

BRITISH DRAGON ASSOCIATION

Newsletter No: 1

December, 1976.

After an exchange of correspondence with Peter Evans, in which I said that we of the Medway Fleet were a keen bunch and I was sure any assistance required in connection with the affairs of the B.D.A. would be forthcoming as soon as any request was made; the result was an almost immediate reply that the preparation of a Newsletter would be of help in doing more to keep members informed of Dragon events, both in the U.K. and worldwide.

The result of the initial effort is now with you, fleet contributions having been received from the Fleet Representatives - those Fleets without a mention is due to no contributions having been received - I was advised that Conor Doyle would send a report, but I gather he's too busy polishing the silverware obtained at Abersoch and together with practice for Torquay 1977 he has no energy left!

It is proposed to prepare the next edition for publication during April/May, 1977 containing Fleet Reports, at least one short article of general interest, a short report/statement on Dragon Affairs together with a FCR SALE/WANTED section. I would therefore, be very pleased to receive Fleet Reports and articles for consideration by the end of March, 1977. Naturally, any constructive suggestions regarding content would be of great assistance, AS WE ARE ONLY GUESSING AT THE MOMENT!

Ken Richardson - Medway Dragon Fleet.

CRUISING DRAGONS ??

Unlike "Old Soldiers", there seems no good reason why Dragons over their peak need ever "fade away" and for this reason I am trying to encourage the formation of a cruising section of the Association. Members will not need reminding of the speed and strength inherent in the design, features that are most desirable in a cruising boat.

For those of you that cannot conceive how a miniscule cuddy could in any way provide the creature comforts for a small family, may I say that with only a very small, almost indiscernible, increase in coachroof height and length, my own boat has four berths, gas cooker and even a fully operational marine toilet! With a 7.5hp Mercury outboard in a well alongside the rudder shaft, the boat has provided exhilarating cruises to France and the Channel Islands, including an average of 8 knots from Dartmouth to the Needles. Of course such beautiful lines must result in a "wet" boat but, as with sports cars, there are always some inconveniences as a small price to pay for high performance and character.

I know of no other 29ft boat that can be bought secondhand for less than the price of a new Laser dinghy and conversion for a more sedate use requires absolutely no changes to the rig and can proceed without interfering with the sailing season. The conversion cost, apart from any necessary refurbishing of the standard structure, would probably cost between £300 and £1000.

Up till now I feel sure that many owners of cruising Dragons have held the Association in awe and felt outside its scope. If you come across ANY Dragon not in the Association try to contact the owner and say that he will be welcome whether he be interested in racing and/or cruising and that there is no need to be part of one of our Fleets. Even though you are solely interested in racing, the encouragement of boats past their prime to be converted for cruising could well enhance the value of your own racer when it is its turn to be pensioned-off. Please direct such potential new members to me - Alan Burgess, Bank House, Summerhill, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5RD - daytime telephone 01-467-6533.

A.B.

FLEET REPORTS.

CLYDE FLEET report that they are currently having a thin time, with only 5 or 6 boats racing regularly, but it is hoped that further interest will result in an increase in numbers during next season.

FORTH FLEET have been very active this season with eleven boats having ghosted and thrashed, sweltered and shivered their way through a season of mixed weather and much good racing. Veterans such as Gumley and Manuel (classed thus, purely on grounds of years at the tillers of Dragons - they started young) were out again and it was good to see Marshall Napier returning from his dalliance with Solings and I.O.D's to helm CRUSADER (ex SANDPIPER)

FOR SALE:

- D/K 382 'VAL' Built '62 by Bjarne Aas. £2,500
Wood spars.
2 suits sails.
Contact: John Hart on Maidstone 831601
- D/K 369 'ARANEA' Built '64 by Clare Lallow.
Contact: Tony Lewthwaite on Abersoch 2350
- D/K 416 'VEGA' Built '65 by Borresen.. £3,950
Metal spars.
Various sails.
Contact: Vic Driver , 145 All Saints Rd., Hastings.
- D/K 411 'AQUILLA' Built '64 by Berresen.
Metal spars.
Various sails.
Contact: Tom Gurney, c/o Medway Yacht Club,
Upnor, Rochester, Kent.
- Set of wooden spars for Dragon - will split
Contact: John Reeves on Maidstone 54677 (day)
Maidstone 64344 (evenings)
- Four genoas and two mainsails by Ratsey & Laphorn and Elvstrom, all in
fair condition. Contact: Richard Riggs on Woodbridge 3777 (day)
Waldringfield 617 (evenings)

Don't forget, fleet reports, items of interest, goods for sale/wanted
required by end of March, 1977 for inclusion in NEWSLETTER No: 2 to
be published during April, 1977 -- all to be forwarded direct to:-

Ken Richardson,
10 Ronver Road,
London, SE12 0NJ.

