

Tuesday night DBSC racing concludes!

Tuesday night racing for Fireballs closes as it began!

The last DBSC Tuesday Night Race of the 2012 season took place this week and finished as it began with a win for Noel Butler and Stephen Oram. I have been fortunate enough to sail a significant number of the Tuesday nights races this season and I can't recall a night when they didn't win.

In very odd wind circumstances they had to come from behind to secure their win. With a flooding tide in Scotsman's Bay, the question was whether there was enough wind on the seaward side of the course to justify going left rather than right on the first beat. Neil Colin & Margaret Casey pioneered the inshore route, while Louis Smyth and Cormac Bradley took the seaward option. The other seven Fireballs were also inshore of the latter combination but at the first windward mark there wasn't a great deal of distance between the boats led round by Colin/Casey, Butler/Oram, Mick Creighton & Joe O'Reilly, Cariosa Power & Marie Barry, Smyth/Bradley, Frank Miller & Grattan Donnelly, Louise McKenna & Hermine O'Keefe, Jonathan Nicholson & Viv Besselar and Dave Coleman & Glenn Fisher.

The first reach was tight which led everyone to believe that the second reach would be broader but that didn't prove to be the case and scrambled spinnaker drops after the gybe mark saw a restructuring of the pecking order with Colin/Casey going for a swim, Butler & Oram taking over the lead followed by Creighton/O'Reilly and Miller/Donnelly who had got ahead of Smyth/Bradley. Thereafter, the pack chased Butler/Oram but to no avail.

Behind them, on the second beat, Creighton, Miller, Smyth & McKenna went slightly different ways but managed to cross each other at different stages of the beat in wind conditions that made tacking angles redundant. Smyth again played the outside line but found that he had lost distance to Miller but closed on Creighton and McKenna had closed on him.

Going down the sausage, Smyth was sandwiched between McKenna (inshore) and Creighton (offshore) while Miller and Butler sailed away in their own wind and water.

At the second rounding of the leeward mark, 3rd, 4th and 5th rounded bow to transom. After varying hitches inshore, all three boats tacked onto starboard to go up the beat.

The first reach of the second triangle was a bit broader than the first time round, even though Butler/Oram led the fleet more upwind than was necessary to get to the gybe mark. Miller/Oram were still secure in 2nd, followed by Creighton/O'Reilly, McKenna/O'Keefe and Smyth/Bradley. Despite the easing of the first reach, the second reach was again too tight for spinnakers.

As they weren't registered for DBSC, Creighton/O'Reilly didn't go through the finish line to leave the finishing order as; Butler/Oram, Miller/Donnelly, McKenna/O'Keefe, Smyth/Bradley, Colin/Casey.

Getting to Rome - without a container!

Taking Fireballs to Rome – without a container!

When the dates for the Fireball Europeans were declared, the thoughts of the Irish Class Association turned to how we could get the boats to the venue, Bracciano, NW of Rome in Italy. In the past, where the venues were further away and not accessible by road (Barbados for example), there is little choice but to put the boats in a container and wave them goodbye for a protracted period – delivery – two week regatta – return. In some instances, it was even a case of driving to the return delivery port and towing the boats home from there – Barbados in 2010 required collection of the boats in Portsmouth in the UK!

However, in a year when the Europeans regatta venue was accessible by road (Rome) and the UK fleet was hosting their 50th Birthday Nationals of the Class, the thoughts turned to towing the boats to the venues. Dublin to Rome, however, is not a road trip undertaken lightly and the advice was that it would take the guts of three days to drive there.....and another three days to drive back. And Penzance isn't exactly a short hop from Ireland either! Once the level of interest in going to Rome was determined it became obvious that the logistics would be best served by using multiple boat trailers. The problem was that we didn't have enough of them for the numbers who had by this stage declared their interest in going to Bracciano.

The answer was to have a SINGLE multi-boat trailer! The Irish National Sailing School, in the person of Irish Fireballer, Kenny Rumball (IRL 15058), who is also the Manager of the School, offered to make a multi-boat trailer available for the Rome trip, which could also be used for Penzance (UK Nationals)and potentially Slovenia in 2013. And the prospect of using the trailer for other classes to take boats to venues within driving distance offered an additional commercial incentive to the INSS for committing to the Rome trip.

While we all speculated as to how the INSS would solve the challenge – by purchasing a trailer or fabricating it - Kenny and his team went away to consider their options. Questions about the status of the trailer were answered with assurances that everything was on track for the proposed departure date of the week before Bracciano. As good as his word, the trailer arrived in Dun Laoghaire harbour on the designated evening for loading!

Boats had been stripped out of sails and rudders, masts had their spreaders removed, straps, ropes and padding were organised by individual boats owners, under and over covers were fitted but trolleys were scheduled to be left behind. Nearly three hours later (not bad for first time of use) eight Irish Fireballs had been secured to the trailer and a ninth was sitting atop the towing vehicle, a Toyota Land Cruiser, purchased specifically for the trip.

Less than a week later, in the very pleasant heat of Bracciano, the Irish team re-assembled to reclaim their boats. INSS' multi-boat trailer attracted much attention with the Swiss in particular intrigued by what they saw. The Italians too were very impressed! Some of the British competitors in Bracciano had also made use of a multi-boat trailer commercial operation to get their boats to Rome and after the regatta these boats would be delivered to Penzance for their Nationals (11th – 17th August).

It was great to have so many Irish boats at the Europeans and the trailer meant that boats would only be gone for slightly longer than the duration of the regatta. At the end of the Europeans, the boats were reloaded onto the trailer and departed the club at around 21:00 Friday evening. By 17:30 the following Monday evening, in Dun Laoghaire harbour, the boats had arrived back and some of them sailed the following evening's DBSC race.

En route to Bracciano, the driving was done by Kenny and Andy Boyle. On the way home, Conor Kinsella travelled with Kenny and our collective thanks need to go to these individuals for the time they spent on the road. With a multi-boat trailer now available for road-accessible regattas, the prospect of higher Irish participation levels at international Fireball events is significantly increased and at the time of writing, there is already considerable interest in going to Slovenia in 2013.

This investment by the Irish National Sailing School seems ready to make immediate returns on their outlay!

Photos by Hermine O'Keefe.

Irish Team in Bracciano: Kenny Rumball & Conor Kinsella, Simon McGrotty & Ruairi Grimes, Noel Butler & Stephen Oram, Luke Malcolm & Shane Diviney, Niall McGrotty & Neil Cramer, Ed & Ed Butler, Louise McKenna & Hermine O'Keefe, Mary Chambers & Brenda Maguire, Louis Smyth & Cormac Bradley.

Fireball Nationals 2012 - Howth Yacht Club.

Consistency brings reward!

The Irish Fireball Nationals, sailed this past Friday, Saturday, Sunday were certainly not short-changed in terms of available wind. Friday saw heavy conditions for the three races of the day with the fleet being taken off the water between races 1 and 2. Saturday saw a tired fleet come ashore after four races in challenging conditions but by Sunday the breeze had eased to produce what were described as "champagne conditions" for the last day.

Friday's results were a key element to the overall situation and being able to finish all three races was a significant building block in getting to a podium finish. Simon McGrotty & Darragh Dineen produced the best performance of the day to take two race wins, either side of a race win by Noel Butler and Stephen Oram. This left the Skerries combination with a 1pt lead on the Friday evening over Butler/Oram. Third place overall saw Ed Butler (Jnr) teamed up with recently selected Irish 470 Olympian crew, Scott Flannagan, three points adrift of 2nd place.

Saturday saw four races sailed and Butler/Oram put together a solid performance relative to their close rivals to effectively tie up the regatta with a day to spare. Counting a 2, 1, 3, 1 suite of finishes they opened up a huge gap on their rivals, most of whom carried at least one bad result on the day. The next best result for the day was that of Kenneth Rumball and David Moran who put together a 4, 3, 1 5 followed by Neil Spain and Francis Rowan who scored a 3, 4, 4, 10. However, in terms of total points this left them 20 points adrift of the leaders.

With the first discard coming into play on Saturday evening, the actual situation was as follows;

Irish Fireball Nationals (Sat evening)	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Tot
1 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	10pts
2 Kenneth Rumball & David Moran	2	1	5	3	4	3	1	5 21pts
3 Neil Spain & Francis Rowan	4	4	4	3	4	4	10	23pts

Wind conditions eased for Sunday's proceedings and the final three races of the series were completed. Butler & Oram sailed the last day even though they effectively had the regatta sewn up.

McGrotty/Dineen came back from a dreadful Saturday (2 x 21pts) to post a 1, 4. Rumball/Moran scored a 4, 2 while Spain/Rowan's regatta came unstuck with a 21 in the last race, which undid all the good work of a 3rd in Race 8. Butler/Oram had a 9 and another first to close out the event with some authority. The nine was to become one of their discards, the other being a third.

Irish Fireball Nationals; Final Overall	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	Tot
1 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	9	1	11pts
2 Simon McGrotty & Darragh Dineen	1	3	1	2	1	5	4	1	4	19pts
3 Kenneth Rumball & David Moran	2	1	5	3	4	3	1	5	4	2 22pts
4 Neil Spain & Francis Rowan	4	4	4	3	4	4	10	3	21	26pts
5 Ed Butler (Jnr) & Scott Flannagan	2	2	5	1	2	1	6	2	1	5 6 27pts

The Silver fleet was won by Dave Coleman and Glen Fisher in 17th, followed by Mary Chambers and Brenda McGuire. The ladies applied discretion rather than valour to Friday's racing but finished all the remaining races of the weekend. Dave and Glen had a difficult day on Saturday but had other results just off the top ten. The Classic Trophy was not awarded.

Noel Butler offered the following additional oversight of the regatta;

Quite a few combinations flirted with the front end of the fleet and led races at different times. Frank Miller and Grattan Donnelly sailed a very consistent Friday to lie in 5th overall and their "counted" results showed a consistency that saw them finish in 8th overall. Michael Ennis and Marie Barry also led a race, lost the lead and regained it. Niall McGrotty & Neil Creamer, scored a 2nd to Butler/Oram in Race 7 and Noel admitted they only just caught the former combination in time. In some of the heavier conditions Michael Murphy and Alex Voye got their chance at the front and they secured two 2nd places in their set of results. In Race 8 an OCS was signalled and Butler/Oram and Butler/Flannagan went back. It afforded the former combination an opportunity to see how an Olympic-qualified crew works the boat around the course. Butler/Flannagan eventually got back to 5th in this particular race. From a rare trip through the fleet, as a consequence of going back at the start, Noel also confirmed that there was competition all around the course with individual battles going on right through the fleet.

The testing conditions over the three days put a premium on keeping boats together and among the casualties of the regatta were Luke Malcolm who suffered an exploding rudder stock and Louis Smyth who broke a jib halyard. Butler/Oram suffered no such trauma and were lending equipment to other competitors to keep them on the water. Meticulous maintenance does have its place in Fireball racing!

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<http://www.fotosail.com/events/2012fireballnationals/>

Race management by Harry Gallagher and Scorie Walls was of a very high standard, as their reputation dictates! Races were started promptly after the last finisher of the previous race and while the fleet was brought ashore on Friday for a period, when the wind eased they were sent back out again to race. All starts were under Blue Peter conditions and the start lines were set up with a laser-spotter for accuracy of length and at the request of the Class, a variable weather mark was used. This is a set up that was encountered at the European Championships in the Czech Republic in 2010. A second weather mark is available to the RO if the wind changes so that a true beat can be set for each windward leg. The RO has the independence to reset the weather mark without having to wait for the last boat to go around the old weather mark before it can be lifted. The irony of this weekend is that the breeze was reasonably steady so the benefit of this mechanism was not as significant as might be the case.

