

RORC Rating Office and CHS/IRC - Timeline

The 1980s

1983

The RORC Rating Office moves from No. 7 Station Street, Lymington to rented, dedicated premises in Bath Road, Lymington overlooking the sea water baths. (Coincidentally, James Dadd, future member of the Rating Office team, lived at 7 Station Street as a lodger in the early 1990s!)

1984

Channel Handicap System (CHS) introduced by RORC and UNCL as club level racing rule alongside IOR.

The Rating Office boss (known then as Rating Secretary) is Mac MacDougall, with Tim Thornton as the technician and Anna Schmidt in reception.

1985-1991

CHS developed by RORC and UNCL, numbers increase as numbers of IOR boats decrease. CHS is used in various events including overseas from Hong Kong to Europe to Australia.

Jenny Barnard (now Howells) joins the Rating Office in January 1985 as office junior. Cdr Tony Ashmead replaces Mac MacDougall as Rating Secretary. Tim Thornton & Anna Schmidt leave and John Moon joins as Technical Manager. Julie Britton joins as part-time administrator.

Ken Kershaw, Technical Manager at the Royal Yachting Association, is heavily involved in developing the CHS software.

1988

3000 boats are rated under CHS worldwide.

The 'triple-S' numerical Safety & Stability Screen is used to advise owner and race committees on the suitability of boats for offshore racing.

1989

CHS is used in the Fastnet Race for the first time.

The 1990s

1990

The first Channel Handicap Yearbook is published, edited by Sir Peter Johnson. Outside the UK and France a list of 10 overseas contacts is listed. Swan regattas use a 'sister' rule NSR for their events.

Different sail cloths are rated, with Kevlar being 'particularly highly rated'.

4500 boats are rated worldwide.

1991

CHS is 8 years old and "is now an accepted and primary rating system for handicap classes at major events". The CHS Yearbook includes tips on boat preparation, rig set-up and how to query your own or a competitor's rating. RORC recommends physical weighing of boats for an accurate weight figure, and owns its own 'Tesco' sponsored loadcell.

The CHS Rule text fills four sides of A4.

The 'triple certificate' for Offshore One Designs such as the Sigma 33 is introduced, including IOR, IMS and CHS ratings. The 'Southern' certificate year is already in place for those countries that fit a June-May sailing season.

4750 boats are rated worldwide.

Carole Abbott joins the Rating Office in January.

1992

The Rating Office administers IOR, IMS and CHS certificates.

CHS rule changes include spinnaker and pole rating changes, extension of the Hull Factor scale to cope with 'racy' boats, and rationalisation of rated sailcloths.

The rule text is now five pages, and the Yearbook includes 1991 race results, showing a variety of boat types in the top places.

1993

The ARC race uses CHS for all classes.

Rule changes for 1993 include: a limitation on age allowance, recommendations to control crew numbers, changes to spinnaker measurements as asymmetric sails are allowed.

Rig factor is developed, and the sailcloth rating is simplified with only 'hi-tech' cloths (eg. Kevlar, Technora) being rated above base rate.

New y, h & x measurements are added to enable CHS to better assess the overhangs.

John Warren takes over as Director of Rating. John Moon leaves the office and Mike Urwin joins as Technical Manager.

1994

The 10th anniversary of CHS.

Endorsed status for certificates is introduced to improve confidence in rated data, since fewer boats hold measured IOR or IMS data. Clubs may require Endorsed certificates for their events.

Water ballast, asymmetric spinnakers and bowsprits are embraced, but cautiously: mixing types of spinnakers/poles increases rating.

The Rating Office reminds owners that maintaining a correct certificate is as important as the initial application.

1995

The RORC CHS Committee (previously user group) is formed under Chairmanship of Paul Waxman and the CHS Constitution is printed in the Yearbook.

The CHS rules are re-written to improve order and clarity. Rule changes include the rating of hi-tech sailcloths being related to boat size, and Hull Factor is reduced to 0.1 increments (previously 0.5).

A calculated Crew Number is shown on certificates, which has no effect unless invoked by race organisers.

More details of hull material and accommodation standards are taken into account.

The first Guide for Race Organisers is published in the CHS Yearbook.

1996

CHS is made available to any owner in any country, no matter what other rule that country is promoting.

The possibility of having a CHS page on the internet via the IYRU is suggested. However it is noted that this will not enable 'dial-a-rating'!

The highest rated boat is Wallygator, a 105' superyacht with a rating of 1.682. An article in the Yearbook explores the explosion of 'sportsboats' and how they fit into CHS.

