

20th anniversary issue

Classic Boat

WWW.CLASSICBOAT.CO.UK

JANUARY 2007



WE'RE BACK!

**Our feature at the
London Boat Show**

**Did the 1967
boat show kill
Donald Campbell?**

**Design Competition:
The winners**

**The Fife that met
a bulldozer**

**60 years of
the Firefly**

**Portholes
refurbished**

The ropemakers

£95



0 1

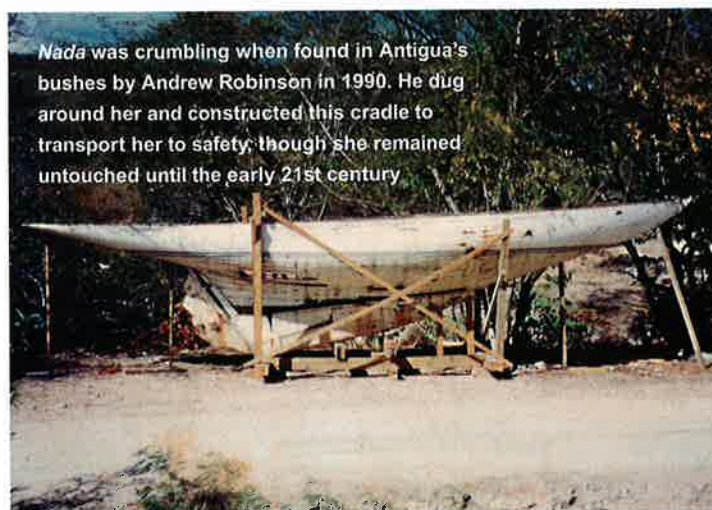


Above: The fire-breathing Fife Dragon – seen here on *Nada's* spinnaker – was unique to each boat he designed
Main photo: At the Antigua Classics



6M NADA REBORN

Built in 1930 by William Fife, the 6-Metre *Nada* survived hurricanes and decades of neglect before a bulldozer finished her off in 2000. Six years, \$200,000 and a nearly-new boat later, the reborn *Nada* is ready for the International Metre Regatta. *Words by Annie Sherman*



Nada was crumbling when found in Antigua's bushes by Andrew Robinson in 1990. He dug around her and constructed this cradle to transport her to safety, though she remained untouched until the early 21st century

She sat in a dishevelled wooden cradle in a disused boatyard in St John's, Antigua, when boatbuilder Andrew Robinson found her in 1990. Shrubs were growing through her foredeck because her hull was riddled with holes, while her rudder and keel had parted ways with the rest of the boat. The year before she had fallen over, snapping her mast and crushing her starboard side. She had rotted so badly that Robinson feared she would fall to pieces if he used a crane to transport her, so he dug around her and built a solid new crib.

"Certain boats have a particular line about them that you can admire straight away, and I saw *Nada* had it," Robinson said. "She is a truly remarkable design from possibly the most artistic designer that ever

lived." Thus began the rescue mission that lasted 15 years, attracted experts from all over the yachting world and cost Robinson his business partner.

Because of the magnitude of the restoration, it took Robinson a decade to gain momentum, find financial support, hire hands to do the work, collect the extensive materials and build a building big enough in which to do it all. He was busy growing his new company, Woodstock Boatbuilders, and they were restoring and refitting other boats, while *Nada* waited to be Woodstock's first rebuilding project. Meanwhile, since Robinson had come to Antigua shortly before finding *Nada*, uncertainties grew and rumours spread locally that this newcomer's eyes were too big for his wallet.

"Not letting go of this dream is a result of the design. It's one of the best-looking boats Fife ever built, with long overhangs and sleek, well-balanced lines. She looks good from behind, in front, up high and down low," he said. "And we're boatbuilders, we really wanted to build this boat."

At Easter 1995 Robinson convinced local hotelier Paul Deeth to buy *Nada* and have him restore her, and so they moved her to Deeth's Inn at English Harbour on the other side of the Caribbean island. That autumn, while two hurricanes demolished Antigua, *Nada* kept safe in her new crib. But, four years later, Deeth sold his hotel, and the new owners bulldozed the property where *Nada* lay in wait. All that remained of her afterwards was her



It took a team of experts at Woodstock Boatbuilders to put *Nada* back together again



