
The IDA Technical Committee

Patrick Gifford

explains the work and objectives of an often misunderstood group of people

I have the dubious honour to sit on the Class Technical Committee. The Dragon Class, as you all know, is a one-design and the purpose of the Technical Committee is to ensure that the one-design principles are properly controlled, while at the same time permitting the legitimate aspirations for improvement of the suppliers to the class, whether of boats, sails or rigs. This inevitably tends to mean that the committee is unpopular. Its most common expression is probably "No". However, its activity in various fields over the last year or so will have an impact on most Dragon sailors.

Sail Measurement

Probably the most important work is in the area of sail measurement, and to some extent, more general measurement at regattas. As some of you know, both at the Gold Cup in Douarnenez, and the European Championship in Pwllheli, there were considerable problems of sail measurement. It is vital that everybody races with sails that both measure and have been measured. Douarnenez revealed an

alarmingly lax attitude to the need to have one's sails measured, as well as one specific measurement problem. Pwllheli revealed that, with one or two honourable exceptions, there were minor measurement problems coming from a wide variety of sailmakers.

The Committee is determined that it should be possible for any Dragon sailor to buy from a loft a sail that has been properly measured, whether by an internal or external measurer, and that the measurement should be acceptable wherever the boat is sailed. We are, however, intending to move towards more effective policing of the measurement process, rather than simply checking that sails have, at least in theory, been measured. May I remind you to ensure that any sails that you use are already measured, and that if there are any problems, it is the sailmaker's responsibility to put them right.

Keels

The Committee has also spent many hours discussing keels. It is clear that there is a gap in the

existing rules once keels began to be encased in sheaths made either from epoxy resin or glassfibre. The original rules refer only to the measurements and templates for a bare iron keel, and do not control the shape of the finished keel. After much discussion, new measurements and templates have been adopted which will make it easier for the class to preserve its Dragon character and ensure that keel reshaping is not permissible.

Construction

The third area that has been important to us over the last year has concerned the construction method. Petticrows, one of the largest builders, proposed a different mould which would result in the join between the two parts of the whole mould being in the turn of the bilge rather than at the top of the keel. After much discussion, this was accepted, since the committee came to the conclusion that it did not affect the one-design principle and would not have any impact on either the shape or speed of the boats.

The Process of Change

Other issues continue to be raised in the Committee, and it is important that members of the class should understand how the process of change works.

Any proposal for a change in the rules, including a change in materials, has to be debated by the Technical Committee which will then make a recommendation to the general committee of the class. If that recommendation is accepted, it is then put to the ISAF and if they agree with the proposal, it then goes to the ISAF meeting. If passed at that meeting, the proposal will then be incorporated in the Dragon Class Rules.

This process should give plenty of scope for consultation, and the members of the Committee are of course open to any class member who wishes to express a point of view. Naturally this may mean a harder life for the Committee members, but it is in the interests of the greatest possible openness in the class and consensus about the class objectives.

Philip Colville

Extracts from the Daily Telegraph Obituary May 28th 1997

PHILIP COLVILLE, who has died aged 86, was a stockbroker for 40 years, with a reputation as one of the shrewdest investors in the City.

Educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, where he read mathematics, he enlisted in September 1939 and was commissioned in the Grenadier Guards. As a platoon commander, Colville took part in a series of rearguard actions. He used to say that if he had not sailed up the Seine before the war, he would not have known

of the ferry at Caudebec, and would consequently have been captured.

Apart from bridge, his recreations were shooting and sailing. He was a compulsive sailor, spending every summer weekend at Cowes, sailing and racing his Dragon. From 1943 he was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, of which he was Rear Commodore from 1972 to 1976. He was a stalwart of the RNLI of which he became vice-president in 1974. He never married.