

The following paragraphs describe each of the Thames A Raters in the fleet as at 2006.

Kingfisher 1 (1 = Sail number)

Designed and built in Kingston in 1909 by Alfred Burgoine, one of the two main designers of raters and a towering figure in Thames yachting. Her first owner was W.T. Clarke, then commodore of Thames SC. A very successful boat, and a multiple winner of the prestigious Queen's Cup, she has been consistently fast throughout her career.

Kingfisher – Currently kingfisher

A lengthy and comprehensive rebuild was finally finished in 2001, and she took part in Bourne End 2002, showing flashes of real pace than promise to make her a strong performer. On handicap she was 2nd in the 2002 Queen's Cup, and also scored well in Bourne End 2003.

My Lady Dainty 2

Designed and built in 1911 by Burgoine, a prolific designer responsible for many popular Thames classes, as well as some of the best raters. She was built for A. Field of the Tamesis Club at Teddington. Known to everyone as 'MLD' she has had her share of success, and until recently was one of the most regularly sailed raters.

My Lady Dainty - Currently

Sadly she is now in need of restoration, and her current syndicate are seeking new owners.

Surf 3

Originally called Sea Miaou, Surf was designed in 1908 by the great Linton Hope, the revolutionary yacht designer whose radical lightweight designs were immensely influential throughout Britain.

She was built by Hart, Harden and Co. for FD Lambert and CT Ricardo, two leading figures of Upper Thames SC. She arrived at Thames SC in 1930.

Surf - Currently

Recently one of the most actively sailed raters, she's particularly quick on a fetch or close reach. The year 2001 saw big changes in her syndicate, after Kevin Pearson moved over to Lady Jane. In 2005 Surf changed hands again. She was bought by Dieter Meier, a member of Upper Thames Sailing Club. She has been transferred to Bourne End, where Dieter intends to undertake a restoration programme.

Estelle 4

Designed and built by the very successful Burgoine in 1902 Estelle's first owners were EM Bond and HM Bond of Thames SC. Always a very quick boat Estelle was one of the first to have, in 1938, one of the tall 45ft masts that are now such a feature of the rater.

Estelle - Currently

Estelle has had a lot of success over the years and was one of the most regularly sailed under owner Martin Grounds. Sadly the year 2000 saw Martin announce this would be the last year he sailed Estelle at Bourne End, and the boats immediate future.

Carina 5

Another Burgoine designed and built boat, and one of his very best. Launched in 1902, she was virtually unbeatable in her early years. Her first owner WH Wheeler, later commodore of Thames S.C. was called by the great Linton Hope 'the king of boat sailors. He said of Carina, 'No matter what the weather may be, drifting match or half a gale, Carina is sure to be either first or in the first three

Carina - Currently

Post-WW2 she was a regular winner, but was laid up in recent years. She has now been superbly rebuilt by the Ossie Stewart-led Caprice syndicate. Looking absolutely stunning, she returned to the water in the 2003 Bourne End week, and won both the Scamp Cup and Thames Champions Cup on handicap.

Vanessa 6

Originally called Latona Vanessa was designed and built by Burgoine in 1902. First sailed at Thames S.C. she later moved to Upper Thames SC. She was deliberately built relatively small so that, according to her sail area, she could race either as an 'A' rater or a smaller slower 'B' rater.

Vanessa - Currently

Changes in handicapping make it difficult for her to compete against the larger boats, but after recent work she has been back in the water and sailing fairly regularly, and sometimes showing flashes of real potential.

Saucy Sally 7

Designed by the great Linton Hope and built by Burgoine in 1906 for CP Gosnell of Thames SC. In 1919, when other boats were using gunter rigs, Saucy Sally tried out a Bermuda rig, which was soon copied by others.

It was just one example of the way raters were at the forefront of yachting innovation for so long. A successful boat, but, like Vanessa, designed to operate as an 'A' or smaller 'B' rater, which nowadays makes it hard for her against her bigger sisters.

Saucy Sally - Currently

Now owned by Thames S.C. and laid up.

Ulva 8

The oldest rater in existence. Designed and built in 1898 by Burgoine for T Foster Knowles of Thames Valley SC. When first sailed she was simply unbeatable, and marked a plateau in rater design. Until then design innovations meant raters only lasted a few years before being outdated, but in Ulva various trends reached their natural conclusion. Linton Hope said Ulva was 'one of the best boats ever seen on these waters'.