Rod rigging is now rated differently to wire rigging. Rule changes include a requirement for the number of crew, and the sail wardrobe, to remain the same throughout a regatta. There is no longer a rating disadvantage for using a mixture of symmetric and asymmetric spinnakers.

The RYA/RORC Sports Boat Rule is developed to cater for sports boats.

1997

After a period of stability, CHS worldwide numbers increase. The workload reaches a level where more than one person is required to process certificates in the Rating Office with Jenny Howells. Niki Coster moves from administration to fill the post.

CHS Rules are extended to accommodate articulating bowsprits. Clarification is given regarding Mainsail Upper Width, and the use (or not) of a spare mainsail and replacement of damaged sails. The rule on crew numbers is updated.

The rating of internal ballast is developed.

1998

CHS gets a website, part of rorc.org at this stage, and an e-mail address. Features of the CHS internet pages include introductory information and an e-mail inquiry form.

The Australian Yachting Federation embraces CHS, following its use in Western Australia for some years.

Changes are made to the headsail width limitations, amending RRS 50.4 for small jibs. Sailcloth rating is further eased, now rating only 'exotic' cloths such as carbon, although sails containing hi-tensile materials need to be declared. Limit bands are now required by the rule to mark P and E.

The Yearbook now includes a simplified application form for approved One-Designs.

James Dadd joins the Rating Office.

1999

IR2000 is introduced, CHS is re-branded as IRC from 1/1/1999.

The roller furling headsail allowance is introduced to give credit for cruising sail configurations. Overhangs are now measured with the boat in empty condition, and stern overhang is measured to the waterline rather than the rudder stock.

The rating of mainsails is developed to give allowance to hollow leech sails, and mainsail half and three-quarter widths requested. Carbon sails are the only ones that need be declared.

TCF (Time Correction Factor) is now known as TCC (Time Corrector IRC). A total of 5400 boats are rated worldwide.

The 2000s

2000

The new IRM rating system starts on 1/1/2000.

Spinnakers are now rated simply on the largest area, and a non-spinnaker rating is included on the certificate for white-sail classes. To avoid abuse, single furling headsails must be at least 130% overlap to qualify.

Rolex Commodores' Cup is raced under the new IRM Rule.

Ford Cork Week sees record entries, raced under IRC.

2001

IRC rules are altered to distinguish between advertising and non-advertising in accordance with new ISAF rules.

Headsail half width up to 55% is allowed for all headsails, not just jibs. Spinnaker definitions are simplified. There is now no rating tax for carbon sailcloth, removing any sailcloth tax for any currently available cloths.

The roller furling headsail allowance is revised and an additional level added for also using an ISAF heavy weather jib.

The IRC Yearbook is now published by Yachting World, and the format updated. An article is included giving advice on taking your own boat measurements. The list of overseas countries now numbers 23, plus those countries administered by UNCL.

The America's Cup Jubilee regatta is run in Coves using IRC.

2002

Rolex Commodores' Cup is raced under IRC for the first time.

The half-width restriction on headsails is lifted, LLmax is added, and headsail area becomes the limiting measurement.

The rating penalty for carrying a spinnaker pole and bowsprit is removed. The rating of spinnaker poles and bowsprits is developed with the new STL definition including the option of tacking an asymmetric spinnaker to the deck.

The new ISO standard 12217-2 on stability includes STIX, which IRC will include from 1/1/2003 where available and is introduced in the Yearbook.

The One-Design application form is now available to 26 designs, and the guidance for race organisers now uses two full pages of the yearbook.

The Rating Office now has its own domain name, rorcrating.com.

2003

Musto takes over sponsorship of IRC.

STIX and AVS are included on IRC certificates, where the data is available.

Over 300 Australian boats now hold IRC certificates.

Rule changes are mainly aimed at improving clarity and understanding, particularly regarding keeping your certificate legal after changes to the boat. Adjusting or detaching standing rigging while racing is prohibited. The limitation of 10 degrees for static heel angle with moveable/variable ballast is removed.

At Admiral's Cup the big boat class uses IRC ratings.

Mike Urwin becomes Technical Director, James Dadd Chief Measurer, Jenny Howells IRC Manager and Carole Abbott Office Manager.

September: Volvo Open 70 Rule is published, written by James Dadd and Mike Urwin

November: IRC is recognised by ISAF as an International Rule.

2004

IRC is introduced into the USA at the Big Boat Series in San Francisco.

Options under 'probably the most commonly misunderstood IRC rule' - that of furling headsails - are clarified, and it is noted in the Rule that boats must have a complete furling system fitted to claim the single furling headsail credit.