Smooth sailing during the Antigua Classics

CORY SILKEN



CORY SILKEN



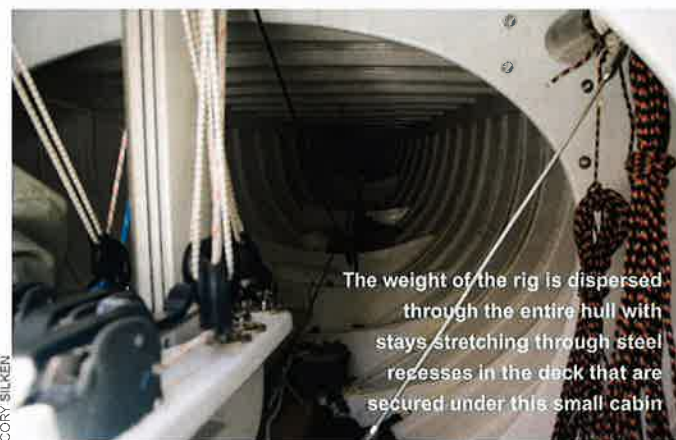
The sleek teak deck (left) and the Harken aluminium racing winches give her a more contemporary feel

CORY SILKEN



Though dwarfed by *Aschanti IV* at the Antigua Classics, *Nada* still shone in her inaugural race

CORY SILKEN



CORY SILKEN

The weight of the rig is dispersed through the entire hull with stays stretching through steel recesses in the deck that are secured under this small cabin



Making a splash in Antigua

TIM WRIGHT

lead keel, a piece of deadwood and a bronze fitting that Robinson scrounged from the heap. *Nada* was gone. "It had taken years to save her, to keep her whole, and then these guys come along and destroy her in one fell swoop," Robinson said. "I thought that was it, the project was over." But with *Nada's* death came a new opportunity. Instead of languishing over which pieces to save and which to replace, Robinson could completely rebuild her according to the original specs. So they lofted Fife's full-size plans in Nicholson's yard, an old powder magazine, in English Harbour, and finally got to work. There's nothing like a deadline to jumpstart a project. And, though *Nada* had waited for nearly two decades for a facelift,

it took the 2006 Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta to get her on the racecourse. Had they waited, Robinson said it would have been another year before her launch, and the momentum would be lost. The International Six Metre Association also changed the class regulations mid 2006, so she would have been uncertified if launched any later. "We really wanted to get her ready for the Classics, and there were times when we didn't think we'd make it," said Jim Child, a key member of the build team. "So we really put our heads into it." Robinson enlisted the help of Ian Howlett, technical committee chairman of the ISMA, and British International Six Metre Association chairman Tim Street to ensure the new *Nada* would be worthy of

class certification. Adhering to the stringent building and weight restrictions was the toughest task. If the measurements were off by a few millimetres or the wrong materials were used, *Nada* would be ineligible to race with the rest of her class. "Everything had to be a certain size, weight and type of wood," Robinson said. "There were so many pitfalls and variations." Originally built to the second rule – utilising traditional construction methods as well as wood and bronze materials – *Nada* was redesigned and rebuilt to the third international rule, featuring modern materials such as alloy, veneer and 736sqft of Mylar sails. Robinson and his crew brought her to her original racing form, reducing her weight and minimising everything to

class specifics to maximise speed. Purists may say that strengthening *Nada* with a sheet of veneer and introducing plywood ring frames to support a modern rig of rod, carbon, Spectra and alloy, is defiling the boat and Fife's memory, but Robinson believes Fife would be proud of their efforts to return *Nada* to the international racing circuit. "I'm not a believer in taking a rundown 1930s boat and making it into a traditional 1930s boat again, because it's just too hard to sail," said AllSpars rigger Andy Postle. "Whether it has a wooden rig with bronze winches or a modern plan, like *Nada*, it doesn't alter the original goal of the boat, and that is to race. With *Nada*, they've taken a classic boat and made her a classic again."

The new 36ft (11m) hull is of red cedar planking with an Afromosia veneer on top. The original lead ballast is secured to solid locust wood on the keel, and biaxial glass-fibre covers the entire hull for class weight and thickness. Sailing stresses are also dispersed through the bulkhead via stays stretching through steel recesses in the deck extending from the tabernacle to the mast. Except for the spinnaker pole, carbon fibre is not used due to class regulations. The one place they didn't minimise was the flush teak deck. Robinson said they could have used lighter planking, but decided the heavier wood looked better. The tiller handle is carved lignum vitae, a very dense and oily wood typically used for dead eyes and bearings. Robinson

salvaged it from an old Antiguan sugar mill, and said it could be 400 years old. His Woodstock team perfected the remaining custom bronze hardware. They also painted the hull black to contrast with the gold leaf and red-lined dragon, featured on the stem cove line and the spinnakers. No Fife would be complete without his signature fire breather, each one unique. "We tried to do it on a shoestring, but it's a racing boat, so she needed the best," he said. He solicited bids from eight sail-makers and, though he made an effort to use local Antiguan materials and vendors, chose Robbie Doyle's D4 Twaron sails. To make sure *Nada* went as fast as she could, Doyle said the sails are made of bulletproof Mylar fibre sandwiched between sheets of

