

Chapter Four Revolution

Removing the restrictions on methods of construction to permit *Reedham Nan* in the class had wider implications than was possibly realised at the time. No-one came forward to produce kit boats to the *Reedham Nan* design and she remains the only double chine punt built. In some respects this was a pity. When considered beside subsequent hull shapes, she hadn't been drawn on a level playing field and in different circumstances might have made a major contribution to the class.

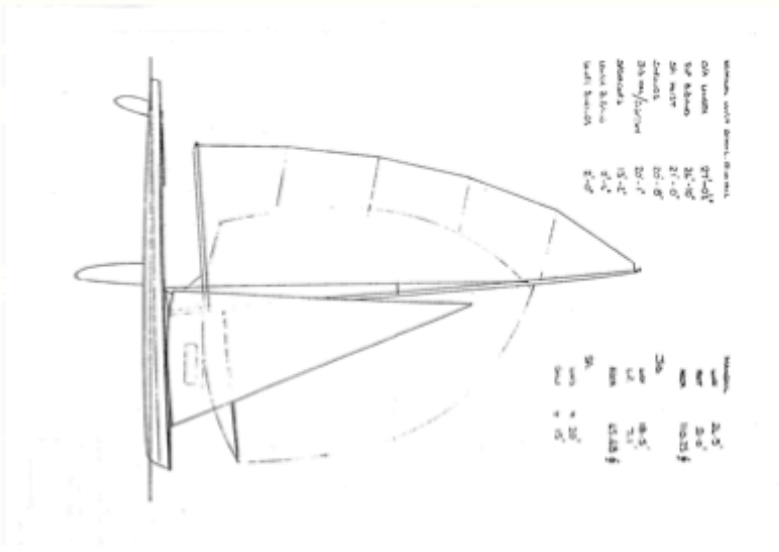
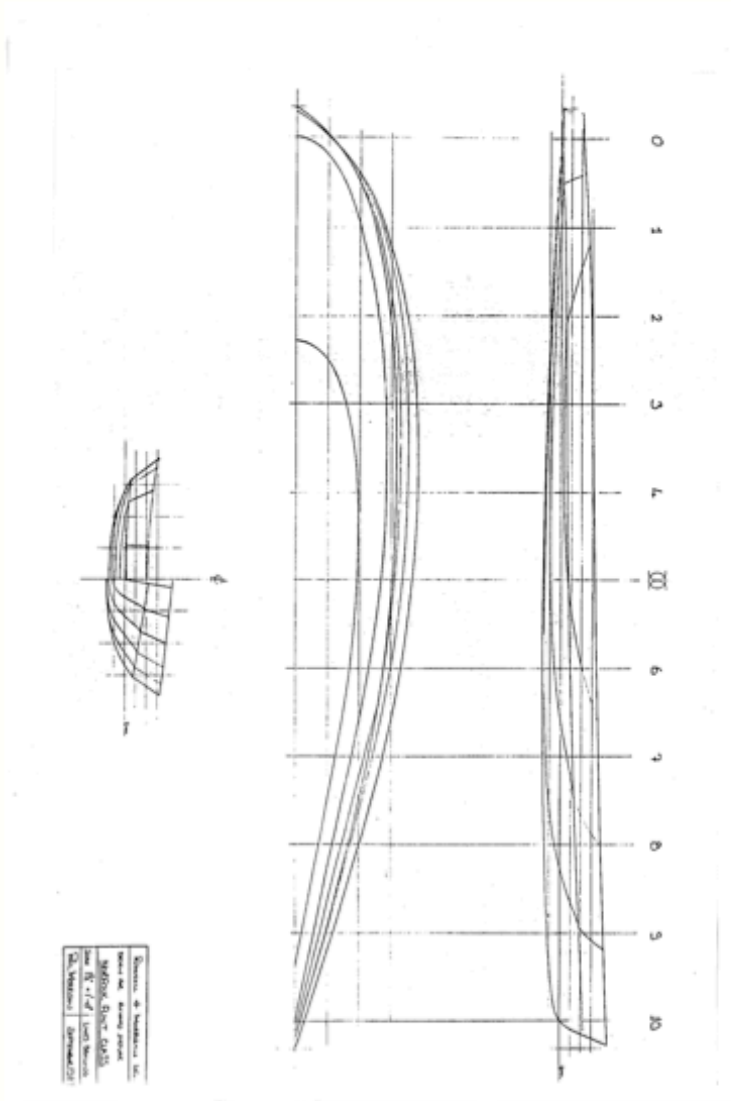


