

West of England Conference

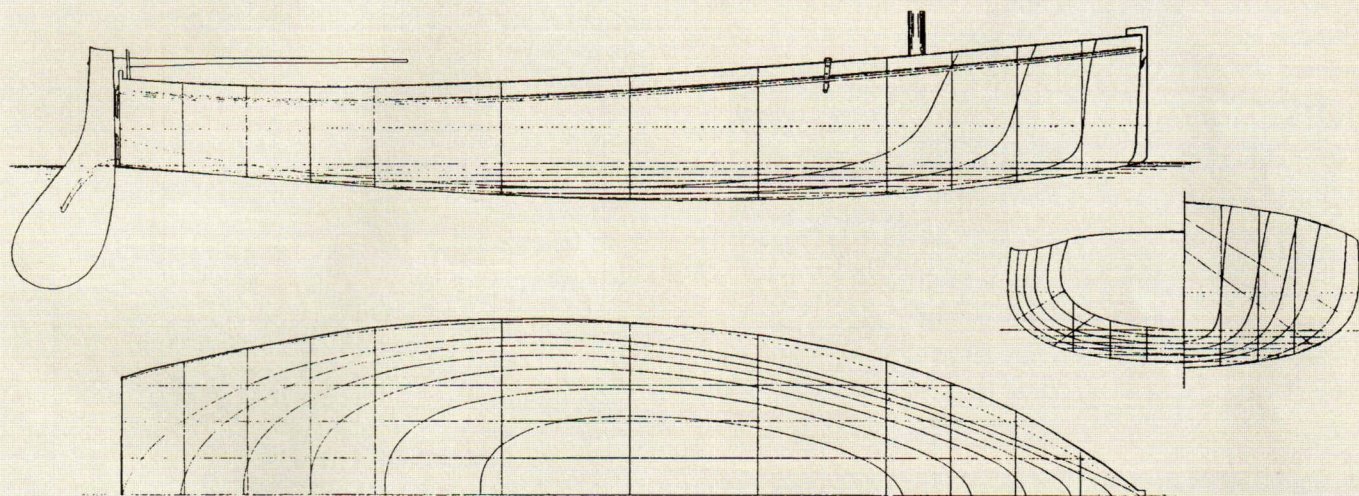
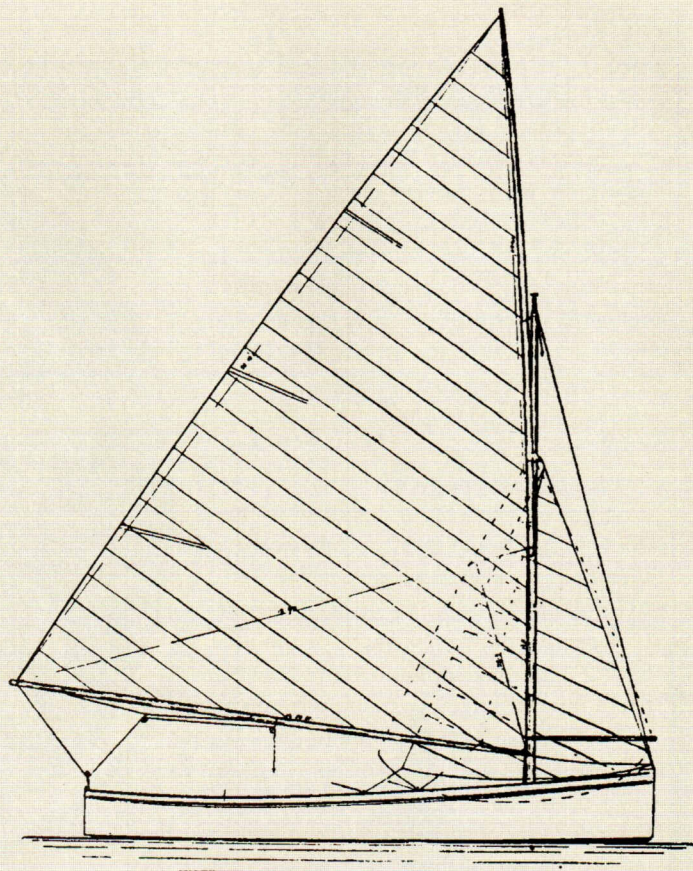
The West of England Conference 14ft (4.2m) racing dinghy *Cocky Lion*, designed by Morgan Giles for Lady Muriel Coventry in 1908, was very successful, especially in windward sailing. Her hull was cedar carvel laid with fitted seams on bent American elm frames while the Gunwales were made from American elm also. She would have carried a short boom for setting a spinnaker. The rig and dimensions are typical of dinghies of the time, but the WEC 14 footer was the forerunner of the later National, then International, 14ft dinghy class.

LOA: 14ft (4.2m)

Beam: 4ft 10in (1.5m)

Draught: 6in (15cm) 4ft 1in (1.2m) with centreplate lowered.

Displacement: 728 lbs (271 kgs).



The West of England Conference racing dinghy *Cocky Lion* 14ft was the forerunner of the National and International 14ft dinghy class

received private coaching in mathematics and science to aid his ambition of becoming a yacht and boat designer. When the Pengelly and Gore partnership dissolved in 1902 Morgan went to study with Gann and Palmer at Teignmouth.

It's possible that for a short time in 1902 Giles may have run a small yard in Shaldon, but even if this was the case, the decision he took that Christmas was a bold one. With just six years of practical and theoretical experience under his belt he decided to move to London and establish a small design practice specialising in small wooden cruising and racing craft.

The young Giles was fortunate in being able to own and sail a succession of small yachts and boats, starting when he was 15 years of age with *Fruit Girl*. She was followed by 2½ Rating class *Hebe*, then *Hebe II* in 1900 and later many others. His helmsmanship was to become outstanding and his knowledge of racing ways and rules considerable.

Indeed, racing dinghies were always a great interest and the 14ft (4m) West of England Conference Class, forerunner of the National, later International, 14ft (4m) dinghy class, were his

personal favourite. These were open boats not exceeding 14ft (4m) overall and having a 0.3 Rating under the old Yacht Racing Association rule, allowing sail area of 129sqft (12sqm).

The dinghies designed under this rule were very fast, handy and reasonably seaworthy. The general length of course for their races was about 9 miles and, so close was the racing by the best helmsmen, it was not unusual for three or four boats to finish within a minute of each other. Most of the sailing clubs on the South Devon coast gave races for the class and the various local town regattas gave good prizes for them.

Giles was also active in the 18ft WEC Jollyboat class of three-man centreplate racing boats in which his old mentor Abraham Pengelly was dominant. But by 1904 he had sufficient experience to be asked to alter the hull of the fast boat *Mabel*, designed and built at Exmouth by George Lavis in 1903. She won a preliminary race but carried away her rudder in the final.

Giles attracted wider attention in January 1907 by winning a *Yachting Monthly* design competition for a 12ft dinghy useful as a tender to a yacht or to be sailed and rowed for pleasure in its