



OCEAN CRUISING CLUB®

For Immediate Release

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## The Ocean Cruising Club Announces Awards for 2020

**Devon, UK, 23 January 2021** – Despite a pandemic raging throughout the year, the OCC Awards Subcommittee has found numerous achievements to recognize in the cruising world. Nominations are made by Full Members of the OCC, winners are selected by a highly experienced team of bluewater cruisers, and selections are approved by the OCC General Committee.

The Club's premier award, **The OCC Barton Cup**, which salutes an exceptional or challenging voyage or series of voyages, goes to **Bert ter Hart**, s/v Seaburban. This non-stop, unsponsored, solo circumnavigation via the five Capes was conducted entirely without the use of GPS or other electronic aids to navigation. The seven-month voyage is believed to be a world record for the longest duration in quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bert's navigational skill and seamanship set a magnificent example to all distance sailors. Bert was the recipient of an OCC Challenge Grant which was instituted to help support particularly adventurous or environmentally conscious endeavours.

**The OCC Award** has two components – one rewards members who contribute valuable services to the OCC and the other for anyone who contributes extraordinary service to the cruising community at large. This year, the OCC Award recognises a group of members who collectively provided immensely valuable services to both members and the cruising community as a whole in response to the novel Coronavirus pandemic. The award recognises the following individuals who jumped in to assist cruisers around the world as borders closed and restrictions were imposed on foreign visitors often without warning while cruisers were on passage:

- Vice Commodore **Daria Blackwell**
- Regional Rear Commodore **Alex Blackwell**
- Regional Rear Commodore **Moira Bentzel**
- Member **Tim Goodyear**
- Global Network Support Coordinator **Fiona Jones**
- Roving Rear Commodore **Guy Chester**

They co-ordinated, monitored, tracked, assisted virtually and arranged real time assistance, to hundreds of sailors both in the Atlantic and the Pacific who were undertaking hazardous voyages because of the pandemic and often with hurricane and cyclone seasons threatening. These sailors included many OCC members but also many non-members only

too glad to have their help, often from countries not well represented amongst our members, some of whom have incidentally joined the Club since. It goes without saying that the reputation of the Club was also greatly enhanced as a result of their efforts. It cannot be too highly emphasized what a tremendous and often literally life-saving job they did, co-ordinating too with official national rescue services in the USA, UK and the Azores. Many sailors owe their gratitude. On 9 January 2021, The Royal Cruising Club recognised their efforts by awarding the OCC their Medal for Services to Cruising.

**The OCC Seamanship Award** goes to OCC member **Garry Crothers** of Northern Ireland. Garry lost an arm in a motorcycle accident. He found himself as a solo one-armed sailor in St Martin when Covid-19 struck. He needed to get back to Northern Ireland for his daughter's wedding in September. With no flights and no possible crew, he sailed solo non-stop directly to Derry, N.I., taking 37 days...the ultimate single-handed sailor. He is involved in sailing for people with disabilities ([Sailability](#)) and is a true role model and inspiration. Garry was one of the sailors assisted by the group receiving the OCC Award, who were checking in with him daily.

**The OCC Lifetime Cruising Award 2020** is presented to **Nick Skeates**, a true cruiser's cruiser. Nick has been described as a 'fantastic character full of soul, wisdom and experience'. Nick has been an almost permanent liveaboard since leaving the UK in 1975 aboard his first *Wylo*, a Morgan Giles-designed 28-footer, at the age of 28. Two years later, having sailed to New Zealand and back into the Pacific, he lost her on a reef near Fiji in poor visibility.

Back in NZ with almost no money he decided to design and build his next boat, [Wylo II](#), a 32ft gaff cutter with steel hull and wooden deck, which he launched in November 1980. He did nearly all the work himself, including making her sails. At least 160 sets of plans – some of a slightly extended 35ft version – have been sold since then, with more than 50 boats built. He remains a fount of knowledge for both plan purchasers all over the world and those who simply drop by *Wylo II* at anchor (he shuns marinas) wherever they may see her.

Since 1980 Nick has made four circumnavigations aboard *Wylo II*, covering more than a quarter of a million miles, and he has crossed the Atlantic more times than he can count. *Wylo II* is very simple but extremely strong – at least one sistership has sailed around Cape Horn– with an interior built mainly from recycled timber and a primus stove in the galley. Nick still prefers to navigate by sextant, though he admits to carrying a GPS in reserve. In these days of ever-larger cruising yachts with all the bells and whistles, Nick remains true to the philosophy which has served him well for nearly 50 years.

**The Vasey Vase** recognises "an unusual or exploratory voyage made by an OCC member or members" and, in an age of speedy circumnavigations, often in the higher latitudes and frequently in pursuit of a place in the record books, **Graham and Avril Johnson's** 18-year voyage is 'unusual' and certainly merits this award. They have been frequent contributors to the OCC's flagship publication, *Flying Fish*, sharing their knowledge with all who follow.

Additional awards presented, the details of which can be found on the [OCC website](#), include:

- OCC Jester Award to Jack van Ommen
- OCC Qualifier's Mug to Sasa Fegic
- OCC Water Music Trophy to Kirk Patterson
- OCC Port Officer Service Award to Victor Langerwerf (Curacao) and Peter Café Sport (Horta, Azores)
- OCC David Wallis Trophy to Dag and Ma Theresa Hoiland

Earlier this year, the Vertue Award, a regional US award, was presented to Regional Rear Commodores Bill & Lydia Strickland.

Commodore Simon Currin commended all the winners, “I would like to add my personal thanks to everyone who went out of their way to assist others and those who kept up our spirits and fed our imaginations with adventurous pursuits. Hopefully, more will be able to undertake such pursuits in more settled times.”

Awards Sub-Committee Chair Eoin Robson concluded, “Thanks so much to all the members who sent in their nominations and the volunteers who judged them. It was no easy task. There were surprisingly many high-quality nominations in a year when perhaps we might not have expected them. Well done!”

## About the Ocean Cruising Club



### ***The Worldwide Community for Adventure Sailing Since 1954***

The OCC is the “home port” for those who have sailed long distances across big oceans. With 45 nationalities represented among more than 3100 members, and Port Officers around the world, we have a more diverse membership and a more international reach than any other blue water sailing organisation.

The Ocean Cruising Club exists to encourage long-distance sailing in small boats. A Full Member of the OCC must have completed a qualifying voyage of a non-stop port-to-port ocean passage, where the distance between the two ports is not less than 1,000 nautical miles, in a vessel of not more than 70ft (21.36m) LOA; associate members are committed to achieving that goal. This standard distinguishes the OCC from all other sailing clubs.

Our membership as a whole has more experience offshore than any other sailing organisation – in the number of circumnavigators, in the range of extraordinary voyages members have completed, and in the number of solo sailors and female sailors among our ranks. This is what sets us apart from other organisations, even as it draws us together as a group.

Web: [www.oceancruisingclub.org](http://www.oceancruisingclub.org)

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OceanCruisingClubMembers/>

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