

ISMA Classics Committee Report to the 2014 AGM

1. The market for restored Classics Restorations

It is now become clear that the asking prices for the most beautifully restored and rebuilt Classic Sixes are so high that the market is stagnating. Sellers need to realise that the sums spent on restoring a Six usually add little to its sales value and more importantly, younger potential owners are unable to pay the sums asked. In fact, many of the potential buyers looking for a Six would prefer to find an old hulk to restore for themselves.

This winter several owners accepted the inevitable and reduced their prices. A number of very good classics, which in some cases had been laid up for sale for up to seven years, have been sold, at prices somewhere between £25K - £35K. This may come as a disappointment to sellers seeking higher prices, but it is the message the market is sending us.

The Classics Committee would, of course, like to see the maximum number of classic Sixes racing. It thus urges owners to accept the market's message and to reduce prices so as to get their boats back on the water and racing.

2. Misunderstanding of the Flotation Allowance

Unfortunately, the problem of measuring older boats to the Metre Classes Rule has been exercising the best yachting minds for at least 85 years and recently there has been much disquiet about the very successful Flotation Rule for Classics. As all will be aware, all wood and therefore all wooden boats take up water and get very much heavier as they get older. As a result, it has been reported as long ago as the Thirties that no wooden boats over about three years old would be able to float to their designed marks unless weight is taken out. This and the requirement for a Flotation Test for all the Metre boats every two years or so, led directly to the demise of much of the Six-Metre Class around the world from around 1933 and again in 1956. In Britain, the old Sixes were put into the "Q" Class as they could no longer measure and, as a direct result, the owners simply sold up and left the class. It became apparent that Uffa Fox's pithy comment, "the older the boat, the deeper it float and the slower it advances" remains true.

Since the founding of the Classics Committee sixteen years ago, the problem had been largely ignored since it seemed it could not be solved. Outside of Finland, all boats which once held a certificate were welcomed into the class, regardless of whether they floated to their marks. Very few have been able to float to their marks.

It does not seem that being kept in a shed over the winter made any appreciable difference.

To some extent the Eights and Twelves have the same problem and both their Rules have been studied and rejected.

In 2007 some draft Classic Rules for the Sixes which took account of this problem, were very widely circulated and the principle of establishing a permitted variation was accepted. Based on information derived from checking some British boats it was provisionally set at 5 cms as being an "opening figure", but with the possibility of adjusting it. Discussions between the Classics Committee and the Technical Committee, led to modification of the Classic Rules in this sense. It was also acceptable to the RYA as official British measurers and to ISAF.

There is no subsequent evidence that floating deeper and thus gaining a longer water line has given any gain to the speed of the boats. Indeed, from long and careful study, the Replicas and lighter boats are the fastest. Furthermore the suggestion that one could improve a boat which measured by increasing her weight with internal ballast does not seem to have worked in actuality.

The general feeling initially was that it would be too much to permit more than 5cms variation in depth as most boats would seem to float above that figure. This problem has been in existence since at least the end of the 1920s, without anyone coming up with a fair and equitable solution before the current draft Classic Rules. What we do not want is

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for all the pre-1965 boats in the world, except those very few which have been totally rebuilt or are brand new, to be outlawed which would once again lead to the collapse of the class.

Recently, it has been proposed, without any supporting evidence, that the Allowance might be reduced to 30mm. ISMA members should be aware that at both the 2007 and 2009 World Championships, flotation depths were checked. In both fleets, all the first six boats in the results, including the Replica, each floated exactly to the marks as far as could be checked. However, in 2007, the four boats which floated deepest to their marks finished 15th, 17th, 20th and 24th. Since any reduction in the depth Allowance, would only create difficulties for the older and slower boats, it is not seen that there is any case for a reduction.

The question has also been asked as to whether Replicas would have the Flotation Allowance permitted. Appendix A 'Classic Rules' lists variations which apply to "boats initially certificated and/or constructed prior to 31st December 1965" so no recent replica could possibly qualify for a flotation allowance.

3. Replicas

Recently there has been considerable disquiet expressed about the working of the Replica Rules, especially reference the cases of the two "Replicas" Angelita and Buzzy III (II).

As a result of a query in 1999 by a Finnish owner whose boat had got burnt, the Replica Rules were drafted by the Classics Committee in conjunction with the Technical Committee and then approved at the 2000 AGM at St. Tropez. They were drafted very tightly, as it was feared that some people might wish to build a number of Goose based one designs, which in effect could rule the world and destroy the class. Thus the Rules specify that any Replica MUST be replacing a destroyed boat and must be built in exactly the same way and with the same timbers as the original. In fact that has had to be slightly amended as Honduran and most African Mahogany is now no longer obtainable, so Sipo and Khaya, which is an African Mahogany but which is readily available, have been accepted as a replacement. It must also be noted that the 'construction rules' at the time were Lloyd's scantling rules and there is nothing in there that would prohibit using modern glues, or optimising the weight. Only if the original plans actually specified the timber to use might there be a problem. Lloyd's Rules offer a wide range of possible timber, and specify minimum thicknesses and density, in pounds per cubic foot so you don't have to use Honduras mahogany. For instance planking must be a minimum density of 35 lb/cu.ft. But they don't put many controls on weight distribution. And the only stricture on using different types of timber, apart from its density, is mainly based on its durability and longevity. For instance teak has an assigned period of 16 years whereas white pine, red cedar and Philippine Island cedar has a period of just 6 years.