Tel: 01-857-8384

whenever he got the chance

Yet all this experience could not prevent an owner of a mere four years standing, though for long apprenticed to Gumley, from carrying off most of the honours Hamish Mackenzie, in KIS, had quite a season taking first places in the Opening Regatta, the Bruce Aitchison Cup for Forth Week Regatta, the early points, Saturday points, the evening points and the local Class Championships. In addition, middleperson Lesley Arthur at the helm won a handsome loving cup for the Ladies Race. Such was the loot collected by KIS at the annual prizegiving, that she received it in a special capacious bucket "designed for a hardhine Dragon fitted with a folding rudder". A little unkind to the thirteen year old Borresen boat, still with foredeck unsullied by any unnatural orifice, which certainly goes. As also is the rumour that there is no need for windows in KIS's sails, since the crew can obtain a good view of boats close by through the open seams in the bow planking!

In spite of the heavy weather start to the season damage was slight. I.O.D. masts were falling like nine pins and the Dragons seemed to be escaping. They didn't escape entirely however, as when BAWBEE's did go it went most considerably. She was leading by five Gumley minutes (equal to two Imperial or one Mackenzie minute) on the final beat of a points race when there was an almighty bang and all the rigging went slack. After the initial shock the crew discovered the mast had broken cleanly at deck level and re-impaled itself on the stump! BAWBEE completed the race under genoa to finish third. Rumour has it that when writing for a replacement Kenneth ordered two - a reflection on his faith in metal masts - or a hedge against inflation?

Whilst there will be a few changes within the fleet during the winter months, it is anticipated that there will be plenty of close action again next season.

ALDEBURGH FLEET's racing has been dominated by JAVELIN, with which Richard Riggs has made his return to the Dragon Class, and POLLY sailed in partnership by Patrick Gifford and Michael Bunbury. In the first part of the year JAVELIN was undoubtedly the faster boat, showing her speed by winning her first race under Richard's command at the Bradwell weekends. POLLY meanwhile was bedevilled by a curious combination of pregnancy and courtship amongst the crew. Come the Regatta the situation was reversed, and some judicious timing and a regular crew gave POLLY four straight wins. The total turnout was twelve boats, which can seem a lot on the Aldeburgh starting line, but the two leaders were rarely troubled.

Away from home both JAVELIN and GANYMEDE franked the value of the form. JAVELIN has been much travelled this year - Bradwell, Abersoch, Burnham, Munich, Palma - and has performed extremely well against all opposition, winning easily in the races contested at Burnham Week and placing regularly in the other events.

GANYMEDE went to Cowes Week and there she stayed, for after a second and a third she sank and is now the subject of a valuation dispute for salvage (it is difficult to assess a thirty year old boat with extensive amateur rebuilding!)

This year we have seen the entry of Clive Cooksey and George Gordenham to the class with FREYA and regret the loss of her previous owners, the Sadler family. JAVELIN has also of course been a new competitor. We believe the Aldeburgh Fleet also possesses the only cold moulded Dragon keel, upon which Peter Wilson hopes to laminate the topsides this winter, for final completion by Spring 1978. Would-be imitators should prepare themselves for a labour of love!

WALDRINGFIELD FLEET have had quite a successful season, although we lost JAVELIN to Aldeburgh and CHOW went to Orford for cruising. The turnout on Saturday races was usually five or six.

SNAP went to Lowestoft Regatta in June and took first, second and third in three races. Five of the Fleet went to Aldeburgh for the Regatta in August giving eleven boats racing.

MUSTANG and MEHOOPANY have left us, but ISIS has come from Abersoch with SEAHORSE from Oban - the standard of boat has improved and the newcomers are all keen to race regularly.

SNAP was our most successful Dragon this season, with VENTURE a close second - using North and Elvstrom sails.

We are planning a series of races at sea next season in addition to the normal Saturday afternoon river series.

