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Nineteenth-Century Cruising Yachtsmen in the Mediterranean

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Abstract

The study of leisure and activities taking place within leisure, such as yachting, is accepted as a serious and necessary academic interest, with both social and economic aspects. This paper arises from a wider study on the development of 'Aquatics'—rowing and sailing in England and South Devon over the period 1640–1914. Sources used include published accounts of nineteenth-century pleasure voyages, private letters and estate papers, Club records and newspaper reports. The following general questions will be raised: What was the extent and range of yacht cruising during the nineteenth century? What were the motives of cruising yachtsmen in the nineteenth century? What were the costs and other practical problems involved in a Mediterranean cruise in the nineteenth century? Two early nineteenth-century Mediterranean cruises by members of the Royal Western Yacht Club of England, Plymouth, those of James Brooke in *Royalist* (1836–1837), and Sir Thomas Dyke Acland in *Lady of St. Kilda* over the previous winter will be examined. These have

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The Extent and Range of Yacht Cruising before and during the Nineteenth Century

Yachts will be defined as in Falconer's *Marine Dictionary* of 1780 as 'vessels used as pleasure boats by private gentlemen'.¹ British private pleasure sailing evolved as an activity which involved both cruising and racing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and after the establishment of peace in 1815 developed a hierarchical structure of socially select yacht clubs, which provided an organizational base for yachting.

After 1815 the number and range of cruising yachts increased, and continued to increase for the remainder of the century. *Bell's Life in London* reported in February 1837 that the Marquis of Waterford had a new yacht *Charlotte* (265 tons), nearly ready for a trip to Africa, that *Menal* (175 tons), *Royalist* (142 tons), *Corsair* (851 tons), and *Cynthia*



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