RESTORATION OF THE YEAR

It’s Award time again here at *Classic Boat* and once more we are faced with agonising choices. Here we present the cream of this year’s restorations and select a shortlist of six boats.

**LUCKY GIRL**

Built at the Finnish Abo Batvarf yard in 1910 to a 1909 design by Wm Fife III, *Lucky Girl* was the prize in a raffle held by the Nyland’s Yacht Club. She obtained her name as the winning ticket was held by the three-year-old Lucy Tallberg, whose father went on to win the bronze medal in the 1912 Olympics. The rebuild of the first rule 8-Metre was begun by Fairlie Restorations in August 2007 and completed in time for the Fife regatta in June this year. Fairlies retained her composite steel and ash frame construction as well as installing a new cedar laminated coachroof with careful attention to the Fife details.

*Lucky Girl*

- Length 41ft 7in (12.7m)
- Beam 7ft 10in (2.4m)
- Draught 5ft 1in (1.6m)

“Everybody has won, and all must have prizes,” said the Dodo in *Alice in Wonderland*. In the world of restoration, which is in any case not a race or a competition, everybody does end up with a prize, in the shape of a beautifully restored boat, together perhaps with the satisfaction of having done the work, made the difference and brought something beautiful, elegant and possibly historic back to life.

So why, in that case, have an award scheme which of necessity picks out, and presents a prize to, one among many deserving and impressive projects? You might ask that, and we certainly do, quite frequently, when faced with the task of considering and attempting to evaluate so many disparate, but seemingly equally impressive, restorations. In the end, we suppose, the award is more about the process than the result: the process of focusing attention on the boats, their histories, the work that has gone into them.
and not least the remarkable and dedicated people and teams that can take credit for these achievements.

A successful restoration is usually a matter of bringing together the inspiration to do it and the skills to get it done. The former is normally supplied by the owner, who usually, let’s face it, also brings the necessary cash; the latter will certainly involve at least one craftsman, in the shape of a boatbuilder or shipwright, but may also encompass a whole team including perhaps a naval architect, historian, surveyor, tradespeople with specialist skills, fabricators of this, that and the other, and ultimately riggers and sailmakers. Sometimes the ‘owner’ will be a group determined to rescue a significant vessel, and the cash will be provided, in part at least, by the likes of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Sometimes, too, the owner and boatbuilder will be one and the same person. Our contribution, in running the Award, and in compiling this review, is to salute all these people, celebrate their achievements.

**AYRSHIRE LASS**

A little (24ft) half-deck gaff cutter, built by Wm Fife II in 1887, *Ayrshire Lass* was restored by Michael Kennedy ([Dunbrody, Peggy Bawn](#)) in Dunmore East, Waterford. The client was Paul Goss, skipper of *Adix*, who had been observing the *Lass*, on and off, over the years, eventually shocked into action by her decline. The full story, involving historian Iain McAllister and naval architect Theo Rye, was told in CB244 (October) but suffice to say it was a major restoration, and a thoroughly authentic one.

_Ayrshire Lass_

Length 24ft 7in (7.5m)
LWL 22ft 4in (6.8m)
Beam 7ft (2.1m)
Draught 3ft 4in (1m)

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**IERNE**

‘Purity’ is the watchword for owner Huw Jones’s restoration of the 1914 Wm Fife III 8-Metre *Ierne*: wooden spars, low-tension rig and no sheet winches. *Ierne* was unearthed, in a barn in Portugal, by Huw’s boatbuilder, Joe Irving. Replacement of her frames, 80 per cent of which were broken, enabled her lines to be trued-up; the deck, teak-planked, is traditional, and a work of art. *Ierne* retains her spartan, racing-machine feel – and Huw is not afraid to break spars in pursuit of his sport.

*Ierne*

Length 41ft 7in (12.7m)
LWL 27ft (8.2m)
Beam 7ft 7in (2.3m)
Draught 5ft 9in (1.7m)
achievements and inspire and encourage others to have a go – or, if already started, to carry on.

This year’s crop of candidates does not actually include any HLF-funded restorations, though there are a number going on. Every awards programme has to have rules, and one of ours is that a boat becomes eligible only once the project is complete, the vessel is launched and able to sail, or where appropriate, motor, under its own power. This would explain, perhaps, the absence of some craft that attentive readers might have expected to see. Kim Holman’s Phialle, profi led in CB235, exactly a year ago, but whose interior fit-out is still to be completed.

La Spina
Italy’s first ever 12-Metre, La Spina was built in 1929 for Italian aristocrat, the Marquis Francesco Spinola. She was relaunched in April after a two-year restoration at the Aprea Peninsula Navis boatyard in Sorrento. She now belongs to a syndicate of Italian owners who showcased her at this year’s Argentario Sailing Week (CB246). While the hull is a rebuild, the interior is, according to Stefano Faggioni, 85 per cent original, including the antique cookers in the galley and the Marquis’s writing bureau. Where original material has been lost to time, Faggioni has spent days trawling through antique shops for items like wall lamps, and has designed new ceiling lamps himself.

