

## Modern Six Metres Newsletter No. 3 February 2015



Valhalla GBR 107

### Introduction

It is 21 years since Tim Street started the Annual Classic Six Metres newsletter. Partly as a result of this initiative, owners started to take considerable interest in what other owners were doing and this led to a major interest in the upgrading of many old Six Metres. By comparison, the Modern Six Metres, broadly those built after 1965, have been left without a focal point. These boats, often designed by the best naval architects of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are raced keenly; typically between 10 and 15 at recent major events, but many are sitting in sheds, not feeling the water beneath their keel from one year to the next. Others are sailed but are in need of some tender love and care to bring them up to the standards of the best. Once properly equipped these boats offer a sailing experience that remains second to none, and at a price that looks very attractive compared to other, broadly comparable classes. What is particularly remarkable is that despite the many different hull designs, the boats currently competing typically finish within seconds of one another. Better and more exciting in the view of many than one design racing.

### Why A Modern Six Metre?

This newsletter is aimed at those who are considering a Six as well as those who have already decided a Six is for them. It might also offer guidance to those who own one of these boats and are trying to decide what to do with it next.

Briefly the Moderns evolved in the 70s and early 80s away from their long-keeled predecessors, the Classics. They are generally built in GRP,

Although there are several very beautiful wooden Moderns on the Circuit.

They are good value, even compared to a Classic, demand relatively low maintenance and are very challenging to race competitively. In my experience young dinghy sailors find them a revelation to crew in, and of course the helm/tactician is hugely fascinated by the close winded sailing angles upwind (closer than any other conventional keel boat) and the intrigue of getting the right angles downwind.

In short the Modern Six offers a very big bang for the buck, especially for those who enjoy a combination of powerful weatherly keelboat racing and sailing a fascinating part of our racing heritage.

The purpose of this newsletter is to review the current scene and to offer some thoughts as to how more of these boats can be revitalised and brought out to play.

### Quo Vadis?

#### Pre 1979 Boats

But where are the Moderns to go now? One major problem is that boats built between 1965 and 1973 are at present outclassed, whilst those built between 1973 and 1978 (the

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Vintage Moderns) are also at present outclassed, but in their cases mostly due to their lack of wings.

Consideration has been given to the plight of the older Sixes, in particular by Don Wood, owner of St. Francis VI, at whose behest there has been much encouragement given to forming a division of "Vintage Sixes" for which he has presented the Nelson Trophy for presentation at the major international events.

It would only need three or four of these boats to appear at a championship for some very close racing to develop and provide great fun for a new and probably younger generation of Six Metre sailors.

A clear problem is that current owners are reluctant to accept a realistic valuation for these beautiful boats. As a result virtually none of the pre-1979 boats now ever race and are languishing in sheds and barns. Current owners need to accept that the market for these boats is very limited at anything other than a competitive asking price.

They are not toys and will only really repay their investment by being sailed hard in skilful hands.

These older boats, pre 1979 need either to be used or 'moved on'. Their market value is negligible, candidly barely more than scrap. A lovely 1975 Vintage Six was sold last year for around £10k and that was after being on the market for an extended period. Without a circuit to race on, the likelihood of this changing in the near future is somewhere between remote and nil.

A full list of all Moderns is available for anybody who wishes to see it.

### Post 1979 Moderns

The position seems to change by 1979 when the moderns became much faster, even before winged keels. Design concepts that had been trialled in the 12 Metres cascaded down to the Sixes and these post '79 hulls seem inherently faster than their immediate predecessors.

### Modern Designers

Since the introduction of the modern Six Metres, successful design has been in the hands of five main naval architects:

Olin Stephens  
Peter Norlin  
Gary Mull  
Pelle Petterson  
Ian Howlett

Between them, they have produced by far the majority of successful post 1970 designs. This is not to say that they are alone, as Doug Peterson has designed at least three boats: Razzle-Dazzle, Discovery and Ah Si Si. More recently, Stephen Jones and Julianne Hempel have also designed boats.

Curiously, a look at recent race results suggests that very few design innovations after around 1981 added anything to boat speed. Recent winners of the Worlds and Europeans all date from the period 1979 – 1983. In short, all boats from 79 onwards, given a modern wing keel seem, in the right hands and with the right kit, to be capable of a podium place at the

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major Six Metre regattas. All that is needed is to upgrade the equipment and sails of any of these boats to give them a chance of competing with the best. Many boats currently racing are handicapped by systems and layouts that are overly complex and do not reflect the modern technology that is available to make the boats easier and slicker to handle. Carting around the best of 1980's technology has proven a very successful formula for not winning regattas; however it is an issue that is easily remedied.

My own experience of updating Valhalla, a Peter Norlin design of 1981, which had not previously been placed in any major event, shows that an older modern is quite as quick as the more recent boats. She has now won the Europeans in 2012, was second in the worlds in 2013, and leading the Europeans in 2014 when the regatta was abandoned due to lack of breeze.

### Strengthening the Class

Experience with the classic yacht environment suggests a lack of adrenaline resulting from the absence of real 'first past the finishing line' races, due to the necessary handicap system. These people represent a fantastic potential for the Six Metres and we should get them interested. To attract them a few things must happen. We must develop our image of "legendary Metre Class, racing machines". We must be perceived to be 'gentlemen' and maintain 'fair play' while still being competitive, and above all provide the environment where we will all have the best time.

The International Six Metre Association (ISMA) is taking huge strides to address some of these issues, with an updated web site, the retention of a PR professional and a campaign to broadcast the message of the sheer enjoyment to be had out of racing a Six.