NADA'S HISTORY

Built in 1930 as *Dana II*, *Nada* spent much of her early life racing, mainly in Scotland, attracting a wide range of attention. Legendary Cowes boatbuilder Uffa Fox was impressed with her seaworthiness. "To ginger *Nada* up, I designed and fitted the mast, rig and sails... and sailed from Burnham to Cowes," he wrote. "On the way down we left trading schooners weather-bound for Dover, not so much because of the weather, but because they could not turn windward."

In the late 1960s she was kept on Belfast Lough in Northern Ireland, but broke free from her mooring in a storm and was driven ashore. She sustained modest hull damage and was sold to Londoner Stephen Cash, who transported her by low-loader to a barn close to Gatwick Airport. Friends came together to fix her, installing a self-draining cockpit, three new laminated ribs and external cladding in glass-reinforced plastic.



Nada cruising in the Solent, circa 1976

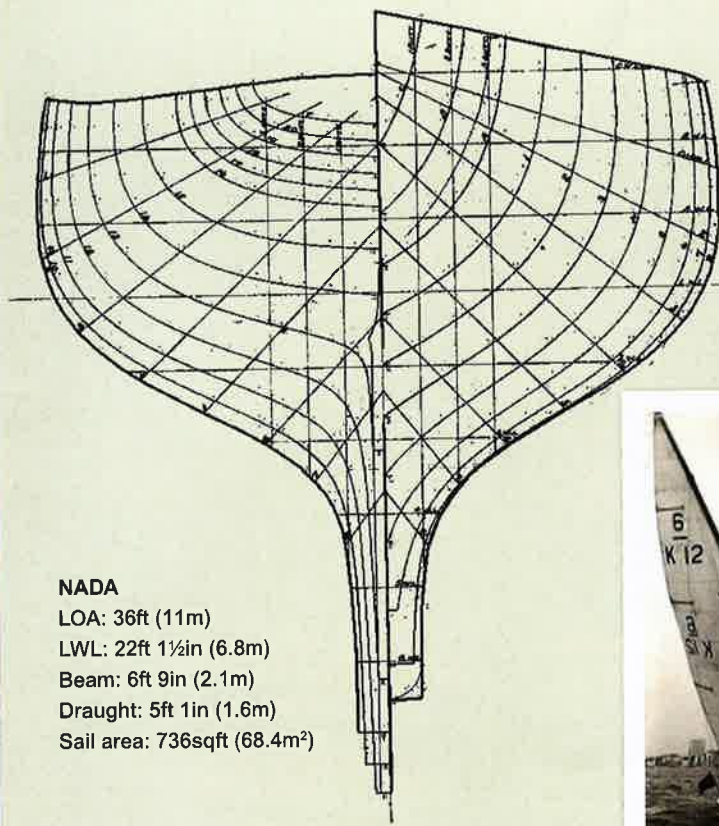
In 1975 Joe Loughborough saw *Nada* in Gosport, Portsmouth Harbour, and fell in love. "A Fife 6-Metre is the ultimate sailing machine, and there weren't many around in those days. So I begged, borrowed and stole everything to refit her," he said. He paid £1,300 and had 41p left over to buy a celebratory beer. He completely refurbished her the following winter, from a new cockpit to deck hatches and a glassfibre deck.

Loughborough raced *Nada* for two years in the Solent and took her cruising to Dorset, but left her behind when he travelled and ran boats in the Med and Caribbean. So *Nada*

sat in his backyard, covered and protected, until 1984, when his boss, John Trafford, asked him to ship her to Mustique in the Grenadines, where he was setting up a 'play pen' of expensive toys. Not able to take care of *Nada*, Joe sold her to Trafford for \$10,000; Trafford gave her back to Joe as a wedding present in 1985.

Joe then did something he still regrets: he traded *Nada* to Jim Fuller for a Gauntlet 41 Torage. Joe later heard that Fuller had lost interest in *Nada*: "He hauled her, left her uncovered and she blew over in a hurricane. She was on the fast track to deterioration."