While the turnout of only 20 boats is of concern, there were some mitigating circumstances. Barry Hurley, who has been crewing with Andy Boyle, was racing single-handed around Rockall as part of Galway's festivities for the Volvo Ocean race. Andy Boyle himself was racing in the Round Ireland Race which had started the previous weekend and Brian Flahive was also in double-handed mode, finishing the Round Ireland.

Howth have been very anxious to host another Fireball event after their very successful hosting of our Leinsters in 2010. The turnout of 20 boats would have represented a shortfall in their expectations, considering that the greater Dublin Area is our base. The sole travellers were Michael Murphy & Alex Voye from Waterford/Limerick, and Michael Ennis who came down from N.Ireland to sail with Marie Barry. Regrettably, other Fireball centres were conspicuous by their absence.

In the current climate is the idea of a 3-day event stretching the resources too far? In which case it will be interesting to review the UK entry to their 50th Nationals in August in Penzance! And if a Dublin based Nationals only generates 20 boats, how do we contemplate taking the event outside the greater Dublin Area.

Domestically, the emphasis moves away from our provincial events and towards domestic sailing with the George regatta this Saturday (7th July). Two weeks later, Irish boats will be in Rome for the Fireball Europeans.

Good turn out for Fireball Ulsters!

New father Francis Rowan returned to the folds of the Irish Fireball fleet this past weekend, teaming up with Neil Spain to win the 2012 Irish Fireball Ulster Championships, hosted by East Down Yacht Club. While their winning margin of five points was comfortable by Sunday afternoon, relative to the one-point margin by which they led on Saturday night, the reality was that this regatta was very much a case of snakes and ladders, for everyone, and a watching brief had to be kept on Messrs Butler & Oram and Butler & Kinsella who were one and two points adrift on Saturday night respectively.

Sunday's two races were trying affairs with a wide range of interpretations on how to sail the beats. The problem we faced was that the forecast for the Irish Sea didn't manifest itself on the coastal waters of Strangford Lough. While Met Eireann was suggesting easterlies of F2 – 4 for Sunday morning, the micro-climate within the SW corner of Strangford was providing light and variable winds flicking from WNW to NNW, meaning we were sailing towards a windward shore. On both races the fleet was split, almost evenly between those going right and those going left. Some even tried the middle and saw lots of boats ahead of them at the weather mark as a consequence. Sailing the Olympic configuration, the beats were very challenging, the reaches became tighter than they were ever meant to be and Fireballs sailed down the second reach on opposing gybes to take "perceived advantage" of win and tide.

Spain/Rowan took Race 5 on Sunday morning with Butler/Oram doing yet another "Houdini act" to finish second. One of the features of their performance this weekend has been their consistent ability to get out of poor positions on the first beat to finish inside the top 3. Rumball/Moran were third, allowing them to leapfrog Ed Butler & Connor Kinsella into third overall, the latter combination finishing fourth.

Thus, Spain/Rowan had a two-point cushion in first place. A long period of time elapsed before race Officer Roy Edwards was able to get the final start underway. The wind had gone light again and flicked left and right by 10 - 15°. Yet again the fleet was undecided as to which way to go, left, right or middle! It seemed left paid, but the first reach was very tight and the leading boats struggled to get to the gybe mark with spinnakers. The leading bunch was populated by Niall McGrotty & Neil Creamer, Neil Colin & Margaret Casey, Simon McGrotty & Ruairi Grimes, Spain/Rowan, Michael Ennis & Marie Barry, Connor & James Clancy and a little off the pace, Messrs Butler and Oram. The downwind leg of the sausage started off as a tight reach and became the run it was supposed to be further down the leg. The subsequent beat was a "one-tack" strategy and the first beat of the second triangle was a very tight two sail fetch. By which time Messrs McGrotty & Creamer had gained an enormous lead (given the conditions). In second place were Neil Colin & Margaret Casey, Spain/Rowan had the comfort of third place with Butler/Oram down in 6th. Rumball/Moran who had tried to work the middle on the first beat, and paid heavily for the effort, worked their way up to 11th, ultimately their discard, but enough to give them third overall.

Saturday's racing had consisted of four races – two trapezoids and two Olympics. Due to the wind direction the course was set in the area between East Down Yacht Club and Killyleagh, with the weather mark (No.1) in open water, but the outside loop of the trapezoid parallel and close to the shore.

The first race was a Team Skerries, father and son benefit as Niall McGrotty and Simon McGrotty, with their respective crews of Neil Creamer & Ruairi Grimes taking first and second. Rumball & Moran finished third. Race 2 saw a new combination, Ed Butler (Jnr) and Connor Kinsella, take the race win from Neil Colin and Margaret Casey, with Butler/Oram in third.

Races 3 & 4 went the way of Spain/Rowan with Butler/Oram scoring a 2, 3, Rumball & Moran a 3, 5 and Butler/Kinsella a DNF, 4. This left the pecking order as Spain/Rowan, Butler/Oram, Butler/Kinsella, Rumball/Moran, McGrotty/Creamer and McGrotty/Grimes. A point separated 1 to 2, 2 to 3, 3 to 4, with 2 points separating 4th to 5th and 6th with the McGrottys tied on 12 points.

A requirement to pass through the start/finish line on the upwind legs of the Olympic courses caught out quite a few people this weekend and there was a liberal sprinkling of DNFs on the final results sheet. Due to the vagaries of the wind, some people also had unusually large numbers on their score cards – Spain/Rowan discarded an 11th, Rumball & Moran the same, Colin/Casey got rid of a DNF, but counted a 15, Michael Murphy & Alex Voye shed a 17, Louise McKenna & Hermine O'Keefe a 18, Louis Smyth & Cormac Bradley a 17, while Owen Laverty & Ed Butler shed one DNF but carried another.

Aside from the overall and race winners, there were some other combinations who gave a good account of themselves, Connor and James Clancy finished 7th overall with all their results inside the top ten. Gavin Doyle and Richard Franck had four top ten finishes on their way to 9th overall. And newcomers (of a sort), Ed Butler and Connor Kinsella finished 6th with a race win, three 4ths and a 13th.

The Silver Fleet was a home affair with John Orr and Karen Caughey from EDYC winning from Brian O'Neil & Don Howes, with Mary Chambers and Brenda McGuire of Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club in third. Orr and Caughey also won the Classics prize.

The venue was shared with the Wayfarers who were sailing their National Championships, a repeat of the arrangement on our first visit to EDYC in 2010. East Down was hospitality personified! The welcome was warm and genuine. They provided a self-serve buffet of packed sandwiches, fruit, chocolate bars and a variety of cold drinks to allow competitors to put their own lunch together. On the Saturday night there was a BBQ and live band, with the evening a social event for members and competitors alike. On the Sunday, soup and rolls were available in advance of the prize-giving.

Gordon Jess, of Wayfarer fame and persuasion, was responsible for the organising of the event from a club perspective (as well as being a competitor) and he and his team are to be congratulated on a great weekend. Race Officer Roy Edwards had his work cut out for him with the elements, but he manfully stuck to his task to get six races in.

Irish Fireball Ulster Championships; East Down Yacht Club R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 Nett

1 Neil Spain & Francis Rowan National Yacht Club IRL 14996 5 11 1 1 1 3 11

2 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club IRL 15061 7 3 2 3 2 6 16

3 Kenneth Rumball & Dave Moran Irish National Sailing Club IRL 15058 3 4 3 5 3 11 18

Silver Fleet

17 John Orr & Karen Caughey East Down Yacht Club IRL 14546 13 18 14 13 15 14 69

18 Brian O'Neill & Don Howes East Down Yacht Club IRL 14595 16 17 16 18 DNF 10 77

19 Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club IRL 14865 15 16 18 20 DNF DNF 90

(Prizegiving photos by Terry Ingles)

(Race course photos by Roy Connolly)

Dun Laoghaire & Ulsters.

In the alternate years to the 4-day Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta (even-numbered years), the four Dun Laoghaire clubs each host a one day regatta. The first of the 2012 DL regattas was hosted by Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club on the Saturday of the June Bank Holiday and saw eight Fireballs contest the event.

Two races were sailed, with winds of 8 – 10 knots in sunny conditions opening proceedings. Neil Colin with apprentice crew Joe led the first race initially but ultimately gave way to Frank Miller who in turn ceded the lead and the win to Neil Spain and Francis Rowan.

The wind strength and the weather conditions deteriorated for the second race. 5 knots was the approximate wind speed and the sunshine gave way to grey conditions and finally rain.

Neil Spain and Louis Smyth contested the positions at the front of the fleet, with the former winning out to take the regatta in overall terms. By virtue of scoring the 2nd place in the 2nd race Louis secured second overall leaving Frank Miller in third overall.

This regatta also saw the long awaited Dublin Bay debut of Ms. Aine O’Gara, who came to our attention when she joined the Fireball family in Sligo for International Week and the World Championships. Never having sailed Fireballs before, but having gained trapeze experience in catamarans, she crewed for the 2nd Australian in Sligo, Patrick Hughes. For the DMYC Regatta Aine crewed with Mick Creighton.

As the wind died so the rain set in.....as forecast! The Fireballers congregated in the DMYC bar afterwards to conduct the traditional post-mortem on proceedings.

The Fireball focus reverts to the provincial regatta scene with the Ulsters or Northern Championships being hosted by East Down Yacht Club over the weekend of 16th/17th June. We enjoyed superb hospitality there when we there 2 years ago, with the Club organizing a midsummer barbecue and a live band to coincide with our visit and that of the Wayfarers. Since then their Fireball fleet has grown to four boats. We also enjoyed good weather and an uncluttered racing area. Brian O’Neill will be anxious to see a good turnout at this event.

We will be sailing with the Wayfarers again this year!

First Regatta Honours go to Butler & Oram!

Nineteen Fireballs made the trip to Killaloe for the season opening Munster Championships of the 2012 Irish Fireball regatta season. As one of the few locations outside the greater Dublin area to have a resident Fireball fleet, the venue has been a permanent fixture on the Fireball circuit for quite some time. In addition to their easy access to the racing area, the host Fireballers always make their visitors very welcome and the attraction of the area with its scenery and the immediacy of Killaloe and its eating and drinking locations normally means there is a good turn-out.

This year, in an effort to promote the older Fireballs, the Munsters were chosen to host a Classic Fireball Regatta. In the rules for the event, a Classic was deemed to be a boat with a sail number lower than 14600. Four of these appeared with Neil Colin & Margaret Casey foregoing their Winder to add to the numbers.

On Saturday, four races were sailed in dull misty conditions with winds around the 8 – 10kts range. It had started slightly breezier but dropped off as the day wore on. This introduced some significant shifts.

Noel Butler & Stephen Oram dominated Day 1 winning the first three races while behind them the other podium places were being shared out between Barry McCartin & Finbar Bradley, Neil Spain & Hugh Butler, Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly and Niall McGrotty & Neil Kramer. McCartin/Bradley took the fourth win of the day, followed home by Spain/Butler with Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley pushing Butler/Oram into an uncharacteristic 4th.

Thus after a four race programme, the overnight situation was as follows;

1st Noel Butler & Stephen Oram 3pts
2nd Barry McCartin & Finbar Bradley 6pts
3rd Neil Spain & Hugh Butler 8pts

In the Classic Challenge, Neil Colin & Margaret Casey were comfortably ahead of Jim Ryan & David Tanner, while Cariosa Power and Marie Barry were in control of the Silver fleet.

