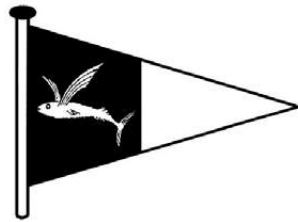


THE OCEAN CRUISING CLUB

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS



Researched and written by

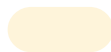
Tony Vasey

Commodore 1994 – 1998





Humphrey Barton – the Founder



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INTRODUCTION

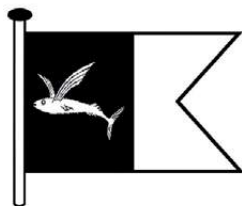
It is important that the first 50 years of the Club's history should be recorded, as if it were not written now much would be lost. Our thanks go to past Commodore and Club Archivist, Tony Vasey, for researching, collating, recording and writing this publication, and also to Anne Hammick and her team for assisting with the editing. Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to an anonymous member whose generous donation has gone a long way towards covering the cost of this publication.

Much has changed since Humphrey Barton set sail in 1952. We only need to think of modern methods of communication, electronic navigational systems, reliable inboard diesel engines, high-tech protective clothing, sail handling, electronic and wind vane self-steering systems, together with the near doubling of the average size of boats crossing the oceans.

It is interesting to speculate what the next 50 years may bring. However, going to sea in a small boat is, in some ways, still as hazardous as it was 50 years ago, so perhaps not much has really changed during that time. Sailing is still the challenge and adventure which it has always been and hopefully will long remain.

I trust that there will continue to be a need for the Ocean Cruising Club to provide worldwide friendship and support for ocean sailors, both past and present.

Alan John Taylor
Commodore
Ocean Cruising Club



FOREWORD

My connections with the activity of ocean cruising go back some way and by 1954 fortunately included enough long distances to allow me to become a founder member of this Club. In those long ago days amateur voyages across stretches of ocean were considered as splendid adventures, verging sometimes on the perilous. In some respects and in some vessels the perils and triumphs were totally real and many adventurous ocean cruisers were properly lauded. In fact at the early gatherings of the Club it was commonplace to hear the remark, 'As I said in my book ...'.

The origin of the Club rests almost entirely with the legendary Humphrey Barton, a man of consummate seamanship and one of nature's born leaders, and with such a man at the helm it would have been quite unreasonable for me not to have volunteered at once for his new club. When one reads of the many famous people who flocked to become early members it shows that there was a real need for such a fraternity, and I suspect a great number saw Hum Barton's Ocean Cruising Club as their natural home. Latterly, of course, the name Hum embraces his wife Mary, his successor as our Commodore and our Admiral, who led the club forward with style and panache through occasionally difficult head winds.

The establishment of the OCC has probably done more to open up the oceans to the sailing yacht than any other process. From the start the membership conditions suggested in themselves that ocean sailing was a practical possibility not restricted to the supermen and women of legend with their publishers. Next one must credit the club and its members with their influence on the design and development of the yachts themselves – hand in hand, it has to be said, with those for offshore racing. This development of hulls and equipment has been matched with that of communication and navigation. Once it was not uncommon for less funded yachts to put to sea with a piece of wood with three nails on it representing the altitude of the pole star on the latitude of, say, Barbados. Now, with GPS, it is difficult not to know where we are to within a few yards at all times.

It comes as a surprise to realise that the Ocean Cruising Club has been in existence and growing healthily for some fifty years, during which it has acquired a pleasant degree of veneration. And it is gratifying that Tony Vasey, a former Commodore, has recorded this period so diligently. It must have been a labour of love, with half his sources at sea at any time and the other half offering the embellished memories of advancing years. Dare I suggest that he has 'Volume I' printed on the spine, for this Club is not just to be a 50 year wonder.

Colin Mudie
Founding Rear Commodore

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

History is written between the lines whilst hopes and intentions are to be found on the pages of formal documents. Real history is revealed in letters, minute sheets and in conversations, but it then becomes a matter of interpretation. To record events purely from agendas and minutes would be dull indeed, but once one places a construction on records it is no longer objective. I have tried to steer a course between the two in as light a vein as possible, but in doing so I do not wish to imply any lack of the importance of certain events. I have strived to be as impartial as possible, especially when describing controversial issues such as events during the 'Difficult Times', but to gloss over these would not do justice to the record or the Club. Inevitably I will have construed certain issues in a way that does not please everyone; if this gives offence it was not intended, and all I can offer is that they take advantage of Colin Mudie's suggestion in his Foreword and in due course write Volume II.

The development of the Club in its early days was relatively easy to follow, since it was a small organisation and people joined because they wanted the close association with like-minded fellows. Although it may sound trite, life was at a much slower pace 50 years ago and expectations were more modest. Relative costs and inflation were both low, so when initially all posts of responsibility were voluntary, the Club could be run on a few hundred pounds a year. In many ways it was its very success which caused problems with its organisation and running. What worked for a few, mostly known to each other, did not necessarily work for many hundreds and the Club found it difficult to adjust. Furthermore, the far-flung nature of the membership creates an inevitable time lag between decisions and results, which makes it uniquely hard to administer.

In those early days the Club was dominated by a handful of colourful personalities whose names appeared regularly, either as part of the organisation or out on the oceans shaping its character. It was easy then to quote those of influence, but they are now so numerous that it is difficult to decide whom to cite personally. The more people who are named the greater the danger of giving offence by omission, but I cannot quote those who do not write and those who write well tend to get priority. We have doubtless missed hearing thrilling tales of derring-do from those too modest to commit themselves to paper, but that silent majority have done just as much for the Club by flying its burgee on many an adventure. If anyone whom I have left out feels neglected I apologise, but whereas a litany of personalities might satisfy many, it would certainly bore even more.

Tony Vasey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mary Barton's encyclopaedic knowledge of the Club has been invaluable and her encouragement throughout had been a great source of support. Rosemary and Colin Mudie's recall of Club activities in the early days has been of great value and their shrewd advice on certain sensitive areas has been most useful.

Without the help of Founder Member the late Chich Thornton, who provided the only known copies of the first two Members Lists, there would have been serious gaps, and the very much extant Founder Ian Nicolson has been a constant source of information on those same early years. Another Founder, Bill Wise, recalls to our benefit the days before the Club was formed, and his records of early events have been invaluable. I also received much useful information on the early transatlantic races from Founder Hugh Austin. Of the several other Founders who have been of help I must especially thank Harvey Loomis, both for his professional advice and for much valuable information on famous early American members. Another Founder from the States, Walter Flower, provided invaluable details of the start of the Club over there. And also from the States I must thank Peter Passano who, together with CCA Historian Bob Drew, was most helpful, especially with details of the Blue Water Medal.