Neal Duffield and Rick Sargeant sailing *Razorbill* on the Thurne.

photo: Tricia Duffield

Andrew Wolstenholme and John Findlay had done little more than spend their time and money trying to help the class move forward in what seemed a sensible direction at the time. This was the end of their involvement with racing punts. John subsequently asked Andrew to produce a short punt for him that could never comply with class rules. Maynard Watson built the new boat that was christened *Esox*. Brothers of the angle will have already spotted a pike in the water.

Nevertheless, the floodgates had been thrown wide open for unlimited development and in 1988, the class witnessed the launch of one of the most radical design changes ever. Class Secretary Richard Sadler asked Phil Morrison to design him a Norfolk Punt to take full advantage of the new rules.



Drawings reproduced by courtesy of Phil Morrison.

Phil Morrison is a modest, self-effacing man with a large number of highly successful designs to his credit, ranging from restricted class dinghies right through to short-handed offshore mono and multihulls. When questioned about his Norfolk Punt design he remarked that he was told to "do his damndest" and went on to comment that he'd just done his thing and that naval architects are said to have only one design in them and his was the *China Doll* design of National 12! When pressed, he recalled "at the time Richard Sadler advised me that the class were considering twin trapezes and possibly some more sailing on open water, so I designed her with that in mind. Twin trapezes were accepted at the 1986 AGM and *Blackbird* set the scene for a burst of unprecedented change and development. She was beautifully built by Simon Reed and launched in 1988. The Morrison design had much wider stern sections than either the Wyche & Coppock hull or the double chine punt. Double-ended sailing boats have a tendency to drag their sterns at speed and the heavily veed bows of the Wyche & Coppock design unusually required crew weight to move for'ard to maintain optimum planing. The Morrison hulls were indeed quick in a blow but the additional wetted surface area of their wider sterns made them slower than the old hard chine design in light weather. Nevertheless, the class had leapt from what barely qualified as a restricted class to out-and-out unrestricted development.



Blackbird.

photo: Richard Sadler



Blackbird. Deck view.

photo: James Hoseason



**Matthew Thwaites in
*Rainbow Trout.***

**1989 PUNT
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

photos: James Hoseason

Fred and George.

**Tom and Richard Clarke
in *Kipper.***





photo: James Hoseason



The new rules provided an opportunity to update some of the older punts.

left
Kingfisher.

below right
Harnser.

photos: Chris Towell



far left

Whilst some owners were renovating older punts, others were determined to squeeze all they could from the new design. ***Swift*** featured a transom hung rudder.

photo: Richard Parker

right
Rhode Island Red under construction, showing off her carbon fibre credentials and cockpit drain tubes.



far right
Matthew Thwaites working on the boat.



photos: James Hoseason

In 1989 the class accepted James Hoseason's proposals that fully battened mainsails and sails made from non-woven cloths such as Mylar be permitted. This was a sensible alteration as these sails are able to remain competitive for longer and less inclined to pull out of shape when righting after a capsize with possibly a ton of water laying in them - even if they aren't quite as pretty.



Gerald Sambrooke Sturgess.

photo: Judy Macdonald (nee Sturgess and Peter Sturgess)

1991 saw the club lose a whole generation of its most senior members. Dr. Basil Tracey died aged 91. Basil's first punt was *Rushlight* which he took over from his brother-in-law in 1936. He not only enjoyed his sailing but put a great deal of hard work and effort into the club; not to mention public spirited generosity in ordering new punts when he felt the class needed a boost. He had been the driving force behind the club's revival after the war and continued to take great interest in the club's affairs. At the age of 90, he set out with his son Peter in *Melanitta* (which he had repurchased) and capsized in full view of the pontoon. Basil emerged damp but still smiling.