Five years later, Joe wanted *Nada* back, but she was in bad shape, and he couldn't handle that much restoration again. After several resurrections, it seemed *Nada* had finally succumbed to the elements. But, just when people were about to give up on her, Robinson discovered her in the bushes and took her in hand.



NADA
LOA: 36ft (11m)
LWL: 22ft 1½in (6.8m)
Beam: 6ft 9in (2.1m)
Draught: 5ft 1in (1.6m)
Sail area: 736sqft (68.4m²)



At the Antigua Classics

CORY SILKEN

laminated with the latest load path technology. Along with the high-cut jib clew for one-design Caribbean racing, she carries a set of both symmetrical and asymmetrical sails, "because we knew she'd be doing a lot of reaching when racing. So they can pull the asymmetrical when reaching, and the smaller symmetric for dead downwind," Doyle said. "Though the Six-Metre class has allowed symmetrical and asymmetrical, conventional wisdom is not to have both. But from light conditions to squalls, it all works."

Postle fitted a lighter and stiffer alloy rig compared to the traditional wooden mast, so plywood bulkheads were installed at the mast and backstays to accommodate the weight difference. "This is a thoroughly

modern yacht," he said. "It has custom everything: spectra lines, composite runners; it's a completely measured 6-Metre."

FUTURE

After a last-minute rush of polishing and tightening, *Nada* was launched in April at the Classic Regatta, where she captured four guns in four finishes, including the single-handed race, resulting in trophies for the Spirit of Tradition Class, best performance by a local yacht and best performance by a yacht under 40ft. If her success in her inaugural race is any indication of her potential, *Nada's* future looks very bright. Perhaps that's why GBR Challenge founder Peter Harrison snatched her up as a new plaything. "Andrew made

her easy to use and she's absolutely lovely," said Postle. "She's well-balanced, loose on the helm, and we literally popped the rig in, pulled the sails out of the box and went sailing."

Despite the financial setbacks, the doubts and the bulldozer, Robinson was never deterred. He put everything on the line for this boat, including mortgaging his house and nearly sacrificing his company, because he wouldn't let *Nada* die again. "Financially it was touch and go. It was a huge gamble, potentially disastrous, and my former business partner told me to stop," he said. "From an accounting point of view it was a losing situation, and I probably should have stopped. But luckily it all paid off, and she's brilliant."



Slipper & Saloon Launches. Dinghies, Punts, Skiffs and powered Canoes for rivers and lakes

Good range of interesting early craft for sale

Riva restorations a speciality. "Carlo the legend, Riva the myth" two part book set available in English text.



"Indigo" 28ft Saloon Launch - currently for sale, can be viewed at Hurley

Visitors welcome 7 days a week. Please telephone or visit to discuss your ideas and explore likely costs.

PETER FREEBODY & CO., BOATBUILDERS

Thames Boathouses, Mill Lane, Hurley-on-Thames, Berks SL6 5ND

Tel: +44 (0)1628 824382 (day) or +44 (0)1628 823969 (evenings) — Fax: +44 (0)1628 820238 — Website: www.boatbuilder.co.uk

OCEANUS™ is a proven, highly durable polyester sailcloth designed specifically for traditional sailing yachts and training vessels. Oceanus delivers lighter weight, improved strength and exceptional durability while maintaining the texture, color and hand of traditional ship's canvas.



Topsail schooner Pandora, flying sails made by Armando Battaglia of Sailorwear using Oceanus #13 and #10 sailcloth.

Ask your sailmaker for
OCEANUS
SAILCLOTH
Manufactured by North Cloth (US) 203-783-4244
E-mail: jody@ncloth.northsails.com

Peter Freebody & Co.

OF HURLEY-ON-THAMES

Established over 300 years. Boatbuilders, designers & restorers of classic boats – steam, petrol & electric.

Visit our website:
www.boatbuilder.co.uk

WOODSTOCK BOATBUILDERS LTD

Photo: Steve Moore www.tropicalstudios.com
Recently restored 1929 Fife 6 Metre *Nada* in English Harbour
Applying a fusion of sophisticated and traditional techniques
Awarded 4 Winning Trophies at Antigua Classic Regatta 2006
THE CARIBBEAN'S MOST DYNAMIC REFIT COMPANY

JOINERY	COMPOSITES
STRUCTURAL	DESIGN
DECKS	PAINT
METAL	SYSTEMS

DOCKYARD DRIVE, ENGLISH HARBOUR,
ANTIGUA, WEST INDIES
TEL: +1 268 463 6359 FAX: +1 268 562 6359
refit@woodstockboats.com
www.woodstockboats.com