

THE 2021 AWARDS

After having to be cancelled in both 2020 and 2021, the 2022 AGM and Annual Dinner were finally able to take place at the Annapolis Yacht Club in Annapolis, Maryland on Saturday 2nd April, the first time the AGM has ever taken place outside the UK. Events over the weekend were organised by Lydia and Bill Strickland, with Janet Garnier and Henry DiPietro acting as Masters of Ceremonies for the Award presentations which, as usual, took place during the Annual Dinner. Our thanks to all four of them!

All the photographs taken during the presentation ceremony are reproduced courtesy of John van-Schalkwyk and Alex Blackwell. Thanks are also due to Eoin Robson, Chair of the Awards Sub-committee, for receiving the award nominations and overseeing the judging panel, the fourth year he has brought his organisational skills and wise judgement to this sometimes challenging task.

The weekend as a whole, including the Annual Dinner, was sponsored by Safe Harbor Marinas, Mantus Marine and Evolution Sails, to which Latell & Ailsworth Sailmakers is affiliated. Their combined support helped keep costs within reasonable bounds.

Further details of the history and criteria for all the awards, together with information about how to submit a nomination online, will be found at oceanclub.org/Awards.



MCs Janet Garnier and Henry DiPietro



THE DAVID WALLIS TROPHY

Presented by the family of David Wallis, Founding Editor of *Flying Fish*, and first awarded in 1991, this silver salver recognises the 'most outstanding, valuable or enjoyable contribution' to the year's issues. The winner is decided by vote among the *Flying Fish* Editorial Sub-committee.

Although winners **Graham and Avril Johnson** received the 2021 David Wallis Trophy for *Full Circle*, published in *Flying Fish* 2021/1, there is little doubt that the Editorial Sub-committee were equally impressed by their 18 previous submissions to *Flying Fish*, sent from all over the globe during the course of their 18-year circumnavigation. Prior to that both worked in academia, so writing came naturally to them, and both are excellent photographers. The only surprise is that they'd not won the Trophy previously (though they've been awarded the Vasey Vase twice, for 2007 and 2020).



Graham and Avril Johnson were presented with the David Wallis Trophy at the Solent Rally on 22nd April. Photo Kathy Mansfield

Full Circle recalled some of the highlights of their voyage, using a chartlet and key to link through to previous articles (all downloadable from oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive). After setting off from Hythe, near Southampton in June 2002 aboard their Peterson 44 cutter *Dream Away*, Graham and Avril made some 65 stops in around 40 countries and islands, and covered an estimated 60,000 miles before returning to Hythe in September 2020. They made a point of interacting with local people as well as with other cruisers, and were among the six crews who received the (now discontinued) OCC Award of Merit for 2015 for assisting the people of Vanuatu after the devastation caused by Cyclone *Pam* in March 2015.

In their acceptance message, Graham and Avril stressed how much receiving the David Wallis Trophy meant to them:

‘We were thrilled to receive the wonderful news about the David Wallis Trophy. We have always enjoyed writing articles for *Flying Fish* and hoped that members have been informed, entertained and occasionally amused or inspired by them. The award answers our hopes, and is much cherished. We would like to thank the editorial team for their outstanding work on, and presentation of, our various articles. The chartlets, layout, brief introductions and faultless editing have contributed hugely to our success.’ *

Graham and Avril were unable to attend the Annual Dinner to receive their award in person, so instead it was presented on 22nd April during the first evening of the Solent Rally at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club’s premises at Gins Farm, Beaulieu.

* In response I would like to say that Graham and Avril’s submissions have always been outstandingly well written and illustrated – not to mention correctly spelled! – making our job both easy and enjoyable. As one proof-reader remarked, ‘I’m always happy to see ‘Johnson’ on the list as it means an interesting read, very little to do, and a second slice of pie when the issue comes out and we get to see the photos’. Editor

THE QUALIFIER'S MUG

Presented by Admiral (then Commodore) Mary Barton and first awarded in 1993, the Qualifier's Mug recognises the most ambitious or arduous qualifying voyage published by a member in print or online, or submitted to the OCC for future publication.

Winner of the **Qualifier's Mug** for 2021 is **James Frederick**, and no reader of his article *1000 Miles Steered by Drogue* in *Flying Fish 2021/2* could possibly claim that it falls short of the requirement to be both 'ambitious' and 'arduous'.

After being introduced to sailing in 2014 with a cruise around the Orkney Islands, down the North Sea and through the Caledonian Canal, James became hooked. Since then he has covered some 7000 miles, mainly as a delivery crew or skipper in the Baltic Sea, the western Atlantic and along the entire west coast of the United States including the Channel Island chain near his home in Los Angeles. His qualifications include a USCG Near Coastal Master's License and an Advanced Diver certification with PADI.

In 2017 he bought *Triteia*, a 52-year-old Alberg 30 which had been unused and unloved for the previous six years and set about refitting her as a bluewater cruiser. After four years' work his preparations were complete and in June 2020 James left Marina del Rey heading singlehanded for Honolulu, Hawaii some 2215 miles away. It was his first solo ocean crossing and the first leg of a planned 'very slow crawl around this amazing world we live in'.

On his 14th day at sea, with some 1000 miles still to sail, the rudder became detached from the rudder post. After inspecting the damage from the water and attempting various means of persuading his heavy, long-keel yacht to steer herself, it became clear that, at least downwind, she was not going to co-operate. To learn how James set up a jury steering system using a spinnaker pole lashed athwartships and a plastic drogue – a combination which, together with his Sailormat self-steering gear, steered *Triteia* for the next 18 days until James dropped anchor off Waikiki Beach – refer to his very readable and well-illustrated article in *Flying Fish 2021/2*. Calling for rescue and abandoning his vessel does not seem to have crossed his mind.

James Frederick with the Qualifier's Mug





*James at work in *Triteia*'s galley*

James is a writer and filmmaker with several books in print, a blog at www.svtriteia.com and more than 200 videos on his YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/sailorjames. He and *Triteia* are currently based in Hawaii and plan to explore the South Pacific later this year.



THE PORT OFFICER SERVICE AWARD

First presented in 2008, the Port Officer Service Award is made to one or more OCC Port Officers or Port Officer Representatives who have provided outstanding service to both local and visiting members, as well as to the wider sailing community.

