it and died on October 12. As McKirdy was born in 1803, his loss to yachting was premature. Besides the boats enumerated McKirdy successfully sailed several others. One of them, Mr. Thomas Douglas's 30-ton *Meteor*, was built at Ardrossan by a cousin of William Fife. A rather amusing incident is

told in connection with McKirdy and the *Meteor*. Mr. Douglas, who lived where the Royal Northern Yacht Club-house now stands at Rothesay, had arranged to take part in the Irish regattas, but pressure of business altering his arrangements, he gave orders for the *Meteor* to be kept at her moorings. McKirdy's grief was none the less deep for being unspoken, and the loss of an Irish cup upon which both he and his master had set their hearts was greatly to be deplored. Without a hint of his intentions to his master he got the *Meteor* under way, and under cover of the darkness laid his course for Dublin Bay, where he found a willing qualifier and a handsome cup. Mr. Douglas's wrath was soon overcome by his admiration of the enthusiasm which prompted the act of disobedience, and both McKirdy and the cup were welcomed on their return to Rothesay.

Another amusing incident in the *Meteor's* career is worthy of record. Racing *Meteor* at Largs against an Irish-owned yacht named the *Charlotte*, after establishing a useful lead in half a gale of wind, the crew of the *Meteor* were astonished to find that the Mount Stuart mark-boat had disappeared. McKirdy's advice was to put about where the mark-boat ought to have been and continue the race. His advice was taken by Mr. Douglas, but the example was not followed by the *Charlotte*, the crew of which searched for the missing boat, which they presently discovered high and dry on the Little Cumbrae. Here was a problem! Robert Wright, their pilot, was a long-headed Largs man, and they looked to him for advice. His advice was to sail round the island, as no other method of making the mark was feasible. Entering into the humour of the occasion, the Irishmen took the advice and, although arriving long after the *Meteor*, the prize. There was no Court of Appeal, and Mr. Douglas was so incensed with the decision of the Racing Committee that he cut the club buttons from his coat. The crew of the *Charlotte* were, on the other hand, so delighted with the result of the match that they went ashore and overtaxed the wine cellar of the White Hart Hotel at Largs, then the unofficial club-house of the Royal Northern Yacht Club. Mr. Douglas was a good sportsman, however, and before the close of the season the breach was made good.

In spite of McKirdy's conscientious objection to being pitted against John Nicholls for a wager, the excitement of a race once made an actual punter of him. In this particular race the *Meteor's* chief opponent was a famous English yacht which was strongly fancied for that and many other races. The yachts started down the wind, and, as that was the visitor's best point of sailing, she quickly left the *Meteor*. So quickly, indeed, did she get away that Mr. Graham, a nephew of Mr. Douglas, who was in charge, exclaimed: 'I'm very sorry I gave my consent to the *Meteor* being started in this race. We've no chance—no chance whatever. Why, it's ten to one against us already!' After hearing this pessimistic opinion several times repeated, McKirdy put the tiller between his legs, and, fishing beneath his jersey, produced a herring-scale bespangled pocket-book. From this he produced a pound note, and, with a confidence that acted like a tonic on the crew, said, 'If you're still o' the opinion, cover that.' Mr. Graham took the bet and the hint. On coming on the wind the crew worked with a will, and McKirdy put some of his best work into the handling of his charge. So well did he manage that, within a hundred yards of the flagship, he put the *Meteor* ahead of his English rival. Before the echo of the gun had died away Mr. Graham thrust two five-pound notes into the skipper's hand, and, taking from his pocket a valuable gold watch and chain, he hung it round his neck, saying the while, 'Wear that, McKirdy, in memory of as good a race as you ever sailed - of as good a race as I ever expect to see any man sailing.'

In those early days a skipper's wages were £1 per week, with neither clothes nor prize money, and the ordinary hands got 16s. to 18s.

The alterations to the *Cymba* were carried out as arranged, and McKirdy's place was taken by William Jamieson, of Fairlie, a cousin of William Fife. In his hands the cutter maintained her reputation, and the finish of 1855 found her undefeated. In her second year one of *Cymba's* finest races was sailed at the first big regatta held at the Isle of Man. The meeting was an historical one, and *Cymba's* race worthy of it. *Cymba* won easily from *Glance*, 35 tons, *Foam*, 25 tons, and *Coralie*, 35 tons.