Stewart Morris.

photo: Thomas Vaughan

Gerald Sambrooke Sturgess, the last surviving founder member of the Norfolk Punt Club died at his home at Barton Turf in August of the same year after a short illness, aged 89. *Swallow II*, which he owned with his father in law, had been seminal to the class for nearly fifty years. He served as commodore of the Yare & Bure Sailing Club in 1936; commodore of the Norfolk Punt Club from 1938 - 1946, again in 1950, and commodore of the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club in 1948. He was also a committee member of the Royal Norfolk & Suffolk Yacht Club for many years after the war and rear commodore of that club in 1974 and 1975. His contribution to international yacht racing was formally recognised by the Order of the British Empire in 1983.

Stewart Morris died in 1991, aged 81. Since the death of his father in 1935, he had largely ceased to compete on the Broads and lived at Itchenor, beside Chichester harbour. He was a regular visitor and never lost touch with his roots in Norfolk Punts. Many local sailing clubs found themselves unexpected beneficiaries of his will.

Justin Scott's sisters acquired *Titmouse (Swallow I)* in 1936 and Justin and his brother Gavin used to camp in her before the war. His first punt was *Sandpiper*, which he restored and he sailed with Tom Harmer from from Thorpe to Acle. She was followed by *Scoter* the first plywood punt and lastly *Avocet*.

Billy de Quincey was an extremely experienced yachtsman with a very successful family pedigree in the sport. His father had been commodore of the Royal Canoe Club and his brother Roger had partnered Uffa Fox in their successful International Canoe challenges against the Americans during the 1930s. Billy himself was part of the successful International Fourteen teams of the 1930s and was a member of the amateur crew shipped on board *Endeavour* for her Americas Cup Challenge. His ownership of Norfolk Punts started in 1961 and he retained *Wild Goose* until 1979.

All five men had been involved with Norfolk Punts for many years and their loss in a single year was a considerable blow.

In 1991 Mike Evans discovered *Shrimp*, the first Norfolk Punt to be registered in the class, lying at the Norfolk Education Committee Sailing Centre at Filby. Her rig was missing but by referring to Gerald Sambrooke Sturgess' records, Michael decided she must have originally carried a simple lug rig. He found some old spars with an authentic look about them; Jeckells cut down an old, cotton Yare & Bure mainsail to fit and *Shrimp* travelled to Greenwich. In a letter to Hugh Tusting dated 2nd February 1982, Stewart Morris recalled in his tiny, almost indecipherable hand: "*Shrimp* was built by Walter Woods in the winter of 1917/18 (for quanting) After the war, she was given a centreboard case and a case aft for insertion of a rudder and a small triangular sail laced to the mast - boom and spar put into sockets at tack and clew - and was my boat. I used to paddle her to windward in Meadow dyke when going from Hickling to Horsey and put up the sail (and insert the rudder) when in open water - or the wind freed. 16' long she got a good handicap, for racing had a sloop rig - 1924 onwards."



Justin Scott.
photo: Celia Scott



Shrimp, presented to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. June 2nd 1994.

l to r
David Skinner, Tom Clarke and Michael Evans.

photo: Tom Clarke

Shrimp, displayed at the National Maritime Museum at Falmouth.

photo: courtesy National Maritime Museum.



The Greenwich Museum has a fine history with commercial sail but has traditionally struggled with 'leisure' craft. When the Queen opened the new £28m, National Maritime Museum at Falmouth on the 14th March 2003, old *Shrimp* headed west. She is on public display and currently hanging from their ceiling. This provides an unusual view of a small boat and Cornwall may not be the most convenient location for a Norfolk Punt enthusiast to inspect the first boat registered in the class but she is at least safe and sound.

Richard Parker and James Gill sailing ***Shag***.

photo: Anna Gill





Preparatory signal.

photo: Chris Towell

A surprising side effect of narrowing the market for racing Norfolk Punts has been a growth in enthusiasm for older punts. The athletic requirements of the new designs have caused enthusiasts to widen the class in search of a more restrained sail and several, more traditional designs have been produced. With this has come the realisation that Norfolk Punts have a wide variety of leisure uses and don't have to be solely 'machines for racing.'



Mike Evans crewed by Edward Whipp at full chat in *Swallow II*.