### Fleet News

Despite the existence in the World of around 100 modern Six Metres, there are really only five fleets, which offer Six Metre racing. These are:

Sweden  
Germany – Bodensee  
Switzerland – Bodensee  
Switzerland - Lac Léman  
England - Solent/Falmouth  
North America - Puget Sound.

### Sweden

This, traditionally one of the largest fleets of Moderns, is undergoing a renewed bout of enthusiasm. There is a number of good quality Modern Six Metres in Sweden, and although one or two are unused, generally the picture is good. I quote from my friend Johan Larson, (a recent convert to the pleasures of the Moderns).

"The Swedish situation is that all our moderns are from 1980 and later. It is Maybe 14 (Salén & Fredell and in racing condition), Notorius (Clas Henningson and in racing condition), Rebecca (Johan Larson and she got new Howlet-keel last year and is in racing condition), Carina (new rudder and some updates to racing condition), Delphina (Michel Larson and racing condition), Jungfrun (Anders Brinnen is doing updates to racing condition), Sting (Thomas Lundquist and in racing condition), Berta (Lars Engelberth and in racing condition). This means there are in Sweden 8 modern 6 meter yachts in good racing condition and all based around Stockholm. We have lost Evelina, the latest Norlin design to Finland but she is

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also in the process of updating to racing again! So Finland now also has one late modern and Tooggi from the 70-ties!”

### Germany

Germany boasts some nine modern Sixes, of which six are based on the Bodensee, at Bottighofen and Romanshorn, with one, Torsten Dornberger's beautifully restored Toogoowooloo IV, which is lying in a yard unused somewhere in Berlin. In addition, Dieter Grunau still has his relatively new boat GER 118 Courage IX, with which he won the World Championships a few years ago.

### Switzerland

Switzerland boasts fourteen Vintage Modern and Modern Sixes, of which five are based on the Bodensee, six on Lac Léman at Geneva and Lausanne and two, Temptation II and Temptation III, both owned by Beat Furrer, based in effect on Lac Neuchâtel near Berne, but racing internationally and on Lac Léman. The Swiss Championships are held on either the Bodensee or Lac Lemman on alternate years. Racing on Lac Léman is very serious and regattas take place at various venues around the lake, including Lutry, Lausanne, Versoix and Rolle.

### Great Britain

The British fleet has some fourteen modern boats, of which eight are, or can be, active in England. These are: GBR 86 Scoundrel One (Robert Bicket), GBR 89 Battlecry, raced very successfully by Richard and Ben Clothier, GBR 90 Lyonesse (Robert Leigh-Wood), BAH 1 Conch Fritters (also owned by Robert Leigh-Wood) which is currently laid up and for sale, GBR 99 Georgia (Tom Richardson), GBR 100 Cream, for sale by Brian Pope, GBR 105 Tempest (Avia Willment), HKG 2 Thisbe and USA 106 St. Francis VI, both owned by Don

Wood, and St Kitts, sporting the very latest Howlett keel; not forgetting Valhalla GBR 107, the current holder of the European Championship.

In addition there are three or four very competitive Moderns up for sale, and I'm told the prices are very realistic.

All offer excellent prospects on the racetrack; they just need some tender loving care.

### North America, Puget Sound

There has been a steady rebuilding in the North American Fleets following on the pioneering work of Kimo Mackey, and there is now a very serious mixed Classic and Moderns fleet based at Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound, where there are at least three serious modern Sixes: USA 107 Frenzy, owned by Rodger Phillips; USA 119 Sockeye, owned by Andy Parker; and USA 126 Pacemaker, owned by Adam Henley. There are also a number of boats, which are expected to join them including Bear, Blade Runner, CAN 135 and New Sweden. Sadly, all the other modern Sixes in the USA are spread about on the East Coast with just two, USA 100 St. Francis V and Discovery owned by Hank Thayer in Newport Harbour, California.

### France

Until quite recently, there were a number of very good modern Six Metres racing as a fleet in southern Brittany, mostly based around Benodet. Sadly, this fleet has now been dispersed, with several boats at least going to England, leaving only a very few boats spread around the country, several of which are for sale.

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Those left are the Vintage Moderns FRA 69 (ex G 53) Astrée on the Ile de Noirmoutier, with a further three boats, FRA 106 Warhorse, owned by Jean-Pierre Gourio, stored at Rennes, FRA 107 Tsigane, owned by Stefan O'Reilly-Hyland, President of the French Six Metre fleet and FRA 99 Rumble Bee, Claude Draeger based at La Trinité in Brittany.

In addition, there are two boats, FRA 94 Etoile du Midi and FRA 116 Bravade VI, which is owned by Jean-Denis Sarraquine, both based at St. Tropez and both of which are for sale; also FRA 110 Ah Si Si, somewhere. Together with Basil Vasiliou's boat, USA 105 Jane Ann (also sailing as MON 2), which is based near there, these could perhaps form the basis of a small modern fleet.

There are, of course, other modern Sixes around the world, some in quite surprising places such as the islands of La Réunion and Antigua as well as two, KA 12 Prince Alfred II and KA 17 Six Pack somewhere near Sydney in Australia.

### Conclusion

In order to move the Modern fleet on I think we need to be aware both of the heritage and the fact these boats remain first and foremost a development class. The well equipped boats at the front of the fleet owe as much to modern sail making and lightweight marine design innovations as they do their past.

I would like to thank Ian Howlett and Tim Street for their assistance in putting this newsletter together. If any one has any info about a Modern Six Metre, or wants any information please don't hesitate to ask. Indeed if anyone anywhere would like the opportunity to try sailing a Six Metre with a view to buying one, I'd be delighted to try and help arrange such a thing.

Paul Smith  
Vice President Racing  
ISMA Board