As often happens, the Awards Judging Panel considered two Port Officers so outstanding that the decision was made to present two **Port Officer Service Awards**. With the AGM, Annual Dinner and Award presentations being held in Annapolis, it was fitting (though pure coincidence) that one should be local Port Officer **Westbrook Murphy**.

Westbrook started sailing on the Chesapeake Bay more than 70 years ago, but it was another 40 before he was introduced to ocean sailing by his friend and neighbour Wolfgang Reuter, with a voyage from Bermuda back to Annapolis aboard the latter's Bristol 45 *Ru'ah*. In due course Wolfgang and his partner Gemma Nachbar sponsored Westbrook's application for OCC membership, later arranging for him to succeed Wolfgang as Port Officer for Annapolis.

On learning of his win Westbrook wrote:

'The tradition continues. When the OCC created the Port Officer Service Award in 2008 Wolfgang was the first to receive it. The outstanding hospitality I've enjoyed from other previous winners Gary Naigle and Greta Gustavson (Norfolk, VA) and George and Nancy Marvin (Hobe Sound, FL) gave me additional examples to follow.' He added, 'My wife Cindy is not a sailor but she excels at a shore party so she

joins me in extending a warm welcome to OCC visitors. Instead of cruising the globe, we sit at home and let the world come to us. Many arrive as sailors and leave as friends.'

His and Cindy's hospitality is certainly appreciated by members, one of whom wrote, 'Westbrook and his wife Cindy provide exceptional service to OCC members. He not only welcomes members to use his private dock on the South River, often for extended periods, but they also extend generous hospitality and assistance.' Another added, 'During our summer sailing up the Eastern Seaboard of the United States we received a warm welcome from all the OCC Port Officers. They helped with research, showed us around, offered us lifts and/or the use of a vehicle and did our laundry, as well as feeding and entertaining us. Among them were Westbrook and Cindy, who made a difficult overseas trip much easier'.



*Cindy and Westbrook Murphy
with their daughter Cameron Heutill*



As noted opposite, it is not unusual for winners of the **Port Officer Service Award** to receive more than one nomination, but **Natasha Wolmarans'** six (one of them from four different crews) may well be a record. Natasha was appointed POR for Richards Bay, South Africa in October 2017 and qualified for Full Membership the following year with a passage to the Seychelles aboard the *Michelle Rose*. A very busy lady, who combines her Port Officer duties with a full-time job and family responsibilities, Natasha nevertheless makes a point of meeting every single new arrival, in the early morning if they've arrived overnight or in the evening after work. Then she assists them in any way she can – as she says, 'as a Port Officer, you're a jack of all trades'.

Among the praise on her nomination forms was, 'Natasha welcomed us to Richards Bay in South Africa very professionally and with lots of enthusiasm ... she goes the extra mile to find out answers and/or solutions if a request is beyond her immediate knowledge.' 'We had the best welcome on arrival in Richards Bay. We already miss Natasha and hope to see her again when we come back next time ... we do not want to deal with robots and fill forms in on the internet, we want this human connection and Natasha brought the best kind.'



**Natasha Wolmarans,
Port Officer for Richards
Bay, South Africa**

Another said, 'We, along with upwards of 60 yachts so far in this second year of Covid, have been welcomed to Richards Bay by Natasha. ... She was on the dock from 0600 until well after dark, all the while doing her normal day job. ... She has been present every day during our three weeks here, going around the boats making sure everyone has what they need and keeping the government and port officials on-side.' Another described how Natasha has become the 'face' of the OCC in Richards Bay, greeting every single foreign yacht – some

110 during 2021 – with sweets for sailing kids and cold beers for thirsty skippers, and handing out SIM cards to internet-starved cruisers. She has co-ordinated sea rescues, worked tirelessly as liaison between port authorities, Immigration and Customs officials, organised PCR tests during Covid times, taken people out shopping and even managed to get time off work to take members to a game park for the day.

Natasha told a South African sailing magazine about learning of her award:

'I was having a really bad day at work and I received this e-mail from the OCC congratulating me and I think I burst into tears, I was so, so excited and so, so happy and very proud. Not the fact that it adds something to my CV, but I had worked very hard for five years ... receiving an award of recognition means a lot to me.'



THE OCC EVENTS AND RALLIES AWARD

This award recognises any Member, Port Officer or Port Officer Representative who has organised and run an exceptional rally or other event.

The **Events and Rallies Award** makes a welcome return after not being awarded last year when Covid restrictions caused almost all the events and rallies planned for 2020 to be cancelled. It goes to **Colin Campbell**, Port Officer for Falmouth and **John Head**, Port Officer for neighbouring Helford River, with special mention of their wives **Rebecca** and **Sue**, for running one of the most enjoyable West Country Meets anyone could remember.

This Meet has a long history, having started out some 30 years ago as a Saturday evening dinner at the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club on August Bank Holiday weekend. It soon expanded to include a Sunday picnic on the Helford River, which was later changed to a bring-a-plate party on an upriver pontoon on the Fal. In 2020 it was cut back to a single,

socially-distanced, upriver gathering, but for 2021 Colin and John decided to expand it to three days, retaining the dinner and upriver party, after which the fleet would sail round to the Helford River for dinner at the Helford River Sailing Club.

Although by late August Covid restrictions had been largely relaxed this was far from certain a few months previously, so Colin, John, Rebecca and Sue had to start the forward planning well before there was any certainty the event would be able to go ahead. Their confidence was justified, as some 51 members and their guests attended over the three days with 14 boats heading upriver on Sunday. Everything ran with the smoothness only achieved by impeccable planning, and it was clear that everyone enjoyed themselves immensely throughout. An account of the Meet appeared in the December *Newsletter*.

John's initial response was, 'We are all in shock re winning. It is the first thing I have been awarded, other than a speeding fine, since kindergarten!'. Colin later followed this up with a more formal response from them both:

'Firstly, thank you for the 2021 Events and Rallies Award – neither of us have overloaded trophy cabinets so the plaques are all the more appreciated!

