



DRAGON NEWS

OCTOBER 2012

from the British Dragon Association

EDITORIAL

By Charles Cronin

Dear Dragon Sailor, welcome to the first experimental late season newsletter. At the last AGM it was decided to increase the BDA budget on member contact. Currently members receive a copy of the IDA and BDA magazines. This newsletter is meant to fill the gap between these publications. While results and reports reside on the website, this newsletter aims to discuss a topic of general interest and mark your calendar for the coming year.

First of all, I would like to thank all members who responded to last May's internet member survey, provided by SurveyMonkey. 63 members responded, or over 20% of the BDA membership, which is a very strong result. You gave your Committee a clear

steer, 57 to 5, to widen the number of venues where the BDA organizes events. The survey also gave us guidance to combine the South Coasts and Edinburgh Cup, which will be in Weymouth for 2013 and Christchurch Bay, hosted by the Royal Lymington Yacht Club in 2014.

With the Summer season coming to a close your thoughts maybe turning towards a new Dragon and next year's campaign. Even if a new Dragon is not in your next Christmas stocking, you would probably like to know what innovations the builders have made in the last several years. To elicit the facts we asked freelance journalist, Abigail Butcher to interview the leading Dragon builders in Europe. Plus ça change ...

Abigail specialises in sport, health and lifestyle for the

UK national papers (Telegraph, Times & Mail). She is a keen sailor, and crews on a competitive J109 from her hometown of Lymington and hopes to take part in the ARC later this year on a Swan 48. Maybe one day we can get her on a Dragon?

For the next season Tim Wilkes, The Hon. Secretary has some notes for your diary. With January's AGM approaching your committee is eager to receive any discussion topics, observations or resolutions for the meeting. These should be emailed to Tim (see back page for address).

Lastly, we would really value your comments on this newsletter. Constructive criticism, or pointers for improvement, all are welcome - and maybe published.



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INNOVATION - PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE

By Abigail Butcher

Since the first Dragon was built in 1928, the one-design class has undergone subtle but major modernisation. Boat builders have adapted their production to incorporate rule changes that range from the introduction of bulkheads and lateral and horizontal stiffening to, more recently, improvements to overall buoyancy and the use of

resin infusion in hull construction.

So how have the major boat builders in Europe managed these changes? And what have they done to give their Dragons the edge in a class where rules are tightly enforced by the International Dragon Association and the International Sailing Federation to ensure old boats remain competitive against new?

Petticrows, in Burnham-on-Crouch, is the most dominant builder in Europe, producing around 30 new Dragons each year.

Co-owner Tim Taviner says: "We do our best to update Dragons but the rules are very well thought through and although there are tolerances on building, nobody has yet made a huge breakthrough in performance."



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large buoyancy area," he explains. "They're not un-sinkable, but it would take a major problem to cause a sinking."

Three years before, in 2005, Peticrows started making hulls using vacuum-assisted resin infusion — lying the glass fibres dry into the mould and using a vacuum bag to draw the

resins through and the laminate to dry.

"It's very consistent on weight and we can make the directions of the fibres very accurate, so it's a much stronger laminate," explains Tim.

Other changes in design include raising the cockpit floor, channelling control lines under the cockpit floor for a cleaner finish and, for 2012, the introduction of a wider, outward angled cockpit coaming for more comfort when crew are hiking out.

"The technology on the ropes for the standing and running rigging has been improved over the past couple of years, as have the blocks and cleats, so they are easier to operate and require less physical effort to do the same job," says Tim.

Simplicity was the overriding objective when Denmark's Vejle Yacht Service took design completely back to basics in 2005 when the company incorporated with Royal Dragon and BB-Dragon.

Borreson (BB-Dragon) was renowned for managing the transition from wood to GRP, but it went bankrupt in 2005 and the newly formed company recognised it needed to develop something new, as Vejle's director of sales and marketing Thomas Schmidt says: "If we were to win any share of the market".

An advisory team of sailors, engineers and naval architects redesigned the hull

and interior layout, building a new hull mould using a huge 3D milling machine using optimised drawings to make a hull that Schmidt says is "100 per cent accurate".

"That was the first thing we did, but it was important to us that sailing a Dragon should be simple, allowing you to focus only on the start and sailing, not making advantages with the boat," he says.

"The class has developed in the past years so everyone was trying to find solutions to improve speed, but we wanted a more simple layout that was easier to race."

The cockpit floor was raised around 20cm, and the Danish shipyard switched to using vacuum-assisted resin infusion — the first builder to do so, according to Thomas — making the boat much stiffer.

Vejle Yacht Services also have the rights to build a tear-drop shaped tubular mast, which Thomas claims is the "more ergonomic and competitive" to the other, more square-shaped masts on the market and to which tailor-made adjustments can be made to the spreaders and rigging.

Doomernik Dragons in The Netherlands prides itself on tailor making boats for a client's specific requirements. In 1996, the boatyard was the first to make an exactly symmetrical male model of a boat cut out by robot, a mould still used today.

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*Markus Glas Gmbh
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“The hulls sit in the mould for three to four weeks instead of a few days, we take much more time laminating it — if the hull shrinks, it’s not a Dragon,” he explains, adding: “We specialise in wooden decks, our woodwork in Holland is in a different league.”

Like the other boat builders in Europe, Joop says there have been very few requests for fully wooden boats since the introduction of GRP which is more easily serviced and nowadays equals the stiffness of wood. Doomernik Dragons take two and a half months to manufacture a GRP boat and five and a half months for a Dragon with a wooden deck.

