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PANERAI BRITISH CLASSIC WEEK

Celebrating difference at BCYC

The weather wasn't the best – on the opening Sunday F7 winds caused the classic Round the Island race to be cancelled while rain and storm clouds also dogged the middle of the week – but despite that, and with 72 boats, this was the best British Classic Yacht Club regatta yet.

The most significant aspects of this year's BCYC Panerai British Classic Week were the number of boats and the difference in design. There were gorgeous gaffers, from the 57ft (17m) Kelpie to the 29ft 6in (9m) Jap; an Ian Howlett 12-M, Crusader; no fewer than five Spirit yachts, a Folkboat...

What? A Folkboat? Yes, small boats were much in evidence, with two SCODs, the Folkboat *Little Otter*, an East Anglian – *Cherette* – and portrait artist Michael Frith's 24ft (7.3m) *Blue Eagle*. "This feels really great," Michael said after racing.

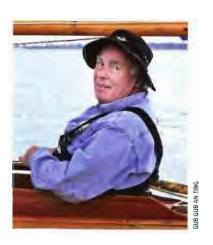






Above: Jack
Gifford of GL
Watson at the
helm of St Patrick
Far left: Ben
Frecheville and
Rory Boyle, crew
of the 8-M Athena.
Left: founder Tim
Blackman - BCYC
admiral.





Far left: Water WAGs? Waiting for the boats to come in. Left: Andrew Thornhill brought two 22 SqMs to the event and helmed Vigilant

"We're not the fastest around the course and to be honest we've crossed the line after the committee boat had left, but as long as our time can be recorded, we're very happy."

Allowing the smaller boats to race meant that William Collier, head of GL Watson and one-time CB columnist, brought his exquisitely restored St Patrick, a GL Watson BRA 18ft class, which is just one of those sweet-lined small boats everyone loves to see. Having been restored at Fairlie she's also quick, and many people (often in larger boats) were seeing her overtaking them.

This year Panerai rolled out a vast courtesy lounge and there was more of a tented village feel to things – hotter sun and it would start to feel like the Med!

And that's really the point. By creating a more diverse regatta along the lines of what happens on the continent, Cowes really is set up for something spectacular next year. Tell those captains in the south: no more excuses! Come and race in tidal waters with the BCYC! DH







Above: Some of the sails look more IRC than BCYC, but the club hosts a contingent of the Spirit class of modern classic yachts. Far left: Infanta, Tim Blackman's yawl. Left: Lora, a 100-year-old Pain Clark design





Far left: The SCOD Marbella and Michael Frith's Blue Eagle enjoy some racing Left: Hal Sisk and Peggy Bawn were providing the 1880s look