*photo:
Eastern Daily Press*

right
Arthur Thain in
Stickleback and
far right
Limelight in 1999.



photos: Chris Tovell

Decoy.
Percy's handiwork still
going strong in 1999.



photo: Chris Tovell

Gamecock in Paul Bown's
workshop being rebuilt for
the Rev. Neville
Khambatta.



photo: James Hoseason



far left
Raymond Crisp in
Sardine.

left
Gamecock after her
rebuild.

photos: Chris Towell

Fabian Bush produced *Scout* and *Goosander* and built both to a very high standard of finish.



far left
Scout sporting her original
gunter rig.

photo: Nick Mockridge

left
John Fowler sailing *Scout*
in 1999.

photo: Chris Towell

Two shots of Marion Bown with *Goosander* taken by Chris Tovell.



1995 saw the launch of the first Norfolk Punt designed by Stephen Jones. *Cuckoo* was again beautifully crafted by Essex boatbuilder Fabian Bush, on this occasion for Peter Bainbridge. Suddenly, there was a resurgence of punts with clinker topsides, for no obvious reason beyond personal preference.



Fabian Bush fitting the hog near *Cuckoo's* bow.

photo: Peter Bainbridge



Cuckoo at Plain Sailing in Wroxham for rigging.

photos: Author



The Norfolk Punt Club logo is a brilliant piece of graphics. The design recently 'grew' an extended roach to its mainsail but few today realise the simple graphics first saw the light of day as the front cover of the 1936 Norfolk Punt Club handbook. Admirers have found an ever extending series of uses for the logo which has become a silent ambassador for the class.



left

Anne Evans's brooch.

far left

Celia Scott's weather vane.

photos: Author

**Punt Championships
c. 1990.**

photo: Chris Tovell



By the mid 1990s, algal bloom had rendered Barton virtually a sterile water as nature had been working away at turning the Broad back into peat bogs. Deposition over the last forty years had equalled the amount of silting over the last four hundred. The 'Clearwater 2000' scheme not only provided opportunities for biomanipulation but the multi million pound dredging scheme that removed 300,000 cubic metres of sediment has made Barton the finest sailing water on the Broads.

Peregrine.

photo: Richard Parker





Merlin.

photo: Roger Taylor

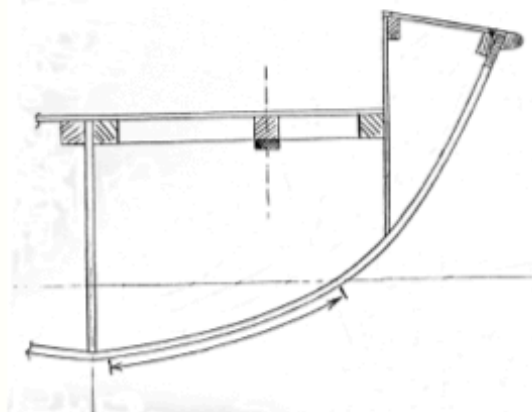
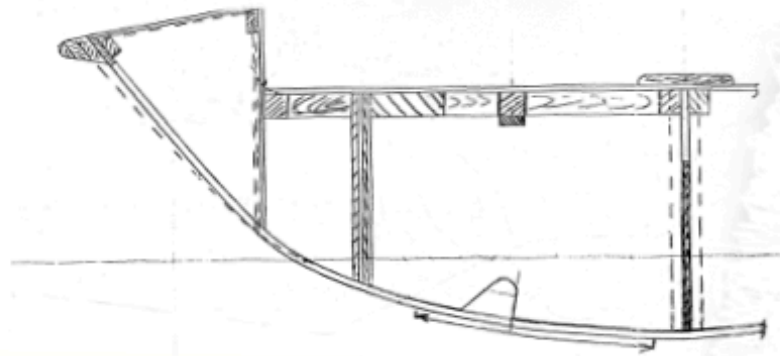


Saker.

photo: Anna Gill



Peter Bainbridge has a long and successful history in international racing and in 2000 replaced *Cuckoo* with *Whooper*, another Stephen Jones design. She was to carry a modern rig, be built down to weight and measure at twenty two feet overall. The new punt has proved a happy middle course in all weather conditions, able to compete equally against the hard chine boats in light weather and the Morrissions in a blow.



Stephen Jones drew easy curves for *Whooper's* sections.

