

Classic Boat

THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL BOATS

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Dipped in sunshine
AT THE ANTIGUA CLASSICS

AT LAST! a new wood-built IOD

As the International One Design class celebrates its 75th anniversary, the first wooden hull to be built in about 50 years, and the first not by Bjarne Aas, is launched in Nova Scotia. *Craig Milner* reports

Why would anyone want to build a wooden sailboat in this day and age? For Steve Bush and Peggie Findlay, it was simply the only way to get the boat they really wanted.

The couple, both radiation oncologists working in the southwest United States, had discovered Nova Scotia as a holiday retreat long ago – they honeymooned there – and more recently bought a holiday home in the town of Chester on its South Shore. They started to get involved in the sailing scene there, initially buying a 24ft (7.3m) William Roué-designed Bluenose sloop, which they raced while still learning to sail.

“We were taking a course on basic racing and some basic sailing, too,” explains Peggie. “And it was all Bluenoses in the course, except for one boat, which was an International One Design. And Steve said, ‘Look at that. That’s really a beautiful boat.’”

The International One Design (IOD) boats, also known as the International Class (IC), designed by the Norwegian builder Bjarne Aas, are celebrating their 75th anniversary this year. Not only are they very attractive, they are also very good sailing boats.

“It was the eye appeal that first caught my attention,” Steve says. “The fact that there was a growing fleet in Chester was another attraction.” Peggie and Steve began to look around for an IOD to buy – they quickly connected with Rick Thompson who had established the local IOD fleet in Chester.

“Because we started out primarily as Bluenose sailors, we were accustomed to plenty of water passing over the bow. The IOD for us is a step up in terms of being dry and comfortable,

a limousine. It’s still got a very close-to-the-water kind of feel. It’s just tremendously pleasurable,” says Steve. In addition, there was the class camaraderie.

“What we experience in Chester is that there are people that are really into it when they’re racing, but when the race is over with, everybody goes and sits on the deck and watches the other races and has a beer and visits and debriefs and then goes over to the tavern and has some fish and chips,” adds Steve.

They came across a couple of older boats in pretty rough shape, as Steve recalls, and some in glassfibre, from which all recent (in the last 50 years or so) IODs had been made. “But glass boats were really not so much what we were interested in. The then-growing IOD fleet in Chester was all wooden boats.”

RESTORE OR NEW-BUILD?

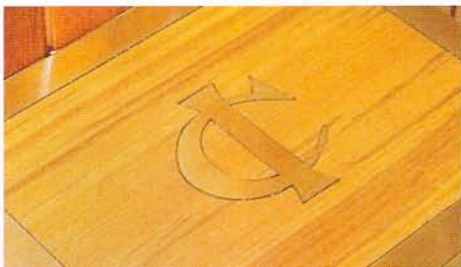
It came down to a question of finding an older hull to rebuild or seeking permission from the class to build one from scratch, and that was what they elected to do.

“We got in touch with Bruce Thompson and the guys at Tern because they had done quite a lot of work on other boats including a beautiful rehabilitation of a Herreshoff P boat, *Seneca*, which sails out of Chester.

“That persuaded us that they had the skills to do the work. We started talking with them and we worked out a schedule and a price and Bruce was able to get permission from the IOD class to undertake the project.

It was the first new wooden International Class boat built under their auspices since 1961.”

Tern Boatworks is a small company that “aims to keep the tradition of Nova Scotia boatbuilding alive.” Its founder, Bruce Thompson, says, “I grew up with boat plans always in the



“A good way to get your head around the boat”

grew up on the water, and my dad always dreamed of building a boat, but kind of never got around to it.” When Bruce graduated from high school there wasn’t an option to go to school to learn the craft locally. He went to England to explore the idea of attending the International Boatbuilding Training College at Lowestoft but eventually went to work at Covey Island Boatworks, and stayed for about five years.

He started Tern in 2005, initially as a one-man band. After about six months, he hired Lucas Gilbert. “He was trained as a machinist and has brought an important level of skills to the business,” Bruce says. The business was still relatively new when the reconstruction of the Herreshoff P-class sloop *Seneca* came along. The boat had been out of the water in Halifax for many years and was not in sailing condition. “The biggest challenge was they came to us in October and asked if we could rebuild it that winter and launch it for its centennial year. It was a big project. It was challenging for sure, and I think that’s the project that kind of put us on the radar.