Given the uncertainty of the Covid situation last year it was a case of fingers crossed when we decided to hold the event and we wondered whether we would have enough interest given the uncertainty at the time. As it turned out, the weather was glorious, we were full to capacity at both dinners and Covid was largely forgotten for the three days of good company on and off the water. Special thanks must go to the RCYC and the HRSC – both did us proud by pulling out all the stops to make the dinners happen so soon after the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Preparations are already underway for this year's West Country Meet in August, so here's hoping we can capture some of the essence from last year's event.'

*Colin,
Rebecca,
Sue and
John,
the team
behind the
2021 West
Country
Meet*



THE AUSTRALIAN TROPHY

First awarded in 1990, the Australian Trophy was donated by Sid Jaffe, twice Rear Commodore Australia. Carved from a solid piece of teak, it is awarded for a voyage made by an Australian member or members which starts or finishes in Australia. The winner is decided by vote of the Australian membership.

The **Australian Trophy** for 2021 was awarded to **Barry Lewis** for his passage home from Italy to Australia and his meritorious seamanship in sailing *Risky Business*, a tender 44ft racing yacht, either singlehanded or with his wife Ros.

Having left New Zealand in May 2018 and sailed to the Mediterranean via the Torres Strait and Cape Town, Barry and Ros spent most of 2019 cruising the western Mediterranean. In November they reached Ostia Marina near Rome, from where Ros flew home to Australia. Leaving Ostia in December, Barry sailed solo to Agadir, Morocco to visit his sister, and then direct to Jamaica where Ros rejoined him. They continued to Cuba but, after just five days, were given 24 hours to leave. On being refused re-entry to Jamaica they continued to Panama, only to learn that the Canal was closed to smallcraft. When the Canal reopened they were ready, and were in the second group to go through. Their first stop once in the Pacific was the Marquesas where, after a short period of quarantine, they received permission to cruise French Polynesia. Then Tahiti called, and after passing Fiji and New Caledonia *Risky Business* reached Bundaberg, Queensland in October 2020, having logged 13,845 miles over the previous ten months. Turn to page 81 of this issue to read Barry's story in detail.

Barry's seamanship was demonstrated by his handling of a sometimes challenging 44ft fast racing yacht, designed by the late Joe Adams for a racing crew of seven. The aluminium hull has a retracting keel which Barry always keeps down while he is sailing, only raising it to enter Pacific atolls or shallow river entrances under power.

Barry was presented with the Trophy at a barbecue on 19th February organised

by Regional RC Scot Wheelhouse and held at the Kuring-gai Motor Yacht Club, Cottage Point, New South Wales.



*Scot
Wheelhouse
(centre)
presents the
Australian
Trophy
to Barry
Lewis, with
Barry's wife
Roslyn on
the left*

THE VERTUE AWARD

The Vertue Award is presented to a member in North America for an outstanding voyage or for service to the Club. Named after *Vertue XXXV*, in which OCC Founder Humphrey Barton crossed the North Atlantic in 1950, it was created in 2014 to commemorate the Club's 60th anniversary. Awardees are selected by North American Regional Rear Commodores.

The Vertue Award for 2021 went to **Moira and Dick Bentzel**, and was presented to them during the Maine Rally held at the Camden Yacht Club on 22nd August 2021, as already reported in the December *Newsletter*.

Moira and Dick served as Regional Rear Commodores for the North East USA from 2017 until 2020, and during that time worked tirelessly and enthusiastically to organise numerous highly successful events, luncheons and cruises, including both the OCC Maine Rally and Maine Mini-Cruise over several years. Joining in 2008 and 2010 respectively, Dick and Moira's qualifying passage in 2009 was from Beaufort, North Carolina to Puerto Rico aboard their Westerly Corsair 36, *Equinox*. They have since crossed the Atlantic in her twice, cruised up and down the Eastern Seaboard multiple times, and cruised Cuba as well as their home waters in Maine.

They gave generously of their time and knowledge to cruisers in both the Caribbean and the Pacific when Covid hit. As Moira describes it:

'We ended up helping skippers who were caught in the Caribbean as borders were being closed, often needing to depart without crew and without full passage preparation. Actions to assist were taking place in both Atlantic and Pacific waters and, as the OCC became more and more involved in an organised effort to help, other groups such as Noonsite, the Seven Seas Cruising Association and the US Coast Guard and Fleet Control became involved.

Weather conditions varied and some boats encountered engine failures or other mechanical or medical issues and were forced to turn



Dick and Moira Bentzel with both the permanent trophy and their 'keeper' plaque

round – sometimes having to go to a different country because they weren't allowed back into the one they had left from. Members started making lists of boats, crew members and when/where they hoped to leave from and head to, and at that point we became involved because there were incidents happening when co-ordinators in the UK were asleep. I would often receive the first e-mail when someone was in distress and needed assistance.'

Moira was part of the team which won the 2020 OCC Award for their response to the pandemic – see *Retreat from Paradise* in *Flying Fish 2020/2*.

In summary, and to quote Dale Bruce – herself Regional Rear Commodore NE USA from 2009 to 2014 – who made the presentation, 'Moira and Dick have made many outstanding contributions to the OCC and have served the Club with great distinction'.



THE OCC JESTER AWARD

Donated by the Jester Trust as a way to perpetuate the spirit and ideals epitomised by Blondie Hasler and Mike Richey aboard the junk-rigged Folkboat *Jester*, this award recognises a noteworthy singlehanded voyage or series of voyages made in a vessel of 30ft or less overall, or a contribution to the art of singlehanded ocean sailing. It was first presented in 2006 and is open to both members and non-members.

Despite some stiff competition, the **Jester Award** for 2021 went to **Katie McCabe**, who at the age of 14 became the youngest person to sail round Great Britain singlehanded.

A liveaboard since babyhood in a family of wooden boat enthusiasts, it was no surprise that Katie hankered for a boat of her own and achieved the ambition when only 12. But whereas most would have settled for a dinghy, Katie fell in love with a semi-derelict 26ft Morgan Giles-designed West Channel One Design built of mahogany on oak in 1950 and named *Falanda*. After nearly ten years ashore she was half full of fresh water and needed an immense amount of work.

After getting her towed home to the River Exe in south Devon, Katie spent every spare moment working on her. In 2020 she sailed solo to the Isles of Scilly and back, accompanied by her father in his own boat. When her plans to cross the Atlantic were firmly quashed by her mother she came up with another challenge – sailing singlehanded round Britain. While willing to cover her for singlehanded, her insurers were adamant that there had to be a 'responsible' adult nearby, so her father agreed to follow her at a distance of 1½ miles. In the meantime *Falanda* needed more work, plus Katie – by now aged 14 – had schoolwork to keep up with and had started a Yachtmaster theory course.

