



Right: the gaff cutter *Tern III*

BEKEN OF COWES

several days. “We bought a newspaper and for the first time realised that there was a likelihood of a great war,” Worth wrote later. They set sail that evening.

In the early hours of Sunday morning, *Brunette* arrived in L’Aber Wrac’h where the crew of another boat “pointed out the mobilisation

flags flying from the signal station, and informed us that Germany had declared war on Russia and France”, her owner later wrote. Back in Cowes, another telegram had arrived with a message from the King who thought the regatta week should be cancelled; by noon it was. That afternoon, about 200 naval reservists who had thought they would spend the following week racing – some of them on board King George V’s *Britannia* – left Cowes for Portsmouth to take up more serious duties. The Commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron was among the well-wishers who saw them off.

Tern III arrived in Torquay that evening, and the next day sailed to Studland Bay. Early on the morning of Tuesday 4 August, the day that Britain declared war on

Germany, *Tern III* set sail for Hamble. “It was a fine day and there was a jolly breeze from the SSW,” wrote Worth. As they approached the Needles Channel, the crew of a tug told them that it was closed and they would have to sail round the back of the Isle of Wight. “Though

we were anxious to get home, we did not regret the extra 30 or 40 miles sailing in such ideal conditions.”

Two German schooners – *Germania* and the Kaiser’s *Meteor V* – had left their home ports the week before bound for Cowes, where they had been expected to race, and were still at sea that day. *Germania* was captured by the Royal Navy, but *Meteor V* escaped.

Meanwhile, Thomas Lipton’s *Shamrock IV*, escorted by his steam yacht *Erin*, was in mid-Atlantic on her way to compete in the America’s Cup. When the crew heard the news of the outbreak of war, they hastily made their way to Bermuda. The Cup was initially postponed until 1915, and was eventually held in 1920.

Erin was subsequently requisitioned for the war effort, but was unfortunately sunk by a torpedo in the Mediterranean with the tragic loss of six hands. “For the life of any of these I would gladly have given the ship,” wrote Lipton.

The crew of *Brunette* eventually arrived in Fowey having been prevented from leaving L’Aber Wrac’h until Thursday 6 August. “Among the many British enterprises that Kaiser Wilhelm II can boast of having spoilt in 1914, he will be able to count the annual cruise of a certain British vessel of 10 tons,” her owner later wrote. 

Cut short by the Kaiser

Nigel Sharp recalls how the Great War ended a summer cruise

On Sunday 19 July 1914, the 10-ton yawl *Brunette* left Hamble for a summer cruise with a crew of four on board. Having previously considered going to Germany, they had, somewhat fortuitously as it would turn out, changed their plans and were heading to France. On the afternoon of the 28th, they heard that Austria had declared war on Serbia when they arrived in Lézardrieux. Tensions had been building over the past month since the assassination of Austria’s Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Bizarrely, *Yachting Monthly*’s July portrait study featured another Austrian archduke, Charles Stephen, who owned another steam yacht and was a cousin of Ferdinand.

On Friday 31 July, the German Kaiser’s brother, Prince Henry, arrived in Cowes to stay with the commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron, of which the Prince was an honorary member. Later that day, the Squadron received a telegram to say that the international situation had forced King George V – the Kaiser’s first cousin – to cancel his plans to attend Cowes Week, which was due to start the following Monday.

On Saturday, Claud Worth, with his wife and three others, sailed his gaff cutter *Tern III* into L’Aber Wrac’h having been cruising in isolated parts of Brittany for



“We bought a newspaper and for the first time realised that war was likely”