Only named, specific IRC rules may be altered by Sailing Instructions. Dayboats are permitted to adjust their standing rigging while racing, and the use of whisker poles for headsails is clarified.

The revalidation form asks for details of canting keels, trim tabs, canards and forward rudders, as IRC embraces these design developments.

The International IRC Owners' Association Constitution is printed in the Yearbook, following recognition by ISAF of IRC as an International Rule.

The inaugural IRC Congress international meeting is held at RORC in London.

2005

The USA formally adopts IRC as an option for their clubs and owners, and almost 500 US boats are rated in 2005.

Rule changes give powers to Rule Authorities regarding local measurement requirements.

The definition of spinnakers and headsails is simplified, and mainsail rating is further developed with the addition of Mainsail Upper Width. Sails are required to be flown 'in close proximity to the boat' in response to the development of kites. Stored power is permitted for all boats for adjustment of sails or appendages; it was previously limited to boats over 24m LOA.

Irish boats start getting their ratings via the ISA, rather than direct from the Rating Office as historically.

The total number of IRC rated boats headed steadily towards the 6000 mark. Emma Cary (now Smith) joins the Rating Office, firstly in an administrative role and later as part of the technical team.

IRC Congress is held in St Tropez, France.

2006

A new IRC software package in Access allows applications completed in Excel to be imported directly into the database, increasing efficiency and accuracy. Certificates are now available as PDFs, greatly increasing efficiency when dealing with overseas Rule Authorities.

The application form is no longer in the Yearbook and is replaced by a worksheet, while the Excel application form is available through the website.

'South' certificate validity dates change slightly to 1 June – 31 May, to better fit major regattas.

Most rule changes are administrative; in addition the default value for MUW is reduced to 22% from the previous 26%. Developments in keel design are recognised with an expansion to the keel material options to accommodate solid or hollow steel keels.

Requirements for Endorsed certificates are formalised.

The first Global Snapshot section is printed in the Yearbook, reflecting the spread of IRC around the world.

IRC Congress is held in Eastleigh, England.

2007

Japan and the Netherlands adopt IRC.

Stored power is now rated, recognising the effect of hi-powered sail handling systems. Keel materials with specific gravity greater than 11.3 are formally banned, following the use of tungsten in two boats' keels in 2005.

The rating of headsails is developed with the addition of HHB (headsail top width) to prevent abuse. Short-handed certificates are introduced. Guidance for race committees expands to three pages.

An additional member of staff (Faith Walshe, now Lawson) is employed for the technical team, so there are now three staff working on the processing of IRC and SBR certificates.

IRC Congress is held in Chania, Crete.

2008

The number of IRC rated boats worldwide is predicted to reach 7200 by the end of 2008.

Recognition of keel design developments introduces the choice of fin keel shapes.

More work is done on the rating of headsail area, and HTW is introduced, while battens are defined and banned from use in spinnakers. The minima for mainsail widths are reduced to give more allowance to cruising boats.

The rules regarding protests and rating reviews are modified for clarification. Questions of rule compliance and common confusions are made a major feature in the Yearbook. Rule Authorities are permitted to prescribe that for specific offshore races, an additional spinnaker may be carried with no increase in rating.

40 designs now qualify as IRC One-Designs. The MyIRC online payment system is introduced for GBR owners.

Despite the economic downturn, the IRC workload and maternity leave necessitate another increase in staff in the Rating Office, as Caroline Aubrey-Fletcher joins the technical team. Three full time and one part time staff now look after IRC certificate processing worldwide (excluding those issued by UNCL). Jenny Howells becomes Technical Manager.

IRC Congress is held in Runnymede, England.

2009

Ocean Safety sponsor IRC in GBR.

Adjustment of the forestay and mast foot whilst racing is allowed and rated, to recognise actual practice on the water. Code zero sails flown from bowsprits cause a change to the definition of J and FL measurement (this is reversed at the end of 2010).

Advertising is now permitted by default unless otherwise specified in the NoR. Sails are now entirely measured in accordance with un-modified ISAF ERS measurement rules.

The first GBR Regional Championship is held on the East Coast.

“Science beats moaning” – industry experts give advice on performance/rating ratio in the Yearbook.

An adjustment to SSS is no longer offered for compliance with ISAF Special Regulations, this change had no practical effect.

Emma Corden joins the Rating Office as full-time administrator.

IRC Congress is held at Paris, France.

The 2010s

2010

IRC gets its own website www.ircrating.org. The MyIRC online payment offers reduced fees to GBR owners.

