



# EXTRAORDINARY BOATS

RUPERT HOLMES ON THE Q CLASS

Hull lines are very similar to those of a J CLASS – it's hard for even an experienced observer to tell the two apart without access to a measure of scale



James Robinson Taylor

The J Class may be the most famous yachts designed to the Universal Rule, but they are by no means the only stunning yachts built to the same formula. **Rupert Holmes** reports on the embryonic revival of the **Q Class**

**I**magine owning a yacht with all the class, style and history of a J Class, but without the monumental costs and logistical challenges. This dream is well on the way to becoming a reality with the resurgence of the Q Class – the purchase and running costs of a Q are a whopping two orders of magnitude less than for the big yachts.

Anyone doubting the appeal of the Q Class has only to look at a list of former owners, which

features two multiple America's Cup winners, including Harold S. Vanderbilt in the 1920s and Dennis Conner, who undertook the first full restoration of a Q Class yacht.

The Q Class was the first built to the Universal Rule, which was adopted with the aim of providing more level racing by the New York Yacht Club after the 1903 America's Cup. Prominent American designers, foremost among them the legendary Nathanael Herreshoff, drew up the Rule, and leading designers from around the world, including Charles E. Nicholson, Tore Holm and Johan Anker, were involved in drawing many of the boats. At least 16 Q Class boats were built between 1904 and 1937.

Most Q Class designs are a little under 50ft, with a beam of just over 9ft and a deep draught, although

later boats tended to be a little longer and narrower. Although slightly beamier, they were very similar in terms of dimensions to the 8-metres built to the International Rule favoured in Europe at the time.

The revived class has a number of high-profile proponents, including French legend Bruno Troublé, former J Class secretary David Pitman and California-based yacht designer David Fladlien.

### Restored examples

One boat that has already been making waves at classic regattas in the Mediterranean and UK is Pascal Oddo's *Jour de Fête*. One of the later Q Class, she was built in 1930 to a design by Frank Paine and W. Starling Burgess and originally named *Falcon II*. *Jour de Fête* underwent a complete restoration in



Guido Carlini

**Above:** at around 50ft the Q Class is still sufficiently large and powerful to have a good turn of speed, while even the best racing crews will have plenty to tweak and manoeuvres to perfect. This is *Leonore*.

**Left:** *Jour de Fête* won her class in last year's Panerai British Classic Week in Cowes, with Bruno Troublé among her crew

|                                    |                  |          |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| <b>LOA</b> ( <i>Jour de Fête</i> ) | 15.85m           | 52ft 0in |
| <b>LWL</b>                         | 10.20m           | 33ft 7in |
| <b>Beam</b>                        | 2.74m            | 9ft 0in  |
| <b>Draught</b>                     | 2.13m            | 7ft 0in  |
| <b>Displacement</b>                | 10 tons          |          |
| <b>More info:</b>                  | qclassyachts.com |          |

{ **World War II** resulted in the end of racing in the **Q Class**, with boats subsequently dispersed over a wide area and many falling into disrepair }

2007/08, retaining as many of the original fittings and timbers as possible.

She won a slew of prizes at last year's Panerai British Classic Week, including 1st overall in Class 5 and the Lallow Cup for the best-presented new entrant. This followed a long run of successes in Mediterranean regattas including Marseille in 2013, 2014 and 2015, Les Voiles de St Tropez in 2014 and Panerai Antibes in the same year.

After World War II many of the boats migrated from the New England coast to the Great Lakes, particularly Chicago and Milwaukee, where a number were eventually lost. At one time it was thought that only three of the original boats were left, however Fladlien says: "I have information of various degrees of certainty about eight existing Q boats, including some which are sailing and others which are being restored."

*Leonore*, a Johan Anker design built in Norway in 1925 and called *Cotton Blossom II* for much of her life, was the first boat to undergo a full restoration. This was carried out in 2003/04 by Dennis Conner and she has been racing in classic regattas ever since. *Grayling*, a 1923 boat, is still racing in Canada's Puget Sound, while *Robin* (from 1928) is available in California and ready for restoration.

### A new era

Fladlien has developed a set of rules for the design of a modern-era Q Class, with the aim of bringing the class back in a modernised form. The vision is for two classifications: Vintage for pre-World War II designs and New Construction for those designed in very recent or contemporary times.

These would retain the same long overhangs, along with deep hulls to provide lots of headroom. Both classifications are included in a revised Universal Rule for the Q Class, with limitations imposed to keep the boats, old and new, reasonably close in performance.

The handicap system is based on a velocity prediction program (VPP) under which both new and vintage boats can race together with time allowance in a similar manner to the one currently used very successfully by the J Class.

The new rule also introduces a number of changes to make Qs both faster and more capable: modern wood construction, broader stern sections to provide a longer sailing length and better downwind stability, lower centre of gravity keel and higher aspect ratio sail plan for upwind efficiency.

At the same time, design restrictions have been increased, to discourage extreme shapes, while mandatory accommodation arrangements are intended to ensure cruising capabilities in the new boats. The rule allows for modern Q Class yachts to be built from wood epoxy, aluminium or composite, by any designer and any yard.

They are stunning boats that stand every chance of gathering an enthusiastic following.



The revised Universal Rule for the Q Class allows modern boats to have low centre of gravity keels and higher aspect rigs

Fladlien & Associates



Greater beam than typical European designs of the same period allows for more accommodation space



*Jour de Fête* to windward of *Leonore* at the 2013 Régates Royales in Cannes



After Dennis Conner's ownership, *Cotton Blossom II* reverted to her original name of *Leonore* and her hull was painted white. She is in outstanding condition



*Robin* is an unrestored original Q Class. She's lying at Rutherford's Boatshop in Richmond, California and has the potential to make a hugely rewarding project

Photos: James Robinson Taylor

Rutherford's Boatshop