After a great send-off on 30th June 2021 Katie day-sailed east along the UK south coast to Cowes. Then a decision had to be made whether to press on to Brighton in a poor forecast or wait it out, a decision that lay firmly with Katie. She opted to continue, on what turned out to be a wet and windy passage, though the real challenge lay in the entry to Brighton Marina, which is narrow with a tight dog-leg. *Falanda* has the low topsides typical of her era and everything ended up soaked.

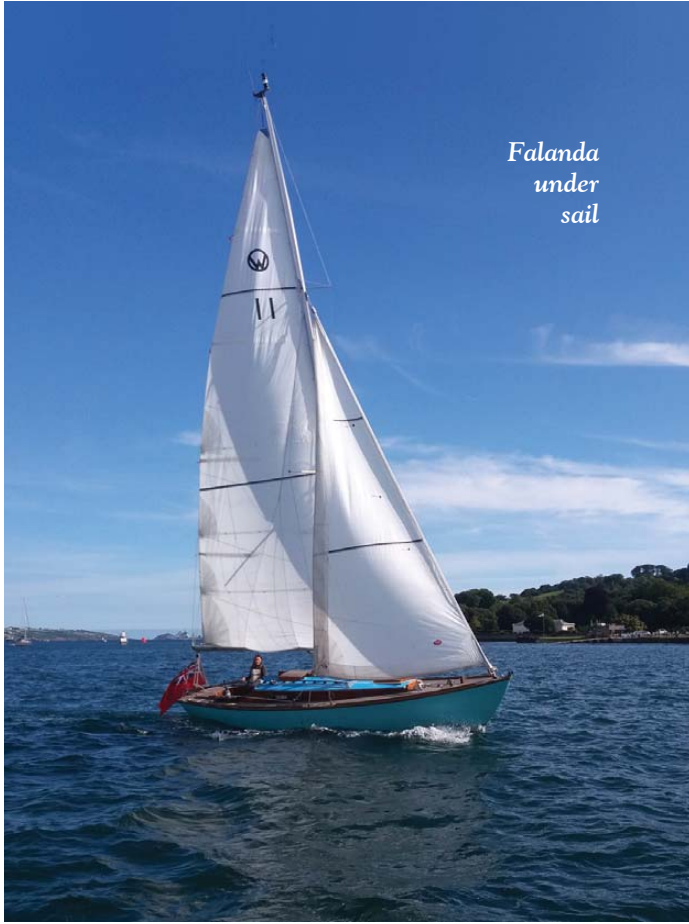
Next came the passage through the Dover Straits and round South Foreland in fog – *Falanda* does not have radar – with more of the same across the Thames Estuary. They encountered frustratingly light winds up the east coast, the longer overnight legs leaving both Katie and her father very tired. A pod of minke whales joined *Falanda* between Eyemouth and Arbroath, then it was north to Peterhead and finally west towards Inverness and the Caledonian Canal, a transit which took a little over two days in continuous rain.

In Oban there was another decision to make – whether to press on to Port Ellen on Islay about 65 miles southwest in the face of bad weather, or wait it out in Oban, possibly for weeks. Having made it to Port Ellen in strong winds and swell, Katie decided to go for the longest leg of the passage, the 175 miles round the Mulls of Kintyre and Galloway to Conwy in North Wales. Approaching the Mull of Galloway in 10ft waves it became necessary to reef, a relatively unfamiliar task for Katie, but she succeeded after a struggle only for the wind to die overnight. When it picked up again next day the mainsail tack shackle failed. Stopping at the Isle of Man wasn't an option due to Covid restrictions, but the two boats made it to Conwy after 32½ hours at sea, just ahead of more bad weather.



*Katie McCabe aboard
Falanda*

A week later they set off through the Menai Strait for Fishguard – shot through at 12 knots due to a glitch in Katie's tidal calculations – and briefly put into Port Dinorwic. Within hours they continued to Fishguard, a longish leg made longer when Katie's autopilot failed. It later proved to be full of water, but a replacement was sourced on a visit (by car) to Milford Haven.



*Falanda
under
sail*

The next leg took them across the mouth of the Bristol Channel, a beam reach in 20 knots of wind accompanied much of the way by a pod of dolphins, then round Land's End and into Newlyn. Back on familiar territory they called in at Fowey, Plymouth and Torquay before reaching *Falanda's* home port of Topsham on the River Exe and a great reception ... though left to herself Katie would have continued across the Channel to France!

One of Katie's reasons for making her trip was to increase awareness of ocean pollution and to raise money for two ocean charities: Sea Shepherd UK and Lonely Whale. She raised more than £16,000 for Sea Shepherd, while donations to Lonely Whale

were made direct. Katie kept a blog about her voyage at falandasailing.blogspot.com/ and maintains a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/falanda.sailing/.

Katie is modest about her achievement, which she describes as, 'essentially a load of individual day trips (along with a few overnights), so it didn't, and still doesn't, feel like a major expedition'. She now has her sights set on the 2023 Mini Fastnet and the 2025 Mini Transat, which has a minimum age limit of 18. This will mean a new and much faster boat of course, but with her track record she shouldn't have too much trouble finding a sponsor.



THE OCC AWARD

The Club's oldest award, dating back to 1960, the OCC Award recognises valuable service to the OCC or to the ocean cruising community as a whole.

Although separate OCC Awards can be made to members and non-members, on this occasion the two categories are combined as the recipients, **Team South Pacific 2020**,

comprises eight people of whom four are members while four are not. In alphabetical order they are **Liz Back** (non-member), **Juan Boschetti** (non-member), **John Hembrow** (member), **John and Lyn Martin** (members), **Viki Moore** (member), **Cynthia Rasch** (non-member) and **Sue Richards** (non-member).

The team was instrumental in supporting yachts caught in Covid limbo across the Pacific in 2020. Each worked on specific aspects, co-ordinating their efforts for the best outcomes, and without their various solutions cruisers would have faced serious issues. As it was, pragmatic workarounds ensured that yachts in Covid limbo had opportunities for safe haven in suitable ports during the southern cyclone season, even if not always in the place they might have chosen.

