

2 July 2015 – yacht race.

The tantalising dream of Great Britain winning the America's Cup yacht race for the first time in 2015 formed the culmination of an illustrated talk at Kyrle Probus Club on Thursday (July 2<sup>nd</sup>).

Former club president Brian Wozencroft said that despite Great Britain being a seafaring nation, none of the home-based yachts had yet equalled even Switzerland's achievement in taking the Cup from the Americans.

Though 'certainly no sailor,' Brian was attracted by the superb design of the three J-class yachts he found resting at harbour during a visit to St Tropez after his retirement in 2005.

He referred to the old design axiom 'if it looks right, it probably is right. Well, these really looked right.'

Brian reflected that the racing of very large yachts had by the early 1900s become the preferred pastime of the rich and famous. Royal enthusiasts included the Sailor King, George V, although he ordered the yacht Britannia built and raced by his father Edward VII to be scuttled in the Solent following King Edward's death.

'The rules governing this so-called Big Boat Class were pretty loose and the boats were getting bigger and bigger,' he said. 'The Americans decided that the rules needed to be better defined and introduced the Universal Rule. The outcome was that the length was that the length was in the range of 120-135 ft and the sail area of around 7,500 sq ft.'

A typical mainsail of a J-Class is some 5,000 sq ft and weighs just over a ton.

The America's Cup followed the challenge issued by the tea tycoon Thomas Lipton with a J-Class yacht he had under construction. The challenge was accepted by the Americans who set about building four boats for the competition. Lipton's best result was a second-place finish.

The yacht Endeavour owned by Tommy Sopwith came the closest of all the UK challenges to bringing home the Cup. It won the first two races convincingly before eventually losing 4-2.

Only ten J-Class yachts were built, six by America and four British. Three of the British J's survived the Second World War and are sailing today, appearing regularly in races throughout the world. They are also available for private charter.