

Fireball International

2023 Report Rear-Commodore Western Europe *Cormac Bradley*

Belgium

No report provided.

France

Jean Robillard
Class Chairman

In 2023 the French National saw 26 Fireballs racing , including our to be Commodore (FI) Nick and partner Evelyne. After the 2023 very deceptive 15 boats that's more in line with our expectations.

The fleet is pretty stable with several crews having changed boats, buying 10 to 15 years old good second hand boats, unfortunately the people buying the replaced boats are not racing and those boats , still perfectly good for club racing , are disappearing in limbo.

The boat bought last year in Dromineer by the class, after extensive repair due to a collision that occurred on the last day of the Worlds, has been used by people interested to sail Fireball in the future. Our plan is to rent it, at a very low price, to a crew committing to race all races for a full year. If we cannot find such crew, we will continue to lend it at each regatta to young crews so they can discover how much fun the Fireball is.

7 French boats went to Portoroz for the Europeans, and about as many are planning to go to Italy next year.

It's becoming more and more difficult to gather enough Fireball for one design regattas, so we are racing more and more often in handicap races. The results are usually good as Fireball crews are very competitive, but it's more difficult to keep the Fireball spirit alive in such events.

It's also difficult to find new blood for the class officers, but we can see local fleets having strong activity, not gathering very often due to cost of transport and lack of time.

For 2024 the French National will be held in Saint-Michel -Chef-Chef (it's not a mistake) the first weekend of July.

Ireland

Neil Cramer
Class Chairman

Nationals Entry

Ireland had a total of 18 boats at their Nationals which were held in August as a joint venture with the 420 Class association. This has worked out really well for the class as the 420 can be seen as a natural steppingstone for youth sailors who wish to progress to a more adult class. Previous year we had 29 entries but that was as part of the world Championships and so the figures were somewhat distorted by that event taking place.

Growth

Fleet had a total of 31 different boat/sailor combinations in competition this year which is a big increase on previous years. One experienced sailor who is relatively new to the class has had a huge influence on establishment of a new fleet of boats in Cork area mostly manned by youth sailors.

Growth has also been driven by:

- (i) Shared events with 420 class which acts as a promotional opportunity for migrating 420 sailors to the fleet.
- (ii) Any profit made from the worlds was channelled into promoting and heavily discounting entry fees to Youth sailors at events in Ireland.
- (iii) Ownership of Class Fireball which is loaned to clubs/individuals as a trial boat.
- (iv) Appointment of a Youth Development Officer (who is young!).

Europeans

Ireland had 4 entries to the Eur event. Would have been more but very high ferry costs proved prohibitive for some. Also, container costs were in region of €10-12K which was much too expensive.

Events

The Class had 7 regattas this year. 4 x 2-day events, 2 x 3-day events and 1 x mixed training/racing 2-day event with qualified coach. Late season enthusiasm saw an extra event added to the normal schedule.

Plans

Nothing different from previous years. Hopefully will get a much bigger uptake for Europeans in Italy.

Personnel

New Youth Development officer appointed.

Worlds 2024

Ireland will have one definite entry at the Geelong Worlds, sailing a chartered boat and I believe there is the possibility of a second entry.

Shetland

*John Manson
Fireball Owner*

Unfortunately, Fireball sailing in Shetland is in decline in recent years. This has been due to a number of reasons, (sailing other boats, family commitments, work, and in the case of both myself and Willum Mouatt - ill health)

I have been back on the water this past 2 seasons, and Willum got back in the middle of this season, but we only ever had 3 Fireballs on the water.

No one from Shetland has travelled to a regatta outside Shetland for many years now, and I cannot see that changing in the short term.

On a personal level, Archimedes has caught up my Ivan and myself. We actually took a decision at the end of the season to move classes, as the Flying 15 is popular here, and more suited to us now. We were lucky to get a quick sale through Frank Miller to a young team from Northern Ireland, so you may well see 15022 in action next year.

Looking ahead, it is difficult to tell what will happen with our Association. I may need to talk to Neil Fraser about perhaps going dormant for a while to see if things pick up in the future.

United Kingdom

Original request was sent to Derian who tactfully reminded me that she had passed the mantle of Chairman of UKFA on to Richard Botting. Richard has been on the UK committee for the past two years as Nationals Co-ordinator and is based at Draycote Water. He owns Fireball 15127.

Info garnered from other locations:

National Inland Champions: David Hall and Paul Constable; 31 boats.

National Champions: Tom Gillard and Andy Thompson; 32 boats.

I would suggest that while this is down from the halcyon days of a sixty-boat fleet, it stands up rather well in recent years. (Just a personal opinion.)

A container of UK boats has been packed for the **Geelong Worlds** (and FI's trophies have been packed with them).

Nine domestic **regattas are scheduled for 2024**, from the first weekend in April through to the second weekend of November. **Their Nationals** are scheduled for the North Cornwall Coast in July – 4 days/8 races.