When *Cymba* was the pride of the Clyde the Earl of Eglington was the popular Commodore of the Royal Northern. As the conceiver of the memorable Eglington Tournament, this wonderful sportsman will always be remembered. Although Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and one of the most polished speakers of his day, he was a sportsman passionately devoted to sport in every shape and form. For the Royal Northern Regatta of 1855 Lord Eglington presented a valuable pair of vases to be sailed for by yachts over 10 tons, the time allowance being limited to 30 seconds per ton up to 50 tons, and 15 seconds beyond. In a gale of wind the following seven yachts started:

Gauntlet, 66 tons	Mr. Houldsworth (Vice-Commodore Northern Yacht Club)
Cymba, 54 tons-	Mr. J. M. Rowan
Stella, 41 tons	Mr. J. Steele
Coralie, 35 tons	Mr. H. E. Byrne
Blue Bell, 31 tons	Mr. R. N. Grinnall
Foam, 25 tons	Major Longfield
Onda, 20 tons	Mr. R. W. Laurie

The yachts took five minutes to get off, *Gauntlet* leading, *Onda* last. One by one the competitors had enough of it. Only three finished, and *Cymba* won the match easily. It was her race, and the dry windward work she made under the trying circumstances was reckoned as one of her best performances. So fierce was the gale blowing throughout the day of the race that Lord Eglington was unable to drive to Largs until late in the afternoon, when the weather was too rough for him to reach the committee boat.

Principal prize-winners of the Royal Northern Regatta 1855 – Eglington Tournament

Boat	Owner	No. of races	No. of first prizes	Value
Amazon	A. J. Young	7	5	£338
Avalon	J. Goodson	4	2	£132
Alarm	J. Weld	1	1	£100
Bacchante	H. B. Jones	1	1	£100
Cymba	M. Rowan	4	4	£283
Georgiana	Captain Thellusson	1	1	£105
Glance	T. Bartlett	8	4	£153
Gloriana	J. Gee	2	1	£100
Evadne	C. T. Couper	2	1	£10
Kitten	R. Leach	5	4	£121
Onda	R. W. Laurie	4	1	£25
Phantom	S. Lane	5	3	£190

Shark	W. Curling	6	2	£120
Thought	C. Coope	7	3	£90
Surprise	T. W. Tetley	6	2	£120
Vampire	N. Peppercorn	4	4	£120

Evadne was the first of several fine yachts built by Fife for Mr. Couper - the *Surge* in 1858, *Æolus* in 1861, and the *Surf* in 1863. These boats were of great length in comparison with the accepted proportions of the time, their proportion of beams in length being 4.3, 4.7, and 4.5.

In the hands of an English skipper named Tim Walker, who had done much good work on Mr. Grove's cutter *Mosquito*, Mr. Couper won a Queen's prize in *Aeolus* in 1862, and one in the *Surf* in 1863. Walker was the first English skipper to migrate to Scotland. He died at Gourock in 1886.

At the close of the season of 1855 *Cymba* was purchased from Mr. Rowan by Mr. Thomas (now Lord) Brassey. So fine a reputation had the boat that the purchase price paid by Lord Brassey (£1,750) was exactly Fife's building estimate.

Although *Cymba* never rounded Land's End, she defeated the 35-tonner *Glance*, built by Dan Hatcher at Southampton, a boat which was considered one of the best of her time.

To replace *Cymba* Mr. Rowan had the 80-tonner *Oithona* built for him at Fairlie. Jamieson transferred his services to the new boat, which did much good work.

William Jamieson was, during his long career, associated with many historic yachts. One of these was *Fidelio*, a composite yawl of about 110 tons. She was designed by Mr. Tennant, a partner in the Glasgow chemical business bearing that name, and the model, cut from a bar of soap, showed a powerful and shapely vessel for her day. In construction she was an improvement upon the composite vessels built on the Clyde. She was framed up at Port Dundas, and finally put together in the yard of Mr. Hill at Port Glasgow, a yard which became famous for many notable yachts, including the 10-tonners *Merle* and *Florence*, and the 20-tonner *Sayonara*. The *Fidelio* was built with nine iron frames set upon the keel, and kept in position by an iron stringer. These frames were sheathed with strong planking laid on diagonally, and another layer placed fore and aft.

It has been generally understood that composite construction in yachts, so far as the Clyde is concerned, originated with Messrs. Steele, of Greenock, in the schooners *Selene* and *Myanza*, and the cutters *Oimara* and *Garrion*, in the sixties, as a result of the success of such construction in the tea clippers. There were, however, earlier attempts to combine wood and iron, for in or about the year 1842 the *Cyclops*, a 30-ton cutter, was built in a Clyde yard with an iron under-water body and topsides of wood.

