# World Sailing Championships- Irelands Brilliant Victory [#1]

In his obituary is written [#2] ‘this page is dedicated to the memory of one of Irelands greatest dinghy sailors and sportsmen our waters have known.

Captain James W. Payne, Passage West, Co. Cork.

‘‘Skipper’ Payne was one of the men who introduced the I.Y.R.U. 12 foot dinghies to Cork Harbour after World War One, in which he served with distinction in the Connacht Fusiliers. He was almost invincible in the Twelves winning an imposing number of club races as well as International contests held in Holland and in cork Harbour against formidable opposition……

Not alone for his record of victories, they stemmed from superb helmsmanship and something akin to a sixth sense of finding favourable slants of wind – will Skipper Payne be remembered by three generations of dinghy sailors? They held him in deep affection for his sportsmanship, his unfailing cheerfulness, his modesty, and above all his ability to be just ‘one of the boys’ in any company.’

Who was Captain Jimmy Warren Payne?

In 1912 *The Yachtsman Magazine* campaigned for the setting up of an organisation to support the interests of Small Boat sailors. Up until that time, yachting was seen as a recreation for rich men and royalty in big boats [#3] Like horse-racing, it was a game for the super-rich, and like horse-racing there was a tradition that a professional should be in charge of the boat, but unlike horse-racing, the owner was encouraged to be on board to enjoy the exctement. To address the needs of small boat owners, **The Boat Racing Association** was established in London in November 1912 under the chairmanship of T.D. McMeekin. The object of the association was ‘Racing in the British Isles of small boats not classed by the Yacht Racing Association.’

In 1913, the Boat Racing Association held a boat design competition, for a craft of 12 feet long, suitable to serve as a tender to a larger yacht, and one which could be sailed , rowed and raced in its own right. The prize offered for a winning design was 5 guineas. Eleven entries were received and the winner was George Cockshott [#4] from Southport in Lancashire, a

Lawyer, who was also an amateur yacht designer [#5] Once the winning plans were published, many boats were built from those plans in England, Holland, and Italy.

Then all was disrupted by The Great War when no yachting took place.

[#6] In 1919, when the War was over, The Boat Racing Association merged into the Yacht Racing Association, of London, which was the governing body for yachting in English speaking countries. The Yacht Racing Association held an International Conference of Nations in London in 1919 to reach agreement on how yacht racing was to be organised in the post-war era. Argentina, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Holland, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland attended. That meeting decided that six classes of yacht, including Cockshott's 12 foot dinghy should be given International status, and should be promoted over other designs. The adoption of a dinghy class was seen as a means to attract youngsters into yachting. It was suggested that yacht Clubs build, say, half a dozen dinghies , which should be at the disposal, under recognised conditions , of young members of the club.

When Antwerp hosted the [#7] 1920 Olympic Games, Cockshott's International 12 foot dinghy was the obvious choice for the smallest piece of Olympic sailing equipment. Two competitors were allowed in each class from each country. The Organisers made a serious error in selecting too many classes of yacht, which resulted in 24 entries in 16 classes. There were two entries in the 12 foot dinghy class, both from the Netherlands. The British were not inclined to enter the 1920 Olympic Regatta because it clashed with Cowes week, where there would be more entries and more competition.

During the 1920s, the 12 foot class grew in Britain, Ireland, Europe and further afield where English influence existed. Fleets grew up in west Kirby near Liverpool, Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, Salcombe, Deben in Essex, Twickenham, Ranelagh, Kingston-on-Thames and Trearddur Bay in Anglesea, and Monkstown Co. Cork, Le Harvre in France, Haarlem and Loosdrecht in the Netherlands.

Four years later, in 1924, the Olympics were held in Paris. [#8] and being true to the French Character, the French insisted that the Olympic Sailing Equipment would be French designed. Ireland was not permitted to enter, because sailing in Ireland was managed by the British based Yacht Racing Association who had selected British dinghy sailor Mr. Gordon Fowler as their representative. Eight countries too part in the Olympic sailing regatta, and the dinghy gold medal went to Belgium's Leon Huybrechts.

Monsieur Joules Bouriez of the Brussels Royal Yacht Club along with King Albert the first of Belgium promoted the idea, that following the 1924 Olympic Regatta, when all the athletes were in Northern Europe, that a World Dinghy Championships be held in the international 12 foot dinghy from September 14th 1924 and the succeeding days. The event was run under the auspices of the Belgian Yachting Federation and managed by the Brussels Royal Yacht Club. All countries recognised by the International Yacht Racing Union were eligible to compete. [#9] The Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth was treated as a separate country, and thus entitled to a place at the championships.

Rules demanded that each country nominate an amateur helmsman and an amateur crew or a helmsman alone , and a reserve helmsman over the age of eighteen. Entries had to be lodged by 15 August. Racing took place on the Brussels-Antwerp Ship Canal around a triangular course of about two miles. There was no entry fee. The number of races was to be dictated by the number of entries received. Six countries entered.

The final list was:[#10]

Mr. Ricardo G. Watney for England from Bembridge Sailing Club with Mrs. Watney as crew.

Mr. Franco M. Biraud for France from Le Harvre with Mademoiselle Ramelot as crew.

Mr. Gerrit Vries Lenisch for Netherlands, from Royal Netherlands Yacht Club with M. Putters as crew.

Signor Renzo Raisini for Italy from the Royal Italy Yacht Club with Mr. Deneve as crew.

