

Sea without litter

FRAGRANT HARBOUR

Autumn 2018

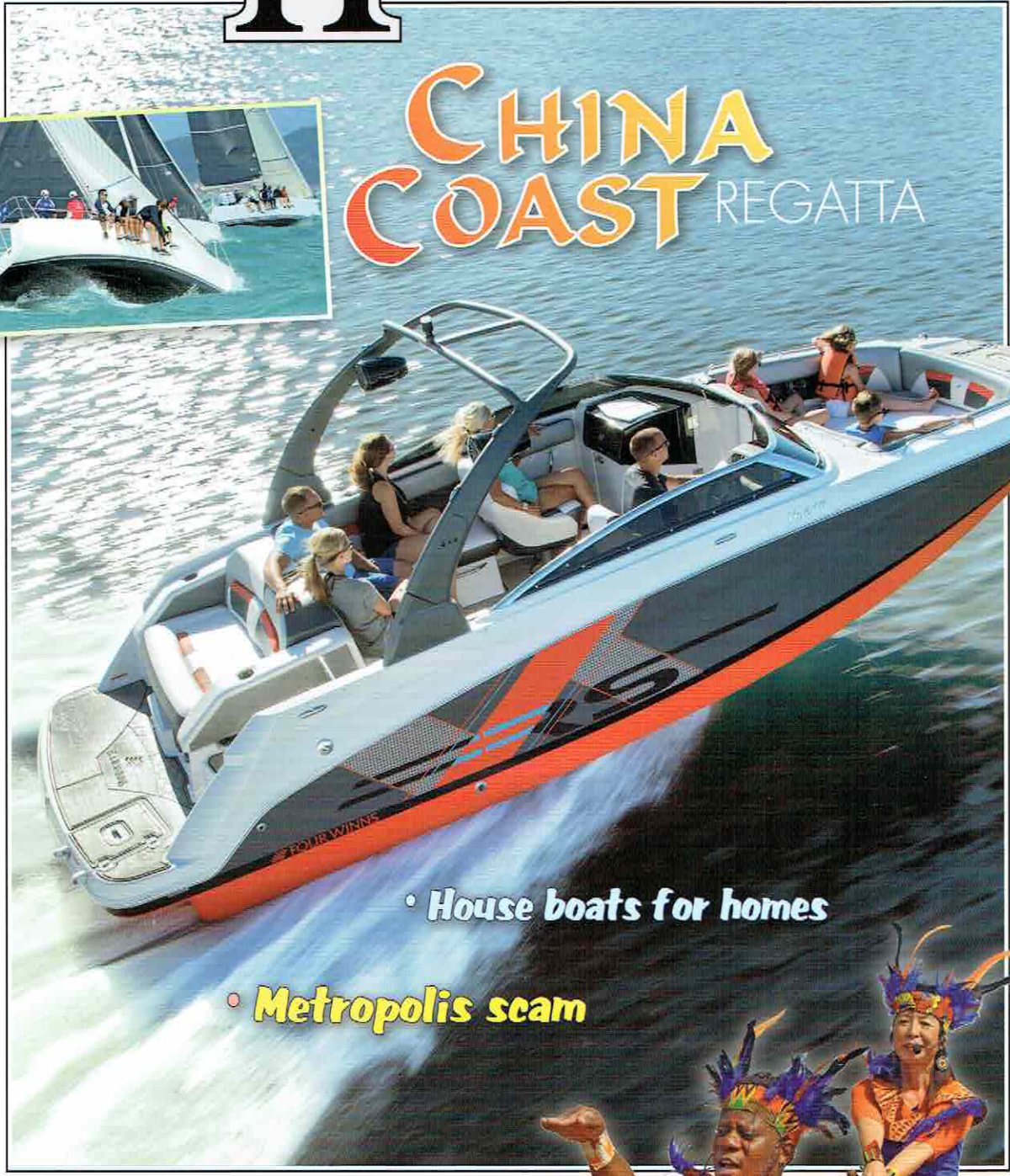
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Hjarbaek Sjaegtelaug

On the banks overlooking the blue waters of Limfjord in Jutland, Denmark, you can feel the history of the ancient boatmen — the Vikings — sailing out to sea. And it was here, mid-year, that FH visited a unique sailing club — Hjarbaek Sjaegtelaug. Our visit coincided with some of the best weather the locals could ever recall and, of course, the sailing conditions were superb.

Through some lucky contacts, we were invited by Bent Moeller Nielsen, to race as 'guests' on board L91, *Jonna*.

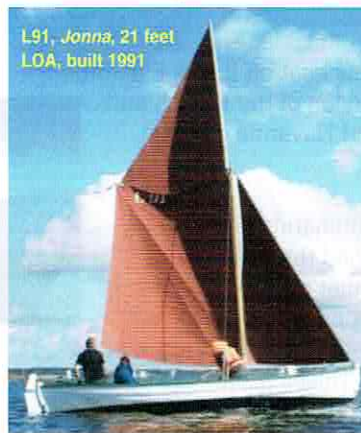
The club is located in the small harbour of Hjarbaek. There are docks for small boats, some parking space and a small shed for equipment. Very rural, simple and unpretentious. The boats are all neatly moored bow-on to the docks, with small plaques giving their names and details.

The Sjaegte (pronounced *sheykte* in English) is unique. A lap strake (clinker built) double ender, it is made of wood and ranges from 14 to 22 feet in length. The mast, sprit, whisker pole, oars — everything is wood and of a traditional design. It does not have auxiliary

power and all propulsion is by wind, or the use of oars.

An interesting feature is the rudder which is gimbaled so that it remains almost perpendicular in the water when the boat heels. This makes it more efficient.