Fidelio was built with a view to winter cruising abroad, and her owner, wishing to discover by actual experiment her suitability for this purpose, engaged Jamieson to take her from Troon to Lisbon with a cargo of iron ore, and to bring back a cargo of fruit. After several voyages Jamieson's reports as to the performances of the boat were so favourable that Mr. Tennant had her fitted as a yacht, and *Fidelio* left the Clyde with her owner on board for a foreign cruise. Mr. Tennant, whose health had given cause for anxiety, greatly benefited from this cruise, but in the spring, when returning home, a fierce gale was encountered, which lasted for several days, and at Holyhead Mr. Tennant was taken ashore in a precarious condition.

Jamieson, as a middle-aged man, sailed the *Fiery Cross*, owned by Mr. J. Stirling, a Dumbartonshire yachtsman. *Fiery Cross* was one of the second William Fife's best schooners, and in sailing her Jamieson displayed great skill and courage. One of his famous races took place in 1864, the year after the boat was built. It was a match from Liverpool to Kingstown, and *Fiery Cross* met the English clippers *Albertine, Madcap*, and *Mosquito*. Bad weather was encountered, in which *Fiery Cross* received a severe dusting, but Jamieson drove the boat through in spite of the fact that she was shipping large quantities of water. At the height of the storm John McNee, the old steward, who was always being torn between his admiration for Jamieson's courage and daring and his desire to get through the world in comfort, after trying in vain to keep himself dry in his hammock, donned his oilskins and sea boots, and went back to bed with an amusing resignation, muttering as he did so, 'Oh, Lord, he's at it again, and we're in for another nicht o't. Ah, weel, there's nae harm in being prepared for the worst.'

Jamieson was over eighty when he died. Though a great skipper, he was scarcely equal to McKirdy, a fact which he himself was forced to appreciate.

William Fife (the second) had by this time secured a few of the best Scottish yachtsmen as patrons. These included the Messrs. Finlay, of Glasgow, Mr. Emanuel Boutcher, the Marquis of Ailsa, Mr. H. B. Stewart, of Glasgow, Mr. R. K. Holmes-Kerr, of Largs, and Mr. David Richardson, of Greenock. For all these yachtsmen Fife built first-class boats, many of which became famous racers. Dr. D. W. and Mr. Alexander Finlay, of Glasgow, were his most progressive patrons. He built for them the cutter *Cinderella*, 15 tons, in 1862 ; the *Torch*, 15 tons, in 1865; and the cutter *Kilmeny*, 30 tons, in 1866. All these were fast, and the most successful of the smaller-sized boats which he had so far built. Their owners had ideas as to modelling and building, and Fife was compelled to adopt many of these against his will. In the building of *Torch* they enforced their demands for lighter scantlings, and in place of $1^3/_8$ inch planking, planking of ¼ inch less thickness was used. Upon their suggestion, also, the frames were hewn and steamed alternately. Fife complained that these scantlings would produce a basket-like hull, and at first refused to build to them, on the ground that the boat would not hold together for more than two years. However, he pocketed his prejudice, and the *Torch* was built, and for many years was a champion prize-winner.

Cinderella was one of the first, if not the first, Clyde yacht to sport a topsail with jackyard. The jackyard itself was small, but the topsail was a large one. As far as is known, hollow spars were also introduced to the Clyde on the *Cinderella*, a hollow gaff being the idea of Mr. Alexander Finlay. The hollowing was accomplished by splitting the spar and gouging out the centre, after which the halves were fixed together. The experiment was not successful, and the spar was discarded after a brief trial, owing to its instability. It is also believed that *Cinderella* was fitted with a hollow topsail yard, hollowed in the same manner as the gaff, and strengthened by battens of greenheart lashed in the vicinity of the slings.

Cinderella as a racing craft is not so well remembered as *Torch* and *Kilmeny*, though she won a number of exciting races. She began her racing career on the Mersey, being opposed by the afterwards celebrated Mersey 10-tonner *Vision*, then newly launched.

