Tuning Classic and Silver Flying Fifteens...

Ivan Coryn has been part of the UK Flying Fifteen Scene for as long as anyone dares remember. Ivan has had many successes in the UK Fleet in Classic Fifteens with a 5th in 1977 and top three finishes in 1982 and 1987. In 2002 he finished 2nd in the French Nationals in 3066, and has become perhaps better known to us all for his strong boat building history in the Class. He will also be forever famous for being one of the major movers involved in the effort to internationalise our Class in Europe. There are many tuning guides available for the newer fleet, but little aimed specifically at Classics and Silvers. Ivan has a wealth of knowledge on tuning Classic and Silver Flying Fifteens, and here Ivan gives us the secrets of his basic tune up routine.

So you've bought a Classic Flying 15, a great way to start out in this fantastically rewarding class.

You have a rigged mast and boom, and you've found the class tuning guides. Firstly you must remember these are GUIDES not gospel especially when it comes to a Classic, but whatever you do keep them as you will find some useful points as you get used to the boat.

*Why is this?*

Flying 15's have had many different builders and construction methods since their arrival in 1947. They all work to a framework of rules which allow differently constructed boats to race on equal terms.

This makes for big differences when it comes the likes of spreader settings and mast rake, the basics of rig tuning.
What do I do?

Set the boat up on her trailer using the jockey wheel so that her waterline is as near to parallel with a piece of flat ground as possible, step the mast and connect the shrouds as done by the previous owner. It is usually easy to spot old settings in shroud plates etc.

Hints and Tips:-
Especially with older trailers, you will find it much easier to manoeuvre on shore if you have a pneumatic jockey wheel. You can get them for around £30 if you shop around and sometimes as low as £25 on eBay.

Rig the jib on its furler and tension the rig until if you have a rig tension gauge the shrouds are at say 300lb tension OR they feel firm to the hand.

Pull a line with a plumbob on it to the top of the mast (NB – with the Rig Tension “On”) and the plum bob should hit the boom (NB – Set it Up Horizontally) approximately 350mm aft of the gooseneck.

Slacken and tension rig accordingly whilst adjusting shroud positions to get somewhere near this as a ball park set up. Look at the mast gate, hopefully the mast has bent forward approximately 25mm from its rest position as the rig tension is applied.

WITH ALL 15 RIGS ONE IS LOOKING FOR THE MAST TO HAVE THE SPACE TO BEND FORWARD IN THE GATE BY AT LEAST THIS AMOUNT PRIOR TO APPLYING CHOCKS TO SUIT AN INDIVIDUAL SAIL OR CONDITIONS.

If this bend cannot be achieved adjust the spreaders until it can.
Sheeting the Jib

With the boat pointed on its trailer (DO NOT DO THIS IN STRONG WINDS WHERE THE BOAT COULD BE BLOWN OVER!) at an angle to the wind that you would expect when sailing to windward unroll the jib and sheet in hard as if you were on the water going to windward.

Extend the line of the jib sheet between the fairlead or barber hauler block and the attachment point of the sheet to the sail, with your spinnaker pole or another long straight edge. Mark this point on the jib luff and measure down to the deck.

You should have a measurement of less than 1400mm above the deck assuming the Jib tack is set at the MINIMUM of 105mm above the deck. For most modern cut sails I would expect a measurement of around 1250mm as a starting point.

The plan shape of a Flying 15 genoa makes means it better to sheet hard along the foot of the sail allowing the top third of the sail to open away from the mainsail giving a clean flow of air over the back of the main.

OK WE HAVE A BASIC JIB SET UP AND MAST RAKE SO ITS TIME TO GO SAILING AND START TO ENJOY THE BOAT!!!
Six Ways to Help your 15 Sail Better

1) If your boat has a traveller fix it in the middle of the boat and forget it. Trim your main with sheet and kicker tension only. Ideally fit a modern transom mainsheet system.

2) Look at the kicking strap, check the distance of the attachment point to the boom from the gooseneck. This should be approx 640mm. Make sure your kicker gives you at least 16:1 purchase, is easily adjustable and accessible to the helm at all times.

3) Make sure your mast is firmly chocked sideways in the mast gate and has sufficient freedom of movement to bend forwards 25mm unless being restricted by ram or chocks.

4) Give your crew a chance make sure spinnaker pole ends work and pole has a good simple uphaul downhaul system.

5) Look at outboard end of boom and make sure outhaul purchase works, is passed through the eye on the sail (NOT THE SLUG SLIDE) and is capable of pulling the foot of the sail out flat ie Hard with a capital H.

6) Make sure your buoyancy bags are inflated and properly fixed in the boat. On old boats I would suggest solid foam blocks as bags are like to be punctured by stray fastenings.
Suggestions for Specific Classes

- WYCHE AND COPPOCK

1) There is a half height buoyancy tank under the foredeck, make sure there is no water in there, and, secondly, that water can’t get in there while sailing.
2) Many W &C boats had a special chock moulding in the mast gate to hold the mast straight at deck level. Remove and replace with adjustable chocks to allow mast to bend as described earlier.
3) Move shrouds outboard by fastening through the gunwale using U bolt or similar. SPREAD THE LOAD BY BOLTING THROUGH A STAINLESS BAR PLACED UNDER THE HULL AND DECK JOINT. Another way is to fit a shroud tang to the outer skin of the hull, having glued in suitable reinforcement internally.
4) Replace Barbour haulers with pin stop track on turn of the side tank to allow correct jib sheeting. Fit suitable reinforcement underneath when fastening.
5) Check there is no play in the rudder when fitted. Ideally replace it with a new one.

- COPLAND BOATS

1) Shrouds modify as Wyche & Coppock above
2) Especially on narrow sidedeck boats stop water getting into front tank. THIS IS IMPERATIVE!
3) Check for rudder play, but replace if you can. On some boats the stern tube for the shaft might need replacing.

A start!

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New and Secondhand Parts for Classic Flying Fifteens can be found in Ivan’s eBay Shop “Ivan's Boats and Parts”