“The next winter we had her back in the shop and we were working on a Bluenose sloop. Then we got the contract for *Enigma*. The owners came in our shop and said they wanted an IOD. They basically left a deposit and we started.” The principal builders on *Enigma* were Bruce, Lucas Gilbert, and Neil Joyce, trained at The Apprenticeship in Rockport, Maine. “I may be the spokesperson for the business,” Bruce says, “but these guys are also the business. They make it happen. Their skills are what produce the end result.”

LOFTED FULL-SIZE

To get the official design specifications, Tern contacted the International One Design World Class Association to say they had a client who wanted one built. “We had to send them a resumé of our work, and then they approved and sent us the drawings on a disc. We lofted the boat full-size and basically went on from there.” The decision to loft *Enigma* was partly to make sure the lines were fair, but also to have the patterns should they have the opportunity to build other wooden IODs later on. “It was a good way to get your head around the boat before really starting it,” says Bruce.

The backbone and framing for *Enigma* are white oak, and the planking is quarter-sawn Douglas fir in keeping with the original specifications. One question that did come up was how to handle seams, because Peggie and Steve wanted to have a very smooth finish. “These boats originally were tight-seamed and glued, and we decided to wedge-seam it,” Bruce says. “We planked it conventionally, and then we glued in cedar wedges with epoxy. The way the boat is built is wherever there’s a station mould, frames are bigger, and then between those bays there’s two more smaller frames. So the bigger frames are all kerfed and riveted, and the smaller frames are fastened with bronze screws.” In the end, the finish was so good that a lot of people thought it had to be a glassfibre hull and couldn’t believe it was wood.

FOUNDRY FOUNDED

One of the finest features of the boat is its hardware, but the original hardware is no longer made. What to do about that, then?

“We built a foundry and cast all the hardware, except for the Harken winches,” says Lucas, who with Bruce is now a partner in Gilbert and Thompson Manufacturing. “We got the drawings and made up all the patterns. We built a little furnace, and now we’ve got a foundry.”

Since then, the foundry business, now with a modern high efficiency furnace, has been providing pattern making, casting and machining for boatbuilders and other customers throughout North America. The biggest job to date has been deck hardware for *Farfarer*, a 58ft (17.7m) ‘fusion’ schooner designed by Nigel Irens and built by Covey Island Boatworks.

Enigma was launched on 26 August, 2009, with the entire building process taking about ten months – “a pretty easy commission,” says Bruce. It was quite an event for the town, as Steve Bush relates. “We had a party with some of the people in the yachting community and then all of their friends came over, and then a lot of people just from the community. The local grocer even closed his shop and came over for the launching.”

In order to race competitively, the IOD World Class Association required that the boat be built in strict conformance with the original 1936 design and

Right and far right: Interior of Enigma shows the level of craftsmanship, finish and attention to detail

ENIGMA

LENGTH OVERALL
33ft (10m)

LENGTH WATERLINE
21ft 5in (6.5m)

BEAM
6ft 9in (2.1m)

DRAUGHT
5ft 4in (1.6m)

DISPLACEMENT
7,120lb

SAIL AREA
426sqft
(39.6m²)