Mike Richey's extensive writing has been a rich source of both inspiration and quotations, not to mention his remarkable recollection of events 50 years ago. I am grateful to all those whom I have been able to quote, especially Arthur Beiser who, in Chapter VIII, has brought us up to date in his thinking on *The Proper Yacht*. My thanks also to the several members and non-members who have allowed me to use extracts from their books. Past Secretary Jeremy Knox was most meticulous in checking on events during his tenure, and Mike Pocock, my successor as Commodore, has given much useful advice on the accuracy of the manuscript. John Maddox had kept me straight on events in Australia and throughout I have had the support and backing of our present Commodore.

The archives of *Yachting World* and *Yachting Monthly* magazines have been invaluable sources of information, and I am greatly indebted to Andrew Bray and Paul Gelder, their respective editors, for allowing me access to them. I must particularly thank Anne Hammick for her rigorous copy-editing, and her band of dedicated proof-readers for helping to ensure that you are distracted by the minimum of typographical errors. Last, and by no means least, I must thank my wife Jill, who has borne the tedium of checking my writing throughout and who did much of the research necessary to compile the rather tedious lists which are required in any history.

Tony Vasey

I – THE BEGINNING

Yachting Monthly, November 1953

'In order that a record may be kept of long distance voyages in small craft, I suggest that an ocean cruising club be formed. The members can be of any nationality and the only qualification need be amateur status and a port to port passage of not less than 1000 miles in a vessel of, say, not more than 65ft LOA. The subscription should be nominal – say 10s.6d. a year, and there should be a general meeting and dinner once a year in London in the winter. If all those interested in forming such a club would write to me, I will arrange a meeting in November or December.'

4 Quay Hill

Lympington, Hants **Humphrey Barton**

In 1949 **Humphrey Barton (Hum)*** was invited by **Jack Rawlings*** to skipper his radical new Laurent Giles-designed aluminium ocean racer, *Gulvain*, in the 1950 Bermuda and Transatlantic races. The boat was to be shipped to New York but Hum eschewed the steamer passage and, as he put it, somewhat tongue in cheek, decided to buy a new boat, sail her to America and sell her to 'help the export drive'. He was then a well-known surveyor for Laurent Giles and Partners and had also earned a name as an intrepid sailor, having won the coveted Royal Cruising Club Challenge Cup for a pre-war passage in the now famous *Dyarchy*. He had sailed thousands of miles on yacht deliveries and ocean races but had not made an ocean passage of any great length.

Hum's pocket and time were both short, but fortunately he learned that Elkins of Christchurch were building a Laurent Giles designed 25ft Vertue class boat, the thirty-fifth of that enduring line of tough little yachts. He snapped her up and was thus committed to his venture, but how many would-be ocean sailors over the years have shared the feelings that he then admits to – alternately thrilled and appalled at the prospect of his first ocean crossing.

Some years earlier he had done a survey for a young man named **Tim Heywood**

* Throughout this account, the first occurrence of a member's name in the text is indicated by bold type.

who had bought a dilapidated fishing boat. They became friends and subsequently Tim helped Hum with several yacht deliveries and crewed him on many offshore races. Tim was Hum's first choice of crew for the Atlantic venture but he had to cry off at the last minute due to illness. Instead Hum took the charming but garrulous Irishman, Kevin O'Riordan, affectionately known as KOR. He turned out to be the ideal crew, quite imperturbable and one who enjoyed himself most when conditions were at their worst. He was an experienced sailor but his greatest claim to fame was having rowed a dinghy round the Isle of Wight, such was the measure of his toughness. Tim recovered in time to join Hum in *Gulvain* to race back across the Atlantic, thus cementing a life-long friendship. Also aboard *Gulvain* was an 18-year-old American by the name of **Harvey Loomis** who, with the summer off between school and university, was setting out on his first ocean crossing.

Pressure of time forced Hum and KOR to take the low-powered steamer route and, since Hum was committed to meeting *Gulvain* at the beginning of June, he had to leave earlier than was wise in such a small boat. They had an uneventful passage but with a preponderance of strong headwinds until they approached the Gulf Stream, 44 days out. They then got caught in a very deep depression which brewed up winds of hurricane force, and the boat suffered a bad knockdown which split the coachroof from end to end (see illustration page 8). Three days later they groped their way into New York harbour in fog and sailed their brave little engineless boat up the East River to City Island, arriving half an hour before *Gulvain*.

The story of the crossing has been enshrined in the classic book *Vertue XXXV*, also published in the United States under the title *Westward Crossing*. It contains some delightful vignettes that contrast so starkly with ocean sailing today. While on passage down Channel they heard of their progress on the BBC news, and such was the rarity of their voyage that they were able to inveigle bonded stores – against customs regulations as they were less than 40 tons. Later they closed Prawle Point and hoisted a message to Lloyd's Signal Station, and they never failed to make a flag signal to any passing ship so that their progress was regularly reported to Lloyd's of London. Yet, despite the brave nature of the adventure that led directly to the formation of the Ocean Cruising Club, Hum admits to feelings which many an ocean sailor keeps in his heart, that 'The ideal cruise requires a good yacht, pleasant company, and a strange coast with plenty of islands and rocks'.

While there had been a smattering of ocean crossings before the Second World War, the austerity of post-war Britain put the damper on deep-sea cruising for some years thereafter. Materials were scarce, money was short and food rationing

made it almost impossible to victual a yacht for a long passage. There was also the danger of mines, which made for dull coastal sailing if you followed the swept channels and markedly less dull if you didn't. Only the most persistent were intrepid enough to brave both the rigours of the ocean and the strictures of finance, with the consequence that most of their boats were minute by present day standards. Hum wished to show, and certainly did, that it was the design of a yacht rather than its size which made it suitable for ocean sailing. His little *Vertue*, with a waterline length of only 21ft, had had the wind ahead of the beam for most of the voyage and yet she averaged 3 knots. And such was her toughness that she weathered a hurricane and still carried on despite considerable structural damage. After the 84 day crossing of **John Buckley** in 1870 in a converted 20ft ship's boat, the 79 day passage by **Frederick Norman** in the 16ft *Little Western* in 1881, and **Ole Brude**'s remarkable 49 day crossing in the 18ft *Vraad* in 1904, *Vertue XXXV* was the next recorded boat to make a non-stop east-to-west crossing by the northern route, and was by far the fastest.

Paradoxically, the OCC was born more of racing than cruising. While there was a dearth of ocean cruising boats, by contrast, ocean racing got off to an early start after the war. The reason for this may be that those who could afford to race could not afford the considerably longer time involved in ocean cruising. Also a number of racing boats were either club-owned or run by the Services and not available for extended cruising. Of course the restrictions caused by the war had nothing like the same debilitating effect on post-war sailing in America, where there was also a much longer tradition of long distance sailing. Yachts had been racing to Bermuda since 1913, and the Transpac Race had been held for many years. They were also much better placed geographically than the British, with a 1000 mile littoral with the Pacific, which generally lived up to its name, and a similar shoreline facing the North Atlantic. The latter favoured the deep-sea passage makers, with a weather shore from which to make their offing and both the Gulf Stream and the Westerlies to help them on their passage.