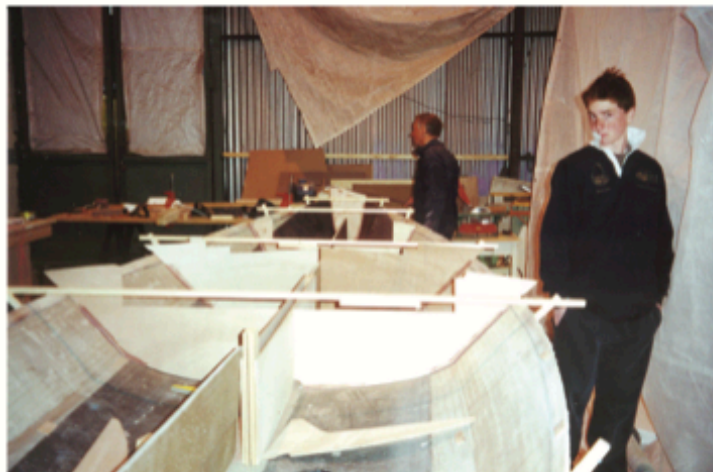
right
Section 8.

far right
Section 5.

*reproduced by courtesy of
Stephen Jones*

Ben Bainbridge visits
Richard Faulkner's yard at
Hamble during the
construction of *Whooper*.

photo: Peter Bainbridge



Norfolk Punts have regularly been successful in Horning Sailing Club's Three Rivers Race. This race involves rounding marks usually placed at Ludham, South Walsham, Hickling and on the lower Bure, usually somewhere near the Stracey Arms. Skippers are permitted to take the marks in any order to take best advantage of wind and tide. The race starts earlier now than it used to but the event is usually sailed on the first weekend in June to coincide with a full moon. Punts have regularly been first to finish this race, which at least permits more sleep than other competitors!



Richard Parker helps James Hoseason into his harness for the 1989 Three Rivers Race in *Razorbill*.

photo: James Hoseason

Peter Bainbridge, crewed by elder son Alex, gained a measure of revenge for his second place in the inaugural Three Rivers Race when he won the event in *Whooper* in 2001.



Peter and Alex Bainbridge in *Whooper* for the Three Rivers Race. The photograph illustrates her original deck layout.

photo: Nick Mockridge

The classes appetite for development has continued unabated and whilst Richard Parker of Boats and Bits in Norwich was busy developing the Morrison hulls, his father John decided that down-to-weight glass hulls built to the Wyche and Coppock design were the way to go. The project grew out of discussions after Wednesday evening racing at Hickling and John's first glass hull *Snowgoose*, built from the class moulds saw the water in the spring of 2003.



right and far right

Snowgoose decked and fitting out

photos: Jane Pye



.... and launched.



Jeff Green's hull mouldings look straightforward enough

photo: Jane Pye



.... until James Jarvey starts to fit the woodwork. This is Chris Woods *Woodpecker* ready for her decks.

photo: Jane Pye

Nicky Barker seems to be enjoying herself on *Snowgoose's* trapeze during the 2003 Championships.

photo: Rachel Clayton



The class accepted both asymmetric spinakers and bowsprits. The asymmetrics gradually worked their way up the mast until they reached the masthead. The sails are a gift for photographers but rather better for speed than visibility!

Chris and Tash Pilling in *Blackbird*

photo: Rachel Clayton





Masthead asymmetrics in action.

photos: Rachel Clayton



Tom Virden and Robert Snelling at speed in *Saker*.