All the team members run businesses – marinas, rallies etc – and have many other commitments, yet all put aside their commercial interests and worked tirelessly to support the cruising community generally, whether clients or not. They used their knowledge, contacts and influence to gain safe outcomes for the benefit of all cruisers, even when those outcomes benefited competitor businesses, working collaboratively with the OCC and openly sharing contacts and information as situations evolved.

Liz Back is Australian Honorary Consul in Panama. Immediately the Canal closed to yachts she started working with the Canal Authorities to get it re-opened first to yachts from Australia and New Zealand and then to yachts of all nationalities. When necessary she also assisted with diplomatic liaisons to facilitate various unique crew clearance and quarantine solutions.

Juan Boschetti is General Manager of Shelter Bay Marina at the Caribbean end of the Panama Canal and our POR for Colón. All yachts arriving in Panama were subject to strict quarantine, during which he provided much-needed assistance – see page 85 of this issue. Juan was instrumental in supporting the re-opening of the canal to yachts and encouraging special consideration for pilots and line handlers.

John Hembrow from Australia is organiser of the Down Under Rally. John was tireless in seeking out suitable ports where crews could quarantine

Janet with Juan Boschetti, the only one of the eight OCC Award winners able to attend the presentation ceremony



John Hembrow,
recently
appointed
**Regional Rear
Commodore NE
Australia**



aboard, and later facilitated individual yacht arrivals. In collaboration with the OCC and with the

support of a senior politician, in later 2020 the 'safe haven' border exemption process was created, which stayed in place throughout 2021. John also successfully advocated for international cruisers stuck in Australia to have their visas extended and for the temporary import of yachts to be deferred.

John and Lyn Martin first cruised the South Pacific in the mid 1990s with their children, and reckon to have covered some 100,000 miles around the area in their 43ft Hartley Fijian *Windflower*, building up a vast store of local knowledge. Basing themselves in New Zealand, in 2015 they set up Sail South Pacific – www.sailsouthpacific.com – to make this knowledge available to others. Their established Kiwi marine industry contacts were invaluable when lobbying for yachts to be allowed entry to New Zealand and an exemption process was created with new, specific quarantine arrangements and approvals aboard.

Viki Moore is based in Christchurch, New Zealand where she is Port Officer for Lyttleton. She has a background in politics and sits on the board of Yachting New Zealand.



When NZ's borders shut in 2020 she was able to use her political experience and connections to help lobby officials and Members of Parliament on behalf of the sailors who were stuck in New Zealand or separated

from their boats. She set up a Facebook group and a database to help stranded yachties through the process of extending their visas and deferring import duty on their boats, and continues to lobby on behalf of those wanting to return to their vessels and those in the Pacific wanting to come to New Zealand. Last year she purchased the Island Cruising NZ rally business – www.islandcruising.nz – from John and Lyn Martin and is currently planning a rally to the South Pacific.

Cynthia Rasch is General Manager and CEO of Port Denarau Marina in Fiji, and was instrumental in the introduction of the 'Blue Lane' Covid Framework that saw Fiji re-open its maritime borders to foreign yachts in July 2020, offering safe haven to many cruisers caught in French Polynesia. She continues to liaise with the government as protocols change and evolve.

Of all the replies thanking the OCC for this Award Cynthia's, dated 25th January 2022, was the most heartfelt:

'At 7pm last night I sat at my desk drawing up the framework for Blue Lanes 3.0 and aligning it to the new changes that Fiji has recently



Viki Moore, recently appointed Regional Rear Commodore NZ and South Pacific

Cynthia Rasch with the Hon Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji



imposed. ... Exhausted, I wondered why I was still working on this, by now singlehandedly. It is without reward as no one knows who has done the legwork silently behind the scenes. ... It has taken hours of my personal time away from my family and friends and definitely given me several grey hairs that have reared prematurely!

Waking up to your letter this morning was so uplifting. It makes it all worthwhile to know that all the work hasn't been for nothing and that it has indeed made a difference far and wide. Thank you immensely for the recognition and the award, it is a great feeling to be recognised for my hard work.'

Sue Richards has been Editor of Noonsite for the past 14 years, but it was only really during the Covid pandemic that the true necessity of Noonsite emerged. With contacts worldwide and a vast library of formalities information, Sue worked hand-in-hand with the rest of Team South Pacific 2020 to document border changes and provide accurate information for boats needing to find a way through the maze of disruption.

Noonsite's timely information on port closures, entry restrictions and port re-openings began at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and continues to this day, a vital tool for worldwide cruisers. Noonsite's Pacific guidance echoed a similar operation for yachts crossing the Atlantic the previous summer – see *Retreat from Paradise in Flying Fish 2020/2*.



Sue Richards of Noonsite



THE VASEY VASE

Donated by past Commodore Tony Vasey and his wife Jill, and first awarded in 1997, this handsome trophy recognises an unusual or exploratory voyage made by an OCC member or members.

The Vasey Vase for 2021 was awarded to double-circumnavigators **Ginger and Peter Niemann**, though in any other year it might well have been the Barton Cup. The Cruising Club of America recognised their achievement with the highly prestigious Blue Water Medal.

*Ginger and Peter
Niemann receive
the Vasey Vase from
MC Janet Garnier*

Ginger and Peter began their liveaboard, cruising life in 2004 when they bought *Marcy*, a 47ft sloop. She was in disrepair, but they fixed her up and departed on a four-year 'southern' circumnavigation which took them westabout from their home in Seattle via the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn.

Highlights included the South Pacific islands, New Zealand, Australia and Madagascar, rounding Cape Horn and exploring the Beagle and Patagonian Channels, and returning home via Hawaii and Alaska.

Back in Seattle they recharged the cruising kitty, sold *Marcy* and replaced her with *Irene*, a 50ft ketch. In 2016 they departed again, this time eastabout via the Northwest Passage – only the 30th US-flagged vessel to complete the transit – down the US East Coast to Florida, across the Atlantic to the UK and then into the Mediterranean. They were in Turkey when Covid struck and, rather than remain trapped or leave *Irene* laid up, headed south for Port Said and the entrance to the Suez Canal. On emerging at



*Peter and Ginger's 50ft ketch Irene
in Canada's Georgia Strait
in September 2016*





Rowing out to Tioram Castle on Scotland's Loch Moidart in April 2019

Suez they set off direct for Batam, Indonesia more than 5000 miles away, where they had been granted permission to stay. Crossing the Arabian Sea and Bay of

Bengal in the monsoon season proved just as tough as they'd anticipated with rough seas most of the way, the silver lining being the decreased risk of pirates.

