

RESURRECTION OF THE SIXES

In Britain, it has long been axiomatic that the International Six Metre was dead, having died to all intents and purposes in 1959. However, despite a lack of any life in the British Isles, a small number of enthusiasts have for long endeavoured to reinstate the Six Metre Class as a major competitive class. Although "Titia" represented the U.K. in the 1952 Olympics with Sir K. Preston, and "Royal Thames" won the One Ton Cup (then sailed in Sixes) with Lt. Col. Stug. Perry as Skipper in 1958 for the last 27 years, there has been virtually no racing in the U.K.

Despite all the enthusiasm and work done by Erik Maxwell who, prior to building "Kirlo" had also built "Gosling" which represented Britain in the World Championships in Seattle in 1973, where she was top European boat, until this year, all efforts to restart the Class have failed. Perhaps the best effort was made by Philip Beck and Roger Hill in the early 1980's who, owning "Thistle" and "Mena", combined to buy "Razzle-Dazzle" (formerly "U.S. III", owned by Scott Rohrer), from the U.S. However, little outside enthusiasm was shown and they subsequently sold both "Thistle" and "Mena", and "Razzle-Dazzle" was laid up on the River Dart in Devon.

The U.K. revival, started in the Autumn of 1984, when two Dragon sailors from the Cowes' Fleet, Tim Street, who had been closely involved in the last America's Cup campaign,

and Tim Russell his long-time partner, decided on a change of Class and decided to explore racing in Six Metres, subsequently arranging to charter "Razzle-Dazzle" for 1985.

A survey of the stock of International Six Metres in the U.K., and discussions with current and former owners, resulted in the location of seven other boats suitable, and potentially available, to take part in racing. These were K8 "Zenith", K47 "Catherine", K52 "Mena", K71 "Kyria", K72 "Thistle", K81 "Kirlo" and KH1 "Perdita" owned by Bill Whitehouse-Vaux.

At the same time, John Prentice, formerly well known as owner of "Battlecry" and as a member of a former Admirals Cup team was, with the help of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, exploring the purchase or building of a new boat.

Of the old boats, "Catherine", "Mena", "Thistle" and "Kyria" were largely restored and are now fit for racing, while "Zenith" and "Saskia III" are undergoing extensive restoration. Several other Six Metres were located but had either been fully converted or would be major repair and restoration tasks.

The Royal Yacht Squadron and Island Sailing Club at Cowes were approached and the Royal Yacht Squadron, greatly encouraged by Michael Crean, a former owner and helmsman in the last British-American Cup in Six Metres, agreed to organise a British Championships over two weekends in July

1985, in conjunction with the Island Sailing Club. To everyone's surprise and delight, no less than eight entries were received, the British boats being joined by "Gitana", owned by Baron Edmund de Rothschild and chartered to John Prentice. Sadly, the starters were reduced to six when "Mena" was involved in an accident while under tow on the motorway from South Wales and "Saskia III" was unable to attend.

The following boats ultimately started: KH1 "Perdita", Bill Whitehouse-Vaux (helmed by Richard Clampett); Z107 "Gitana" chartered and helmed by John Prentice; K81 "Kirlo" Eric Maxwell, skipper: Ian Howlett; K82 "Razzle-Dazzle" (chartered by a syndicate of Cowes yachtsmen including Tim Street, Tim Russell, David Starbuck and David Stride), and helmed by Tim Street; K71 "Kyria" owned by J.R. Jones of Caernarfon, chartered and helmed by Johnny Caulcutt, (former owner of the 12 Metre "Columbia"), and K47 "Catherine", owned by a syndicate from Southampton headed by John Dixon. The boats finished in the above order. All the boats were very well raced and crewed, with representatives of Peter de Savary's last America's Cup Squad in each crew. The regatta held in almost the only good sailing weather of the Summer, was a tremendous success with a surprisingly large number of spectators and spectator boats, especially in view of the counter-attractions of the Admirals Cup.

During the regatta, it was agreed to form a British Six Metre Association. A strong committee with Eric Maxwell as chairman was elected, with the aim of getting the class going again in the U.K.

The planned programme for 1986 is for four boats, "Razzle-Dazzle", "Perdita", "Battlecry" and Bruce Owen's new Pelle Petterson design "Scoundrel", to take part in the European Championships at Portofino.

The British Open Championships will again be run by the Royal Yacht Squadron, on an Olympic-type course, off Hill Head, in the Solent from 14th to 19th July 1986. It is then planned for the class to take part in Cowes Week before several boats depart to Cannes in September for the Regatta Royale. Meanwhile the Royal Yacht Squadron is discussing the restart of the British-American Cup team trophy which was last held in Six Metres in 1951. The 1987 British Open Championships will be held in Torbay during July.

The British Fleet are starting the 1986 season with 13 boats: six modern boats: "Razzle-Dazzle", "Kirlo", "Perdita", "Battlecry", and "Scoundrel", together with a new boat designed by Ian Howlett for Larry Marks and Derek Ide due to be launched in June 1986.

Of the older Sixes, "Zenith", "Sioma II", "Catherine", "Saskia III", "Mena", "Kyria" and "Thistle" are currently

undergoing restoration or have already been restored to be ready to rejoin Six-Metre racing this Summer.

T C STREET

Class Captain