At one period of the race the Fairlie boat had a long lead, but the finish, a stiff turn to windward over a strong adverse tide, found her at a disadvantage. Alexander Wilson, Messrs. Finlay's skipper, finding that the *Vision* was being taken over an easier course, and learning that the pilot of the *Cinderella* was father of the pilot of the *Vision*, luffed his

boat away in beside the *Vision*, and quickly gained the weather berth. The move was not too late, and an exciting finish gave the victory to *Cinderella* by a single second.

In crossing from Liverpool to Dublin Bay *Cinderella* revealed a defect in planking, and it was with difficulty that she was got to Kingstown. Here, however, she was quickly repaired, and sailed excellent matches against the *Vision* and the *Glide*, the latter a new boat built by Mr. David Fulton. In one of those matches *Cinderella* and *Glide* became surrounded near the mark-boat by a crowd of the smaller-class racers, and the crush at the finish promised to be lively. Wilson, the skipper, anticipated the problem which, with a dozen bowsprits darting over the line simultaneously, the judges would have to deal, and placed a man at the bowsprit end, and the *Cinderella* won by two or three seconds. At Rothesay, too, this boat was associated with a close finish after a day's remarkably close sailing. She was matched against the *Swallow*, a fast 18-ton cutter, owned by Mr. D. J. Penney, of Glasgow, and built at Poole by Wanhill, and the *Harriet*, 12 tons, built at Rothesay by a cousin of Fife (II.). The latter boat was the property of Mr. Ogilvie, one of the old school of Clyde yachtsmen living at Rothesay. The *Swallow* was in charge of Archibald Wright, the afterwards famous Clyde skipper. *Harriet* at an early stage of the race carried away her topmast, and the match resolved itself into a duel between *Cinderella* and *Swallow*. Several times during the day these boats passed and repassed each other, and at the mark-boat *Cinderella* was exactly her own length ahead. Having, however, to concede a few seconds to *Swallow*, the latter boat won. *Cinderella* was sold to Professor Thorpe, and ended her career by becoming a wreck on the Hebrides.

The *Swallow* and the *Vision* were among the first English boats to visit the Clyde, and the former boat was the object of considerable interest to the Clyde builders, the founder of the Fairlie Yard being a keen student of her lines, as well as the late Mr. G. L. Watson. The *Vision* was bought by Mr. Morris Carswell in the early seventies, and brought to the Clyde. Mr. Carswell was then one of the most popular racing owners on the Clyde, and the population of Largs, where he resided, were as enthusiastic over the *Vision* as the owner himself; and at the beaching and launching operations on Fairlie Beach every man and boy 'lent a hand' as a duty to the owner and his boat.

The washing of the sails of early Clyde yachts was not uncommon, and when the *Vision* arrived on the Clyde from the Mersey her sails were so grimy that it was deemed necessary to wash them, rather than wait for a new suit. The operation was not a success, Mersey grime resisting the Clyde water, but it provided much amusement for the young talent of Largs, who carried water for the ablutions. Another Clyde yachtsman, Mr. Bamatyne, owner of the *Midge*, also washed the sails of his yacht. Being a fastidious gentleman, he was, on one occasion, annoyed by the prentice weavers of Largs bathing in the Broomfields Wharf, built by Dr. John Cairnie, and, collecting their clothing, deposited it in the sea. The boys were awarded a prompt revenge, for no sooner were the snowy-white sails of the *Midge* laid out to dry than they were collected and deposited in the sea.

When *Vision* became the property of Mr. Carswell, she was given a complete overhaul. Her cutaway forefoot aroused the scorn of the Largs yachtsmen and fishermen, for Mr. G. L. Watson had not yet introduced his revolutionary ideas as to rockered keels and cutaway forefoots. Their relative bearing upon speed was unknown, and it was freely predicted that a boat with a cutwater similar to that introduced in *Vision* could not possibly hang to windward. Accordingly the cutaway portion of the keel at the bow, cleverly and daringly introduced by her draughtsman, was filled up in the most approved

style with a piece of hardwood firmly bolted. This did not, however, ruin the sailing qualities of the *Vision*, and she won many matches against the cracks of her day. Mr. Carswell was a good friend to Largs yachting, and was one of the founders of the Royal Largs Yacht Club.