MEDWAY FLEET comprising 19 boats this season, has been completely dominated by the Wright brothers in the points series, sailing LIS, finishing with a total of six points! The average turnout has been 16 boats on Saturday afternoons

We at Medway were pleased to welcome again our friends from the North Sea Yacht Club, Ostende for our annual team racing weekend, which resulted in a win for the home team. A good weekend's racing was rounded off quite nicely by making arrangements for the transportation of our visitors back to Dover on a Red London Transport Double Decker - the visitors putting the final touches by singing "IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY" as the 97hp monster moved off.

For the second year in succession, we were taught a lesson in river sailing by a visiting Dragon from the Burnham Fleet during the Medway Regatta - BLUE FLAME helmed by David Hall won each race.

ISIS, GALATEA and MESTENG² travelled to Abersoch and participated in the Welsh Dragon Championships and Edinburgh Cup, whilst AQUILLA sailed round to Burnham and raced with the Burnham Fleet during Burnham Week.

A new design for non-slip decks is being tried out on the newest boat in the fleet, but it is rumoured that the 'teak undulations' have not reached the required standard and modifications are planned for next season.

SOLENT FLEET during 1976 consisted of 15 active Dragons and the average number of starters in the 45 SCRA regattas held during the season was over 10 - 18 Dragons entered for Cowes Week.

During what has been a somewhat exceptional season, no less than 10 races were cancelled because there was either too much or too little wind, in the R.T.Y.C.'s race for the Alfred Galin Cup not one of the eleven starters sailed the correct course and regrettably GANYMEDE (Peter Wilson) was sunk during Cowes Week when hit by a freak gust of wind.

ASTERISK (Peter Lloyd) won both the Class Championship and the S.C.R.A. without winning any of the other trophies. CHIME (Tim Street) was runner up in both and in the process won the Ganymede Bowl (Cowes Week Points Championship), the R.T.Y.C.'s Solent Trophy, the R.L.Y.C.'s Cellina Vase and the R.Y.S.'s Nainoy-Luxmore Trophy.

VULCAN (Leopold de Rothschild & Bill Pease) won the Royal Singapore Yacht Club Challenge Cup for the I.S.C. Round the Island Race and the Royal Srn. Y.C.'s Sylphide Challenge Cup. Sailed by Chris Hall VULCAN also won the Crew's Race.

TORBAY FLEET have now increased their numbers to twelve boats and anticipate at least two further additions next season, including Martin Parry who has now returned to Torquay from the Channel Islands.

A most successful October series with racing on Saturdays and Sundays around olympic courses had between 9 and 11 boats participating - the winner was Harry Budd sailing his new glass Dragon CHINOOK.

At least three members will be travelling to Majorca for the Easter meeting and quite a few have indicated that they will be attending the French Championships in Brittany - the ferry from Plymouth to Roscroff makes participation quite simple.

Plans are well ahead for the 1977 Edinburgh Cup to be held from 18th to 25th June, which will celebrate 50 years of Dragons - we hope that the Duke of Edinburgh will come to present the cup and we intend to invite many well known Dragoners to this great event. We have had several applications already, including the Irish and French.

Assistance will be given to anybody who would like to sail with us during April and May to tune up for the Edinburgh Cup.

STRANGFORD LOUGH FLEET the youngest member of the B.D.A., has now grown to boast the grand total of fourteen boats sailing regularly three times a week during the season. It may not be well known, but we started sailing in 1971 on Strangford Lough, which offers excellent sailing water with beautiful scenery, with just six boats and were attached to the Belfast Lough Fleet. However, by 1973 our numbers had increased to eleven boats and we were then granted Fleet Status.

We have hosted the Irish and Belfast Fleets on two occasions and next season we plan to run the Irish Championships.

SOUTH CAERNARVONSHIRE FLEET have reported that the season has shown an improvement in their boats. One boat took part in the European Championships at Munich and came 14th out of an entry of 37 from 14 countries.

Five members will be travelling to Torquay for the 1977 Edinburgh Cup and two hope to enter the Easter Regatta at Majorca. The British made road trailers manufactured in Manchester are proving very satisfactory and have increased the mobility of many Dragons - we will be very pleased to provide details to any interested Fleets.

Our Annual Dinner will be held on 21st January near Chester and all will be welcome.