



Raising the Dead

The Restoration of 6 Metre *Nada*

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It was 5.30am on a quiet Easter Sunday morning in April 1995 in a derelict Boatyard in St John's, Antigua. An almost unrecognisable wooden boat lay long-since abandoned in ruins amongst the overgrown weeds and Cassi thorn bushes. A low-loader and crane drove into the yard towards her. When the yard had closed down some years ago, some of the yard workers had stayed around and made these ruins their home. And it was one such fellow that on this Easter morning commented dryly "Come to raise the dead, have you?" Little did he know (or perhaps he did?) that this was the beginning of the very important resurrection of the IRC 6 Metre *Nada*.

But our story begins more than seventy years earlier, in 1929 in the famous yard in Fairlie, Scotland. Where, William Fife was designing and building yachts, often for the aristocracy or royalty, but it was with 6 Metres and the likes of *Nada* that he was most successful. Charles Nicholson, whose 6 Metres were repeatedly beaten by Fife's, was quoted as saying "The 6 Metre class should properly be called 'the Fife's class'". *Nada* raced mainly in Scotland and by 1932 was chosen to represent England in a team of four 6's to race against the American team that included the young Olin Stevens. Moreover, it was no less than Uffa Fox who sailed her as his constant in the development of his modern rig configurations. He wrote of *Nada* in 1932 that "she left Traders weather-bound in Dover & sailed the whole way to Newhaven to windward in 12 hours, passing three-masted schooners who were anchored in Dungeness, sheltering from the strong westerly wind".

Later, she spent time in Northern Ireland & sailed the Shetland Isles and Denmark, prior to being restored by Joe Loughborough in the Hamble, UK in preparation for being shipped to the West Indies. Once here she cruised the Leeward Islands and raced in Antigua during the 80's winning many local races. But like all romantic wooden-boat stories, she ended up ashore and lay derelict for a time.

In 1990 when the boatbuilder Andrew Robinson first came to Antigua with his bag of tools, he explored the island extensively and found and recognised the by-then dishevelled *Nada*. "On first seeing her, it is hard not to fall in love with her" he recalls, "she is a truly remarkable design from possibly the most artistic designer that ever lived, and she represents the pinnacle of his career". She was then owned by a 93 year old Australian boatbuilder who was still working - but not on *Nada*. Eventually, Andrew persuaded local hotelier Paul Deeth to buy her and employ him to restore her! So it was on that symbolic Easter morning, she was taken by road down to The Inn at English Harbour. Hurricane Luis followed by hurricane Georges caused

further damage and meant added delays on the start of the project. Eventually Deeth handed *Nada* over to Andrew and in 1999, Andrew obtained copies of the original Fife plans from Fairlie Restorations and lofted her out, full size, in the Nicholson's Powder Magazine in English Harbour. By this time Woodstock Boatbuilders was established with a workforce of over twenty people and their own growing premises.

Work commenced on the boat but the increasing success of the business once again halted the project. And it was during this time that the hotel changed hands and tragically she suffered extensive damage from a wayward bulldozer. And all that was left of the original boat was the lead keel, a bronze fitting and a piece of deadwood.

These surviving parts remained at Woodstock along with materials he had been hoarding for the project for over 15 years (including some beautiful cedar planking from 25' bulks that had been seasoning in Antigua for over 30 yrs!) until in July of 2005 when Andrew and his team once again started the restoration.

The philosophy behind the restoration was to build a competitive racing yacht, entirely faithful to Fife's original lines, using materials and techniques that have been perfected over the past seventy years, complying with the Six Metre Classic Class Rules & Lloyds specifications. In Andrew's words; *"The design genius of a previous millennium; the best of today's construction techniques and a rig and sail wardrobe that represents the thinking of tomorrow's designers"*.

Every component of this restoration had to comply with the stringent building and weight restrictions that must be followed for *Nada* to regain her 6-Metre certification allowing her to compete against the hundreds of other yachts of the Class worldwide.

Technical consultation and rig design was supplied by Ian Howlett, naval architect, the long standing chairman of the technical committee of the British International Six Metre Association, (BISMA). The rig itself was built by Allspars, Plymouth, UK - Andy Postle, an expert in 6M rigging, restoration and racing. The extensive wardrobe of Twaron D4 sails were built by Robbie Doyle.

Michael Coddington, Project Manager at Woodstock explains: *"Purists may say that strengthening *Nada* with a sheath of veneer and introducing plywood ringframes to support a modern rig of rod, carbon, Spectra, and alloy is defiling the boat and the memory of Fife. Normally I would agree, but in *Nada's* case, with her history of rig development under Uffa Fox taken together with the whole spirit of the 6-Metre Class being one of racing beautiful boats on the edge of physical possibility, I actually believe that Fife would approve of our efforts to bring *Nada* back under the Third Rule, regain her certification, and compete against other 6 Metres worldwide"*.

On 13 April, she was launched in all her glory with a dedication by Lisa Nicholson and in the presence of the Antigua's Prime Minister, the Honourable Baldwin Spencer.

In Antigua Classic Regatta, *Nada* collected no less than four winning trophies. She was sold in May to Peter Harrison, founder of the GBR Challenge for the last America's Cup and owner of the 115ft Farr-designed ketch *Sojana*. He intends to race her in Antigua again and then ship her over for the metre class centenary regatta and six metre world

championships in Cowes, Isle of Wight, July 2007 then later summer regattas in the Mediterranean before bringing her back once again to winter in Antigua.

Andrew's goal is to have an active racing fleet of both restored originals and new builds based at the Antigua Yacht Club in English Harbour. Currently an investor is being sought to have *1928 Susette* Nada's long lost sister restored. She has recently been discovered in a similarly derelict condition in the UK, and is possibly the last Fife 6 Metre yet to be restored.