Ulva - Current

Other later boats could match her, but she was never to be outdated, and remained a formidable performer. Indeed it was from her hull that the mould was taken for the highly successful GRP raters that have given the class a new lease of life. Ulva had been laid up and in poor condition, but was taken on by the indefatigable Caprice syndicate for restoration.

Caprice IV 9

One of the few raters not designed by Burgoine or Linton Hope - and also one of the most successful. Built by Townsend's of Bourne End she was in fact the fourth rater, all called Caprice, designed by her owner FH Jackson. Linton Hope, an Olympic yachting gold medallist, said Jackson, and his partner Marsden, 'would be hard to beat as boat sailors anywhere'. Jackson was no slouch as a designer either, with Caprice proving consistently successful, twice winning the Queen's Cup three years running.

Caprice IV - Currently

Apart from Jackson other successful helms included aviation pioneers Fred Sigrist and Sir Frank Spriggs in the 20s and 30s. She has never stopped winning, but a recent rebuild gave her a new lease of life.

Under Olympic bronze medallist Ossie Stewart she took both the Thames Champion and Queen's Cup in 1997. More recently her form has been patchy, but at BE2002 was usually in the leading pack showing she is still a competitive boat.

Viva 10

Designed and built by Burgoine in 1910 for CS Yates of Thames Sailing Club. Under the aviation pioneer Fred Sigrist, who helped found the Hawker aircraft company, she was very successful in the 20s. A similar design to MLD she is now lost.

Dainty Too 11

The last wooden rater constructed Dainty Too was built for FG Mitchell of Thames S.C. in 1922 by Turk of Kingston, to the design of JM Soper. Her bluff bows make her look unlike any other rater, and she has had a mixed record, combining lack lustre seasons with some highly successful ones, notably winning the Queen's Cup three times running.

Dainty Two - Currently

Normally sailed by Brian Reed, David Frost and Patrick Walmsley. She is now mainly sailed at Bourne End and is a regular competitor in races at Upper Thames SC where she has introduced other club members to the delights of rater sailing.

Scamp II 12

Designed by Linton Hope in 1906 and built by Hart, Harden and Co for HC Tower, another of the great figures of Thames yachting. Scamp is, along with Caprice, probably the most successful rater, winning the Queen's Cup more than any other boat. Comparing her with the designs of his rival Burgoine, (eg Carina and Ulva) Linton Hope said Scamp, which is similar to Vagabond, was less beamy, with a longer waterline, making her inferior in light conditions but faster in stronger winds and better to windward.

Scamp II - Currently

After being laid up she received some refurbishment, including hull strengthening. She returned to the water in '99 to immediate effect, and remains consistently at the front of the fleet, with a number of top 3 positions at BE2002

Vagabond 13

Designed by Linton Hope in 1907, and built by Townsend of Bourne End. Distinctive looking with an unusually narrow beam, she is also the most historically significant rater. Vagabond had no success until bought in 1934 by Beecher Moore, one of the leading figures in dinghy history. Just 22, he introduced on Vagabond the so-called 'bell rope', the forerunner of the trapeze - a truly revolutionary development.

Vagabond - more History

Taking a leaf from the sailing canoe world he also put sliding seats onto Vagabond, and quite literally took rater masts to new heights, as well as using a spinnaker.

Vagabond - Currently

Later after another period in the doldrums, Vagabond launched the latest resurgence of wooden raters. After years of wooden boats being trounced by GRP raters Vagabond was rebuilt in the 80s, to become very successful. She was the first rater to take sponsorship, and after fitting a carbon mast won many trophies in 2000. In 2001 she won the Queen's Cup, was third in 2002, and then won it again in 2003, being first by over 20 minutes.

Spindrift 14

The first of the 'plastic' raters that started a new chapter in rater history. Highly successful in its early years, like some of the others she was beginning to show her age, and became the first of the 'plastics' to have a comprehensive refurbishment. She emerged in 1998 with her plastic top replaced by a varnished wood deck, which also helped reduce her weight.