MIRIAM BEACH

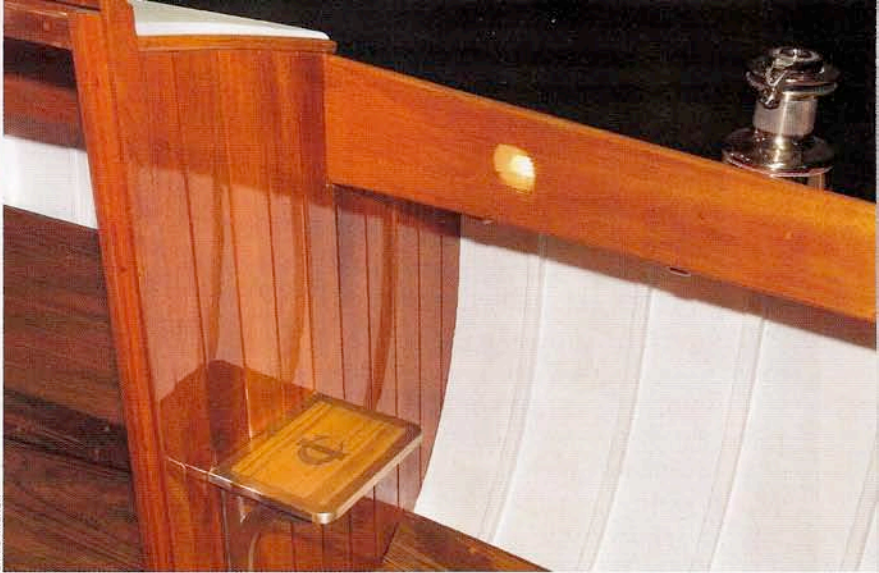


MIRIAM BEACH

Left and far left: A traditional cleat and lozenge shaped port



CRAIG WILMER



JONATHAN ERESSE

Enigma rounds a mark in the lead.
Inset: Boats of the Chester fleet



Left: Boatbuilders Bruce Thompson (left) and Lucas Gilbert

Below: The hull in frame and partially-planked



JONATHAN CRESSER

The all-wood Chester fleet

The Chester, Nova Scotia, fleet – the world’s newest IOD fleet and all wooden boats, officially sanctioned in 2009 – owes its existence largely to the efforts of its captain, Rick Thompson.

A native of Bermuda, Rick had been sailing IODs there for more than 35 years before he and his wife Michelle Pasquin discovered Nova Scotia and bought a house in Chester. As he was thinking about getting a boat for Chester, Rick saw an advertisement in *Classic Boat* for IOD *Mighty Mo*, then in Scotland. “I had actually sailed *Mighty Mo* in the mid 80s in Edinburgh,” Rick recalls. “The light went on and I knew that was the boat for me in Chester. It would fit in like a glove!”

Rick brought *Mighty Mo* to Chester in the spring of 2005, and raced her in handicap events at the yacht club. “Everyone in Chester loved the boat.” And from there the class has grown as other owners have joined the fleet. All the boats were built in Norway, with the exception of a boat called *Ibis*, built in Maine in the mid 80s independently of the class association.

“A lot of classes come and go,” Rick comments. “But the IOD has been around a long time, and I liked the people that were involved with it, particularly Jordy Walker, who was heading it up to revive it.”

“The Chester Yacht Club, the town, and the area have really embraced the classic International One Design,” Rick says. In June of 2009, a team from Chester went to Sweden to sail in the IOD World Championships and came in seventh, “which wasn’t bad,” says Rick. “And then we did the North Americans in Northeast Harbor, Maine. We won. It put Chester on the map.”

By this season, the fleet will include ten boats including *Aileen* (built for Cornelius Shields, who got the class started in the 1930s). “The building of *Enigma* has pushed the fleet to another level of quality. Hopefully more will be built now,” Rick says.

His own boat, *Mighty Mo*, now proudly displaying the sail number CAN 1, will be coming to Marblehead for the 2011 World Championships and 75th Anniversary Celebration.




CRAIG MILNER

specifications – this was the first time a wooden boat had been built in class by someone other than Bjarne Aas in Norway. Tern followed these to the letter but also in keeping with the spirit of the class. “It’s easy to put your own personality into things sometimes,” Bruce says, “but we tried to keep it as close to the drawings as possible. The only thing I would say would be an advancement is that the deck is covered in 6-ounce boat cloth. Besides that it’s pretty much the same.”

The measurements and certification were conducted on site over two days by Charlie Van Voorhis, technical chair for the class association and a world champion IOD sailor, and Kevin Farrar, their official measurer, who also is an official measurer for Olympic class boats.

‘WITHIN TWO MILLIMETRES’

“We brought a whole set of Mylar templates of the various stations taken off of the table of offsets,” says Charlie, “and set up jigs every 200mm, which is what the stations are in the IOD. They did a fantastic job putting her together. There were a couple of sections where his finished boat was within two millimetres of every single radial point that we measured. It was pretty impressive. The boat was very well made.”

In 2010, *Enigma* was in the water by June. Steve and Peggie campaigned her throughout the summer season in the Chester IOD fleet and took part in the annual classic yacht regatta held in Chester in August. This year, she may also sail in the 75th anniversary events. 

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IOD World Championship and 75th Anniversary Celebrations
11-18 June 2011, Marblehead, Mass, USA
New England Challenge, 2-5 June, Marblehead
www.iodworlds.com