On Day 2, the wind had eased off again with marginal trapezing being the order of the day. McCartin/Bradley continued where they had left off the evening before by taking Race 5, followed by Colin/Casey and Spain/Butler. Regatta leaders Butler/Oram slumped to a seventh, most unusual territory for them in an Irish context! However, in Race 6, order was restored when Butler/Oram won comfortably from McCartin/Bradley, Spain/Butler, McGrotty/Kramer & Lavery/Butler. This left a finishing order of;

1st Noel Butler Stephen Oram 15061 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 8pts
2nd Barry McCartin Finbar Bradley 14820 University College Dublin SC 9pts
3rd Neil Spain Hugh Butler 150** Howth Yacht Club 14pts
4th Niall McGrotty Neil Kramer 14938 Skerries Sailing Club 23pts
5th Louis Smyth Joe O'Reilly 15007 Coal Harbour 26pts
Classic Neil Colin Margaret Casey 14330 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 40pts
Silver Cariosa Power Marie Barry 14854 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 51pts

Class Chairman Neil Colin, in his report to this correspondent advised that the event was a great success and was run very well. In particular, he noted that Race Officer, Geoff O'Donoghue, from neighbouring club, Lough Derg Yacht Club, ran an exceptional regatta with races started promptly and all under the regime of the "Blue Peter".

Three boats from Killaloe contested the regatta while the event also saw Michael Murphy from Waterford contest the event with his UL-based crew Alex Voye to make their seasonal debut.

Nationals - Call to arms!

The Irish Fireball Nationals which are being hosted this year by Howth Yacht Club are six weeks away. Scheduled for the last Friday and Saturday of June and the first Sunday of July, June 29/30 and 1 July, this nine race series goes to the northern side of Dublin Bay following their very successful hosting of the Leinster Championships in 2010. Howth are very enthusiastic about the idea of hosting us and after our last visit, there is a fledgling fleet starting to take shape there - Luke Malcolm & Shane Diviney have recently been joined by a second Fireball.

We had hoped to be joined by some of the UK fleet, and invitations to that effect had been issued on the basis of an offer of accommodation from the Howth organisers. We have one UK helm who has visited us quite regularly since the Barbados Worlds, Hannah Showell, who expressed an interest in doing the event, but she would need to team up with an Irish crew and secure the use of an Irish boat.

An additional complication to UK participation is that one of their most popular regattas, at Shoreham, has been re-scheduled for the very same weekend of our Nationals. UKFA have only just learnt of the revised date in April.

The offer of organised accommodation from Howth is thus extended to those who are travelling from outside the immediate Dublin area. Emmet Dalton of HYC is co-ordinating this arrangement but it will only be extended to bona-fide travellers.

My understanding is that one of our favourite Race Officers, Harry Gallagher, will be running the racing side of things. Howth's advantage over other Dublin Bay venues is that they are largely unaffected by commercial vessels passing through their race area. The principal advantage for the Dublin based fleets of Skerries, Clontarf and Dun Laoghaire is the ease of getting to and from Howth.

For those who are intent on going to Rome (Bracciano) for the Europeans, the prospect of nine races in three days is surely ideal preparation for the continental regatta which will take place less than 3 weeks later.

Howth are anxious to get an idea of numbers for the event, so if you haven't put pen to paper so to speak, can you please consider doing so early to maximise the time they have to make the plans necessary to host us.

Regatta season beckons.

The first regatta of the year, the Munsters, takes place in Killaloe in three weeks time - 19/20 May. Killaloe has always been a popular venue for our regattas as it is a very convenient two hours drive (approx) for the Dublin-based fleet, virtually all of which is on motorway or dual-carriageway.

We are also hoping to have a good turnout for the Classics - a regatta within a regatta for some of the older sail number boats.

Killaloe are great hosts and are always delighted to host this event as it swells the numbers of Fireballs sailing at their venue. Access to the race area is easy and the town offers good choices for food and drink on the Saturday night.

At the Adam Bowers weekend last weekend there was some indication of the form of some of the people one would expect to see at the top end of the fleet this year. Though not a full turn-out by any means and with two or three significant absentees, the "form horses" at this early stage of the season would appear to be Messrs Butler & Oram and Simon McGrotty with a new crew.

Bowers conducts his annual coaching clinic!

Perennial primer for Irish Fireball regatta season!

The perennial primer for the Irish Fireball regatta season took place last weekend, 21/22 April in Dun Laoghaire when Adam Bowers brought his expertise, good humour and unique style of coaching to an eleven-boat audience.

Blessed with significant wind for the first time in his trips to Ireland (the fourth, I think), Adam was able to concentrate on additional aspects of racing that the presence of breeze facilitated.

As ever, there was a significant focus on starting with classroom emphasis on controlling position in the end stages of the countdown to the start and a demand that boats be accelerated off the start line rather than accelerating. The consequence of this requirement, Adam stated, was the early achievement of “gorgeousness” within a short distance of crossing the start line.

The achievement of “gorgeousness” has also to be matched with a significant injection of “WUMPETA” – energy and earnestness in the execution of boat and sail trim and helming to get the boat travelling at its fastest in the shortest possible time.

The recurrent theme of proper rounding of the leeward mark is another Bowers “hobby-horse”. Adam perceives the leeward mark as a gateway to escaping from the boats immediately around you who have been tardy in their mark rounding. The quests for clean water and clean wind and the commensurate rudder movements at the leeward mark were drummed into his audience.

Held over two days in strong winds on the Saturday and more moderate wind on the Sunday, the session concluded with the “Porsche Cup” – a three race, no discard series, triangle-sausage-triangle course, sailed under black-flag conditions with a five-minute countdown.

Noel Butler & Stephen Oram successfully defended their trophy, with Luke Malcolm & Shane Diviney second and Frank Miller & Susie Mulligan third.

Thanks are due to Marie Barry (Treasurer) who made the arrangements for getting Adam across from the UK, Marie and Stephen Oram who hosted Adam and rib drivers and assistants in the persons of Neil Colin (Chairman), Mick Creighton, Alistair Court, Hermine O’Keefe and others.

Mediterranean-like conditions for close of Frostbites.

Mediterranean conditions for the last Sunday of the Frostbites!

A favourable window of glorious weather which started earlier in the week extended into the weekend and the final Sunday of the Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club's Frostbite Series. The author of these reports was yet again unable to sail the event but acquired enough information to post this report when he went to pick up results for this column.

Blue skies and a slight haze on the horizon were more symptomatic on a Sunday in June/July before a sea-breeze kicks in than the second last Sunday of March when we all lost an hour in bed due to the clocks going forward. Still nobody could possibly have begrudged the loss of an hour in bed in lieu of the day that evolved. Crowds thronged the piers of Dun Laoghaire as everyone took advantage of the sunshine and the daylight addition to the evening. The ice-cream vendors were in danger of running out of stock such were the crowds.

The Fireball fleet responded to the weather and the close of the series, one assumes, by mustering 17 boats for the day. Two races were sailed outside the harbour in what I believe were near perfect conditions.....apart from an adverse tide that necessitated a slightly conservative approach to the start.

Race 1 was started under a General Recall while Race 2 prompted three black flags when people who should know better failed to restart when they were adjudged over the line. A healthy South-Easterly of 15knots (or thereabouts) gave the fleet just about perfect conditions and with the added bonus of being outside the harbour is sea-swells it must have seemed as if summer had come early. Indeed, Valerie Kinnear, part of the committee boat team told me that it was quite lumpy outside.

I can't give you a blow by blow account but I can tell you that one of our most intense, but friendly rivalries, (intense on the water, friendly off it) in the fleet ended as "honours-even" over the day's two races. Mick Creighton & Frank Cassidy are great mates who enjoy nothing more than baiting each other on the water and then adjourning to a nearby watering hole to conduct a post-mortem on proceedings. Yesterday, Mick was crewed by Ciaran Hickey, no shrinking violet himself, while Frank would have had his long-standing crew John Hudson on board. All four have contributed to the camaraderie of the Irish Fireball fleet and have provided the rest of us with lots of entertainment along the way.

At the "business end" of the day's proceedings, the race wins were shared between Neil Spain & Hugh Butler (14807) and Owen Laverty & Ed Butler (14990). Behind them, the runaway leaders in the series, Messrs Butler & Oram and Rumball & Moran scored two 3rds and two 2nds respectively, probably more content to watch each other than worry too much about race wins. Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley also had a consistent day with 2 x 4ths, while the 5th places went to Laverty/Butler in Race 1 and Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly in Race 2.

DMYC Frostbites; Series 2: Sunday 25th March

Race 1 Race 2

- 1 Neil Spain & Hugh Butler Owen Laverty & Ed Butler
- 2 Kenny Rumball & Dave Moran Kenny Rumball & Dave Moran
- 3 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram Noel Butler & Stephen Oram
- 4 Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley
- 5 Owen Laverty & Ed Butler Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly

The days' mugs went to Dave Coleman and Glen Fisher in Race 1 and Cearbhaill Daly & crew in the second!

The day's events concluded not only the second series but the Frostbite season, though in truth, the weather over the period has been exceptionally good. We didn't lose any races to severe cold weather as we have done in recent years and any races lost to strong (or once, no wind) were recovered by having two races on the subsequent Sunday.

DMYC Frostbites, Series 2 Overall. [12 races, 3 Discards.]

- 1 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram 15061 National Yacht Club & Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 13pts
- 2 Kenny Rumball & Dave Moran 15058 Irish National Sailing Club 14pts
- 3 Neil Colin & Margaret Casey 14775 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 45pts
- 4 Owen Laverty & Ed Butler 14990 Royal St. George Yacht Club 49pts
- 5 Alistair Court & Gordon Syme 14706 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 49pts

6 Neil Spain/John Chambers & Hugh Butler 14807 Royal St. George Yacht Club 51pts
7 Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley 14934 Royal Irish Yacht Club 63pts
8 Louise McKenna &
Hermine O'Keefe 14691 Royal St. George Yacht Club 74pts
9 Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly/
Cormac Bradley 15007 Coal Harbour 77pts
10 Cariosa Power & Marie Barry 14854 National Yacht Club & Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club. 94pts

DMYC Frostbites, Series 1 & 2 Overall [20 Races, 5 Discards.]

1 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram 15061 National Yacht Club &
Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 20pts
2 Kenny Rumball & Dave Moran 15058 Irish National Sailing Club 24pts
3 Neil Spain/John Chambers & Hugh Butler 14807 Royal St. George Yacht Club 69pts
4 Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley 14934 Royal Irish Yacht Club 73pts
5 Neil Colin & Margaret Casey 14775 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 76pts
6 Alistair Court & Gordon Syme 14706 Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club 80pts
7 Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly/
Cormac Bradley 15007 Coal Harbour 107pts
8 Louise McKenna &
Hermine O'Keefe 14691 Royal St. George Yacht Club 109pts
9 Luke Malcolm & Shane Divinney 14790 Howth Yacht Club 160pts
10 Mick Creighton & Paul McDermott/
Ciaran Hickey 14937 Irish Sailing Association 161pts

Reporting consistently on a set of races such as this can't be done single-handedly and I would like to thank, in this concluding report, Louis Smyth, Neil Colin, Noel Butler, Kenny Rumball, Hugh Butler and Mick Creighton for providing me with information for the column.

Thanks must also go to Olivier Proveur and his team for providing the racing over the winter. The Frostbites may be a staple of the Irish Fireball scene but it still needs volunteers to run it every Sunday.