So in 1950 it was a much more experienced US racing fleet that came to the line for the Bermuda Race. With them were *Gulvain* with Hum as skipper, and two much smaller British boats which had also been shipped across and which were to make their mark on ocean racing in the way that Hum did on cruising. They were the 31ft *Samuel Pepys*, skippered by that hard racing man **Erroll Bruce**, and *Cohoe* owned and skippered by the equally hard driver, **Adlard Coles**. *Cohoe* had been slightly shorter, but had had her bow extended in order to comply with the minimum permitted length of 30ft. Laurent Giles were anxious to know how their new boat had fared on her first race, so Hum wired them from Bermuda: 'No mistakes, no mishaps, came third'. The Royal Ocean

Racing Club (RORC) had organised a transatlantic race to follow the Bermuda race, but only five boats came to the line, including the three from Britain. The crews of these three yachts, and those of four of the five boats which entered the next transatlantic race in 1952, were to become founder members of the OCC almost to a man.

Within a year or two of *Vertue XXXV*'s crossing there began a trickle of little boats cruising the oceans. Indeed, one sage prophesied that by the mid-50s there would be up to six yachts a year crossing the Atlantic. Hum set about collecting statistics of all known transatlantic crossings, which resulted in his most interesting book, *Atlantic Adventurers*, published in 1953. There is little doubt that this analysis turned his thoughts to the formation of a club for ocean sailors and it is known that his first idea was to form a 'transatlantic' club. However he soon realised that to restrict it to those who had crossed the Atlantic would exclude many who had made equally remarkable voyages in other oceans, so he settled on a minimum distance of 1000 nautical miles, which stands to this day. He later decided on a maximum length of 70ft, since several of his friends had recently crossed in *Latifa* of that length and he did not wish to exclude them.

Hum's next step was to write to the English and American yachting magazines inviting anyone who qualified and wished to join such a fraternity to contact him. To his surprise he received about 40 replies, and admits that he was at a loss to know what to do next until he discussed his project with his old friend and racing rival, Adlard Coles, who suggested a meeting at the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) Club in London. Hum booked a room there for 27 January 1954 inviting all those who had replied, and again advertised in the yachting press. He also invited the editor of *The Daily Telegraph* as he felt that the possible formation of such a club would have national interest.

Some 30 people expressed an intention to come to the meeting but in the event 23 turned up. The editor of *Yachting World*, **Teddy Haylock**, came along, as did the sub-editor of the *Telegraph*. Hum made his proposals along the lines that he had outlined in his invitation and, not surprisingly, these were unanimously agreed. Eight folk volunteered to form a committee and a ballot was held to decide on flag officers. Hum had studied the rules of several of the clubs of which he was a member and gleaned what he thought suitable for his proposed club. These he produced as a draft, pending committee examination, and they turned out to be remarkably prescient as most of them stand to this day. At first it was considered that no subscription would be necessary, but then it was realised that there would inevitably be small secretarial expenses so a sum of £1 per annum was agreed. The question of a burgee was discussed and someone suggested a flying fish. **Colin Mudie**, being a naval architect, was invited to design one for the Committee's approval. On his way home to Lynton Hum

met his friend **Mostyn Williams** who until recently had been the secretary of the Royal Lymington Yacht Club (RLymYC). Without hesitation, and with very little idea what he was taking on, Mostyn agreed to become the secretary of the new club and carried those duties voluntarily for the next three years. Thus, within the space of a few hours the club had a committee and flag officers, a secretary, 23 members, and almost a burgee.

The meeting is perhaps best summed up by Teddy Haylock, who gave the new club a whole page in the next edition of *Yachting World*:

'A MEETING was called at the RNVR Club on January 27 at the instigation of Humphrey Barton, with the object of forming a club, the membership of which should be confined to yachtsmen who had sailed across oceans. Some thirty people who could be traced were invited and a good many of them turned up. The club was formed and membership was restricted to those who have made a port-to-port ocean passage of not less than 1,000 miles in a vessel of not more than 70ft in overall length. The annual subscription was to be £1 or, if paid by banker's order, ten shillings. The club has no premises and its objects are the encouragement of ocean cruising in small craft, to keep a record of long voyages made by members, and to publish accounts of them from time to time. It is also intended to collect information likely to be of use, to encourage the formation of branches all over the world and to appoint local representatives. Thus, a member sailing into some harbour half-way across the Pacific would be met by a friend and all his wants attended to. There was some doubt as to the name, which has not been settled. Most seemed in favour of 'The Ocean Cruising Club', but I feel that it is too near such things as 'The Royal Cruising Club' or 'The Royal Ocean Racing Club'. Perhaps 'The Ocean Voyagers Club' might be more appropriate. There was talk of a club tie and a burgee, and all sorts of designs were considered.

While the meeting was on a very smartly dressed woman slipped into the chair beside me, to my astonishment it was none other than **Ann Davison**, who that morning had flown over from the U.S.A. She looked very fit and had been made much of in the States; but the adulation seemed to have made little difference to this quiet, modest and altogether charming person. I talked to **Ben** and **Elinor Carlin**, the former an Australian and the latter an American with one of those soft drawling voices. They crossed the Atlantic in *Half Safe*, an amphibious jeep. I cannot help feeling that they are lucky to have survived. They told me that they proposed to continue on round the world. For their sakes I hope they will manage to dodge the Pacific. **Lt. Cmdr. Hamilton**, who recently wrote on his voyage in a Vertue from Singapore to

Portsmouth, was there and **W. B. Howell**, who crossed the Atlantic in *Wanderer II* with a companion and sailed on into the Pacific, bringing his little four-tonner eventually into Vancouver after 7,000 miles single-handed. I nearly forgot to say that Hum Barton, who will be remembered for his remarkable voyage from Lymington to New York in *Vertue XXXV*, has been elected Commodore. **Lt. Col. (Dick) Scholfield** became Vice-Commodore having qualified for membership seven times over, and Colin Mudie, who crossed the Atlantic in *Sopranino* and returned in *Bloodhound*, was elected Rear-Commodore. I was pleased to see a young man still in his twenties elected to flag rank, after all, wasn't William Pitt made Prime Minister at the ripe old age of 24?'

The founding of the club was widely reported, so those who had missed the first trawl had the opportunity to catch up. To be fair to these, and the several who were at sea on 27 January, it was decided at the first committee meeting that anyone who was qualified, and who applied to join within three months of the inaugural meeting, would be deemed a Founder Member.