So far, despite widespread disquiet, four of the first five Replicas built: Sunray, Sara of Hango, Cherokee, Nirvana and Iselin/Apache are known to comply exactly within the existing Rules and subsequent proposals.

The perceived problem has been caused by general ignorance within ISMA. To correct this problem, the Classics Committee recommends that Replica Rule be posted on the ISMA Web site.

Up until the late 1980s Lloyd's and Veritas provided a service of verifying the compliance of a Six under construction. With the end of these services, (which in the case of Lloyds register at least had become absurdly expensive), verification can only be achieved if the construction team makes it work visible to the ISMA membership, posting weekly reports and photographs on the Web. The-Sunray and Cherokee builds, which were very closely supervised by the then Classics Committee set the standard in this respect with in both cases weekly and sometimes daily reports and photographs.

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-Angelita and Buzzy III (II) do however pose a problem in that the boats they replicate - are still in existence, which quite clearly contravenes the Replica Rules. In the case of Angelita, this is purely due to the ignorance of the owner/builder and thus there is considerable sympathy.

Angelita was built to the same design as two existing six metres. So long as she meets the construction requirements of the current Class Rule there is no reason why she should not be measured as a new Six Metre. This will require someone to check that the construction, which is not traditional, complies with Rule 26. This is a matter for the Technical Committee, since it is possible there was no 'Building Form' produced before she was built. If she meets the requirements of the Class Rule and can be measured and rated as Six Metre then she is a Six Metre. What number she is issued is a matter for the authorities in the country where she is registered.

However, if her build also fails to conform to classic or replica rules, it is considered that, trials be held by her appropriate national authority, to see how she performs in their classic fleet with a view to inviting her to take part. She also needs to be inspected by an official measurer, to ensure that she actually does qualify as a Six-Metre, in which case she may race as a "Modern".

In the case of the beautifully built Buzzy III (II), since her original is very much in existence, she may currently only be measured to qualify as a "Modern". However, we are assured by Sonke Stich, the CEO of Oliver Berking's yard at Flensburg, that "she will never be raced as a Six-Metre" and that there is no intention that she should race with the classic fleet.

Totally separately from the appearance of Buzzy III (II), there has been wide ranging discussion as to whether the strict Replica Rule that replicas may only be built of boats which have been destroyed could now be relaxed and copies of existing boats built, to encourage new builds. Although there has been some considerable support for this relaxation both within and without the Classics Committee, it is quite clear that any such proposal would produce very strong opposition from a number of countries and individuals, so it is not now intended to bring forward any amendment for consideration by the AGM.

4. Formation of a Norwegian Six-Metre Fleet

The Norwegian Six-Metre Fleet was once the second largest fleet in the world. Unfortunately, it has been non-existent since the early Fifties

Over the past twelve months, the Classics Committee has worked on-revitalising and rejuvenating a Norwegian-fleet. Most Norwegian Sixes have been sold abroad, the most recent late last year to Majorca. However in conjunction with Chris Ennals, founder of the ECYU and Editor of Klassiske Linjer, the Norwegian Classic Yachting magazine, it has been ascertained that there are still some boats in Norway in sailing condition.

The seven boats now known to be in Norway are:

- S 7 Agnes IV, a 1911 K.L. Lundgren design, owned by Peter Vikeby,
- L 8 Mosquito, owned by Stig Hvinden, in Oslo,
- N 8 Askeladden now owned by the PLUS School at Fredrikstad,
- N 43 Norna II owned by Lars Ingeberg at Grimstead;
- N 63 Buri owned by Jomar Elday at Kragero which has been laid up for some time but he is hoping to bring her out;
- N 78 Stamina (ex Hordung), recently beautifully restored as a cruiser by Honovi Midtskog and Henrik Brun, now based in Oslo,
- N 87 Holmgang, a modern 1981 Peter Norlin boat based at Slevikkilen.

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In addition there is the 7-Metre Martha 2, based at Oslo which has been invited to join in. Many ISMA members will remember the 7-Meter 'Endrick' which until recently raced with the Swiss fleet on Lac Leman.

The Committee of Europe Week 2014, the Royal Norwegian Yacht Club and KTK, the Norwegian Classic Yacht Club have invited any Six-Metre unable to get to Falmouth to join them in a week of racing, social and cultural events from 15th to 22nd July. All the above have indicated that they would hope to attend.

In addition there is N 39 Elizabeth 8 in poor condition at the Holman Yachtwerf and sadly is unlikely to come out.

It is hoped that two boats in the Netherlands:

- Chris Schramm's NOR 17 Oslo
- Marc and Norbert Heijke's N 72 Noreg, may also attend.

It is hoped that this event could provide the basis for constituting a proper ISMA fleet in Norway.

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