Classics Regatta

SAME BOAT! SAME EXCITING CONDITIONS! WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The boat above, sailed by Ian Pinnell and Daniel Cripps, won the 1994 Worlds in Durban South Africa. The boat below was sailed by Tom Gillard & Sam Brearey to the World title in 2012, in Mandurah, Western Australia.

So, they are both World Championship-winning boats to the same design, but separated by 18 years.....which makes GBR 14415 a Classic Fireball.

This year the Irish Fireball Association intends to promote the Classic Fireballs in our midst by starting the regatta season with a dedicated regatta for them at Killaloe on the weekend of May 19th & 20th, coincident with the Munsters. Additionally, the best placed "Classic" will pick up a "Classic" award at the Nationals to be held in Howth at the end of June.

For the purposes of this regatta, we are defining the Classic Fireballs as those boats with a sail number earlier than 14600.

We hope that by having a dedicated Classic Regatta for the older Fireballs we might give encouragement to the owners of these beautiful wooden boats to come and join the regatta circuit on a season long basis.

The Association wants to promote and encourage the Classic fleet using with two approaches;

- Encourage owners of "Classic " boats to attend regattas and participate locally and regionally
- Encourage crews with newer boats to beg or borrow a "Classic" with the view to tuning it up to current standards, thereby demonstrating to its owners that their boat is competitive

The focus on "Classic" is also intended to encourage lower budget completion and make the class more affordable for potential competitors.

Get those wooden beauties going.....

Nationals Online Entry goes live!

The 2012 Irish Fireball Nationals will be hosted by Howth Yacht Club over the last Friday and Saturday of June and the first Sunday of July – 29th, 30th June & 1st July.

This 3-day event will see nine (9) races being sailed under the race management of one of Ireland's leading clubs which has a very impressive recent record of hosting international events:- the Etchells Worlds in 2010 and the J24 Europeans in 2011, together with a host of regional and national events encompassing dinghies and keelboats.

In 2012, in addition to the Fireball Nationals at the end of June Howth will also run the Irish Cruiser Racing Association Nationals over three days at the end of May. These are just two of some seventeen regional or National events that they will host in 2012.

Situated on the northern perimeter of Dublin Bay, but "round the corner" from Dublin Bay, racing for the Nationals will be on a sea-course where there is very little interference from commercial traffic. The club boasts a sizeable marina, a substantial clubhouse that has its own restaurant and bar and a marina/sailing office that has full-time staff. It enjoys easy access from Dublin Airport and the ferry terminals (10 miles) and in 2010 hosted an exceptionally well run Leinster (regional) Championships for the Irish Fireball fleet.

Its race management team boasts one International Race Officer and several National Race Officers, one of whom is expected to do the "Fireball gig".

The timing of the event has been changed twice to accommodate various Fireball fixtures in the Irish/UK/European Fireball scene, namely the Fireball Europeans in Rome in July (21 – 27th), the 50th UK Nationals (11-17th August) and a number of domestic events in Ireland.

In 2011, we canvassed for commitment to this event from the UK Fireball fleet and got some encouraging responses – one of the main attractions being the concept of multiple races on each day – as opposed to the current UK model of a race a day.

The website for online entries has already gone live, so this article is a very early invitation to come and join us for what we expect to be a very well run event.

Website Address: <http://www.hyc.ie/openevents12/default.asp?ename=fireball>

Fireball Newsletter

Fireball Committee Meeting
22 January 2012, DMYC.
(Pre-Frostbite Race)

The first Fireball Committee meeting of the year took place on 22nd January 2012 before the Frostbite Race of the same day.

Events.

Training: Adam Bowers will be giving a training session on 21/22 April 2012 in the DMYC. It is proposed that there will be a day of training followed by more formalized racing on the second day for Adam's Porsche Cup.

Silver Fleet Training: A Silver Fleet training workshop will be hosted by Clontarf Yacht & Boat Club on 28th April, with Damien Bracken as principal instructor. The idea is that this will be a day long session, starting with a classroom session in the morning, followed by an on-the-water coaching session that will conclude with a race in Clontarf (tide sensitive). Back ashore there will be a debriefing session. CYBC is aiming this at their domestic fleet but will welcome other participants from the Silver fleet.

We are also proposing to have a crew training session for the Silver Fleet in Dun Laoghaire on 13th May, (venue to be confirmed).

Regattas.

There are regatta dates up on the Irish Fireball website, but after a "blip" with the Ulster's, scheduled for East Down Yacht Club, we can report that this event is back on track for the 16/17th June. As we did before, we will be sharing the venue with the Wayfarers.

Other dates that you should bear in mind are as follows;

Munster's: Killaloe SC, May 19th & 20th. (Revised date)

DMYC Regatta: 2nd June.*

National Yacht Club Regatta: June 23rd

Round Ireland: 24th June.

Nationals: June 29th, 30th, July 1st, Howth Yacht Club.

Royal Irish Regatta: July 1st

RStGYC Regatta: July 7th.

European Championships: Bracciano, outside Rome, Italy, July 21st – 27th.

UK Nationals: Penzance, August 11 – 17th.

Leinsters: Clontarf Yacht & Boat Club, September 15 & 16th.

* In the absence of a Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta this year (held every second year), the four waterfront clubs in Dun Laoghaire each hold a one-day regatta.

The Europeans in Bracciano are likely to be a big event given that the Worlds for 2012 have already been sailed – in Mandurah, outside Perth in Western Australia. The committee is currently investigating options to get boats to Rome by mass transport.

The UK Nationals will be used to celebrate the 50th birthday of the Class as it is their 50th Nationals (We have a couple of years to go before we can celebrate 50 years of Fireballing in Ireland). Group transport for this event is also under review.

You will see from the list above that the Open Championship does not yet have a venue or a date. You will also note that there are no domestic "Fireball" events in Ireland in July and August. We have looked at how these voids might be filled and are looking at a number of venues to see if they can accommodate us.

Classic Boats.

The Killaloe event will also incorporate a Classic Event for which there will be a dedicated prize. A "Classic" is defined as a non-white boat. We think that the sail numbers would thus be earlier than 14600. So if you are in possession of or want to resurrect a Fireball with a lower sail number than 14600, this is your event. We believe that this would appeal to all those club Fireballers who feel that their boats aren't competitive enough against the Winders. Your chance has

come.....!!!!!!

Alternatively, it might encourage more accomplished owners to borrow an older boat, which they could tune up and sort out, to encourage the original owner to sail on a regular basis, especially if it delivered good results.

Silver Fleet.

The committee is anxious to see improved participation of the Silver Fleet in events and following the discussion at the last AGM, has agreed the following;

- The competitors in the Silver Fleet will be nominated at the start of the season - so competitors know where they stand and who their opposition is, thus promoting interest and rivalry.
- Competitors remain in the Silver Fleet, unless there is "significant" improvement in their performances, such as regularly winning races at regional events, at the Committee's sole discretion.
- Only the winners of the Silver Fleet receive a prize at events – this will reduce costs to the host club, but add prominence to the winning of the Silver Fleet at the event.
- An "opt-out" offer will be made to all those who are initially declared to be in the Silver Fleet.
- The award is "Helm-based".
- All new fleet members will automatically go into the Gold Fleet.
- The fleet ranking will be reviewed annually.

The Committee will publish a ranking list for the complete fleet one month before the commencement of the regatta season. During this one-month period, people will be able to ask for a review of their status within the ranking system.

Crew List.

So often do we hear of people looking for crews or helms that we have decided that a new crew list should be put together! While using the Yahoo E-mail group does alert people to needs and wants, it is rather spontaneous and is inclined to be used as a last minute effort to get a body for a specific event. If we are to grow the number of people sailing Fireballs, we need to be more proactive at recruiting members and pairing people off where opportunities arise. It is suggested that a Coordinator might assist "pairing" with this individual undertaking to collect contact details for potential crew which would then be made available to helms/owners on request, but not generally published. Cormac Bradley will be contacting people in this regard shortly.

ISA EGM.

The Irish Sailing Association (ISA) is holding an EGM on Saturday 11th February in the Royal Marine Hotel at 11:00 to present the findings of a review group that was appointed to see how the Joint Membership Scheme (JMS) could be overhauled to provide a more effective funding mechanism for the ISA from the clubs.

As things now stand a portion of your individual subscription to your own club is paid by the club to the ISA. There are various parameters that determine what this payment should be – club size, type of membership, category of club etc, etc.

As an affiliated Class to the ISA we are entitled to be present at the EGM and to cast a vote. Your home club will also have a vote.

There are whispers to the effect that the Clubs are not too enamoured with the ISA's proposals but Saturday's meeting will provide the proof of the pudding!

International Events.

With the Australian Worlds completed (with a British victory) in January, the next Worlds will be in Slovenia in September 2013. Thereafter, the roster may be Mauritius (2014) and the UK (2015).

It was suggested at this first committee meeting of the year, that we should consider the idea of hosting a Europeans in the near future.

Fireball International.

As previously reported elsewhere, Canadian Joe Jospe (15024) has succeeded Francois Schluchter (SUI) as Fireball Commodore. Other changes to the FI Executive include the retirement of Chris Payne as Rear-Commodore Australia and his succession by Ben Schulz (AUS 15062) who was in Sligo for our Worlds.

Another former Commodore of FI, Russell Thorne has been appointed to the Executive as the UKFA Representative. Due to the size of their domestic fleet, the UKFA have their own representative of the Executive.

Other FI Executive members are Maja Suter (SUI), Rear Commodore Europe, Tom Egli (CAN 15024), Technical Representative, Peter Colebank, Rear-Commodore Africa, Andrew Davies, Secretary and Penny Gibbs (UK), Treasurer.

Irish Fireballers celebrate.

New Irish Fireball Class Chairman, Neil Colin (14775), was Master of Ceremonies when the Irish Fireball fleet celebrated the (regatta) season just concluded with its prize-giving dinner hosted by Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club on Friday evening 25th November.

In addition to awarding medals for the season long Travellers' Trophy, the occasion sees the Class award its own prizes to recognize excellence and contribution to the class.

An attendance of approximately 50 people was bolstered when some of the past members of the class joined us. Martin and Matt Treadwell had an extended period of success in the Irish Fireball fleet but terminated their participation in the fleet around 2002. Frank Cassidy, with wife Gemma doesn't get to sail his Fireball regularly these days, as sailing other boats gets in the way, but both were there. Another past Fireballer, whose nickname is Shergar – suggesting he was fast on the water – added to the numbers of ex-Fireballers who joined the current fleet for the celebration.

The prizes were awarded after dinner;

Travellers' Trophy.

Silver Fleet.

3rd: Cariosa Power & Marie Barry, DMYC, IRL 14854.

2nd: Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion, Skerries Sailing Club, IRL 14939.

1st: Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire, DMYC, IRL 14865.

Gold Fleet.

3rd: Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore, Irish National Sailing School, IRL 15058.

2nd: Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella, Cushendall SBC & UCDSC, IRL 14820.

1st: Noel Butler & Stephen Oram, National Yacht Club, IRL 15061.

Class Awards.

Ladies Helm.

1st placed Lady Helm in Travellers' Trophy.

Diane Kissane, Howth Yacht Club, IRL 14939, 11th Overall.

Asterix Trophy.

(For a significant/outstanding contribution to the Class.)

Louis Smyth:- for his contribution to the Sligo Worlds, including; liaison with Fireball International, the Irish Class Association and Sligo Yacht Club, collecting, hosting and transporting visitors to Ireland for the planning and regatta phases of the event and collecting boats from the UK for international competitors.

India Trophy

(Most Improved)

Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella, IRL 14820:- For finishing 2nd overall in the season-long Travellers' Trophy.

