

Classics Review

Bluebottle

Perhaps one of the most famous Dragons of all time is *Bluebottle*, which was presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth of England and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh by the members of the Island Sailing Club, on the occasion of their wedding in 1947.

The Duke fell in love with Dragon sailing and raced *Bluebottle* regularly, both with family members and also with the famous Cowes yacht designer and racer Uffa Fox. He also lent the boat to others, including to the 1956 Olympic Bronze Medal winning team of Graham Mann, Ronald Backus and Jonathan Janson, after which she was used as a training boat at the Royal Naval College Dartmouth for many years.

She had been on display in the Maritime Museum for some time and had come under the care of the Royal Yacht Britannia Trust but was now in urgent need of attention and so Cowes based boat builder and Dragon sailor David Heritage was commissioned to undertake a full restoration.

The Duke of Edinburgh took a close personal interest in the restoration and the team kept him regularly updated with news and photographs of their progress. He was insistent that she be restored to race and so the restoration sympathetically incorporated a modern rig and systems whilst also maintaining her stunning classic looks.

With the restoration completed she was loaned to top British Dragon sailors Graham and Julia Bailey to race. Very sadly the Duke did not live to see her relaunch, but he would no doubt be very proud to know that in her first regatta, the British Open Championship for The Edinburgh Cup – which had been presented to the Class by the Duke in 1948, she won two races outright and finished the regatta third overall. The Baileys then went on to race her in Cowes Week, a regatta the Duke not only raced in regularly but also played an active role in developing and managing for many years, where she won the Dragon Class in style.

Bluebottle is now on display alongside the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* at Leith Docks in Edinburgh. For a more detailed insight into her restoration read Rupert Holmes' excellent article for Yachting World at www.yachtingworld.com/extraordinary-boats/extraordinary-boats-bluebottle-late-duke-of-edinburghs-boat-135413