Kilmeny made her first appearance at the Mersey Regatta of 1864, but she was in an unfinished state, and her crew consisted of the Fairlie carpenters who built her. These men were keen, but untrained. The first race was in a slashing breeze, in which the fleet beat out to the north-west lightship with housed topmasts and reefed mainsails. While turning to windward with the strong breeze *Kilmeny* led a strong class in good style, but when running home the wind fell light and her crew were at great disadvantage in setting canvas and shaking out the reefs of the mainsail, and she was beaten. The next day she led the fleet to windward, but had the misfortune to break the jaws of her gaff, which lost for her the race. From the Mersey she went on to Kingstown, and here she opened a series of remarkable victories, which continued almost without interruption till first the *Foxhound* and then the first of the 40-tonners were sailed against her.

Torch, on the other hand, was almost a failure in her first year, and gave no signs of being a successful boat. In her second season, however, she was almost invincible, being beaten only by the 20-tonner *Luna* at Kingstown. She was sold by the Messrs. Finlay to Mr. George B. Thomson, under, whose ownership she was a complete success. She was subsequently owned and raced by Mr. W. H. Williams, of Hull, and Mr. W. Sinclair. During her racing career she gained about 100 flags. Her chief measurements were: Length overall, 48 feet ; beam, 9 feet ; draught, forward, 3 feet 9 inches ; aft, 7 feet.

The *Kilmeny* passed into the hands of Mr. Pascoe French, one of the most famous amateur yachtsmen of his day. For him, too, she sailed many fine races. Mr. French died in 1893, at his home, Marino, Queenstown, at the age of seventy-eight. His last vessel of importance was the 40-tonner *Gleam*, which he sold in 1878. Like many of the cleverest yachtsmen, both Corinthian and professional, he retained a fondness for the sea, and in the summer before he died he was sailing small craft in Cork Harbour with some amount of the dash and skill for which he had been distinguished in his younger days. He was once described as the prince of helmsmen, and John Houston paid him a fine compliment when he said that he was the only Corinthian against whom he found it necessary to take off his coat to defeat. At the time of his death Mr. French was the senior member of the Royal Cork Yacht Club, having been enrolled in 1837.

The cutter *Fiona* was launched in the early summer of 1865, from the Fairlie Yard of William Fife. With her dawned the nationalization of the sport. Hitherto Clyde yachting had been more or less parochial, and racing between yachts of the North and the South had been exceptional. Mr. Emanuel Boutcher, however, sent *Fiona*, in charge of John Houston, to race in the South against the crack English vessels. William Jamieson would have done this with Mr. John Rowan's *Cymba*, but the privilege was denied to him ; and though *Fiona* won sufficient prizes to entitle her to an important position in Clyde yacht-building history, it was the opening of a new era in yacht-racing with which her launch is connected that gives her so prominent a position among racing yachts.

There is no more interesting phase in the history of the *Fiona* than that connected with her ownership. She was built for Mr. Moseley, a Liverpool merchant, on the strength of several runs which ships trading in his interest made from the fast blockaded ports of Charleston and Savannah in the grim days of the Civil War. Some reverses of fortune before she was finished made it prudent for Mr. Moseley not to take her over,

and she was launched for Mr. H. Lafone, another Liverpool gentleman, who kept her for one season. She then passed into the possession of Mr. Emanuel Boutcher, a London merchant, who spared neither pains nor expense in keeping her in the forefront of racing vessels. Long after she had become outclassed, and had ceased to be remembered except as past history, she was purchased by Mr. H. M. Rait, a Clyde admirer, who placed her in the rank of active vessels. Mr. Rait had been an admirer of *Fiona* in his early days, and he still maintains her in first-class condition. Under his ownership she has won a number of prizes, including one of the Emperor of Germany's North Sea cups.

All through her successful days *Fiona* was commanded by John Houston, of Largs, and this alone had much to do, not only with *Fiona'* s success as a racer, but with the extension of yacht-racing interests from Clyde parochialism to wider national fields. Houston was the beau-ideal of a yacht skipper, and extremely popular on the Clyde. When quite a youth he secured a passage on the *Cymba*, of which Robert McKirdy was skipper, and on McKirdy going below, young Houston persuaded the man who was steering to let him have a short trick at the tiller. Before long McKirdy became interested in the boy. Then he said: 'Ane o' you see wha's that steerin' the noo ?' On being informed that it was young Johnnie Houston, he said, with unusual gravity: 'Weel, that'll be my successor.'

The early years of Houston's life, however, were spent on board fishing smacks, with occasional racing on board Clyde cruising yachts, such as Mr. Speir's cutter *Crusader* and Mr. John Mills's schooner *Rowena*, of both of which he was skipper. When a skipper had to be found for *Fiona* he was recommended, and secured the position. He was then forty-one years of age.