Hum had also spread the word in the US through the columns of *Yachting* magazine, of which **Alf Loomis**, the father of Harvey who had raced transatlantic with Hum in *Gulvain*, was a sub-editor. Alf wrote to his son Harvey:

'New York
February 24th 1954

Dear Harve,

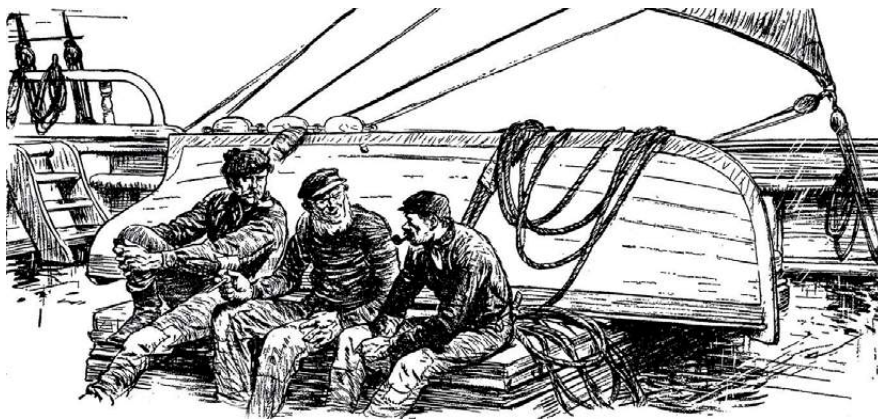
Hum Barton has organised and is the commodore of a new little club called the Ocean Cruising Club. Dick Scholfield is Vice and Colin Mudie Rear and yours very truly is the No 1 American member. Hum sent me a few application blanks for distribution to eligibles, and I am so doing and am also mentioning it in the 'Longboat' (an occasional column in *Yachting*) in April. Dues are £1 per year (\$2.8). Thought you might be interested so enclose a blank. I've sent blanks to Giff (Dr Gifford Pinchot) and Rod (Rod Stephens) for a starter. Sounds like a nice, inexpensive idea.'

The decision to name the new club 'The Ocean Cruising Club' was made at the first committee meeting on 15 February, after a postal ballot of members who

had signed up at the inaugural meeting. Four possible names were tabled: Blue Water Club, Deep Sea Club, Deep Sea Cruising Club and Ocean Cruising Club, the last winning by a large margin. It is interesting to note that by 24 February Alf Loomis in New York knew of the name, so clearly Hum was not slow in spreading the word. Alf kept his promise and gave the club a good send off in the next issue of *Yachting*:

Under the Lee of the Long Boat, by SPUN YARN

'ANNOUNCEMENT has been made of the formation in England of the Ocean Cruising Club, and as it sounds like a good idea, I take pleasure in giving it a little boost. Membership will be open to and, in fact, restricted to, those sailors of either sex, of any nationality, who have cruised or raced on any ocean a distance of 1000 miles between ports in a sail or motor boat not more than 70 feet overall. The club starts off under excellent auspices, with Hum Barton, who brought *Vertue XXXV* to America a few years ago, as Commodore; with Dick Scholfield, a Royal Artillery type who sailed his R.N.S.A. 24 *Blue Disa* in the B.A.-Rio race of 1950 as Vice Commodore, and with Colin Mudie, of *Sopranino* fame, as Rear. Hum asked me to get in touch with American eligibles to inform them of this unique club, but when I had written down from memory the names of nearly a hundred sailors who have covered more than a thousand miles of blue water voyaging I came to the conclusion that publicity in this space would be as effective and a whole lot less trouble than writing a host of personal letters. Dues in the OCC are one pound (\$2.00) a year and application blanks may be obtained from Commodore Humphrey



Under the Lee of the Long Boat

D. E. Barton, 4 Quay Hill, Lymington, Hampshire, England.
Applicants accepted before April 27th will be listed as founder
members. Take it away, Hum, and see how you like writer's cramp.'

Alf was already well qualified to join the embryonic club as he had crossed the
Atlantic as early as 1928, and later, although it wouldn't have qualified, he

***Vertue XXXV* from an oil painting by Glanville**



navigated the J Class *Yankee* across for a summer of racing in the Solent. More recently he had crewed his friend **William Blunt White Senior**, when they won the 1953 Buenos Aires to Rio race in Blunt's 46ft S&S yawl *White Mist*. Apparently the President of the Argentine, **Juan Peron**, had offered to ship some New York Yacht Club (NYYC) boats to BA gratis as a goodwill gesture, and Blunt was one of the lucky chosen. They were received in the 'Pink House', the Argentinean equivalent of the White House, and Blunt replied to the President's welcoming speech in schoolboy Spanish which brought the house down with its inadvertent howlers. Not very graciously they went on to win the race, beating the scratch boat, the Argentine Navy's 72ft yawl *Vandeval*, and several other large Argentinean vessels. Alf later invited Blunt to bring his crew along to the NYYC for a meeting to discuss the possibility of becoming part of this putative club for ocean sailors.

Another competitor in that 1953 race was **Hilario Corralis** who was on the staff of the Brazilian yachting magazine, *Yachting Brasileiro*. He doubtless heard of the formation of the OCC through his magazine contacts as he became the only Brazilian Founder Member. There is still only one Brazilian in the current list.

A meeting in New York duly took place with most of the crew of *White Mist* attending. Alf himself, Blunt, brothers **Walter and Richard Flower**, **Carleton Mitchell**, and **Ducky Endt**. Such was the camaraderie in those early days of ocean sailing that without much knowledge of what they were letting themselves in for all but one of them signed up, and thus, as in England, it was a group of racing men who became the nucleus of the OCC in the US. Ducky Endt was the exception, which is a pity as he was a contemporary of **Sherman Hoyt** and **the Stephens brothers** and quite a star of East Coast racing.

Of the 23 who attended the London meeting, many had already become household names in the small tightly knit deep-sea sailing community. Several had written books on their exploits, while others had gone quietly about the oceans unsung. It must be remembered that those were the days when blue water sailing boats were so few that one altered course to hail another yacht, and you failed to salute a passing of a man-of-war at your peril. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hum knew most of those who were qualified before the meeting took place, many of them being fellow offshore racers. Most of the great and the good had joined with enthusiasm and the list of those deemed to be Founders reads like a *Who's Who* of yachting names. The worldwide trawl, which had brought in a total of 86 from 13 countries, is reproduced in full in Appendix XXX (page XXX). However it would be appropriate to expound on some of the people who had such an influence on the subsequent development of the club and, indeed, on ocean sailing as a whole throughout the world.