Elf
Seventeen years in the restoration, Elf, 1888, was designed for racing by George F Lawley of Boston, Mass, USA. Rick Carrion discovered and bought the 35ft (10.6m) yawl in 1971 as a student, and was dissuaded from selling it in 1973 by Don Street, who told him he had the oldest small yacht in the USA. Instead, Carrion created the Classic Yacht Restoration Guild to co-ordinate largely volunteer effort on Chesapeake Bay. They have produced a ‘museum-quality’ restoration, launched this summer and now making the rounds of eastern seaboard heritage ports. More of Elf’s story can be found at www.cyrg.org.
forces behind saving her for the community, who died in June. He lived to see her relaunched in April (Yard News, CB240) but problems with her boiler have put back the prospect of her proceeding under her own steam until (hopefully) 2009. As for the 106ft (32.3m) 1896 Summers & Payne Cariad I (Yard News, last month) we were faced with a date-related dilemma. She was in the water just within our cut-off date of the end of November; however, the restoration was done in Thailand, and we have not had the chance to view her yet. She is clearly a major restoration, and due to visit the UK this summer, when we hope to see her and do her full justice.

For the boats that have been relaunched in 2007, our criteria are as they were last year: the intrinsic interest of the boat itself; the work involved, including the depth of the restoration and the quality of the workmanship; authenticity of techniques and materials, and the purpose of the restoration.

**MISTRAL**

Dieter Krügel discovered the 1936 L Francis Herreshoff schooner *Mistral* in California in 1995. In worse condition than he thought when he bought her, she was patched up and moved to Lunenburg, Canada for extensive remedial treatment under Dennis Greenwood, from 1996 to 1999. On relaunch, racing quickly showed up further inherent faults in the light construction, and in 2006 *Mistral* was taken to Matthias Paulsen at Arnis on the German Baltic, where new ring frames were fitted (right), the hull reskinned and the deck renewed. *Mistral* was relaunched in May and took part in the Transat Classique.

**ISLAY**

*Islay*, a 38ft by 6ft Camper & Nicholsons day launch, dating from 1922 and a precursor of the ‘J-class tender’, was rescued from an Italian museum by riverboat enthusiast Adam Toop (CB246). Work on the hull, chiefly stabilising it and refinishing it in the present cream livery, from the previous burgundy, was carried out by Alastair Garland of Salisbury. Deck fittings were repolished, and upholstery recovered. Immaculate *Islay* won Boat of the Year, and all other appropriate awards at this year’s Thames Traditional Boat Rally.
This year, the Fife regatta played a part in the timing of completions. No fewer than three Fifes appear in the review, all very different as projects.

**Lucky Girl**, an 8-Metre was restored at the famous Fife specialist Fairlies, while another 8-Metre, *Ierne* was the product of a partnership between an enthusiastic owner, Huw Jones, and his craftsman boatbuilder Joe Irving. The third Fife, and the smallest, *Ayrshire Lass*, brought together a team of all the talents, including owner Paul Goss, shipwright Michael Kennedy and advisors Theo Rye and Iain McAllister. We also have a Herreshoff (*Mistral*), an Olin Stephens (*Opposition*), two contrasting Charles Nicholsons (*Merrymaid* and *Islay*), a Reimers (*Hakahala*), an Abeking & Rasmussen (*Sphinx*), a Harrison Butler (*Mayfly*) and a Dallimore (*Roach*). Special mention must be made of *Elf*, designed and built by a less familiar name, at least in the UK, George F Lawley, and subject of a 17-year restoration by Rick Carrion.

**Sphinx**
A12-Metre, *Sphinx* was built by Abeking & Rasmussen in 1939, for the people of Hamburg and the Norddeutscher Regattaverein (NRV). Following the war, when there were limits on the size of yachts Germans could own, *Sphinx* was sold to two club members with Chilean passports and a well-stocked woodyard, from which A&R built many boats for the club. In 1958, the naval college Mürwik acquired *Sphinx* and renamed her *Ostwind*. She was put up for auction by the college in 2005. Flensburg sailors Oliver Berking, Jochen Frank and Gorm Gondesen successfully bid for her, following restoration she was relaunched in May.

**Hakahala**
A Knud Reimers-designed 6-Metre, D48 *Hakahala* had the distinction of being featured in Uffa Fox’s ‘Second Book’. She was built in Denmark in 1935 to represent Denmark in the Gold Cup. About four years ago she was described as “in a desperate state, lying partly uncovered” in a yard at Roskilde. Luckily Jan Mateboer of the Netherlands stepped in and after drying her out, started to get her back into correct shape. She went back into the water, with borrowed sails, this summer.

**Karensa Mor**
Of the various restoration projects completed this year at Butler & Co’s Old Mill Boatyard, Dartmouth – they include the 60ft (18.3m) Boston smack *Spirit of Britannia* for the Trinity Sailing Trust and *Iris*, a 44ft (13.4m) Looe lugger built in 1921 – Ashley Butler has chosen *Karensa Mor* to represent the yard’s work. An unpretentious Padstow mackerel boat, 32ft and double-ended, she is now in private ownership and used mainly for recreation. Some 30 per cent of her hull – both frames and planks – needed replacing as well as her small deck. A new cuddy was also fitted.
Sizes range from 21ft (6.4m) to 98ft (30m) and ages from 37 years (Opposition, 1971) to 121 years, (Ayrshire Lass, 1887). As for budgets, well, who knows? Most owners are decently coy, and their builders sensibly discreet, about revealing figures. Clearly, though, it’s a lot and the impact of this work on coastal communities should not be underestimated. Nor should the value in terms of skills and training, the benefit to tourism or the sheer exhilaration in seeing a beautiful creation fulfilling her destiny and performing as she was designed to do.

Restoration is almost always more costly and complex than new-build; in that sense it is the nobler course. All of the vessels mentioned here, and the people involved with them, deserve our admiration. The winner will be announced at the London Boat Show. However 2009 is already upon us and we are keen to discover restorations that are due to be completed this year – so let us know and you could be shortlisted for our prestigious prize.