There was nothing unusual in *Fiona's* appearance when launched, and her spar plan was modest for a boat of her size. Originally her leading dimensions were: Length, 75 feet 5 inches; beam 15 feet 8 inches; draft of water (aft), 11 feet 10 inches ; mast (deck to bounds), 44 feet 5 inches ; mainboom, 60 feet; gaff, 38 feet; bowsprit (outboard), 34. feet; topmast, 38 feet; and area of lower sails, 3,720 feet. Like all the boats William Fife II. built, *Fiona* presented a pleasing appearance to the eye, and while there was nothing strikingly original about her, she stood for the very best that could be accomplished from the lessons learned in the designing of the most successful of her immediate predecessors, and this was all that her builder ever claimed for her. Fife had, as he on one occasion expressed it, embodied in *Fiona* all that he had learned in his previous successes, and though she was far from revolutionary in design, she was fair and sweet as to model, and so well built that he had hopes of her doing well as a racer.

In 1875, when she had reached her tenth year of racing - a mature age for a racing yacht - *Fiona* was the chief winner of the year. Dixon Kemp wrote of her: 'Fife's famous *Fiona* is still the hardest nut English builders have got to crack, although her luck this season suggests some uncanny league with the wind and the weather. A look at her prizes this season will sweeten up any old-fashioned touches she may show, and indeed the old boat looks good enough for a glass case as she faces Lapthorn's sail-loft.'

Another equally noted English yachting writer called her 'the terrible *Fiona*, the wonder of all time, the boat which made the fame of Scotch yachts. For more than eight years the fastest yacht afloat, little did her builder think, as he watched her glide into the water, that she would make and maintain a name for him wherever yachts are built or sailed.'

Few boats have secured so much regard from those closely associated with them as did *Fiona*. Quite a fleet of not only good, but famous boats, have been launched from Fairlie since *Fiona* was quietly slipped into the sea, but not one of them ever deposed her in the estimation of her builder. Her present owner, Mr. Rait, like Mr. Boutcher, is a devoted admirer, and John Houston's affection for her was almost pathetic.

Houston's style of sailing was dashing and daring. He tuned *Fiona* up to such a pitch that she frequently carried away everything, and his methods came in for adverse criticism. Some explanation is found in the fact that the sails of forty or more years ago were full-cut and baggy, and that *Fiona's* skipper strained every effort and braced the gear up in order to get all the power possible from his sails, and though his eagerness lost him some races, it gained many of the most brilliant victories.

One of the strangest cases of protesting in the history of the sport is found in connection with *Fiona* and a cup which she won, but never received. The race took place under the flag of the Royal Mersey Club in 1866, the fleet consisting of *Phryne, Astarte, Vindex, Mosquito, Banshee, Christabel*, and *Fiona*. Luck was against the match. On the day fixed the weather was so light that in accordance with the time-limit which then prevailed it was abandoned. The wind was light on the following day, but a good light-weather race was sailed. *Fiona* was out of the race till the closing stages, when, in some excellent turning to windward over a strong weather-going tide, she came away handsomely in response to admirable handling on the part of Houston, and managed to give the allowances to all. So close was the finish, however, that *Christabel* was only beaten by 40 seconds. *Christabel* had an able and experienced pilot aboard, but he managed his weathering tack so badly that, although she had the prize quite safe with the flag-boat almost abeam, the helm had to be put hard up at the last moment to prevent a collision with the bow of the boat. It took *Christabel* a minute to recover and cross the line, thus leaving her defeated by 40 seconds. At this time *Christabel* was owned by Mr. A. C. Kennard, and in the height of his disappointment he sent in a double-barrelled protest against the *Fiona*. The objections were, first, that booming out of sails had been practised ; and, second, that her racing flag was too small. The first objection was quickly disposed of, but as the racing flag failed to stand the tape—owing to the winds having made too free with it—there was no alternative for the committee but to disqualify her, and this they reluctantly did.[1] The *Phryne* was owned by Mr. Law, a Glasgow iron merchant, and commanded by A. Wilson, of Largs. Wilson and Houston were cousins, and Wilson, whose boat at one point of the race had a good chance of winning, became possessed with the idea that *Christabel's* own flag was somewhat scrimp. Conveying his suspicions to Houston, the pair went alongside of *Christabel* and asked leave to have the flag measured. Permission was readily granted, and the flag was so near being under the regulation size that a protest against it under the circumstances would have been justified. No such protest was made, but so much feeling was aroused over the matter that Mr. Kennard offered to sail the match over. Mr. Boutcher refused to consent to this, and the matter was allowed to drop.