II – HUM’S CHUMS

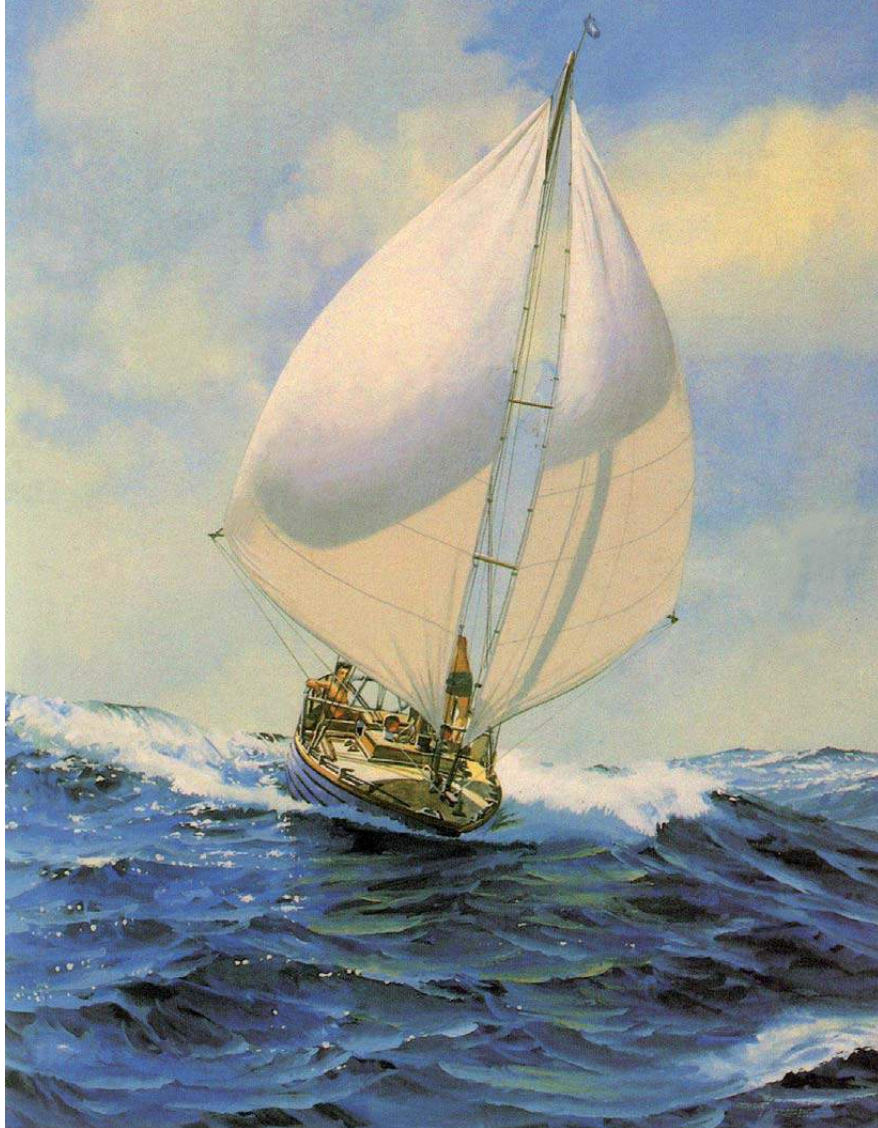
Humphrey Barton was a well-known name in the sailing world, as he was a respected surveyor and partner in Laurent Giles and had written three books on cruising following his famous Atlantic crossing. He was a keen offshore racer and a sailor of considerable skill. His job brought him in contact with many boats and owners and he was unstinting in his advice to would-be ocean sailors. His first crossing has already been described, but this was only the beginning of his Atlantic peregrinations. Hum’s first wife, Jessie, died suddenly in 1959, after which he retired from Laurent Giles, handed the club over to Tim Heywood, became the Club’s first Admiral, and went off cruising.

Over the next 15 years Hum made a further 18 Atlantic crossings, routinely running down to the Caribbean for the winter and returning to Europe to collect his mail in the spring. The last was at the age of 75. In the islands he found that many local people suffered from poor near-sight as they grew older, with no means of correction, so while at home he collected cast-off spectacles from his middle-aged friends and regularly took a box of them out with him. He would sit under a palm tree and try them on his ‘patients’, asking them to read from a paperback to check suitability. He soon discovered, however, that the ladies were more interested in appearance than visual acuity so brought along their bible having learnt a page by heart. Not surprisingly he is still remembered in the Caribbean as ‘The Spectacle Man’.

Hum married again in 1970 to the then **Mary Danby**, who had already made a name for herself as a fearless cruising and racing crew (not least in that toughest of all places, the galley). Together they made five more Atlantic crossings before retiring to the Mediterranean in 1975. Hum died in 1980, but not before he was awarded the Cruising Club of America’s Blue Water Medal, not, as is usual, for a specific feat, but for his life-long devotion to the yachting cause. In his later days he became quite whimsical and rather surprised the young reporter sent to interview him about the award. When asked if there were any words of wisdom that he would like to pass on, Hum replied, “Always keep the land in sight and never never sail at night”.

Despite this advice Hum was a keen ocean racer, so it is not surprising that many members of RORC who were qualified joined him at the outset. Indeed, it was this hard core who supplied most flag officers for the Club for several years and, despite their preoccupation with ocean racing, they brought energy and experience to the new organisation which they had so readily joined.

One of these racing men, Dick Scholfield, was elected Vice Commodore at the



The diminutive *Sopranino*

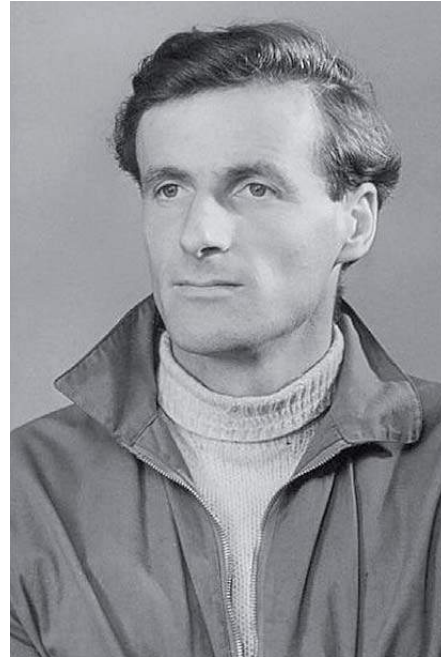
inaugural meeting. Dick was a Colonel in the Royal Artillery but that duty does not seem to have interfered too much with his sailing. He qualified for the OCC three times over in the Indian Ocean before the Second World War and then, in the late 1940s, built one of the first Giles RNSA 24s, *Blue Disa*, and raced her

in the BA to Rio race alongside Blunt White's *White Mist*. After *Blue Disa* Dick owned an even more radical Giles design, *Fandango*, which he raced very successfully for a number of years. He became heavily involved in sail training so retired early from the army and became Race Director of the Sail Training Association (STA) where, together with Colin Mudie, he introduced a rating rule that allowed vessels from 3000 tons down to 20 to race competitively against each other. Dick also skippered the famous *Bloodhound* across the Atlantic in 1952, thus accumulating six qualifying passages before the Club was formed.

