



## **A Brief History of the Scow Class**

The first dinghies that were recognisably Solent Scows were built in Lymington before the First World War. Although the origin of the design is uncertain, George Courtney and Co, the Berthon Boat Company and Dan Bran certainly all played a part in the early years of the Scow.

In the 1920's the Scows became popular in Yarmouth and Theo Smith the well-known Yarmouth boatbuilder built many of the class and they remained popular on both sides of the western Solent with Berthon said to have built over 200 by 1948.

After the Second World War the Scow became popular all over the Solent area with classes in Lymington, Yarmouth, Christchurch, Keyhaven, Hamble, Cowes and Bembridge.

Although the Scows were all basically built to the same design each builder made them a little different and each area had different size sails or different details in the fit-out of the dinghy.

There was hardly a boatbuilder of any significance in the Solent area who did not build Scows at some time and in the early 50s, with people in Bembridge getting interested in Scows, Alan Coombes and Peter Scott started building them. The company they had formed when they left the Services after the war, A.A.Coombes and Co, went on to build over 200 wooden Scows for owners in Bembridge with large fleets at both the Brading Haven Yacht Club and Bembridge Sailing Club.

The Bembridge Scow was as individual in detail as the Scows from other builders. However, all those produced by A.A.Coombes were very much to the same standard and design. When in the 1970's interest in the Scows declined in Bembridge a large number were bought by Yarmouth sailors where the dinghies masqueraded as West

Wight Scows although they were Bembridge Scow hulls fitted with the Yarmouth wire horse and larger sails.

In 1985, with there being a little more interest in Scows, Bill Mitchell who had taken over the boat yard from Alan Coombes and Peter Scott, decided to make a grp version. By this time wooden dinghies had become something that only a few dedicated people would consider owning and the new low maintenance grp version gave the class a new lease of life. There was a Scow revival and after a life on the Solent of perhaps 90 years, and strong following in Bembridge for 50 years, the Scow is still an important part of the Bembridge sailing scene.

The grp Scow is as close to the original wooden version as possible and can be raced on equal terms against those. The hull mould was made from the hull of a wooden boat and the layout of the boat reflects very much the wooden versions, although wooden boats were equipped with buoyancy bags rather than tanks.

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The accompanying photos show the diversity of events sailed in Scows.

The heading photo shows the annual Scow Parade around St Helens Fort.

The second photo is of team racing between clubs, this photo shows BHYC v YSC at Yarmouth, sailed in the Yarmouth version of the Scow with the larger (reefable) sail. Three scows are helmed by BHYC members and three by YSC members.





Then there is Frostbite and Icebreaker racing in Bembridge Harbour for our hardier members, often, as in this photo, in a bit of a blow.



And the annual Scow Championships, an Open event held in August in the area around St Helens Fort with most entries coming from Brading Haven and BSC.