The rig is a sprit mainsail — a top sail on a yard that is hauled up the main mast after setting the main, and a jib. Actually the boat has a narrow beam for its length and, with the top sail, is quite high. There is no modern sailing equipment on board. You have to haul everything up by hand.



There are wood blocks and brass travellers for the main sail. The jib is adjusted by hand and, in strong winds, you definitely need strength in your hands and arms. There is no keel but some internal ballast is allowed. The boats are basically the same design as they were way back when they first appeared in the 1840s.

The Sjaegte has some interesting history. The basic design is thought to have been brought to the fjord from southern Norway.

It was popular up until the 1920s, used mainly for fishing, using a type of purse seine net. Hook and line were also used and there was usually a tank for keeping fish alive in the bilge.

The Sjaegte's good sailing characteristics and seaworthiness made

it suitable for weather conditions in the fjord. At the same time, it was so fast that it was often possible to sail away from the fisheries control boats, which, naturally, increased its popularity among fishermen. Often one boat was owned and operated by several families.

Limfjord, before the 1800s, could roughly be divided into two halves with Løgstør as a partition. This meant there was an eastern part with high salinity and a lucrative herring fishing industry and, to the west, brackish waters supporting perch and skull fish. This changed in 1825 when, during a violent storm, the North Sea broke through the Aggertangen. The salty sea water killed the brackish fish and the industry collapsed.

A new stock of saltwater fish filled the fjord and fishermen had to adapt to new fishing methods. The introduction of the Sjaegte between 1825 and 1840 was a part of this change. But, when engines were introduced in the first half of the 20th century, the Sjaegte became obsolete as a fishing vessel.

However, the boat has been preserved as a part of the history of

the fjord. A group of like-minded people living around the area decided to save the Sjaegte and set up the Hjarbaek Sjaegtelaug.

The club actually started in the 1970s by a group of people who were interested in the history and cultural traditions



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of Limfjord, especially the fleets of traditional boats. The club is well established and supported and has its membership and charter rules and regulations set out in the *laugsskraa* on its web site www.sjaegt.dk.

The members are mostly the crews of the boats. At present there are 33 boats — a source of much pride to Hjarbaek Sjaegtelaug.

Committees organize races, set up courses, elect race officers, manage starts and finishes. Others assist with catering after racing.

The club racing season starts on the first Tuesday in May and continues every Tuesday until the second week of September. These are standard racing events but there are also special islands races, weekend races, and even a World Cup that takes during the third week of August.

Normally, racing starts in the late afternoon with everybody arriving back before sunset. The long summer hours can mean that the races can go on quite late.

On to our participation in a Sjaegte race. Having introduced ourselves to Bent and his crew, Angar, we went to find life jackets in the small club house-cum-storage shed, with picnic tables. There were about 20 boats taking part with several sizes of boat. Each size is a class and each has a handicap. The winds were fresh and weather perfect. Bent decided not to fly the top sail as there were some strong gusts.

The race was a triangle with a fixed start and finish line. A single gun was fired for all classes. Getting a

good position on the line is most important and, without a keel and using a sprit sail with jib, it takes some skill. Bent, who is skipper #2 of *Jonna*, is both skilled and confident. Both these attributes paid dividends as, even though we did not use the top sail, he brought *Jonna* in 3rd in class.

The race was most enjoyable, as was soaking up the traditions of the Sjaegte. FH enjoyed a good work out with some calluses to prove it. Working the jib sheets by hand is definitely a 'skill'.

Working with traditional sails is quite different from the classic three-quarter rig. The competition is fierce rounding the marks and there were at least two boats with ripped top sails by the end of the race. The boats heal considerably (yet nobody capsized during our race).

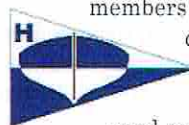
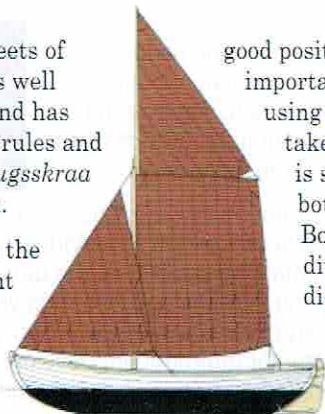
Sjaegte racing is taken seriously and the annual 'World Cup' has been staged 42 times. The three-day event* attracts entries from other parts of the fjord and nearby Norway.

After our race, we all gathered beside the little cub house. There are a number of rudimentary tables set up and we enjoyed coffee and Danish beer. It was the birthday of one of the members and there was much singing and cheers for Ole, the birthday boy.

As your scribe sails Raters at the Yangon Sailing Club, there was lots to talk about. The Rater is also a traditional wooden boat, kept alive by enthusiasts in Myanmar. Photos were shared, stories

told, and past *Fragrant Harbour* articles have recently been sent to Bent and members of Hjarbaek Sjaegtelaug. A club burgee was given as a gift and a YSC burgee has been mailed in return. A good connection made.

— by Bo Colomby



For the 42nd time, the World Cup was held at Hjarbaek Fjord, 17-19. Aug. 18, attracting 39 entries. Winds during the first two days were optimal but increased for the third, resulting in some minor mishaps. Class winners were:

16-18 feet: Leif Vang, Hjarbaek

18-20 feet: Ole Rømer, Hjarbaek (Hans 22nd World Championship)

20-22 feet: Helle and Kim Würz, Hjarbaek

Open Class: Frida Steffensen, FDF Viborg

Aalborg Joller: Arne Steffensen, Humlum

The prizegiving attracted 150 people and Bishop Henrik Stubkjær, gave an entertaining speech about the connection between the bishops in Viborg, the salt of Læsø and the Limfjord fishermen. He proposed official recognition in the cathedral in 2026 as this will be the Sjaegte World Cup's 50th anniversary.



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