The first Rear Commodore, Colin Mudie, worked as a designer for Laurent Giles and had known Hum for some years. He was on the threshold of a career as a naval architect *extraordinaire* and in 1950 had been responsible for the detailed drawings of **Patrick Ellam's** little *Sopranino*. Whereas Hum had set out to show that a stout, heavy displacement, small boat could safely cross an ocean, Patrick wished to prove that a light displacement boat was equally seaworthy. Provided you could keep the water out, he believed that it would float like a cork in any conditions. He experimented with a two-man sailing canoe in which he made several Channel crossings, at times using a trapeze for as long as seven hours. This convinced him sufficiently to commission the bigger boat with accommodation so that he would not have to find a hotel, but at 19ft 8in she was little more than a large, decked-in canoe. Hum described her, after sailing her in the Lymington River, as an amusing little toy in which he would not care to cross the Solent in a blow.

Patrick chose Colin as his crew for his planned transatlantic because he was already acquainted with the boat, having borrowed her for several offshore races. He was also a most useful hand, having served his time as a boat builder. There was just room for the two of them to lie down together, somewhat cosily. When standing, the small hatch came up to the man's waist and he could put his hands over both sides. However she had a self-draining cockpit and a watertight hatch so, short of structural damage, she was virtually unsinkable, if a little uncomfortable. In Patrick's log it is amusing to note that in a heavy gale they both 'put on pyjamas and turned in'. They had devised an ingenious self-steering system (there were no patent systems on the market then), so once clear of shipping it became their practice at night both to enjoy eight hours' sleep – presumably in pyjamas! On the trade wind crossing they averaged a very creditable 3.9 knots and then continued slowly north as far as New York. They wrote of their adventure under the simple title *Sopranino*, and both joined as Founder Members. Colin is still in harness as a naval architect and remains an active member of the Club.

Hum was well acquainted with the young brothers Stanley and Colin Smith who, with their father, built small boats at Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight. They had a long-held ambition to cross the Atlantic under sail but had insufficient funds to build a boat stout enough to cross against the prevailing winds, nor could they spare the time for a trade wind crossing. Instead, in 1949, they sailed steerage to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they set about building to designs that they had sketched on their way over in the steamer. Unfortunately they ran out of money before their vessel was complete so sailed the 20ft hull with a second-hand upturned dinghy in lieu of a coachroof. So lionised were they after this extraordinary feat that they were invited to exhibit *Nova Espero*

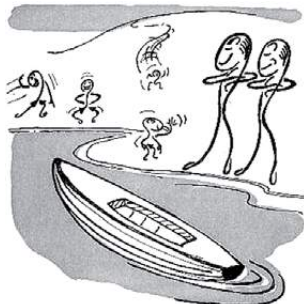


Stanley Smith

at The Festival of Britain in London in the spring of 1951. Their short book, *Smiths at Sea*, tells of their adventure in a delightfully light-hearted fashion which seems to have pervaded their attitude to both work and play.

Before the Exhibition they finished the hull and changed her rig to yawl, after which they deemed her sufficiently seaworthy to make an upwind crossing.

The Smith Brothers' view of their creation



They sailed from the Festival carrying samples of British goods as well as the goodwill of the nation, and bravely challenged the North Atlantic. The story of that eventful crossing was recorded in Stanley's second book, *The Wind Calls the Tune*. Stanley joined as a Founder and went on to make further extraordinary voyages. He designed a 14ft cruising dinghy called the Potter and delivered one to Sweden under sail in November. He did confess to questioning the wisdom of the undertaking when, in the Kattegat at night, they had to chop ice off the rigging to prevent capsizing.



***Nova Espero* with cabin and mizzen,
ready for her second crossing**

Also in the spring of 1951 Hum was asked to survey a little 24ft gaff cutter called *Wanderer II*, designed by his firm before the Second World War. She had already made a name for herself in the ownership of **Eric Hiscock**, who had sailed her to the Azores and back, but he considered her too small to carry the stores required for serious ocean cruising. Eric was more than a little surprised, therefore, when her prospective new owner, a young London dentist called **Bill Howell**, told him of his intention to sail her to the South Seas. But since the 24ft boat was all Bill could afford, and he had told all his friends he was going, as Bill put it, 'go I must, or at least try'. With very little seagoing experience apart from having worked his passage on a liner from his native Australia to England, he set about

learning from the few books available at that time. In the autumn of 1951 he packed his dental instruments aboard and set sail for Tahiti with fellow Australian **Frank McNulty**. They were more afraid of the land than the sea, so qualified for the OCC on their very first passage by staying at sea all the way from Falmouth to Gibraltar. The story of their voyage is told in Bill's inimitable style in his book *White Cliffs to Coral Reef*, in which he relates how in the cabin of his minute boat he drilled teeth with his foot drill, using hypnotism in lieu of anaesthetic, to supplement his meagre finances – all this in an engineless 24ft boat in which he covered 18,000 miles in two years before selling her in Vancouver and returning to his London dental practice. Bill remained an active member until his death in 2002.

During this eventful period Hum was asked to survey a 70ft Fleetwood fishing boat for **Frank** and **Ann Davison**. They planned to convert her for extended cruising but ran out of money and into debt, so attempted to outrun the law with the threat of a writ on their mast. After a horrendous two weeks drifting up and down the Channel they lost the boat and continued their drifting on a

life-float. Frank died of exposure but Ann was washed ashore on Portland Bill. She was not one to give in and wrote a most moving book about their tragic voyage, entitled *Last Voyage*, in which she expressed her maxim in life: 'The only way to live is to have a dream green and growing in your heart'. The book was a success and provided enough funds for her to try once more. This time she found a pretty little 23ft sloop called *Felicity Ann* and again asked Hum to survey her. He found her sound and suitable for Ann's plans, so in 1952 she set off again, this time reaching Barbados to become the first woman to cross the Atlantic singlehanded. She sailed on to New York before flying back just in time to attend the inaugural meeting and thus become a Founder of the club.

Members may recall **Chich Thornton**'s account in *Flying Fish* 2003/1 of his adventurous 1953 Atlantic crossing with his wartime friend, **Victor Clark**. They had served together in the Royal Navy, but their paths did not cross again until 1953 when Victor invited Chich to crew him on his first ocean passage. Victor had bought the 33ft sloop *Solace*, and once again Hum acted as surveyor and mentor. After sailing trials in the Solent Hum saw them off in the autumn of 1953 and they made an uneventful passage until, in the Cape Verde islands, they were boarded by thieves. Victor pursued them across the rocks in the night, one of them dying of a heart attack during the chase. On reaching Trinidad Chich jumped ship to return to his schoolmastering, following a term's leave of absence from Epsom College. He got back just in time for the inaugural OCC meeting and remained a member until his death earlier this year, but not before he had lent the only known edition of the first *List of Members* to the current writer.