The IRC rules are re-organised and re-numbered, and now incorporate the complete ISAF ERS nomenclature and definitions. The Stored Power rating now separates backstay only from running rigging. The rating of whisker poles on boats with no spinnaker pole is formally recognised and rated. There is further development on the rating of keel materials; and for hulls, details of hollows are explicitly requested, recognising the increase in this design feature.

The minimum qualifying LP for single furling headsail allowance is removed for superyachts.

The first boat fitted with the Dynamic Stability System (DSS) is rated in IRC.

The Rating Office is contracted to write an AC72 Monohull Rule; this is not used and the office is consulted on the AC72 instead.

IRC Congress is held in Istanbul, Turkey

2011

A major rule change is that Crew Number on the certificate now applies by default unless amended by the race organiser.

Boats with short-handed certificates may only use that certificate for short-handed racing, to avoid abuse. A limit is put on the minimum size of headsail that can be used by a boat benefitting from single furling headsail allowance. It is clarified that the protest limits are not a tolerance for accuracy of rated data.

IRC and the Rating Office get Facebook pages to increase their online presence.

The Rating Office runs an online survey for owners and clubs to try and find the true reasons why people don't use IRC, which shows that certificate cost is not the major issue.

IRC Congress is held in Paris, France

2012

Rule changes for sails remove the minima for mainsail and headsail widths, giving more credit for hollow-leeched sails. Canting keels are required to have a physical lock at the maximum cant angle.

Certificates are now routinely distributed by e-mail as PDFs. IRC and the Rating Office get Twitter accounts to increase their online presence.

The Rating Office is commissioned to oversee the Volvo Ocean 65 development.

IRC Congress is held in Windsor, England.

2013

The RORC Rating Office and IRC increase their media presence with numerous press releases and articles. Mike Urwin undertakes a series of successful winter seminars at clubs across the UK.

Hardware specialists Spinlock sponsor IRC in GBR and France.

The Spinlock IRC Limited Validity TCC is introduced on a trial basis in GBR and attracts 100+ boats.

Rule changes include: the introduction of Headsail Upper Width and Foot Offset to close loopholes; IRC Rule Authorities are permitted to make national prescriptions to certain IRC Rules; Crew weight becomes the default limit rather than crew number.

IRC Congress is held in Paris, France

2014

IRC celebrates its 30th anniversary with a special logo, additional press releases, stickers for owners, and prizes (lifejacket / rucksack) donated by Spinlock for the GBR IRC Championships.

IRC Rule changes include a new definition of stored power.

The Start Up Scheme offers a discount to new rating applications through a club, and is taken up in Weymouth (Dorset), Rye (Sussex) and Scarborough (Yorkshire).

Faith Lawson leaves the Rating Office and Charlene Jackson joins in December as part of the Technical Team.

IRC Congress is held in Windsor, England

2015

The IRC Rule is tightened up to prevent amendment of issued TCCs by third parties. A new definition of Hull Shell is introduced together with a change to the definition of Age Date.

The Start Up Scheme includes 68 boats rated in Weymouth, Dorset. Limited Validity TCC is renamed as Single Event Rating.

After 22 years in the Rating Office, Mike Urwin retires as RORC Technical Director on 31st August and James Dadd (formerly RORC Chief Measurer) takes over as Director of the Rating Office on 1st September. The Rating Office team now consists of 5 full time staff plus two consultants (Andrew Yates and Mike Urwin).

The lowest IRC rating is 0.735 (1896 Buzzards Bay 15) and the highest is 1.982 (Maxi Wild Oats XI).

44 IRC Rule Authorities outside GBR and France are listed in the IRC Yearbook. Taiwan, India and Jamaica approach the Rating Office about using IRC rating. 6000 boats are rated by RORC and UNCL this year.

Jenny Howells celebrates 30 years in the Rating Office.

IRC Congress is held in Marseilles, France

2016

A new online application system is developed through MyIRC as a move away from using Excel forms. The fee saving for applying online is around 14%.

James Dadd does a successful tour of the UK along with the RYA Technical Department holding seminars at clubs and talking about the best ways to try and get more people out on the water.

A minimum hull length of 5.00m is introduced to the IRC Rule; bulb weight is now printed on certificates; abbreviations for some sail measurements are standardised and new cutter rig definitions are added; Dayboat definitions now includes an upper limit of 10.00m LH. The IRC software is changed to allow 28-30 sportsboats to be more competitive.

The Club Swan 50 OD is developed with the Rating Office overseeing one design controls and rules.

11 Regional and specialist GBR IRC Championships are held.
The inaugural IRC European Championship is held in Cork, Ireland.