On arrival in Batam it transpired that their permission to stay in Indonesia had been revoked, and while nearby Singapore allowed them to stay, they were forbidden to leave their boat. They lived aboard *Irene* at the Changi Sailing Club for five months, totalling nearly 300 days aboard, and on 2nd February 2021 departed for the long passage home via Japan and the Aleutian Islands. They finally returned to their home port of Ballard, a seafaring district of Seattle, in August 2021.

While all long-distance voyages are challenging, Peter and Ginger's experience brings a new meaning to the word. In addition to the anticipated challenges of wind and weather, they persevered in the face of Covid, enduring extended on-board quarantine. To quote their Blue Water Medal citation, 'Their teamwork, courage, good humour, flexibility and innovative spirit are evidence of their exceptional personal and sailing mettle. During these uncertain and difficult times, their persistence and ingenuity are truly inspiring.'



THE OCC ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Presented for the first time this year, the OCC Environment Award was suggested by OCC Member Jonathan Webster as a memorial to HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. It recognises cruisers who contribute towards the environment, or cruisers who raise issues pertinent to the environment especially where ocean cruising is concerned.

The inaugural OCC Environment Award goes to **Richard and Stephanie Hackett** of *Sea Mercy*. This non-profit charity, whose motto is 'Sailing with a higher purpose', organises the delivery of humanitarian aid and disaster relief to the island

nations of the South Pacific. It currently specialises in distributing portable solar- and generator-driven desalination units and reusable water filters across this vast area in the wake of natural disasters, all delivered by a volunteer fleet of private yachts. Several OCC Members are involved, either making deliveries or as co-ordinators. Visit their website at www.seamercy.org/.

Richard Hackett told us more about Sea Mercy and its aims when thanking the OCC for the Award:



'It's such an honour for my wife and me to be awarded the Ocean Cruising Club Environment Award. With so many environmental needs around the world, and so many incredible organisations doing their best to address them, this truly is an honour. As I told the Commodore when he notified us of this award, it should really be going to all the Sea Mercy volunteer chaptains who are on the front lines for us, but my request for an additional 350 individual plaques to be mailed out was politely refused!

Although we often get the majority of the kudos and recognition for all the incredible work our volunteers do across the South Pacific, we've also been nearly keel-hauled a few times by our island nation partners for some unwise, although well-intentioned, decisions our captains have made on our behalf without prior approval. Receiving an award like this reminds us that it's worth the risks – besides, they say love covers over a multitude of sins, and we love our volunteer captains and crew.

Although Sea Mercy programmes focus on disaster response, health care and economic development, our goal is to 'do no harm, while doing good'. Since its founding ten years ago Sea Mercy has responded to five Category 5 cyclones in the South Pacific, and with each disaster we learn something new about how we can improve on our efforts. One such area was addressing the ecological disasters that international aid organisations were creating while providing emergency drinking water ... unfortunately they were unknowingly doing harm, while doing good.

Delivering emergency food, shelter and clean drinking water are generally the top three goals of disaster response agencies, and their solution for the latter is to deliver tens of thousands of plastic water bottles to the affected island communities. Unfortunately, once the contents are consumed the majority end up scattered across the island and floating inside their reefs for decades to come. We knew there had to be a better way and started putting it in motion.

With financial and in-kind support from the yachting community, we began collecting solar desalination units at our base at Port Denarau, Fiji. With a little training these portable units proved to be self-sustaining, produced enough clean water for a village, and could be delivered and set up by our volunteer vessels to deliver clean drinking water to stricken



Jonathan Robinson explaining how to operate and maintain a Sea Mercy portable solar desalination unit

A completed solar desalination unit ready to start work



communities within days of a disaster. When the need has passed we pick them up, have them refurbished and put them back in storage for the next emergency. They eliminate the need to deliver plastic water bottles wherever Sea Mercy vessels respond.

It obviously didn't need a rocket scientist to come up with this solution – we probably couldn't find one in our volunteer fleet even if we tried! – it just required someone to question what is viewed as normal and think outside the box for a better solution. If you think about it, that pretty much describes a yacht skipper, always needing to find a way to fix something that was designed by someone who did not truly understand how it was going to be used in real life.

Sea Mercy's motto of 'Sailing with a greater purpose' is really about empowering our volunteer captains to do just that wherever they sail – to question the norm, and then work with the Sea Mercy leadership in developing new ways to help others. This partnership of minds and purpose has allowed Sea Mercy and the yachting community to make a difference wherever we sail in the world.'



THE OCC SEAMANSHIP AWARD

Donated by Past Commodore John Franklin and first presented in 2013, this award recognises feats of exceptional seamanship and/or bravery at sea. It is open to both members and non-members.

The OCC Seamanship Award for 2021 goes to singlehanders **George Arnison** of *Good Report* and **Duncan Lougee** of *Minke*, in recognition of their outstanding seamanship during the 2021 Jester Azores Challenge – jesterchallenge.wordpress.com/ – from

Plymouth to Praia da Vitória on the island of Terceira in the Azores. Both were adamant that Roger Taylor also deserved considerable credit for co-ordinating the rescue, as for the first five days they had no direct communication whenever darkness or weather conditions forced the two boats apart – it was only through text messages to and from Roger that they could check each other's position and re-establish contact. Roger also provided advice and encouragement and – although Duncan and George never required their help – liaised with the maritime authorities who were monitoring the situation.

On 1st July *Minke*, a 25ft Folkboat, was lying to a drogue in gale-force conditions 380 miles northeast of Terceira, the northeasternmost of the nine Azorean islands. *Good Report*, a solidly-built 30ft 9in wooden yacht, was some 40 miles to leeward, hove-to and also reporting force 8–9. That afternoon *Minke's* rudder became detached from the trailing edge of her keel, leaving the yacht helpless.