Victor had intended to continue singlehanded but was persuaded to take **Stanley**, a 16-year-old lad from St Lucia, who accompanied him for the entire circumnavigation. The

**Victor Clark – now in his
nineties and thought to be the
Club's oldest member**



voyage took six years, more than a year being spent at Palmerston Atoll where *Solace* was wrecked on the reef. The entire population of the island turned-to and rebuilt almost the entire starboard side out of local timber and bits salvaged from other wrecks. When he eventually arrived back in the Caribbean to drop Stanley, Victor called at Bequia and found it quite spoilt ‘... no longer the quiet little village of 1953. There were half a dozen yachts at anchor ...’

A small boy rowed over from one of the boats and inveigled his way aboard *Solace*, where he boasted that he had made several Atlantic crossings – admitting when questioned that the first two were ‘in mummy’s tummy’. He introduced Victor to his parents, **John** and **Bonnie Staniland**, who had, in fact, already made four Atlantic crossings in their 46ft schooner *Nymph Errant*, by the time the Club was formed. Although they were sailing at the time of the first meeting they both became Founder members. Victor was also at sea in February 1954, but Hum ensured that he was registered in time to become a Founder and, at the age of 95, he is thought to be our oldest member. The story of his adventurous circumnavigation was published under the title *On the Wind of a Dream*, a phrase he took from an anonymous poem:

In fancy I listened – in fancy I hear
The thrum of the shrouds and the creak of the gear,
The patter of reef points on the mainsail a’quiver,
The bow-wave that breaks with a gurgle like laughter
And the cry of the sea birds following after,
Over oceans of wonder, by headlands of gleam
To the harbours of fancy on the wind of a dream.

Ian Nicolson was apprenticed to the yacht designer Frederick Parker before the end of the war. They were one of the main rivals of Laurent Giles, which was how he met Hum in the late 1940s. Ian soon became restless in the restricted post-war Britain so decided to emigrate to Canada, and in 1952 bought a share of the 45ft ketch *Maken* and sailed her from England to Vancouver. He later moved to Nova Scotia, and while there read of the formation of the OCC, so registered in time to become a Founder. He built a 30-footer which he named *St Elizabeth*, sailing her home singlehanded to attend the first annual dinner, which sufficiently impressed his then girlfriend to become his wife. Together they built a 35-footer to a design which Ian describes as a ‘nursery-ketch’, it being designed around their intended family. Since then they have built a further four sea-going boats with their own hands and Ian has written 24 books on sailing matters, a number which grows each year. Even so he still finds time to be an active member of the club.

In 1953 Hum went to meet a young man on his arrival at Gosport after sailing his *Vertue* from Singapore via the Cape of Good Hope. **Peter Hamilton's** *Speedwell of Hong Kong* was a later model than *Vertue XXXV* and was specifically designed for ocean cruising, but force of circumstances meant that Peter had to sell her before his further plans could be fulfilled. After the inaugural meeting Peter bought another *Vertue*, *Salmo*, and set off on what was intended to be a circumnavigation. Unfortunately – or fortunately, depending on your point of view – Cupid intervened and Peter got engaged on the eve of his departure. He made it as far as Montreal, but could stand it no longer so flew home, married his fiancé, and took her on a would-be round the world honeymoon cruise. This time nature interfered and, since the boat wasn't large enough for three, they turned back in Tahiti and sold her (the boat) in Los Angeles. This romantic tale is told in Peter's delightfully named book, *The Restless Wind*.

Mary Blewitt was assistant editor of the *Journal of the Institute of Navigation* alongside **Mike Richey**, the Director, of whom we shall hear much more. Mary, who later became Mary Pera, took a particularly keen interest in celestial navigation and in 1950, before she had made an ocean passage, she published her timeless little book *Celestial Navigation for Yachtsmen*. Such was its authority that it soon became known simply as 'Mary Blewitt', and is still in use to this day as a primer in basic celestial navigation. Her book cut away centuries of obfuscation. She showed in simple language the basis of nautical astronomy and how simple it was with the new tables to translate an observation into a position line on the chart. She was also a keen ocean racer and regularly navigated *Bloodhound* or *Foxhound* in RORC races. She also navigated for **John Illingworth** when they won the Fastnet. Mary qualified on a return Atlantic crossing in *Bloodhound* in 1952, thus becoming a Founder.

In his book *The Circumnavigators*, **Donald Holm** describes **Al Petersen** in these words: 'All wanderers on the sea are brothers, but this one is a born gentleman and a rare sailor'. A machinist in Brooklyn, Al scraped enough money together to buy a 1926 Colin Archer gaff cutter of 33ft overall. She was called *Stornaway* and the dinghy was aptly named *Lewis*. He left New York harbour in 1948 without telling anyone of his intentions, if he even knew himself. In an interview in Australia his laconic reply when asked why he was solo was, "I want to be alone". Not surprisingly they dubbed him 'Garbo'. He arrived back in New York in 1952, where the caption in a NY paper described him as, 'only the fourth person since time began to have circumnavigated singlehanded'. He then slipped back into anonymity, until a letter to *Yachting* magazine from **Edmund Poett** (also a Founder Member), telling how Al had twice diverted to



Al Petersen, ‘only the fourth man since time began to circumnavigate solo’

help him out of difficulties, came to the notice of the awards committee of the Cruising Club of America (CCA). Interestingly, at that time they were considering two other yachtsmen for the coveted Blue Water Medal – Patrick Ellam of *Sopranino* fame, and Carleton Mitchell for his success in two transatlantic races in *Caribbee* – both of whom were to become Founders two years later. Al was awarded the medal, then returned to his machine shop to save for his next sortie.

Meanwhile he met and married Marjorie, an experienced dinghy sailor, and together they gathered enough pennies to set off again. Over the next 20 years they sailed on a shoestring to Singapore and to the Mediterranean. They eventually swallowed the anchor in San Francisco Bay, but continued to live aboard until Al’s death. Describing their frugal life aboard, Marjorie recalled how when the knees wore through on their jeans they made them into cut-offs, and when the seats went through they patched them with the leg bottoms. But their little ship exuded efficiency. The leathered jaws were always tallowed, the wooden blocks were free and gleaming and every rope was neatly coiled. How Al heard of the formation of the OCC is not recorded, nor how he afforded the \$2 subscription, but he became a Founder and shows a circumnavigation as his qualifying voyage. *Stornaway*, of whom they were both so proud, was sold on but stayed in Sausalito where sadly only this year she sank through neglect. When raised was so rotten she didn’t even make a good bonfire.