At one period of her career *Fiona's* closest competitor was the 60-tonner *Vanguard*. Racing at Southsea on one occasion, this boat pressed the Fairlie cutter so close in a stiff breeze that, after she had carried away her topsail yards in quick succession, Houston put

[1] In those days the law demanded that the racing flag of a first-class yacht should be 4 feet on the fly and 3 feet 6 inches on the hoist.

up a thimble header and sailed her home a winner by the narrowest of margins. On the following day *Vanguard* was again hard on the Fife boat. Towards the finish they were running down on the winning-line under spinnakers that were being carried uncomfortably. To make matters worse, a gybe on the line was almost inevitable to save the race. Houston conceived the bold idea of letting the scudding-sail fly rather than lose time gathering it in. Fortune was favourable, and the sail blew clear away and settled on the water like a balloon, and the race was won.

Although Houston was skipper to Mr. Boutcher's boat for over twenty years, owner and skipper did not always see eye to eye as to the management of the boat, and at least in one race Houston threatened to lock the offending owner in the cabin.

The whole period in which Houston was sailing-master of *Fiona* is filled with adventure. On one occasion, racing from Cherbourg to Ryde, *Fiona* carried away her mast and gear in mid-Channel. Nothing daunted, Houston set the crew to rig up a jury-mast, and the cutter was taken safely to Gosport without assistance.

In the early days of *Fiona's* racing in the English Channel Houston was a complete stranger to the waters, and was more dependent upon pilotage than practically any other skipper against whom he had to sail. On one occasion, racing from Ryde to Cherbourg, the French port was not reached before dark. When nearing the coast Houston inquired of his pilot, an Itchen ferryman, which was the breakwater light. 'Well, sir,' said the pilot, 'there was neither breakwater nor light here when I was here before, which was only once, and that twenty years ago.' This awkward situation threatened the loss of the race. Houston, however, decided to take the risk. He ran the boat into the harbour on a shrewd guess, and won the cup. On many occasions, too, *Fiona's* skipper disregarded the advice of his pilots, and one particular race was cleverly won through his daring in this direction. In a Channel course the boats were cross-tacking in the vicinity of a reef of submerged rocks, of which the pilot conceived a horrible dread. *Fiona's* only hope of winning the race lay in negotiating a gully between the reefs, and Houston determined to run the risk against the frantic appeals of the pilot. Luck was with the adventure, and Fiona went safely through, coming out half a mile to windward of the boat which had previously held the weather gauge.

Although, generally speaking, the Scottish aristocracy took but a comparatively small amount of interest in the racing side of yachting, the Marquis of Ailsa was a keen patron of the sport, and owned a large fleet of famous racing boats. Moreover, he opened up a yacht-building yard near his own seat in the south of Ayrshire, and he was intimately connected with the ship and yacht building establishment at Troon on the Ayrshire coast, which was founded by the Duke of Bedford, the then Commodore of the Royal Northern Yacht Club, and which still bears the name of the Marquis of Ailsa. The Marquis was, in fact, a tower of strength to Scottish yachting in those halcyon days when he was owner of the *Foxhound, Bloodhound*, and *Sleuthhound*, for, like Mr. Boutcher with *Fiona*, he raced these boats all round the coast, and in thirteen years won 113 prizes.

The Marquis of Ailsa has always been devoted to yachting. From Culzean Castle a fine view is obtained of the Clyde and Ailsa Craig, the grim milestone of the sea from which the title is taken. The coast around the castle has produced a fine and hardy type of fishermen, and it was among the fishing 'nabbies' owned by these men that the Marquis of Ailsa gained his earliest experiences. At the same time he sailed in his father's 25-tonner *Tammie Norie*, named after a bird which haunts Ailsa Craig, and before he had

succeeded to the estates he was owner of the 15-tonnner *Snowdrop*. Neither of these yachts were in any way remarkable, and have long since been forgotten.