Carole Abbott celebrates 25 years in the Rating Office.

IRC Congress is held in Cowes, Isle of Wight, England

2017

MyIRC is now used for the majority of GBR applications and discussions are held about extending it overseas, but are delayed by technical detail as applications have to go through Rule Authorities.

IRC Rule changes include: change to STL definition to include headsails being flown from bowsprit; Aft Rigging added to replace separate runners and checkstays; the trend of adding lead to hollow fin keels is now rated.

IRC Certificate holders benefit from discounts from: Spinlock, Seahorse, RORC, TuffLuff
Single Event Rating is now only offered for six events including the Round the Island Race and Cowes Week, Panerai British Classic Week, Three Peaks Yacht Race and the Little Britain Challenge Cup.

James Dadd leaves the Rating Office in February to pursue personal projects including the Volvo Ocean 65 class.
Dr Jason Smithwick joins the Rating Office as Director in July. Jason's previous role was as Technical and Offshore Director at World Sailing.

Continental IRC Championships are held in:
European - Marseilles, France
North American – Block Island Race Week, USA

IRC Congress is held in St Malo, France

2018

IRC uses newly developed formulae to rate foils that create lift, to replace the previous simple method of adding to Hull Factor.

IRC Rule changes include: removal of the Dayboat classification; Hull and Rig Factor rules are updated to reflect actual practice; definitions added for lifting foils.

IRC European Championship is held in Cowes, UK, incorporating the RORC Commodores' Cup.
The inaugural joint Offshore World Championship is held with the ORC in The Hague, Netherlands, in July.

Charlene Jackson leaves the Rating Office.

IRC Congress is held in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland.

2019

For the first time since 1989, no RORC IRC printed yearbook is published. In place of this an agreement is made with Seahorse Magazine (the official RORC magazine) for exclusive IRC online issues on alternate months, accessible by those holding a current certificate.

Sally Moss joins the Rating Office Technical Team.

IRC Rule changes include: boats now see a rating reduction for carrying fewer than 3 spinnakers; boats fitted with systems to adjust the forestay while racing are now rated for it; definitions of P,E,PY,EY are updated for boats with no measurement band; RRS 49.2 re crew position is modified to delete 'sitting on the deck'.

An updated IRC website is launched in March.

IRC European Championship is held in San Remo, Italy.

IRC Congress is held in Marseilles, France.

The 2020s

2020

MyIRC is now the primary method for applying for certificates for GBR boats.

Start Up is renamed as the Advocate Scheme.

The Single Event Rating scheme is frozen and only offered for five UK events (Round the Island Race, Cowes Week, British Classic Week, Three Peaks Yacht Race, Little Britain Challenge Cup)

IRC Rule changes include: whisker poles are now rated the same as spinnaker poles; list angle is now required for boats with variable ballast (eg. water ballast) and is rated; bulb weight definition is updated.

The COVID-19 pandemic causes lockdown, from March 15th in the UK, and results in cancellation of the IRC European Championship in Cork, Ireland, and the ORC/IRC World Championship is in Newport, Rhode Island, USA. There is some racing in the Autumn before lockdowns are re-imposed.

IRC Congress is held virtually online in October.

2021

IRC Rule changes include: whisker poles are now rated separately. A rule change in May 2021 allows an NOR or a Rule Authority to change IRC rule 21.3.6 regarding the declaration of whisker poles.

New Windows software developed by Dr Jason Smithwick (Rating Office Director) is used to issue IRC certificates. Additional features for the rating offices, RORC Rating Office and UNCL Centre de Calcul, include a include visual representation of the boat and further developed automatic error checking.

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing but racing commences at Easter (April) in the UK.

Office Manager Carole Abbott leaves the Rating Office in June after 30 years service.

IRC Congress is held in October at the RORC Clubhouse in London and virtually online.

2022

Racing is back to normal in the UK; the rating office sees a lot of interest from owners and boats new to racing or returning after a few years' lapse.

IRC Rule changes include: whisker poles now only rated if used to leeward; boats are no longer allowed to use stored power for steering unless specified by the Notice of Race.

A Secondary certificate is introduced on a trial basis for Southern hemisphere countries from June, replacing the short-handed certificate.

In May the Rating Office joins with the RYA and South West Yacht Time Corrector team to administer RYA YTC as an introductory level rating/handicap for club racing.

An updated RORC Rating Office website is launched in May.

IRC European Championship is held in Breskens, the Netherlands.

IRC Congress is held in Valetta, Malta and virtually online.

IRC website: <https://ircrating.org>

RORC Rating Office website: <https://rorcrating.com>

