



GUY VENABLES

loved *Britannia*, which had missed the previous season while being ‘reconditioned’. I wonder if the King’s mind was more on the fitting out and the prospects for *Britannia*’s coming season, in which she would win 22 prizes from 26 starts.

When William’s great-great-uncle Edward (previously the Eighth) married in June 1937, it was a low-key French affair which no other member of the Royal Family attended. A few days earlier *Endeavour II* had arrived in Bristol, Rhode Island, with great hopes of winning the America’s Cup; probably a captivating diversion for everyone.

William’s grandmother Elizabeth (later the Second) married in November 1947 – a time of year unlikely to affect anyone’s sailing plans. However, the Island Sailing Club generously gave the couple the Dragon *Bluebottle* as a wedding present, and the groom subsequently presented the class with the Edinburgh Cup for its national championships. And, as *Yachting Monthly* reported: “The King of Norway took advantage of being in England for the Royal wedding to pay a visit to Camper & Nicholsons to see the progress which is being made in converting *Philante* into a Norwegian Royal yacht.” *Philante*

## ROYAL WEDDING? I’d rather be sailing

*Nigel Sharp* looks at how we spent previous wedding days

The day chosen for William and Kate’s wedding should be a blessing for sailors – giving us, as it does, a second consecutive four-day spring weekend. But how have previous Royal weddings affected keen sailors?

William’s great-great-grandfather George (later the Fifth) married in July 1893. George’s father was Edward (later the Seventh), whose brand new racing cutter *Britannia* was just a few weeks old. Edward must have been champing at the bit to spend time on board, and the interruption of a family wedding may not have been welcome. However, either by luck or good planning, a two-day break in the racing may well have allowed him to attend his son’s stag night as well as the festivities.

The day after the wedding *Britannia* was beaten by her equally new rival *Valkyrie II* by 28 seconds after six hours of racing. One glass of champagne too many, perhaps?

William’s great-grandfather George (later the Sixth) married in April 1923. By this time George V owned and



**“A better day for holding a wedding than a yacht race”**

had been *Endeavour II*’s mothership in 1937.

I remember the day William’s parents married in July 1981. We were given a Bank Holiday so that we could all enjoy the occasion. I very much did so by joining a small flotilla of dinghies on a beautiful but almost windless day, and we drifted across the Solent to Cowes. On the way we passed the world’s top ocean racers, waiting for some wind so that the first race of the Admiral’s Cup could be started. *Yachts and Yachting* later reported: “There was barely a daily newspaper writer who could resist the observation that it was a better day for holding a wedding than a yacht race”. In a two-hour postponement “those thus blessed watched the wedding on portable telly and gave out progress reports to those less well equipped”. Britain went on to win the Cup.

And when William’s father married the second time, in early April 2005, we were still in awe of Ellen MacArthur’s epic voyage, or too worried about our own fitting-out schedules, to give the wedding much thought.

William and Kate will, of course, be hoping for a warm and sunny day. We join them in that, but please can we have a southwesterly Force 3 as well?