The success of the Scotch yachts of the latter sixties had not been lost upon the young Ayrshire nobleman, and in 1870, when he succeeded to the title, he commissioned Fife to build what was afterwards the famous 35-ton cutter, *Foxhound*. This yacht was manned by a crew drawn from the local fishermen, and a couple of Largs weavers, and the skipper, Sloan, was also a local fisherman; and though it soon became apparent that in *Foxhound* Fife had produced an excellent and fast craft, the crew was unable to successfully play the racing game against the experienced crews of the South Coast boats, and in the first thirteen races she secured only two prizes. A change was decided upon, and Ben Harris, of Itchen Ferry, who had successfully sailed the 60-tonner *Vanguard*, was engaged at the opening of the season of 1871 to sail the *Foxhound*. The change was at once apparent, and the Marquis had the satisfaction of seeing his vessel take the lead among the racing yachts of the period. The success of Harris and his southern crew opened up a regular invasion of the Clyde by southern skippers and hands - an invasion which continued for nearly twenty years.

In 1871 *Foxhound* sailed twenty-one races and won twelve prizes, including a Queen's Cup presented to the Royal Yacht Squadron, the Marquis of Ailsa having been elected to the Squadron in that year. *Foxhound* was the smallest vessel that had won a Queen's Cup within eighteen years, and the fleet against which she competed included the *Flying Cloud, Egeria*, *Guinivere, Hirondelle, Rosebud*, and *Harlequin*.

At this time the nucleus of the afterwards famous 'forty class' was in existence, being represented by *Niobe, Myosotis*, and *Muriel*, and when in 1872 that trio was joined by the *Norman*, which had been built for Major Ewing, the owner of *Foxhound* recognised that his yacht was too small to compete successfully in the class. In 1873 he determined to build another boat. Fife had at this time on the stocks a half-completed 60-tonner, which had been laid down for a Glasgow gentleman who died while she was in the framing stage. This craft gave excellent promise, and the Marquis of Ailsa requested Fife not to part with her. At a certain stage of the negotiations, however, Fife was summoned to Cowes, and there received an order for a 40-tonner, the idea of racing the 60-tonner having been abandoned by the Marquis.

Mr. Fife was not slow to appreciate the great opportunity which had come to him in these busy days of 1874, when he had the 110-ton cutter *Cythera* to complete for Mr. David Richardson, of Greenock, the 60-ton cutter *Neva* for Mr. R. K. Holmes-Kerr, of Largs, and at least one smaller cutter, the *Blenda*, in addition to the *Bloodhound* for the Marquis of Ailsa.

The '*Hound*, as the new boat came to be spoken of, was scantily fitted inside, but she gave every appearance of speed. Ben Harris was placed in charge, and though she did not create such a record as either *Cymba, Fiona*, or *Torch* had done, she nevertheless opened and maintained a brilliant career, and won for her owner sixty prizes in six seasons.

For sustained excellence the 'forty' class has never been surpassed, and after some years *Bloodhound* passed to the hands of Mr. Thomas Dunlop, a Glasgow shipowner, for whom in the seasons from 1902 to 1906 she won twenty-eight prizes.

Bloodhound's record during the period in which she carried the flag of the Marquis of Ailsa is given below, as well as the racing records of her two greatest rivals in the class—Major Ewing's *Norman* and Mr. Dunbar McMaster's *Myosotis*. The former was built by Mr.

Dan Hatcher and the latter by Mr. Michael Ratsey. Tom Diaper, of Itchen, sailed the *Norman*, and William O'Neill, of Kingstown, the *Myosotis*. The *Norman* is still in commission on the Clyde. The *Myosotis* was destroyed by fire in a French port. The following is a record of these yachts:

Racing records of *Bloodhound*, *Myosotis* and *Norman*.

	Year	Starts	Prizes	Value
Bloodhound	1874	20	11	£315
	1875	24	16	£500
	1876	24	12	£412
	1877	24	12	£380
	1878*	-	-	-
	1879	30	16	£680
	1880	27	5	£180
Myositis	1872	18	7	£330
	1873	24	14	£560
	1874	20	6	£140
	1875	24	4	£105
	1876	22	12	£170
	1877	20	15	£541
	1878	31	18	£740
Norman	1873	-	9	£285
	1874	-	15	£612
	1875	-	12	£460
	1876	-	10	£392
	1877	-	-	-
	1878	-	-	-
	1879	-	-	-
	1880	-	20	£785

*Not fitted out

With the record of *Bloodhound* we have already travelled beyond the limit set by the title of this chapter, and it must suffice to conclude this portion of our work with the satisfactory reflection that the talent of the early builders and yachtsmen of Scotland has been emulated worthily by their successors, and that the past thirty years have only served to add fresh laurels to those already won in these early days of yacht-racing.