Captain's Prize.

(Awarded at the discretion of the Dun Laoghaire Class Captain.)

This year's award was made by Owen Laverty who has just stood down as DL Class Captain.

Cormac Bradley:- Owen made the award in recognition of Cormac's contribution to the Irish Fireball Class, highlighting his efforts to organize events over the years, his reporting of Fireball events and the manner in which he carried out these activities – without complaint!

The Liam Bradley Trophy.

(This is a new trophy, donated by Immediate Past Chairman, Cormac Bradley, in honour of his late father.)

Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella:- Awarded in recognition of the fact that they are a new combination in Fireballs who have enjoyed spectacular success in a very short period (finishing 2nd overall in the Travellers' Trophy). Cormac alluded to the fact that they sailed four of the five regattas, sailed consistently (finished in the top 3 in the four events), in an accomplished manner without protests and in a style that made it entertaining and challenging to race against them. Cormac emphasized the need to recognize new talent coming into the fleet as this would be the future life-blood of the class.

Class News.

Neil Colin is the new Chairman of the Irish Fireball Class.

Neil took over the helm at the Class AGM in Dunmore East in late September, having offered his services a few weeks previously. Neil has been a staunch supporter of the Class in the past few years and has given of his time to multiple training sessions for the Silver fleet. In that capacity he has been ably supported by his crew Margaret Casey, who retains her position as Class Secretary.

Marie Barry also continues in her role as Class Treasurer while Louise McKenna comes aboard as the Dun Laoghaire Class Captain. Frank Miller has undertaken the role of Trophy Secretary, while we have just been advised that Hugh Johnson is also returning to the committee as Clontarf Class Captain. Luke Malcolm, sailing out of Howth, also joins the committee as there is favourable speculation that a new fleet might be established there.

Brian O'Neil will continue to represent the interests of the northern fleet and he too is hopeful that some new blood might be introduced to East Down Yacht Club which has been adopted as the home of the Ulster Fireballs.

Stephen Oram will continue as Webmaster, while Cormac Bradley will provide liaison with Fireball International and the other NCAs.

At its first meeting on 6th November, the new committee set out its stall for the 2012 season where there are already some dates available for your diaries. The Nationals will be hosted by Howth Yacht Club on June 29/30 and 1 July. This avoids the Europeans in July, 20 - 27th in Bracciano, outside Rome, and the UK Nationals in August. Next year the UKFA will host their 50th Nationals in Cornwall - not just the 50th birthday of the Class, but their actual 50th Nationals regatta.

The schedule will also take in Killaloe in May and East Down Yacht Club in August. Dates for these two are yet to be fixed and one venue has yet to be finalised.

Season closes in Dunmore East as it opened in Carlingford.

The domestic regatta season of the Irish Fireball Class closed in Dunmore East as it had opened in Carlingford in May, with a single day of racing. Race Officer Harry Gallagher had indicated as early as Friday morning that there was a distinct possibility that sailing would not be possible on Sunday and consequently took the decision to sail four races on Saturday.

Arriving at the club in time for the Class AGM, the consensus was that an excellent day's racing had been had by the 18-boat fleet, with four good races completed in excellent conditions and very tight racings.

This is manifested by the overall results which show that the winners had a 1pt margin over second place and second place had a similar 1pt margin over third.

Race wins were shared by Kenny Rumball & Teddy Byrne and Noel Butler & Stephen Oram, but Messrs McCartin & Kinsella, the 2011 National Champions, were obviously snapping at everyone's heels with a 3, 2,2,2 series of results.

Rumball & Butler took alternate race wins with Butler getting the first one. A 1,3,1,3 scorecard at the close of Saturday saw Butler/Oram at the top of the standings with McCartin/Kinsella and Rumball/Byrne tied second overall a point astern. The pecking order thereafter was Clancy/Rowan, Boyle/Flahive, Smyth/O'Reilly, Murphy/Voye. But with a seven point gap between tied second and fourth, in reality the regatta would come down to the top three on Sunday.

My information is that RO Harry Gallagher's initial assessment of conditions on Sunday morning, observed from a rib on the race course, was that racing could proceed. However, by the time the committee boat got onto station the conditions had deteriorated and the few combinations who had gone out were happy to retire to the shore where boats were packed up early in driving rain and cold conditions.

With the single discard coming into play the order at the top of the fleet was changed in that Rumball/Byrne were able to get rid of a 5th, whereas Butler/Oram were only able to shed a 3rd, giving the former the title by a single point margin.

Thus the five regattas of the year have each been won by a different combination.

Butler/Oram took 2nd overall, with McCartin/Kinsella 3rd overall.

In the Silver Fleet, Luke Malcolm & Shane Diviney saw a four point margin over the next Silver Fleet boat on Saturday night shrink to a 1pt margin in the overall standings, but this was enough to win this division and claim 10th overall. Second in the Silver Fleet was Cariosa Power & Marie Barry, followed by Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion.

1 Kenneth Rumball Teddy Byrne 2 1 5 1 4pts
2 Noel Butler Stephen Oram 1 3 1 3 5pts
3 Barry McCartin Conor Kinsella 3 2 2 2 6pts
4 Conor Clancy Francis Rowan 4 5 3 4 11pts
5 Andrew Boyle Brian Flahive 8 4 4 7 15pts

10 Luke Malcolm Shane Diviney 12 9 12 10 31pts
12 Cariosa Power Marie Barry 9 11 15 12 32pts
15 Ben Malone Matthew Bennion 15 14 15 13 41pts

This regatta also concludes the season-long Travellers' Trophy which sees Noel Butler & Stephen Oram double their margin over Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella to two points at the top of the log. Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore/Teddy Byrne go into third overall, followed by Clancy/Rowan, Boyle/Flahive, Smyth/O'Reilly/Bradley, Bracken/O'Hara, Miller/Donnelly, McGrotty/Grimes & Colin/Casey. Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire win the Silver Fleet, evidence of even further progress after attending the training sessions last season. Second and third in the Silver Fleet go to Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion and Cariosa Power & Marie Barry respectively.

The Dunmore East regatta had an international flavour with participation from Hannah Showell, from the UK sailing with Martina Michels, who flew in from Germany for the regatta, having relocated there from Ireland earlier this summer.

Regrettably, the regatta was conspicuous by the absence of representatives of the Skerries and Clontarf fleets and there

was a sole representative from Killaloe.

At the AGM, the need to rebuild these fleets was identified as a challenge for the Class Association by incoming Chairman Neil Colin. The AGM also discussed the operation of the Silver Fleet where numbers have been falling in recent events despite the fact that we have seen new combinations coming into the fleet.

With the regatta season concluded the focus will now turn to the Frostbites in Dun Laoghaire Harbour. These will get underway in November and run through to March.

An individual interpretation of the Fireball Council Meeting
Tuesday 21st June, Sligo Yacht Club.
by Cormac Bradley, Irish Fireball Class Chairman.

Present: Francois Schluchter (Commodore), Andrew Davies (Secretary), Tom Egli (Technical Representative), Maja Suter (Rear Commodore Europe). Joe Jospe (representing Rear Commodore America), Ben Schulz (Representing Rear Commodore Australasia), Tim Saunders (UKFA), Guy Tipton (Canada), John Manson (Shetlands), Jean-Francois Nouvelle (France), Roger Leeman (Switzerland), Jaroslav Werner (Czech Republic), Cormac Bradley (Ireland & South Africa [by proxy]), Martin Peculier (France), Owen Laverty (Ireland).

1. Commodore's Report.

FS advised that the minutes of the 2010 Council Meeting in Barbados were now available but have also been posted on the FI website.

Despite the difficulties presented by the volcanic ash to air travel, Barbados had been a very successful event and the Barbadian Government has seen a significant return on their investment in the event.

The 2010 Europeans attracted a 50-boat fleet to the Czech Republic in September/October.

FS has taken over as the webmaster of the FI website and undertook to get more information posted to the site.

The Fireball finances are "comfortable" but there are outstanding statements. The 2009 statements of income and expenditure have just been finalized and will be reviewed by the FI Executive before publication. Thereafter the 2010 statements will be prepared and reviewed. It is hoped to have a new constitution in place by the end of the year.

2. Secretary's Report.

AD reported that the latest sail number worldwide is 15070 which is at this regatta.

He has now taken over the issuing of plaques to new-build boats.

The prospective South African builder has suffered a significant setback when his premises and moulds were completely destroyed in a fire that started in the adjoining property. It is proposed to try and get the Singapore moulds to South Africa to give the SA builder assistance in getting the project back on track. [\(It may be that a plug will go to Cape Town rather than the actual moulds, but FI have committed themselves to giving assistance to this boat-building initiative.\)](#)

AD had attended the full meeting of ISAF with whom we enjoy a very good relationship.

The Class is benefitting from world-wide coverage, particularly with the Barbadian initiative which has led to another warm island destination approaching the Class to host a World Championship – Mauritius.

[Fireball Council Meeting; Sligo 2011](#)

These notes/minutes are an individual record/interpretation of the meeting – they are not intended to replace or compromise any

official record emanating from Fireball International.

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Fireball Ireland and FI had worked well together to deliver this Championship.

AD has been to the 2012 venue of Mandurah and reported that his meetings there had been successful.

The 2012 Europeans have been confirmed for Bracciano in the third week of July (20 – 27th).

3. Treasurer (Penny Gibbs – comments by FS in her absence).

The 2009 statements indicate that we were in a comfortable position with either a zero balance or a marginal debt (of the order of £200.00).

Our income and expenditure has been adversely affected by the weakness of Sterling and in addition we have seen our expenses go up and our income drop.

Negotiations with the Norris Brothers who have the copyright on the Fireball, have been ongoing with respect to the distribution of the plaque income and a new plan for the distribution of these funds – to ISAF, Fireball International and the Norris Brothers has been proposed. This will require a new contract to be negotiated.

4. Technical Representative's Report.

Winder are pursuing the idea of building a new mould that will be more appropriate for the infusion method of construction.

David Hall had been registered as a new licensed Fireball builder.

The XSP project in Singapore has stalled and there is now a plan to get those moulds across to South Africa to Russell Burgess who had his premises and moulds destroyed in a fire.

(Refer AD report.)

An application to build boats in plywood had been received from the UK.

Dave White in North America is still building Fireballs as a school woodworking initiative.

The regulation of NCA nominated measurers is still a problem. In essence we don't know who our measurers are and therefore it is very difficult to keep track of who is measuring what until it comes to an International Championship.

There is a proposal to adopt the button system for sail measurement whereby the buttons are supplied to NCAs/measurers for free and payment for the button is made after the sail has been measured, using a system like PayPal. This proposal will also have to be teased out with the sailmakers and is likely to be a subject for the Open Forum as well.

A review of the measurement methods for the jibs is required as the current method set out by ISAF doesn't work. It is proposed to introduce additional measurement points in the jib over and above the ISAF requirement.

The proposal to have two windows – with the same cumulative area as the single window – has been adopted.

5. Rear-Commodores' Reports.

Fireball Council Meeting; Sligo 2011

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official record emanating from Fireball International.

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5.1 Europe.

The Czech fleet is showing strong growth (as evidenced at the turnout at the 2010 Europeans).

The Europeans Championships had been a good event.

The 2011 Grand National will be hosted by Switzerland and the 2012 version will go to the Czech Republic.

Bracciano is confirmed as the venue for the 2012 Europeans.

5.2 Australasia.

The Australian fleet is growing in advance of the Worlds in Mandurah in December.

A small fleet is also developing in New Zealand.