M. Leon Huybrechts for Belguim from Royal Yacht Club of Belgium and winner of the Olympic gold medal in 1920.

For reasons unknown, Switzerland and Denmark were prevented from competing.

Of course, I didn't mention Captain Jimmy Payne and his wife Aileen represented the Free State.

The cost and difficulties of international travel, and the cost of competing at the Olympic Regatta prevented several other nations from taking part.

Of course this audience knows who Captain James Warren Payne was! [#11] He was born in Glenbrook in 1882. He joined the Munster and Leinster Bank in Cork in 1901. Perhaps the fact that his grandfather was a Director of the Bank, may have helped him acquire his position. His father, Somers Payne, was later to become a Director of the Bank. James married Aileen Wynnefredda Furney (1898-1990) of Riverstown in 1920.

How did it happen that the Paynes were selected to represent the Irish Free State? James was aged 41. Was that not too old? The Paynes had commissioned Mr. James Pluck of Cove to build an International 12 foot dinghy in 1923 for £47 2s.6d. Payne was acknowledged to be the best 12 foot dinghy sailor in the Royal Munster Yacht Club at Monkstown for the 1923 season. That is why he was seleted to represent his country.

The race course on the Brussels-Antwerp Ship Canal, at the World Dinghy Championships, (unlike that of the 1920 Olympics) was of modest length, less than 4km in non-tidal waters. The competitors were required to complete each kilometer in less than 25 minutes. An unusual sailing instruction was that competitors could sail with either one or two people in the boat, alone or with a crew.

Of the 45 dinghies in Belgium at the time which were made available for use by the overseas competitors, twenty-eight were short-listed, and eventually the six best matched boats were selected, and lots were drawn to see who would be the first to sail in each boat. Each country had their own scrutineer to ensure that the boat allotment was undertaken fairly. John W. ward of the Royal Munster Y.C. was the Irish technical representative, and commander W.G.H. Bickford DSO, RN(retd) represented England.

[#12] In the races, Ricardo G. Watney of Britain won the first race on Saturday in a steady breeze. The second race was a great duel between Ireland and Belgium, both of who pulled away from the others, and Belgium won by less than 2 seconds at the finish.

In the third race, held in the afternoon, Capt. Payne won by 30 seconds from Mr. Vries-Lentsch of Holland. The ensign of each race winner was broken out on the clubhouse flagpole and the watching crowds cheered as the flag was hoisted. The green white and orange tricolour was hoisted, as it had been in Paris for Jack Yeats and Oliver St. John Gogarty at the Paris Olympics a week before.

On Sunday racing continued. The wind was so light [#13] that racing was not possible. When the breeze did pick up, and a race started, Ireland and Belgium were recalled due to an OCS, and had to return to restart correctly. This provided an opportunity for Holland to win from Italy, while Ireland finished second last. An attempt was made to sail the sixth race failed, and the boats had to be towed back home.

On Monday morning, Belgium won the fifth race from Ireland in a good breeze, and in the last race Ireland and Watney from England exchanged places in the lead several times before Ireland crossed the line one second ahead of her opponent.

[#14] These are the official results. [#15] Capt. Payne in a jubilant mood.

In the evening, a celebratory dinner for over sixty members and their guests was held at Hotel de Boulevards. Mr. Milligan Drake represented the British Embassy, and Count Gerard O'Kelly de Gallagh the Free State's representative in Brussels was in attendance. An excellent menu was followed by toasts, the Champions health was drunk, with musical honours. Mr. Payne spoke in thanks of the hospitality which he and his wife had enjoyed.

What was the real significance of this victory? [#16]

1. In 1924, most of Irish sporting activity was local. There were exceptions, such as Rugby Union, field hockey and Football. Even in those sports, it was very rare to travel further afield than Britain.
2. Ireland being a yound country, had little experience of competing internationally in sailing, other than in the America's Cup with Sir Thomas Lipton who had been spurned by the British yachting fraternity, and was adopted by the Royal Ulster Yacht Club in Bangor. Lipton, unlike Capt. Payne, failed five times to with the America's Cup.
3. Previous to Payne's success, media reporting on sailing events concentrated only on the largest yachts, such as Sir Thomas Lipton's.
4. Yachting, was previously been perceived as a rich-man's sport. The 12 foot dinghy used for the World dinghy games was a modest boat which had cost between £40 and £50 in 1924.
5. Several boat clubs saw that the 12 foot dinghy was their opening into international sailing. One such club was the Seapoint Boat Club in Dublin Bay which placed and order for six dinghies from Michael Mahony, a local boatbuilder.
6. Captain Paynes crew, unlike most of the other crews, was a woman. Despite the challenges of what wear while sailing, Aileen Payne was an expert helmswoman in her own right. Aileen Payne's achievement allowed the women of Ireland to see that sailing offered them mens to become involved in a non-contact sport.

7. At a time when much of Irish industry was craft based, the orders for new boats built of the best materials, created opportunities for craftsmen such as pluck in Cobh or Mahony in Dun Laoghaire.
8. Local newspapers were quick to celebrate the Free State's win and [#17] the enterprising Palace Theatre in Cork advertised 'A Special Film of the Thrilling Event (taken in Brussels)' will be shown throughout the week.
9. This was the Irish Free State's first International sporting success as a separate component unit of the British Commonwealth of Nations. (Noting that the two medals won at the Paris Olympics were for art and literature.)

Than you for listening and do enjoy the film.