George received a satellite message from Roger asking if he could go to *Minke's* assistance, and immediately started the long beat to windward in search of the crippled boat. In deteriorating conditions *Good Report* encountered problems of her own

Minke under tow. Good Report was under sail, not power



George Arnison, joint winner of the Seamanship Award, with MC Henry DiPietro





*Good Report on arrival at Praia da Vitória.
Photo John Willis*

when the genoa furling line parted, but George continued their beat to windward, sometimes heaving-to in the gale-force conditions. It took him two days to reach *Minke*.

On arrival George could see that Duncan had succeeded in removing the damaged rudder and was attempting to sail using a jury-rigged replacement, and for a while both boats continued towards Terceira. However, after a few hours the Folkboat's emergency rudder failed

and George stood by while Duncan sought an alternative solution. Eventually he managed to get *Minke* sailing in roughly the right direction by balancing the sail plan, but with no rudder *Minke* would only track at around 40° to the wind. Duncan sailed *Minke* 240 miles south in gradually easing conditions, with *Good Report* remaining nearby. On 6th July, with several hundred miles remaining and the wind direction no longer favourable, the two men decided on a tow.

George and *Good Report* towed *Minke*, under sail alone, for 232 of the remaining 289 miles in a range of wind conditions, replacing broken tow lines as necessary and even using a spinnaker for 6½ hours and 23 miles, though rough weather, including a force 9 gale, repeatedly forced both boats to heave-to.

Perhaps the final word should go to George Arnison:

‘The Jester Azores Challenge turned out to be quite an adventure, though possibly not in the way I had anticipated. It certainly tested boat and skipper alike, and both *Minke* and *Good Report* demonstrated the ocean seaworthiness of well-found small boats of traditional long keel design. I think Duncan, Roger and I all took particular satisfaction that we were able to uphold the Jester tradition of self-reliance and good seamanship to get *Minke* safely home without the need for external assistance.

A friend told me that he could find very few records of one sailing boat towing another, under sail, for any distance, so I thought it might be worth recording that of the nine days and 681 logged miles that it took us to make Praia da Vitória, *Good Report* towed *Minke* for 3 days and 8 hours at an average speed of around 2.9 knots and in conditions from force 3 to force 6, all under sail with no use of the engine. On 11th July we crossed the Jester Azores Challenge finish line at Praia da Vitória like that, together and without assistance.’

THE OCC LIFETIME AWARD

First presented in 2018 and open to both members and non-members, the OCC Lifetime Award recognises a lifetime of noteworthy ocean voyaging or other significant achievement in the sailing world.

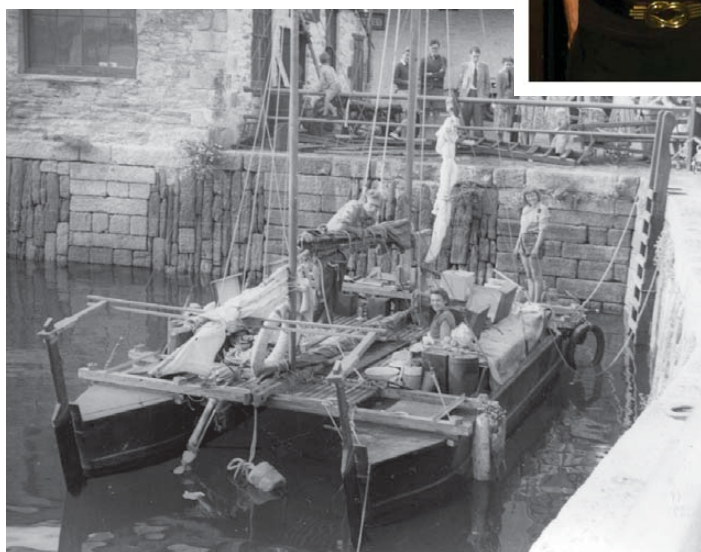
The Lifetime Award for 2021 was made posthumously to James Wharram, who sadly passed away on 14th December 2021 at the age of 93 – see page 231 of this issue.

Although James came from a non-sailing background – he was born in Manchester in 1928 – he became fascinated by Polynesian double canoes after reading Éric de Bisschop's *The Voyage of the Kaimiloa* as a teenager. Starting small in the early 1950s, one of his first designs was the 23ft 5in *Tangaroa* in which he, Ruth Merseburger and Jutta Schultze-Rhonhof sailed from Falmouth to Trinidad via the Canaries in 1955. There they built the 40ft *Rongo* in which they sailed north up the US East Coast to New York, where he was invited to appear on a TV quiz show together with mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary. Sir Edmund ensured that James won, enabling him to buy a radio for the passage back to the UK, the first such voyage to be made by a multihull.

Nearly all James's voyages were made aboard vessels that he designed and built himself with the help of his largely female workforce – he was very aware that most Wharram catamarans were built by amateurs and provided economical entry-level cruising for many with limited finances. Despite production catamarans now outnumbering them, Wharram designs



*Hanneke Boon
receiving the Lifetime
Cruising Award on
behalf of the late
James Wharram*



*Tangaroa
in Falmouth
in 1955*

maintain a loyal following and have made some notable voyages, including that of Rory McDougall who received the 2015 Jester Medal for circumnavigating aboard *Cooking Fat*, a 21ft Wharram-designed Tiki.

In addition to seven Atlantic crossings – see *Two Girls Two Catamarans* (1968) and *People of the Sea* (2020) – during the 1990s James, his long-time companions Ruth Merseburger and Hanneke Boon and their son Jamie, plus other crew for various legs, made a five-year circumnavigation aboard his 63ft *Spirit of Gaia* – one of the larger vessels to have transited the world's two major canals propelled only by outboards. At the age of 80 James made one last notable voyage in the Pacific, the 4000 mile Lapita Voyage, to demonstrate that the canoes of the Polynesians were capable of migrating from southeast Asia to the Pacific islands, despite these lying to windward. James remained active as a designer until shortly before his death. He was also an authority on traditional design and construction methods worldwide, always viewed with a designer/builder's eye rather than from a more academic perspective. Finally, he was a fine writer, writing several books and many magazine articles. His autobiography *People of the Sea*, written with Hanneke Boon, was reviewed in *Flying Fish* 2021/1 and is highly recommended.