From a zero base, 9 Fireballs are now based in Mandurah with 2 more boats due to be added to the fleet imminently with the prospect of a further 2 boats after that.

The South Australian fleet is in good health, however, the east coast fleets are suffering from the effects of the marketing of the Olympic Classes.

5.3 America.

The Canadian Class Association has developed a new constitution and have introduced a new model of membership which is not tied to boat ownership.

The fleet on Canada's West Coast is struggling but the East Coast Fleet is healthy.

Oregon, in western USA, is growing as a new centre for Fireballs.

The "Mid-Winters" in Florida had been a good event.

The three boats "imported" to Barbados for the 2010 Worlds are now in the USA – with Clay Poulson who is here [SUI15063] owning one of them.

6. General.

6.1 International Events.

While there are some locations under consideration for the 2013 Worlds, the venues post 2013 are less certain.

For the 2013 Worlds Holland, Spain, Greece and Portugal are under consideration.

An approach has been made by the Mauritian Government to host the Worlds, possibly as early as 2014, based on the success of the Barbados event. However, we are in the very early days of discussions.

The 2015 Worlds are proposed for Tampa/Davis Island.

The North American Championships in 2012 are scheduled for Columbia, in Oregon.

The 2011 Grand National will be hosted by Val Andre in August.

6.2 Fireball International website.

It was generally agreed that the current FI website does not project the sort of image we require. The dedicated Worlds website has also experienced problems with control of content and accessibility.

Currently we have three different websites – FI, Worlds and Europeans – and it was proposed that a major overhaul of the websites is required. There was support for the idea of having a solitary hierarchical website in FI's name with links to the event websites and NCA websites contained within the master site.

Fireball Council Meeting; Sligo 2011

These notes/minutes are an individual record/interpretation of the meeting – they are not intended to replace or compromise any

official record emanating from Fireball International.

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Tim Saunders explained that the UK website had undergone a major refurbishment with the addition of "Twitter" and "Facebook" accounts to get news and information out more effectively. An amount of £2,000 had been spent on the exercise.

Messrs Schulz, Saunders and Laverty were prepared to form a working group to propose some ideas to revamp the FI website and Tim S produced a "mock-up" of how a revamped website might look.

6.3 Format of International Events.

Particularly in the current economic environment, it was felt that we need to review the time required to contest the Worlds when the preceding week is not a Europeans (or significant regional event). An idea to reduce the "International Week" regatta to three days of racing was proposed. Measuring could then take place on the weekend in advance of the Worlds, which would remain a five day event (with a scheduled lay-day).

(At the Open Forum Meeting, the format of the Worlds was also the subject of enthusiastic discussion.)

6.4 Database of Members.

Ben Schulz recommended that we look at the idea of developing a database of members. Currently there are different models for NCA membership across the Fireball community with the result that we don't have an accurate picture of who our clientele is. Developing a proper database would allow us to a) know the actual size of the international Fireball community, b) be more effective in our communications with our members, c) improve the management of our income from membership. This initiative could be undertaken in tandem with the development of the new website.

6.5 Commodore Fireball International.

The nomination process for the position of Commodore has been extended in view of the fact that only one nomination has been received – Joe Jospe from Canada. It was felt that in the interests of transparency an extended opportunity for other candidates to be considered was warranted. Some NCA representatives were unaware that a nomination process had been initiated.

The nomination period has thus been extended to 31st July 2011.

Maja Suter, in acknowledging that this would be Francois' last Council meeting, proposed a vote of thanks for his time and effort on behalf of the Class.

In response, Francois spoke of the pleasure the position had brought him, together with the new friendships that had been forged the World over.

New Champions for the Class!

New Champions in the Irish Fireball fleet!

Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella, representing Cushendall Sailing Club, Royal St. George Yacht Club and UCD Sailing Club are the 2011 Irish National Fireball Champions after another commanding performance on the water. However, this time their talent wasn't directed at getting small numbers on their score card but rather making sure that having gone into the overall lead that they didn't lose it.

At the end of Day 2 McCartin & Kinsella were tied on 11pts with Simon McGrotty & Ruairi Grimes of Skerries Sailing Club, with the latter combination on top of the pile and they had a twelve point cushion on the next two boats who were both tied on 23pts – Mike Murphy & Alex Voye & Noel Butler & Stephen Oram.

The forecast, which has been the subject of much debate at this regatta (and many others no doubt) was mixed. XC Weather had been predicting 9knots with gusts of 12 – 14. The Sea Area forecast from Met Eireann had talked about Force 4 to 5, but at least they were agreed on direction – WNW! While both had the direction right, the Race Management Team of Neil Murphy, Richard Kissane, Stuart Kinnear and others had enough material to work with to set two exceptionally good Olympic courses to exploit the breeze and relatively flat waters in the inner reaches of Dublin Bay. While there was more than 9knots on the water, there wasn't the Force 4 to 5 either, though some of the breeze brought in with the rain squalls was providing a handful and the top reach of the last triangle of the 2nd Olympic was sailed two-sailed by most.

In Race 7 of the series, McCartin/Kinsella scored a 3 to McGrotty/Grimes's 5th – fifteen – love to McCartin/Kinsella. The race was won by Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore who were not having their best regatta, followed by Clancy/Rowan. In 4th was Butler/Oram, with Creighton/Bradley in 6th – the stronger breeze being to the latter's advantage.

In Race 8, McGrotty/Grimes fell back to 6th, a position that most combinations would envy, but not helpful in the penultimate race of a series that was getting very tight at the top. McCartin/Kinsella scored a 4th – thirty –love to the series' leaders! Rumball/Moore won again, but their charge to the front of the fleet was going to be a case of too little, too late. Butler/Oram took 2nd, Kissane/Bradley 3rd, Creighton/Bradley 5th.

The leading pack at the front of the third race, a windward/leeward was made up of the usual suspects with two notable absentees – McCartin/Kinsella & McGrotty/Grimes. The former decided that they were going to be ultraconservative and sail their opposition down the fleet to make doubly sure of their win – a bit like Nadal serving an ace on Championship Point – just to put a final "classy" nail in the coffin.

While the Championship leaders played around at the back of the fleet, scoring an 18th and 13th respectively, Butler/Oram, Kissane/Bradley, Clancy/Rowan, Rumball/Moore and Creighton/Bradley hared around the course. All of these got a finish, except for Rumball/Moore who were ruled OCS, thus finishing off their event in much the same way as it had started – in disappointment.

The consequence of Butler/Oram's late charge on Day 3 is that they closed the overnight gap to a single point. Rumball/Moore's two wins propelled them from 10th to 7th, Clancy/Rowan's 2, 8, 3, saw them jump from 6th to 4th, while Creighton/Bradley, with a 6, 5, 4 went from 12th to 9th at the expense of Miller/Donnelly, Bracken/O'Hara & McGrotty/Cramer.

The Silver fleet, of course has a competition within the competition and on Saturday evening Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion held a 10pt advantage over Ian O'Gorman & Glen Fisher. While both had been timed out of Friday's third race, Malone/Bennion produced a "tight" set of results of 13, 14, 16 and two 17ths to O'Gorman/Fisher's 15, two 16ths, 17 and 23rd. In third was Peter Armstrong and Peter Collins of Sligo Yacht Club sailing the wooden Fireball that made its debut at the Sligo Worlds (15060).

Malone/Bennion more than doubled their lead over O'Gorman/Fisher in Sunday's racing to score a comfortable win. Armstrong/Collins were comfortably third.

Pos Crew R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8 R9 Pts

1 Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella 1 3 3 3 1 3 3 4 18 17

2 Simon McGrotty & Ruairi Grimes 3 2 4 1 5 1 5 6 13 21

3 Noel Butler & Stephen Oram 5 8 27 4 4 2 4 2 1 22
 4 Conor Clancy & Francis Rowan 27 10 1 10 8 5 2 8 3 37
 5 Diana Kissane & Finbarr Bradley 8 1 27 7 9 8 9 3 2 38
 6 Mike Murphy & Alex Voye 2 5 27 2 2 12 8 7 14 38
 7 Kenneth Rumball & Seamus Moore 27 6 27 5 6 7 1 1 22 48
 8 Andy Boyle & Brian Flahive 13 4 27 12 3 4 7 9 10 49
 9 Michael Creighton & Cormac Bradley 27 9 27 6 14 6 6 5 4 50
 10 Niall McGrotty & Neil Cramer 9 11 2 9 11 11 13 14 8 61
 11 Frank Miller & Grattan Donnelly 7 16 27 11 12 10 15 10 6 71
 12 Louise McKenna & Hermine O'Keefe 6 13 27 27 10 14 17 16 11 87
 13 Gavin Doyle & Richard Franck 15 14 27 13 13 9 16 15 9 88
 14 Damien Bracken & Brian O'Hara 27 7 5 8 7 18 27 27 27 99
 15 Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion 17 17 27 14 16 13 10 18 15 102
 16 Louis Smyth & Joe O'Reilly 4 15 27 27 27 27 14 12 5 104
 17 Jon & Una Evans/Aidan Caulfield 11 19 27 15 14 16 11 19 17 104
 18 Neil Colin & Margaret Casey 14 18 27 27 27 27 12 17 7 122
 19 Ian O'Gorman/Dave Coleman & Glen Fisher 16 23 27 16 17 15 20 21 19 124
 20 Emmet Dalton/Ciaran Hickey & Marie Barry 10 12 27 27 27 27 27 13 16 132
 21 Garrett Connelly/Ciaran Harkin & Hugh Johnson 19 21 27 27 27 27 18 11 12 135
 22 Cearbhall Daly & Mark Browne 20 25 27 17 19 27 21 24 27 153
 23 Peter Armstrong & Peter Collins 27 26 27 27 27 27 19 20 20 166
 24 Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire 12 20 27 27 27 27 27 27 27 167
 25 Catherine Hilliard & Michael Dowd 27 22 27 27 27 27 22 24 27 176
 26 Freddie Stevens & Huw Rees. 18 24 27 27 27 27 27 27 27 177

At the closing prize-giving, thanks were offered to Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club for hosting the event and in particular to Neil Colin and Margaret Casey who in addition to being members of the Fireball Class committee are members of DMYC and were principally involved in organizing the event. They also sacrificed their Saturday sailing to provide rescue cover when there was a problem with resources. Thanks were also afforded to the Race Management Team of Neil Murphy, Stuart Kinnear and Richard Kissane and to Valerie Kinnear who processed the results.

Prizes in the form of "part-vouchers" from P&B, towards a jib, and from North, towards a spinnaker, were awarded to the mid-fleet boat in the Gold and Silver fleets respectively and won by Niall McGrotty & Neil Cramer (jib) and Cearbhall Daly & Mark Browne (spinnaker).

Glass prizes from Dublin Crystal were awarded to the 1-2-3 in both the Gold and Silver fleets.

Fireball Ulsters

Considering there were only two entries in the Inbox of Ballyholme Yacht Club a week before the regatta, the turnout of 19 boats over the weekend of the regatta was quite a turnaround. In truth the regatta was never really in jeopardy as the Class has a reputation of entering late and with this being the second regatta in a month, there was a glitch in getting the appropriate documentation out.

Representatives from Skerries (2), Clontarf (1), Howth (2), East Down Yacht Club (1), Sligo Yacht Club (1) were joined a composite crew from Cushendal Sailing and Boating Club/Royal St. George Yacht Club and eleven boats from Dun Laoghaire.

