

THE OCEAN CRUISING CLUB

– how it began

Admiral Humphrey Barton

(Mrs Pat Pocock, daughter of our founder Humphrey Barton – who was elected the Club's first Admiral in 1960 – came upon some notes her father had made about the beginnings of our Club and thought current members might be interested to read them.

Towards the end of the Inaugural Meeting, Hum (as he was always known) asked those present “to enlist all the new members they could, and said that if everyone put into the Club a little more than they took out of it, it was sure to be a great success”. Sixty-three years later the message remains unchanged!)

In 1953 I had nearly finished writing a book entitled *Atlantic Adventurers*, which was published twice in England and once in France. It was about the small craft which had crossed the North Atlantic, starting with *Red White & Blue* in 1866. It took me three years to collect the stories and I kept down the overall length of the boats to 30 feet.

It then occurred to me to start a club for those who had crossed the North Atlantic in small craft but, after some thought, I decided that this would not be fair to those who had made remarkable voyages across other oceans and I finally decided on a minimum distance of 1000 miles in a craft with a maximum length of 70 feet. I arrived at the latter figure as the 70ft yacht *Latifa* had crossed the North Atlantic and several of my friends were on board. I then wrote to the English yachting magazines asking anyone who had qualified and was interested to write to me, and I received 30–40 replies.

I did not then quite know what to do next, but one day when in Southampton I met my old friend, and publisher, Adlard Coles, and told him about my idea. He thought for a moment and then said, “I suggest you write to the Secretary of the RNVF Club at 38 Hill Street, London, and tell him about it and ask him if you can have the big room upstairs for one evening. It has a bar attached.”

So I wrote to the Secretary and hired the room for the evening of 27th January 1954, and sent a letter to all those who seemed to be interested. I also wrote to the Editors of the *Daily Telegraph* and the yachting magazines, telling them about the meeting. The former sent Mr Dickin, sub editor, and Edward Haylock, the editor of *Yachting World*, whom I was so pleased to meet once again, was also kind enough to come. I knew I would need these two as scrutineers. My lady typist and I drove to London from Lymington. She took a typewriter with her and I explained to her what I expected to happen and what I wanted her to do.

It all went according to plan. Having made a brief speech I asked if those present were keen that a cruising club for amateur ocean voyagers should be formed, the qualification to be a 1000 mile non-stop passage in a craft not more than 70 feet overall, and to this they all agreed. I suggested the name should be the Ocean Cruising Club, but no definite decision was made. I asked if anyone had any ideas as regards a burgee and someone put forward the idea of a flying fish. That was agreed and I asked Colin Mudie to draw one. I suggested a yellow fish on a blue background with a yellow fly, and this colour scheme was approved, but it was to be confirmed in due course by the Committee.

I then said that we would have to form a Committee, and proposed that 12 should be the number and asked for volunteers. Eight offered their services and my secretary took down their names. I went on to say that I was a member of about six English and Irish yacht clubs, that I had carefully perused the Rules of each and had extracted what I thought would be a suitable set for our new Club. I thought that we could leave the finalising of the Rules to the next Committee Meeting, which would be in about a month's time, followed thereafter by one every month during the winter and none in summer. This was agreed.

"We shall need three Flag Officers", I said. "A Commodore, a Vice Commodore and a Rear Commodore, and you have the eight members who have already volunteered to serve on the Committee from whom to elect these officers. This is to be a secret ballot and my secretary is now typing out the voting slips. You will soon get one each and on them please mark your choice. The scrutineers will be Group Captain Haylock and Mr Dickin, the sub editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. It will take a few minutes and, in the meantime, the drinks are on me." I opened the door to the bar and a steward came in and took their orders.

Within ten minutes or so the scrutineers were going through the voting slips and soon Group Captain Haylock got to his feet and announced the results. I was elected Commodore, and my good friends Lt Col Scholfield and Colin Mudie Vice Commodore and Rear Commodore. On returning to Lymington I asked my old friend, Mostyn Williams, who for several years had been Secretary of the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, if he would like to take on the job of Secretary of the new Club which I had just formed, and this he was delighted to do.

So that is how it all began. Now there are members of many nationalities, and I have been proud to fly my Admiral's flag at a very large number of ports on both sides of the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean since I was promoted from Commodore in early 1960.

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**Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting of the Ocean Cruising Club
held at the RNVF Club, London on 27th January 1954**

Mr Barton took the chair and explained the aims and objects of the proposed Club. A proposal was made by him that such a Club should be formed with the aims and objects as set out in the draft Rules, and this was passed unanimously. The name was discussed but no definite decision was arrived at.

A copy of the proposed Rules was handed to members. They were passed in principle, with the exception as regards the name. They are to be carefully considered by the Committee, who will seek legal advice if necessary, and be re-submitted for final approval at the next Annual General Meeting.

The following members offered to serve on the Committee:

Mr WIB Crealock	Mr C Mudie
Lt Cmdr AG Hamilton, RN	Lt Col RGF Scholfield
Mr WB Howell	Mr HI Hughes
Mr GB Heywood	Mr HDE Barton

As the number did not exceed the fifteen allowed by the Rules no ballot was necessary.

A secret ballot was then held to elect the three Flag Officers, the scrutineers being Gp Capt E Haylock and Mr Dickin (both non-members). The results were announced by the former and were as follows:

Commodore
Vice Commodore
Rear Commodore

Mr Humphrey DE Barton
Lt Col RGF Scholfield
Mr Colin Mudie

The Commodore thanked the members for electing him. He said that it was a great honour and that he would do his best for the Club. He asked members to enlist all the new members they could, and said that if everyone put into the Club a little more than they took out of it, it was sure to be a great success.

The question of the design for a burgee and tie were discussed and the matter referred to the Committee.

The Commodore then thanked the RNVR Officers Association for allowing the use of their Club and granting temporary membership to all those present. The official proceedings then terminated.

