

## **Star Dust found at Chipstead**



**A modern National 12 Racing Dinghy**

In common with a few other classes of sailing dinghies celebrating birthdays in 2006, the National Twelve class was 70 years old!

As a development class, the boats have changed radically since the early days. Uffa Fox was commissioned to produce the original lines in 1935 by the Yacht Racing Association (now the RYA) as a cheaper alternative to the International Fourteen Class and N1, Gypsy, was built and launched in early April 1936. The design was called Uffa-King and she resembled the International 14s that Uffa Fox was also designing. The original class rules stipulated an

overall length of 12 feet, minimum hull weight of 190 lbs with a 45 lb steel centreboard and of ribbed clinker design. As the all up sailing weight was around 600 lbs (!) it was assumed that National 12s wouldn't plane and so the Uffa-King had a narrow, V-sectioned hull able to knife its way to windward without losing speed on the run.

Over the years there was a gradual development with many rule changes to accommodate the improvement and availability of more modern materials. Ribbed clinker gave way to glued clinker in the mid 1950s. By the 1970s the number of planks was reduced to 4 per side. Round bilge boats were permitted in the early 1980's and so the modern National Twelve evolved. The class has always been at the forefront of design innovations and it has spawned many other classes. To name a few, Uffa Fox based the Firefly on one of his National 12 designs for the 1946 Olympics; the Lark was heavily based on an extended National 12; Phil Morrison has used his experience in National 12 designing to produce the RS200.

And so to Star Dust.

During a number of Winter working parties, the Fast Handicap fleet had been moving a red National 12 around the boat park and she was eventually relegated to the "abandoned boat area" at the far end of the berths. Each year we would strip off the brambles and weeds from her cover and "dust" her off.

For the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year, the National Twelves had organised a birthday weekend regatta in May based at Northampton SC and I thought it would be rather nostalgic to get this poor old neglected National 12 back



**Star Dust rescued from the brambles**

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to sailing condition and put in an appearance! I identified her as a Proctor Mark VI design, N1475 built by Whyche & Coppock circa 1957!



**Decks about to fall off**

On close inspection the deck was in a shocking state but the hull appeared pretty sound. There had been a very botched repair to the bottom of the transom where she must have been grounded at some time in the past with the rudder down causing the lower pintles to rip out a section of wood. Undaunted I towed her home in early April and set to work.



**Paint scraping**

I turned her over and was rather dismayed to find that the decks fell off! Still, that saved some time! The red paint also literally fell off in places and so within a couple of weeks I had a bare hull ready for varnishing. 3 coats later she was looking pretty good. The side and rear decks were the next job. As they had fallen off on their own without breaking I decided that I could use the old pieces as templates. After carefully cutting and shaping, the new decks were on, varnished and ready for the regatta. (If only it had been that easy!)



**Varnished!**



**Star Dust sailing at Chipstead**

Star Dust was all packed up and ready to go on the May Bank Holiday Monday and off we set for Northampton.

We arrived in pouring rain with a real gale blowing. Undaunted Maggie and I rigged her and duly set sail - luckily the launch area was in a sheltered bit near the club house. We had only sailed her once before on the previous day at Chipstead when it had been a gentle force 2 to 3, very pleasant we thought.

What a difference a day makes!

Half way to the start on a dead run across the Northampton reservoir we were becoming agoraphobic, it was such a large expanse of water.

And then the wind hit us.

We rolled, rocked, bobbed and roared around, virtually out of control.

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BANG! The kicker broke. Maggie tried to repair it but it was too windy and, in danger of broaching and having an unscheduled swim, we headed back to the shore for a much needed cup of hot coffee and a bacon sandwich. We were able to catch up with many of our friends from the Class that we hadn't seen for years and we watched the racing from the comfort of the warm club house as the fleet fought its way around the course fighting off the hail stones! It could have been worse; we might have still been out there!



Robert Murrell

For information on Chipstead Sailing Club visit  
<http://www.chipsteadsc.org.uk/>

**Star Dust at Northampton**

For information on the National 12 racing dinghy visit  
<http://www.national12.org/index.shtml>

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