In times past the Fireball Class were regular visitors to Ballyholme, particularly when they hosted a week-long dinghy regatta, but in the time of this scribe's association with the Irish Fireball Class this has been our first visit. Ballyholme has had a solitary Fireballer in recent times, but unfortunately Denis Findlay lost his struggle with cancer and so he was unable to enjoy the return of the class to this venue on Belfast Lough.

Race Officer Robin Gray, RYA N.Ireland's Race Officer Co-ordinator did the honours over the weekend and enhanced his reputation as an excellent RO with three superb races on Saturday when we enjoyed a sea breeze of 15/16 knots. In addition to good courses we enjoyed sea conditions that gave us excellent surfing conditions and saw a few stories of rogue breaking waves in Saturday's post-mortems. Turnaround times for races were good to the extent that after a solitary black flag start in Race 1, after a General Recall, three hour long races were sailed in beautifully sunny conditions that saw the fleet ashore and showered by 16:30.

I gather that Sunday was not quite as co-operative from a wind perspective as the wind started light and moved around much more. Due to a family bereavement, I missed the day's proceedings but was updated on how the day panned out.

Day 1 was claimed by Simon McGrotty & Ruari Grimes who won races 1 and 3 with good upwind speed on the beat and excellent boat handling off wind, particularly in the tight first reaches of the triangles. The blot on their day 1 record was a fourth place which may have been influenced by a wandering gybe mark which had to be substituted by a rib flying an X Flag. There certainly was the unusual sight of Fireballs beating and tacking towards the gybe mark and McGrotty/Grimes may have lost places here. Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore, Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella and Damien Bracken & Brian O'Hara were able to take advantage by filling the first three places before McGrotty/Grimes finished in fourth.

After three excellent races, the standings were as follows;

1. Simon McGrotty & Ruari Grimes 6pts (1,4,1)
2. Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore 8pts (4,1,3)
3. Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella 10pts (6,2,2)
4. Noel Butler & Stephen Oram 13pts (2,7,4)
5. Louis Smyth & Cormac Bradley 16pts (3,8,5)

The silver fleet was 5-strong for this regatta and included a visitor from the UK. Hannah Showell teamed up with Margaret Casey to provide the third all-female crew of the event and together with Cariosa Power & Marie Barry, Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire, they contested the regatta with Kate Grimes (helm), Martina Michels (crew) and Karen Caughey (crew), the latter three being joined by Nick Malone, Cearbhall Daly and John Orr respectively. Diane Kissane was the sole female outside the Silver fleet, sailing 14939.

What is encouraging for the Irish fleet at this point in time is the influx of young talented sailors into the class. Yes, it may be coincidental with the hosting of the Worlds, but it seems that they are enjoying themselves and there is a camaraderie that is developing among them and with the more "established" members of the fleet. This weekend we were joined by Luke Malcolm & Shane Diviney who bought a Fireball on the back of the Leinsters sailed in their home club of Howth last year. Howth is also scheduled to host the 2012 Nationals and we hope to have a fledgling fleet there by the time we visit next summer.

Barry McCartin has joined the fleet from the Topper Class where he has enjoyed significant success. Diane Kissane has proven her pedigree in Optimists and has been showing a great turn of speed and ability to handle the Fireball in a very short time. There are other young recruits to the class who contested the Worlds in Ben Malone and Ben

Scallan and the hope must be that we can continue to attract this age of competitor to ensure that we remain at the forefront of domestic sailing in Ireland and beyond.

My detail on Sunday's proceedings is based on word of mouth reports from my helm, but I gather that the day's wind wasn't quite as steady as Saturday's. It doesn't seem to have upset the McGrotty/Grimes charge to the title as they bagged another two firsts to give themselves two-thirds of the regatta's race wins. The one that "got away" on Sunday went to Frank Miller and Grattan Donnelly.

Counting all races, for the sake of analysis, Conor Clancy & Francis Rowan won by a healthy margin, counting a 2,2,4 for the day. On Saturday they had a complicated capsized in Race 1 and retired from Races 2 & 3 due to a broken spreader. Thus while they didn't feature overall on Saturday evening their success on Sunday saw them finish 7th overall.

McGrotty/Grimes had the next best daily score of 12 points (1,10,1), the 10th becoming their discard, with Rumball/Moore next best with 5,6,2. Butler/Oram's travails continued with a 4,5,5, for the day which is completely inconsistent with their recent form. Damien Bracken and Brian O'Hara also had a better day with a 8,4,3.

In the Silver Fleet Hannah & Margaret had a three point lead over Cearbhall & Martina at the close of racing on the Saturday evening, with Cariosa & Marie in third place a further three points adrift. Cariosa & Marie won the second day with two finishes just outside the top ten and an 18th to Hannah/Margaret's 11,12, DNF to leapfrog Cearbhall/Martina into 2nd place in the Silver fleet.

As ever with our northern visits, the hospitality of Ballyholme Yacht Club was excellent with a dinner arranged for the Saturday night at which some unfinished business (a prize-giving) from the Open Championships was concluded. The atmosphere in the Club was welcoming and in particular their provision of race results on both Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon was very fast with multiple score sheets being made available.

Robin Gray will definitely be on our wish list for future events, particularly as he ran the regatta exactly as we asked him to. Our thanks also go to Mark Markey, Rear Commodore Sailing who coordinated our visit from a BYC perspective.

The Class now enjoys a month's break until the Nationals which are being hosted by Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club on Dublin Bay over the last Friday/Saturday/Sunday of August, 26 – 28th. Class coordinator for this event, Neil Colin, has secured sponsorship from Pinnell & Bax and the regatta documentation can be found on both the Irish Fireball website and the club website.

The decision to go with a Dublin venue was taken in view of the two-week Worlds regatta in Sligo so that we didn't have to embrace another distance regatta for the Nationals. Additionally, in recent years the Nationals have been hosted outside the capital (Baltimore, Westport (x2), Cork, Fenit, Wicklow) and the feeling was that it was time for them to return.

Pos	Sail No	Crew	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Nett
1	14981	Simon McGrotty & Ruari Grimes	1	4	1	1	10	1	8
2	15058	Kenneth Rumball & Seamus Moore	4	1	3	5	6	2	15
3	14820	Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella	6	2	2	6	3	7	19
4	15061	Noel Butler & Stephen Oram	2	7	4	4	5	5	20
5	14904	Damien Bracken & Brian O'Hara	20	3	6	8	4	3	24
14	14775	Hannah Showell & Margaret Casey	12	13	13	11	12	20	61
15	14854	Cariosa Power & Marie Barry	15	14	15	18	11	11	66
16	14877	Cearbhall Daly & Martina Michels	14	15	12	14	18	13	68

Gluttons for punishment?

Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta
& Fireball Open Championships.

In a move that could be interpreted either as gluttony or madness, a smaller than usual contingent of the Irish Fireball fleet contested the biennial Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta, sailed over four days from Thursday 7th to Sunday 10th July!

The sense of gluttony was due to the fact that the programme was for ten races over 4 days, less than two weeks after the conclusion of the two-week Worlds regatta in Sligo. The sense of madness due to the fact that having sailed for two weeks in Sligo some people were already ready for another ten races in Dun Laoghaire.

The Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta was established in 2005 and has been held every two years since. Despite the gloom and doom associated with Ireland's economy the event this year boasted 420 entries from Class Zero cruiser-racers, to one design classes (J109, Laser SB3s) and onto the dinghy classes – Flying Fifteens, Squibs, Wayfarers, IDRAs, Fireballs, Lasers and Waterwags.

A very low turnout of 8 boats contested the first race of the regatta on Thursday afternoon and enjoyed the best winds of the entire weekend. Blowing twelve to fifteen knots in glorious sunny conditions the only down side was a very lumpy and confused sea which made the reaches and the downwind leg of the sausage very uncomfortable. Despite the small fleet the start was very competitive and up the first beat there was little to chose between the frontrunners who consisted of Diana Kissane, Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley, Conor Clancy & Francis Rowan, Neil Colin & Margaret Casey and Louis Smyth & Cormac Bradley.

Boyle/Hurley took an early bath on the first reach, followed by Diana who went swimming at the gybe mark. This allowed Clancy/Rowan, Smyth/Bradley and Colin/Casey to move to the front. This was the order by the leeward mark, but as the race progressed, Boyle/Hurley got back into the chasing pack and Diana was only just astern.

Clancy/Rowan took the gun in a building breeze, followed by Boyle/Hurley, Smyth/Bradley, Colin/Casey and Diana.

The second race of the day was postponed when the rescue resources became stretched with Wayfarers and IDRAs requiring attention. With the wind building and the tide about to turn, creating a wind against tide scenario on the course, Race Officer Harry Gallagher made the decision to send the fleet home. Later in the four host Dun Laoghaire clubs stories abounded of broken masts, cruisers laid flat with mast tips in the water and the SB3s claiming they had 30+ knots of wind on their course.

Friday provided blue sky sailing conditions but in terms of wind the day was in complete contrast to Thursday in that the wind was very light.

Race wins were shared between Diana (Race 2), Boyle/Hurley (Race 3) and Clancy/Rowan (Race 4). Diana, sailing 14939 was showing exceptional speed around the course and this correspondent thought she had won two of the day's three races, but it turns out there was a more equitable share of race wins.

Wind conditions were light with marginal trapezing the order of the day, but the competition on the water was excellent. Outside the three race winners, other performances of merit were the two 4th put together by Louis McKenna and Hermine O'Keeffe and a 4,5, 3 by Smyth/Bradley. Newcomers Catherine Hillard & Michael Dowd (IRL 14735) were also in the mix in some of the races.

Saturday saw a regatta schedule of another three races with the prospect of a fourth to make up for the loss of Race 2 on the Thursday. Harry Gallagher has less wind to play with than the previous day but he still managed to get his original quota of three races in. However, on the course there was a complete "sea-change" in the results on the water.

The Saturday and Sunday races made up the Open Championships for the Class and saw the addition of a few more Fireballs on the start line. Included among those was the combination that has dominated domestic sailing in Dublin Bay this season and was the best placed Irish boat at the Worlds – Noel Butler & Stephen Oram. Three races, three bullets and the early races by some very significant margins! These two seemed to win effortlessly!

Clancy/Rowan dominated second place on the finishing line, taking all three. Diana, Boyle/Hurley & Damien Bracken & Shane McCarthy shared the third places. This latter combination had a very mixed day with their 3rd the obvious highlight!

Butler/Oram's absence from the Fireball fleet on Thursday & Friday (they sailed other boats on these days) meant that they didn't dent the overall 1-2-3 on the eve of the last day of the regatta, but it was a sterling performance.

Sunday saw a change of location for the Fireballs who had shared the Salthill course with Wayfarers, IDRAs and Lasers on the first three days of the event. Sunday saw the Fireballs and IDRAs share the Scotsman's Bay course with the Waterwags.

Another two races were sailed on a much smaller course, necessitating the last race of the series to be extended to four laps of the Olympic configuration (triangle-sausage-triangle-sausage-finish). At last Butler/Oram were pushed to protect their perfect scoreline but despite the very close attention of initially Clancy/Rowan and then a posse of pursuers in the second race, they held out to add another two first places to the Saturday haul of three. It was enough to take them to 6th overall for the Volvo event, but left them dominating the Open Championships.

At a crowded prize-giving at the Royal St. George Yacht Club on the Sunday afternoon, winners in all classes were rewarded with prizes and had photographs taken for posterity to close what had been an exceptionally good four days of racing. Lights winds yes, but not flukey or flaky!

Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta: Fireball Class.

