



Reg White, an appreciation:

Born in Brightlingsea in October 1935, the son of an oyster merchant Reg grew up on the foreshore and was into boats from a very early age. His first boat was a West Wight scow, a gunter-lug rigged dinghy with a tiny jib that he added and a rowing skiff (originally used to ferry oysters from the smacks to the quayside) on which he and a companion rigged spars and sails made from two bed sheets and was steered by an oar. Lateral resistance was supplied by two leeboards, pivoted on bolts through the gunwales. Practicality was a byword from an early age.

After school he did a boatbuilding apprenticeship at James & Stone's yard. At the same time, he sailed his father's Brightlingsea One-Design (BOD), Tiller Girl, named for the dance troupe of which his elder sister, Pam, was a member. With Ken Howe, he built two Hornets, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and gained a sixth in the national championship at Plymouth within days of launching the new boats.

Reg became involved with the building of a 16-foot hard-chined catamaran for Roy Bacon and that was the start of a partnership, which later became Sailcraft Limited. Roy encouraged Rod Macalpine-Downie to Brightlingsea where Sailcraft became the builders of all Rods' designs, starting with the Thai Mk IV. It progressed through the Shark via the Iroquois 30-foot cruiser to bigger boats including British Oxygen and the 60-foot British Airways for Robin Knox-Johnston.

John Fisk, a member of the IYRU multihull committee inspired Macalpine-Downie and Reg to develop and build a prototype, which became known as Hellcat, launched early in 1959, and built in wood by Sailcraft. Several modifications followed and eventually a glassfibre version, Hellcat 2, was built, again by Sailcraft, and after just one trial sail against the prototype, shipped to New York, where she defeated John Hicock's Wildcat by 4-1.

It was the beginning of a challenge that occupied Reg for many years, during which time he built and developed a series of winning boats, sailing in them either as helmsman or crew of four successful boats culminating with the wing-masted Lady Helmsman in 1966. During the campaigns he met Rodney March, who had a potential design for a B-class boat that became the Tornado. Reg built two, one un-rigged with a wing mast, and the other with a more usual sloop rig. They were entered for the IYRU one-of-a-kind trials for an international one-design. The un-rigged boat was quicker but broke its mast after two races; Reg steered the other one to win the series convincingly.

The Tornado went on to become the Olympic multihull class boat, starting with the 1976 Games at Kingston, Ontario, at which Reg, crewed by brother-in-law John Osborn took the Gold. He had also begun to produce glassfibre Tornados and started

experimenting with various fibre lay-ups, making the boat stiffer, and consequently faster.

Unfortunately after winning his second world championship in the class in 1979, he was denied a second chance to win gold when the British sailing team was withdrawn from the Moscow Games as Russia had invaded Afghanistan. He was proud that four years after that, his eldest son, Robert, represented Britain in the Tornado at the Los Angeles Games.

His business flourished for some years with cruising catamarans and technical development of the Tornado, until the recession of the early Nineties when Sailcraft was wound up and Reg began a new business building boats for companies that marketed them. It was called White Formula. As the business developed, he joined forces with fellow Tornado gold medallist, Yves Loday. The Anglo-French alliance produced a new range of small catamarans, starting with the Hurricane (in several sizes) and progressing to the Spitfire and Shadow.

Reg is survived his widow, Lyn, his sister Pamela, three sons, a daughter and thirteen grandchildren.