photo: Anna Gill



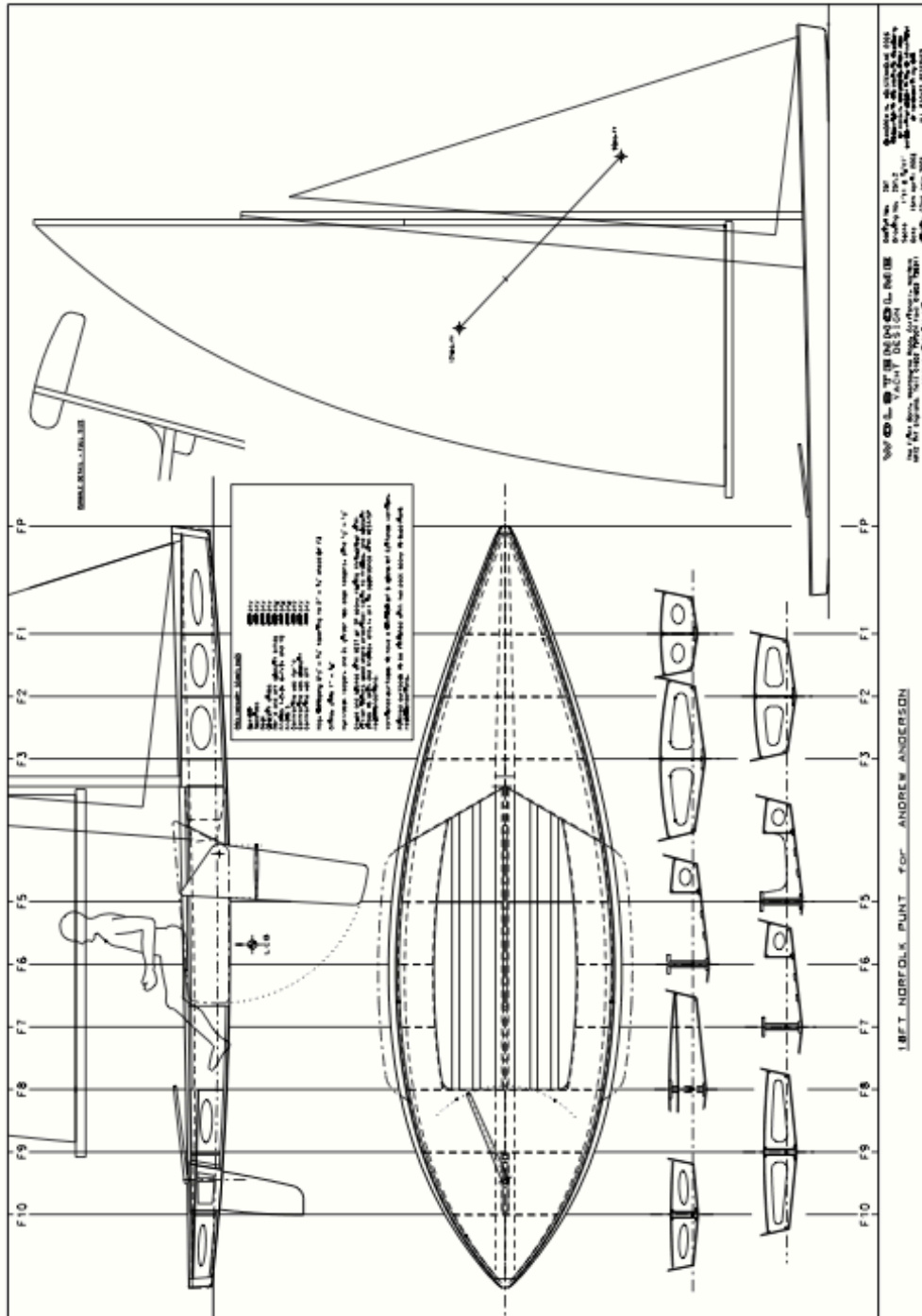
Hickling.

Hickling has always been a spiritual home for Norfolk Punts and Hickling Broad sailing Club is now home to the largest fleet of Norfolk Punts.

photos: Rachel Clayton



In parallel and as if to prove the wider appeal of a Norfolk Punt, Andrew Anderson commissioned Andrew Wolstenholme to design an eighteen foot punt for sailing and rowing that he could use near his new Yorkshire home.



Reproduced by kind permission of Andrews Wolstenholme and Anderson.

Simon Girling and John
Friend in *Cormorant*.

photo: Anna Gill



Championship start.

photo: Anna Gill





**Punt Championships
2004.**

photo: Chris Towell



Saker.

photo: Anna Gill

After sixty years, the Norfolk Punt class is more successful today than at any time in its history. More Norfolk Punts of all persuasions have been built in recent years than ever before and turnouts for Norfolk Punt races are the highest in the classes history. Congratulations!

*So point her up and haul your wind, get ready for the gun
But never set your spinnaker until you're on the run.
Though some may ride and some may shoot, while others like to hunt
The finest sport in all the world is sailing in a punt.*

Eric Chamberlin. 1936.