Pos.	Crew	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	Nett
1	Conor Clancy & Francis. Rowan	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	4	16
2	Diana Kissane	5	1	2	2	3	6	5	6	2	26
3	Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley	2	2	1	7	4	4	3	9	3	26
4	Louis Smyth & Cormac. Bradley	3	4	5	3	6	5	4	3	11	33
5	Neil Colin & Margaret Casey	4	5	6	6	5	8	8	5	9	47
6	Noel Butler & Stephen Oram	15	15	15	15	1	1	1	1	1	50
7	Louise McKenna & H O'Keeffe	6	6	4	4	15	15	15	4	6	60
8	Cearbhall Daly & Martina Michels	7	7	9	9	8	7	9	10	12	66
9	Catherine Hillard & Michael Dowd	8	15	8	8	11	9	7	12	8	71
10	Damien Bracken & Shane McCarthy	15	15	15	15	7	3	10	7	5	77
11	Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire	15	15	7	5	9	11	11	11	10	79
12	Gavin Doyle	15	15	15	15	10	10	6	8	7	86

Fireball Open Championships

Pos	Crew	Sail No.	Club	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total	Nett
1	Noel Butler & Stephen Oram	IRL 15061	National Yacht Club	1	1	1	1	1	5	4
2	Conor Clancy & Francis Rowan	IRL 14996	National Yacht Club	2	2	2	2	4	12	8
3	Andy Boyle & Barry Hurley	IRL 14934	Royal Irish Yacht Club	4	4	3	9	3	23	14
4	Diana Kissane	IRL 14939	Howth Yacht Club	3	6	5	6	2	22	16
5	Louis Smyth & Cormac Bradley	IRL 15007	Coal Harbour Dun Laoghaire	6	5	4	3	11	29	18
6	Damien Bracken & Shane McCarthy	IRL 14904	Clontarf Yacht & Boat Club	7	3	10	7	5	32	22
7	Neil Colin & Margaret Casey	IRL 14775	Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club	5	8	8	5	9	35	26
8	Gavin Doyle	IRL 14765	National Yacht Club	10	10	6	8	7	41	31
9	Cearbhall Daly & Martina Michels	IRL 14877	Coal Harbour Dun Laoghaire	8	7	9	10	12	46	34
10	Catherine Hillard & Michael Dowd	IRL 14735	Royal Cork Yacht Club	11	9	7	12	8	47	35
11	Louise McKenna & Hermine O'Keeffe	IRL 14691	Royal St. George Yacht Club	15	15	15	4	6	55	40
12	Mary Chambers & Brenda McGuire	IRL 14865	Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club	9	11	11	11	11	52	41
13	Marie Barry & A.N.Other	IRL 14854	National Yacht Club	15	15	15	15	15	75	60
13	Luke Malcolm & A.N.Other	IRL 14790	Howth Yacht Club	15	15	15	15	15	75	60

Tim Rush rises to the challenge!

North Sails' Tim Rush challenged,
but delivers the goods!

With a forecast of average winds in the high teens and gusts in excess of 25 knots it would have been very tempting for Tim Rush of North Sails to pick up the phone and cancel his proposed training weekend with the Irish Fireball fleet in Sligo this weekend just past, 21/22 May. However, he didn't and after an early flight to Dublin on the Friday morning he was soon in the company of Neil Colin traversing Ireland to the west coast location for next month's Fireball Worlds.

Having ignored the weather implications for his plans, Tim was left standing in front of his audience on the Saturday morning, wondering how the time could be usefully used. The previous evening's plan to climb the adjacent hill to survey the race area for the Worlds also had to be canned as mist had enveloped the top half of the aforementioned hill. As with his visit to us last year, in Skerries on the east coast, just north of Dublin, Tim impressed his hosts with his interpretation of the weather and how it was manifesting itself in Sligo. The prognosis wasn't good!

Saturday was spent discussing sail shapes, sail development, particularly in the context of North's own development plans, recently evidenced by the first Fireball 3DL mainsail from North baptized in the competitive environment by Martyn Lewis at Castle Cove the previous weekend.

As rigging a boat outside to translate the theory into practice wasn't practical due to a howling SE we brought the laboratory inside, rigging up a Fireball on its side so that Tim could show everyone the influences of kicker, strut, cunningham, rake and rig tension on sail shapes, with the implications for performance in flat and choppy waters and light and breezier conditions.

This also provided an opportunity to impress on everyone the importance of checking out the condition of the boat in advance of a major event, i.e. the Worlds. Attention to the condition of all running rigging, standing rigging, screwed in fittings, rudder fittings and hull condition. From this evolved a discussion on centerboard use with Tim advocating some slightly different ideas to what those present would consider the norm.

Sunday saw the group land-based again and joined by SYC's Brendan Brogan, a winning GP14 National Championships crew, who gave a briefing on the tide patterns with respect to the likely race areas for the Worlds. This included indications of where the mass movement of water could be expected, relevant navigational and landmark references, the impact of local shipping movements relative to the race course (infrequent) and the scenario of a sea-breeze.

The weather may have also influenced the size of Tim's audience, as only seven combinations made it to Sligo. However, there was ample value for those who had made the trip and the interaction with Tim was excellent. By his own admission Tim doesn't compete with an Adam Bower's type presentation as Adam is more interested in the interaction of your sailing with the course and the other competitors (Circle of Awareness), but he provides excellent input to the mechanics of sail management for the different conditions. Every question was dealt with and invariably led to a more detailed discussion of the subject in question and associated issues.

Tim's commitment, in visiting the Irish fleet this weekend, despite the weather forecast, will soon see him held in the same esteem as Adam who has been visiting us that much longer. It is also indicative of North's ambition to get into the Irish Fireball market where they are represented on a full-time basis by Maurice "Prof" O'Connell.

Thanks must also go to Sligo Yacht Club for the use of their premises for the weekend, in particular, Peter Armstrong who was able to let us in and out and secure the premises when we left. Expect to see Peter's home-built Fireball on the start for the Worlds. Peter is also the proprietor of the Rosses Point Guesthouse which is one of the accommodation options for the Fireball Worlds.

As this was the author's first visit to Sligo Yacht Club since their clubhouse was replaced (for the 2006 GP14 Worlds), I can assure you that they have a fabulous facility in a spectacular location. The dry areas of the building are very impressive while the changing facilities are roomy, clean and tidy. Looks like a superb venue for our major regatta in three weeks time!

Neil Colin, Margaret Casey and Louis Smyth also deserve our thanks for their individual contributions to making Tim's visit such a success.

New combination takes the Leinsters!

A new combination of Graeme Grant & Francis Rowan, 14807, took the first domestic title of the Irish Fireball season, the Leinsters, hosted by Carlingford Sailing Club over the weekend of 7/8th May. Rowan of course is a longtime stalwart of the Class but Grant is a newcomer and in fact will be contesting the Fireball scene with Hugh Butler, Rowan being a first day substitute in Carlingford.

Twenty boats made it to the southern shores of Carlingford Lough for the only domestic Fireball regatta this side of the Fireball Worlds, scheduled for the middle two weeks of June in Sligo. The core of the fleet was made up of Dun Laoghaire regulars, but we were joined by Hugh Johnson & Michael Ennis and Damien Bracken & Brian O'Hara sailing under the burgee of Clontarf Yacht & Boat Club, Simon McGrotty & Ruairi Grimes from Skerries and Ian O'Gorman & Glen Tislen representing the host club.

The Irish fleet has seen an investment in new boats, a change of ownership of existing boats and an injection of new and young talent into the fleet. We now have a further two 15,000 series boats, 15058 (Kenny Rumball) and 15061 (Stephen Oram). 14854, 14865 & 14939 have changed hands within the fleet while 14807 and 13820 are new additions to the fleet (presumably from the UK). New combinations in Barry McCartin & Conor Kinsella (14820) and Ben Malone & Matthew Bennion (14939) have been on the Frostbite circuit but this represented their first domestic regatta.

Four races were sailed on the Saturday in grey slightly misty but not unpleasant conditions. The first race of the day was shortened to two laps when the physical size of the course was deemed to be too big. The three subsequent races were sailed to full length. Apart from the first race where Noel Butler & Stephen Oram seemed to steal a march of the rest of the fleet, the racing was quite tight. Race wins were shared between Grant/Rowan and Butler/Oram, but behind them the competition was tight. McCartin/Kinsella had a slightly slow start of 5,10 before claiming two second places to finish the day in third overall at the end of the day's proceedings.

Kenny Rumball & Seamus Moore (15058) were not as convincing off the start line and first beat as they have been in the Frostbites but fought back in at least two races to claim low scoring places. Their 3, 2, 5, & 6th saw them in fourth overall on Saturday evening. McGrotty & Grimes had symmetry to their results 6,4,6,4 to round out the top five. With a 2,1,4,1 Grant & Rowan topped the pile to Butler/Oram's 1,3,1,3.

Silver fleet racing was tight also with 6 boats contesting this division. By the close of business Malone/Bennion had a three point margin on O'Gorman/Tislen who were two points to the better relative to Nicholson/Bessler.

O'Gorman scampered off the water directly into the galley to finalise the preparation of the Saturday night dinner.

Sunday dawned with a marginally different wind direction, sunshine and a forecast of more wind. And so it evolved! The wind built during the morning, the race area was moved northwards and a downwind slalom to the race area beckoned. There was some reticence onshore but 6 boats showed that they meant business. However, even as they hared off to the start area, the wind was continuing to build and when they got there the Race Officer, James Byrne, after onshore consultation determined that conditions were now at the upper end of sensible. A decision to abandon racing was deemed to be the wisest by those who had gone afloat.

Thus the first regatta of the season was prematurely brought to a close. Still everyone had the relative luxury of a discard.

Carlingford Sailing Club were very good hosts and the weather and wind we enjoyed will certainly have undone the image that some Fireballers seem to have, that Carlingford Lough is a fluky place to sail! They have an excellent clubhouse that is well situated to give a panoramic view of the Lough and the backdrop to the sailing waters is exceptional with the Mourne on one side of the Lough and the Cooley Mountains on the other. Access from Dublin is very easy with motorway access most of the way then a short 15-20 minutes drive on a good secondary road.

Bowers doesn't disappoint!

In what is becoming an annual event for the Irish Fireball fleet, Adam Bowers' coaching session this weekend past (16/17 Apr) was a huge success. While no sailing was possible on either morning, due to lack of wind, the afternoon sessions were extended and very busy. The sun shone all weekend and when the wind did arrive it was ideal for what we were trying to achieve. An encouraging feature of the weekend was the number of new, young, talented sailors who attended the training, only some of whom I knew about previously.

Adam's M/O is very interactive and in addition to being an exceptionally good coach, he is entertaining in the way he gets the message across. Of course it helps that he has competed at the highest level himself, but every year there is a freshness to his material. He combines coaching experiences with racing experiences to bring a new slant to the material being discussed and while one element of his coaching weekend remains the same every year - The Posh Cup - there is never a sense of "we have been here before".

This year the new feature was the "gut-buster" race where a windward/leeward course was complemented with a mark half-way up the leg that had to be rounded in an anti-clockwise direction going upwind and downwind. The purpose - to emphasise the importance of initiating the planning of the leg as early as possible.

18 boats took to the water on Sunday and in The Porsche Cup Noel Butler & Stephen Oram won, followed home by Simon McGrotty & Ruari Grimes and Barry McCartan & Connor Kinsella.

As ever these events don't just happen by themselves and thanks must go to Marie Barry for doing the liaison with Adam, Marie and Stephen Oram for hosting Adam and Neil Colin & Margaret Casey who organised ribs from DMYC and drove them during the weekend.

Thanks too, to Royal St. George Yacht Club for hosting the event and to you the participants.