Hanneke was invited to attend the Annual Dinner and accept the Award on behalf of James, and spoke about him and their time together:

'Following James's death I was kept very busy and received hundreds of messages of condolence from all round the world. Then I was asked by German friends if I would like to join them on their 65ft Wharram catamaran to cross the Atlantic in January. It did not take me long to decide this would give me time to adjust to a new life without James, to reconnect with the ocean and have peace to remember our life

*Spirit of Gaia, aboard which James, Ruth, Hanneke
and their son Jamie circumnavigated in the 1990s*



*James in 2015
checking the lines
of their latest
design, the 24ft
Mana. Hanneke
always made the
models*



together whilst
watching the
ocean waves
and starry skies.

The day
before our departure from Lanzarote I received an e-mail from the OCC
telling me James had been chosen to receive a posthumous Lifetime
Award. I know James would have been delighted as he really valued
the Award of Merit that he received in 2013 and which led to us both
joining the OCC.

However, his response to the award would have been that he did not
achieve what he did alone. To the sailing world James Wharram was a
pioneer of sailing catamarans, the vocal, charismatic motivator whose
name became a legend, but he would always admit that he would not
have become this without his two lifetime partners and soul mates,
Ruth and myself.

James' early, pioneering voyages in the 1950s on Polynesian-
inspired double canoes were achieved with the strong support of Ruth
Merseburger (later Wharram), who was his navigator both at sea
and in his life path. Throughout her 62 years with James she was the
person who organised the business side of things, who sent out the
plans, communicated with all the Wharram builders and managed the
finances for building new boats. She was James' rock and the mother
of the Wharram world. She died in 2013 at the age of 92.

From the early 1970s I also became part of the Wharram team, adding
my drawing and designing skills. For nearly 50 years James and I worked
as co-designers, co-researchers in our studies of canoe craft and sailing
partners. My instructional drawings were essential in enabling our
builders to create their beautiful boats. The last thing we worked on
together was our autobiography, *People of the Sea*, which was published
in October 2020. With its appearance James had achieved everything
he wanted to do in this life.

So I would like to accept this award on behalf of the Wharram team
of James, Ruth and myself, for our joint achievements. I will of course
continue to design and, via our website at www.wharram.com/, to
support our many builders.'

THE OCC BARTON CUP

The Club's premier award, named after OCC Founder Humphrey Barton and donated by his adult children, twins Peter Barton and Pat Pocock, the Barton Cup was first presented in 1981. It recognises an exceptional or challenging voyage or series of voyages made by an OCC member or members.

The very popular winner of the **Barton Cup** for 2021 was **Dustin Reynolds** for his 7½ year solo circumnavigation starting and ending in Kona, Hawaii. 2019 Barton Cup winner Randall Reeves was invited to introduce Dustin to the audience and to make the presentation – of the very Cup he would have received himself two years ago had the 2020 Annual Dinner not been cancelled – see *Flying Fishes* 2020/1, 2020/2 and 2021/1.



*Dustin Reynolds, winner of the Barton Cup for 2021,
with Randall Reeves, winner for 2019*



In Randall's words:

'Dustin came to sailing in an unusual way. One night in October 2008 he was riding his motorcycle not far from his home on the Big Island of Hawaii when he was hit head-on by a drunk driver. Among other injuries, that accident violently

Dustin tells those present about his circumnavigation

severed his left arm and mangled his left leg beyond recovery. In a hospital bed hours later, doctors gave Dustin the choice of spending his last few minutes with family or undergoing a difficult surgery that they thought probably wouldn't work. He chose surgery and he survived.

Three years later Dustin was without money, job or purpose. Then one day he discovered a circumnavigator's list on the Joshua Slocum Society website. He noted that no person like himself had made the record books and suddenly he had a goal – he would somehow buy a boat and be the first double-amputee to sail solo around the world. Problem: he didn't know how to sail. Solution: YouTube and books.

In June of 2014 Dustin cast off alone from Kona, Hawaii in a 46-year-old Alberg 35 named *Rudis* with \$20 to his name. His first ocean passage ever was from Hawaii to Palmyra, nearly 1000 miles. The following year in Thailand he sold *Rudis* (she was very old and her engine had died – in fact, she soon sank on her mooring) and bought a 1983-built Bristol 35.5 which he named *Tiama*.

Illustrative of Dustin's grit is that *Tiama* hadn't the luxury of self-tailing halyard or mainsail reefing winches. How do you grind and tail a main up the mast or secure a reef to the boom with a single arm? Answer: you tail with your teeth! Throughout 2018 and 2019 Dustin sailed with his teeth across the Indian Ocean, stopping in Sri Lanka, the Chagos Archipelago, Madagascar and Mozambique before reaching South Africa. In the last of these he salvaged an old self-tailer and then was gifted a self-tailing mast winch by the Royal Cape Yacht Club.

Dustin aboard Tiama, the yacht in which he completed his circumnavigation



*Dustin
welcomed
home
in the
traditional
Hawaiian
manner*



Dustin completed his amazing solo circumnavigation via the Panama Canal, returning to Kona in December 2021, 7½ years after departure.

Equally as impressive as his voyage, however, is how Dustin undertook it. According to one of his nominators for this award, “Being alone and moving slowly allowed Dustin to become a part of the communities he visited, and in so doing he accumulated a wealth of experiences that most circumnavigators can only dream of. As he has travelled, Dustin has always been quick to help others, and in turn he has been the recipient of a generosity without which this incredible life experience would not have been possible.” In the words of another, “Dustin has given many motivational talks during his circumnavigation, demonstrating by his own example that almost any obstacle can be overcome with determination and perseverance. Following his accident and slow recovery his aim was to seek a different way of life, and the life he chose is an inspiration to all of us.”

On a personal note, I’ve spent a few cold, dirty nights at the mast attempting to convince the mainsail to play nicely ... and I’ve often wished I had a third arm and leg. Given that, I’m even more impressed that Dustin had the courage to dream so big and follow it through.’

Dustin received the OCC Seamanship Award for 2018 for ‘his outstanding courage and tenacity as a double-amputee in setting out to circumnavigate alone’, at which time he was about halfway around the world, followed by an OCC Challenge Grant to assist with his expenses. Turn the page to read *Sailing Around the World Alone, Part 1*, Dustin’s account of the first half of his unique circumnavigation, and visit his website/blog at thesinglehandedsailor.com/.

