



BEKEN OF COWES



Above: The 12-M Hera and Mouchette on the Clyde, Scotland
Left: Dormy, designed and sailed by Gilbert Laws off Ryde

a couple of weeks after the Ryde regatta so that it fitted in better with the well-established Clyde fixture list. In fact, the two events could have been considerably further apart, as the sporting events of the 1908 Games were actually held over a six-month period.

The winning 12-Metre was *Hera*, designed and sailed by Thomas Glen-Coats, who had been apprenticed to the legendary yacht designer Alfred Mylne, reputedly on board. The silver medal winner was *Mouchette*, whose crew included James Baxter, a former England rugby union cap. Three races were scheduled, but after *Hera* won the first two, the third was cancelled.

In the earlier event at Ryde, the 6 and 8-Metre classes had the most entries, with five boats in each. Both were won by British boats – *Dormy*, designed and sailed by Gilbert Laws, and Blair Cochrane's *Cobweb* respectively. The bronze-winning 8-M was *Sorais*, sailed by Philip Hunloke, who would later become King George V's sailing master on *Britannia*, and owned and crewed by the Duchess of Westminster.

Scotland's Olympics

Nigel Sharpe discovers how the Scots took gold on the Clyde

During this summer's Olympic Games, two football matches (of course football shouldn't be an Olympic sport, so let's not waste time debating that one) will take place at Glasgow's Hampden Park. This is by no means the first time an Olympic event has taken place north of the border: sailing paved the way more than a century ago.

In 1908, when London was host city for the first time, the sailing events were to take place at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. As the International Rule had been introduced throughout Europe the previous year, it had been decided that all the Olympic sailing should take place in the Metre classes – all gaff-rigged at that time, of course. This was ambitious, as the rule hadn't yet become established, and there were five classes: 15, 12, 8, 7 and 6-Metres. Two boats per nation could compete.

In the 15-M class there were no entries at all – after all, only three existed at that time, although they did all race in Cowes Week immediately after the Games. The Twelves fared only slightly better – there was no overseas interest, but a British fleet which had started to take root on the Clyde was keen to take part. However, they felt there was no point making the long trip to the Solent just to race against each other, so they persuaded the organisers to move their Olympic regatta to Hunters Quay. They also put forward a convincing argument to hold the event



“...no point making the long trip to the Solent just to race each other”

Part of the reason for the poor 6-M turnout was that the lucrative Ludmilla Copee Challenge Cup had taken place in Ostend immediately before the Ryde regatta, and there wasn't time for boats to return. T D McKeekin, a crew member on the gold medal-winning *Dormy*, wrote a report on the Games in *Yachting Monthly* in which he made it clear that he would rather have been in Belgium.

After *Dormy* had been selected for the Games, he had to “reluctantly relinquish our long-promised trip to Ostend”, where the 6-M *Gipta* won 2,500 Francs in prize money. What price Olympic glory? Furthermore, he didn't enjoy the flukey winds off Ryde, writing that, “it would be tedious to describe in detail the varying fortunes of the three most wearisome races in which I ever participated”.

There was just one entry in the 7-M class – *Heroine*, sailed by Charles Rivett-Carnac, whose crew included his wife Frances, making them the first husband and wife team to win Olympic gold together. They were only required to sail in two of the three scheduled races before they were awarded their medals.

The 7-M's only other Olympic appearance, incidentally, was in the 1920 Antwerp Games, where the entry list doubled, and the British gold medal-winner's crew included another married couple, Cyril and Dorothy Wright.