Spindrift - Currently

She was also the first rater to use a lighter carbon fibre mast, which helped make her the most successful boat in '99, including winning the Queen's Cup. After a successful spell Rob Cage sold Spindrift, and, sailed by Martin Hunter, she had a highly successful Bourne End in 2002, including winning the Queen's Cup. In BE03 she was 2nd overall.

Atlantis 15

Another formidable performer, helmed by Julian Smith. Julian is not only the youngest ever helm to win the Queen's Cup, but has also won it six times, more often than any other helm in the long history of this most sought after trophy. Atlantis has also usually had top-class crews, and their excellent teamwork means Atlantis' six victories in the Queen's Cup are way ahead of any other GRP rater.

Atlantis - Currently

In 1999 she was refurbished, emerging with a stunning new wooden deck, and returned to winning form, taking the Thames Championship at Bourne End 2000, and in 2002, when she sported a new carbon rig.

Osprey 16

A steady winner of trophies Osprey had nevertheless seemed to miss out on the big ones - until 1998, when helmed by Paul Browning it took the Queen's Cup for the first time. Since then Osprey has been one of the most regularly sailed boats in all competitions, and despite not having the extensive refurbishments carried out on other boats, Osprey remains highly competitive.

Osprey - Currently

This is a tribute to the skill of Paul Browning, who had a series of enthralling battles with Vagabond in the year 2000. In 2002 she received sponsorship from building design firm CIC.

Lady Iona 17

One of the most regular of the club racers Lady Iona's distinctive green hull is a steady performer on Tuesdays and Sundays, competing for the series trophies. Her greatest success has been when helmed by Tony Penfold, but she is currently going through a quiet spell.

Sacre Bleu 18

Helmed by first Martin Hunter, and then Adrian Hart, Sacre Bleu was highly successful in the eighties and early nineties, winning all the major trophies, including the Queen's Cup, Thames Champion Cup, Braganca Bowl and China Bowl.

Sacre Bleu - Currently

More recently she had been less active but is now back in the water after some refurbishment, mostly done by Tony Western, and has an increasingly active syndicate, which promises much for the future.

Wings 19

Owners are Chris and Victoria Preston

Lady Jane 20

Very successful when first launched Lady Jane, unlike most of the original 'plastic' raters, had a wooden deck from the start.

Lady Jane - Currently

She was refurbished in the late nineties, but after a quiet 2000 season was bought late in 2000 by a new syndicate led by Kevin Pearson. As one of the club's best sailors this could mean a new period of success for Lady Jane, and at BE2002 Kevin regularly had Lady Jane in the front pack, and gained her some top 3 places.

Champagne 21

Built with a wood rather than a plastic deck Champagne was a formidable performer when first launched, mostly helmed by Martin Hunter, and in 1994/95 won most of the major trophies. Still quick she now spends much of the season at Upper Thames SC.

Champagne - Currently

Champagne has had extensive work done to her decks over the winter of 2004-5. It is planned to sail her in series races at UTSC during the summer as well as participation in BEW2005 with a UTSC crew. She is entered for the Three Rivers Race and will also participate in the autumn regattas at the Tamesis Club.

Bonito 22

One of the newest raters, she was launched in May '98. She first raced at Bourne End Week, but the rush to get her ready showed. She returned to the boatbuilder for more work and re-emerged later in the year, looking much improved. She has an unusual open foredeck which aroused much comment. Under helm Martin Hunter she started to show flashes of speed, but remained an erratic performer, and so far has achieved little success.

Bonito - Currently

Currently she is not being sailed.

Tara 23

The newest rater, originally named Caprice V, was built by Steve Neal using the same Ulva-derived mould as other 'plastics'. However, instead of GRP carbon fibre was extensively used, and, although inconsistent, she is already showing flashes of speed that suggest she will be a highly competitive boat.

Tara - Currently

As Caprice V she was originally owned by the Ossie Stewart-managed Caprice syndicate but was sold in the spring of 2004 to David Frost, Patrick Walmsley and Brian Reed. She was renamed Tara in March 2005. She is now based at Upper Thames SC. The acquisition of a trailer will make it possible for her to compete in events at other clubs in 2005 including the Three Rivers Race and at the Tamesis Club. At UTSC she is sailed most Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons in series races.

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