“We’re working on a higher floor over the coming year, and hope for 2013 we will

have a new inner section,” he says, “and last year we came up with a new version of the Barney Post (main sheet traveller) which is easier to use.”

And in Germany, Bootswerft Markus Glas Gmbh has shifted production of its Dragons from Austria to Poland, a move owner Markus Glas hopes will make them competitive on price and more appealing to the UK market.

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With the move to build in Poland, at a yard that has not before produced a Dragon, Markus took the opportunity to make subtle changes in design.

With added buoyancy, the deck layout has been made roomier, particularly in the aft section for the helmsman.

“There is also a new spinnaker shoot, with a new runner system — using the same tackle but different lines with fine adjustments,” he explains.

The new moulds will give around 2,650 litres of buoyancy (moulds used in Austria gave 2,580 litres) and the aft part of the inner section is sealed to increase buoyancy.

“We’re aiming to produce two boats by the end of this year to exhibit next spring.”

All the builders said the majority of their work was producing GRP boats, followed by fibreglass hulls with wooden decks. Refurbishments are still key too, proving that carefully planned rules achieve what they have set out to do — to allow old to race against new.

With no drastic changes allowed, Tim Tavinor of Petticrows says making improvements to the Dragon is more a case of “nibbling away” at the design.

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

By Tim Wilkes

Just over half way through the year and all the BDA regattas are now done. Some fleets are laying their boats up, whilst others still have three more months racing. So far, so good. So let’s look to the future and anticipate what we have to look forward to.

AGM & Dinner: Please note in your diary’s that the

2013 AGM and annual dinner will take place at the Army & Navy Club at 1800 hours on Friday 18th January 2013. This will be our third year at The Rag and we have been looked after very well there. The AGM takes place downstairs with a cash bar as a backdrop. Dinner is then upstairs in the Library, which is a lovely room for dinner at tables of 10. The food has been of a gener-

ally high standard and the service very good. We again hope to have a short but interesting after dinner speaker and to then repair to a nearby private bar to continue on well into the night. In January of this year we had over 40 attendees and it would be good to see some more regular Dragon sailors at this winter event. You will be able to book via the web or in person to me;



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contact details below.

Worlds at Weymouth 2013:

I make no apologies for raising the Worlds at this stage, before our own regattas. As I'm sure you will now be aware the BDA is running the 2013 Worlds in Weymouth on the Olympic race course. It is a major occupation for your committee and demands a great deal of our time in ensuring we lay on an excellent regatta with absolutely first rate racing. In that regard the entire association is on show and it behoves us to capitalise on the outstanding success of the Great British London Olympics by being a class act organising our Worlds. We may need help from members in getting there and I would ask that you all give us your backing and support. The regatta web site has recently gone live and we shall be adding more information to it in

the coming months. Please keep up to date with what we are doing.

2013 BDA Regattas: In the run up to the Worlds we felt it was important that we could offer the opportunity for those who did not wish to or who did not qualify to attend, to race on the same course and with the same organisation. It will also give the organising body, the Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy, a chance to become better acquainted with the Dragon and its followers prior to the Worlds. So both the South Coasts and the Edinburgh Cup are at Weymouth from Saturday 22nd to Saturday 29th June 2013. Our aim is to make it easier to book accommodation for the one week period and therefore racing will start on the Sunday and finish on the Fri-

day. We hope this will encourage many of you to come and race at an outstanding venue and to have some fun doing so too. In 2013 it will again be the turn of the Medway Fleet to host the East Coasts and for us to return to beautiful Abersoch for the Northernns. Full details will be available on the web site.

Housekeeping: We live in an age of increasing digitalisation and rapidly evolving media formats. We are aware that not all members move apace with these and that for some of us, holding a firm piece of paper in our hands is more reassuring. In the past twelve months we have made several postings to all members alongside emails, web stories and Facebook updates, including invitations to the AGM and dinner, separate mail-

ings for the IDA and BDA magazines and this newsletter. We have been monitoring response carefully and two things emerge. The first is the importance of letting us know of any changes in your email or physical address; it is only you who can let us know of any change. The second is that there is an inevitability that we shall, at some time in the future, become a virtual based association. The IDA now decides to publish its annual magazine on a yearly basis; at one time it looked as if there would be no magazine for 2012, though the decision has been made to publish now.

Housekeeping

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Your BDA Committee

Martin Makey - Chairman - mob 07860 729804, email martin@themakeys.co.uk

Ron James - Vice Chairman - mob 07740 177038, email r.james@company-doc.co.uk

Tim Wilkes - The Hon. Secretary - mob 07720 288100, email timwilkes6@hotmail.com

Charles Cronin - The Hon. Treasurer - mob 07711 589198, email charles@cronin.cc

BDA Fleet Captains & Coordinators

ABERSOCH - Jamie Peters - mob 07775 851091, email james.peters@merchantsecurities.co.uk

ALDEBURGH - Rufus Gilday - mob 07779 029090, email rufus@gildays.com

BURNHAM - Mark & Amanda Wade - mob 07850 584134, email mark.wade@virgin.net

COWES - Owen Pay - mob 07813 963643, email owen_pay@yahoo.co.uk

MEDWAY - Julian Sowry - mob 07710 037349, email medwaydragoncaptain@gmail.com

CLASSICS - Patrick Gifford - mob 07930 558737, email patrick@gifford97.fsnet.co.uk

CULTRA - Simon Brien - mob 07721 767 777, email sbrien@btwcairns.com

Irish Dragon Association - National Secretary

Tim Pearson - mob +353 (87) 248 0361, email timothympearson@gmail.com