It will be remembered that Erroll Bruce and Adlard Coles – the latter now known the world over as a publisher of sailing books and author of the classic *Heavy Weather Sailing* – had shipped their boats to New York with *Gulvain* for the 1950 transatlantic race. At less than 31ft overall Erroll’s *Samuel Pepys* was the smallest boat in the race, while at 32ft Adlard’s *Cohoe* was slightly longer but rated better. This was the first time that such small yachts had been allowed

to compete in a transatlantic race and they were determined to prove the seaworthiness of their little ships. It was a heavy weather race, but this did not stop them from driving their boats to the very limit and almost beyond. They were rarely more than a few miles apart so shared the same weather pattern, and it is interesting to compare the logs of the two boats under similar circumstances. After exceeding his yacht's design speed over a 24 hour run, Erroll wrote:

'Steering is difficult and the yacht rolling heavily. Still, all the time we are driving forward at seven knots, and often over. Occasional freak waves knock the yacht about. At 6.30 p.m. in a squall, with Jack at the helm, a very steep sea struck the boat. She lifted bodily out of the water from the stem to the mast, while the rest of the hull was immersed up to the cabin top. The helmsman who had previously been sitting in a normal cockpit found himself sitting in a rectangular wooden box comprised of the cockpit coamings, while all the rest was under water. The yacht was planing with an immense bow wave abaft the mast and about 3ft higher than the rail. On top of the wave Jack said it was like standing on an overhanging cliff looking over a plain towards the horizon.'

While running before the same gale Adlard wrote:

Still blowing hard from astern and in twelve hours we logged eighty-four miles – or seven knots. This is above our maximum theoretical speed, but frequently the boat is held on a wave and planes for some seconds at a much higher speed. This is most exciting to the helmsman, as the tiller goes stiff and the bow wave froths up on either side level with the guard rail and water pours over each side deck, as though we were submerging.'

Samuel Pepys beat *Cohoe* by five hours, but had to give her seven on handicap which gave the latter first place. Erroll entered *Samuel Pepys* for the next transatlantic race in 1952, and was again the smallest boat in the race, but this time she won. Among his crew was **Bill Wise**, who became a Founder and remains a member to this day. Erroll still took an early morning singlehanded

sail in the Solent in his eighties. One morning he slipped overboard while docking and had considerable difficulty getting out, after which he wrote to the Commodore offering his resignation on the grounds of bad seamanship. It was not accepted.

Bill has some interesting reflections which illustrate the different development of yachts and racing on either side of the Atlantic:

'Whilst we British had suffered a virtual ban on sailing from 1939 to 1945 and our boats were almost all pre-war, they had built new ones and were developing new techniques. Our elderly craft looked a trifle shabby in Long Island Sound compared with the smart new Americans, but we could show them a thing or two in crew training! Anyway, after a month working up in the Sound, we in *Sam Pepys* gained a creditable place in the Bermuda Race – 3rd in class and 5th overall out of 52 boats competing.

We had acquired some new-fangled nylon sheets (too stretchy for anything except the spinnaker; Terylene / Dacron had yet to be invented) and shock cord (this did prove extremely useful and one of my first actions, on getting back to Portsmouth, was to visit the local chandlers and tell them to get hold of some at all costs). We Limeys were much impressed when the start of the Halifax race was postponed because an American yacht's refrigerator had broken down! The locals were surprised to find we did not even have an icebox, and still more surprised to find we had no engine.

One device which we did beat the Americans to was our radar reflector. Reflectors had just begun to appear on buoys and I got a collapsible model knocked up in the naval workshop which caused a lot of interest when hoisted on the *Samuel Pepys* yardarm. It became known as the 'Wisdom'. I also got the workshop to make us a very stylish rotatable wooden frame on which I wound a few turns of wire as a DF loop. It worked perfectly and we homed in on Bermuda without any last-minute panic. We also had the new RN boat's crew oilskins, a vast improvement

on the old tarpaulin jacket. Seaboats, however, had not progressed beyond the clodhopper stage and were forbidden absolutely by our skipper. Apart from one nylon spinnaker, all sails were cotton or canvas and could not be bagged when wet for fear of mildew, so there was always a sodden jib or two on the floor of the forepeak.

We signalled several passing merchant ships, 'Please report us to Lloyds of London'. This went by light at night or by international code flags in daylight. We did worry slightly when one foreign ship responded with, 'Will report you to LYONS of London' (a well-known tea house) but even that got through. When we identified ourselves to a passing liner as *Samuel Pepys*, we asked her 'what ship' and she replied 'Mary Windsor'. We later found that we had indeed been talking to the *Queen Mary*.

Later we were becalmed within sight of a fleet of French tunny-men, fishing on long poles. One of them decided to give us a fish and approached within a few yards but then panicked, and went full astern hooking a fishing line round our mast. Fortunately the line parted but not before we were heeled, gunwales under. Determined to do his bit for the *entente cordiale*, he then floated the fish and a bottle of wine astern in a bag. That night we dined well on fresh tuna steaks and *vín ordinaire*.

At the same time, on the west side of the Atlantic, Carleton Mitchell was carving out a name for himself with his famous Phillip Rhodes centre-board yawl, *Caribbee*. While *Samuel Pepys* was the minnow of the 1952 transatlantic race fleet and had to fight it out with **Frederick Morgan**'s *Joliette*, *Caribbee* at 58ft overall, and **Jaques Barbou**'s *Janabel* of the same length, were the big boys. Carleton used this passage as his qualifier to become a Founder, but he had already cruised many thousands of miles in *Caribbee* and in his book *Passage East* wrote poignantly about life aboard, a description which applies equally to cruising and racing.

'I'm in a sentimental mood. Down below my shipmates off watch are asleep, confident of us on deck. I look down and see the oil lamp swinging in the gimbals on the bookcase over the fireplace.

By its light the cabin is very snug and cosy, completely disassociated from the noise and rushing water on deck. Every detail of that cabin is familiar, every corner and every blemish on the panelling. It is my true home. Sitting at the table I have eaten conch in the Bahamas, soft shell crab in the Chesapeake, and herring in the Baltic. Leaning back against the cushions I have laughed and sung and swapped lies with a wonderful succession of shipmates. At that spot just abaft the main mast my closest friend was married. At that chart table I have known uncertainty and indecision yet have ticked off thousands of miles from the tropics to just short of the polar circle; in those bunks I have slept the deep sleep so impossible ashore. No other place means so much to me. In fact, as Rat said to Mole of 'messaging about in boats' – 'Nice? It's the only thing.'

These two transatlantic races, 1950 and 1952, supplied a total of 15 Founder Members, more than one-sixth of the 86 who joined at the outset. Five of them are members still: Tim Heywood and Harvey Loomis who were with Hum in *Gulvain*; Bill Wise who sailed in *Samuel Pepys*; Carleton Mitchell of *Caribbee*, and **Hugh Austin** who raced in *Joliette*.

Carleton later commissioned the beautiful Sparkman and Stephens yawl *Finisterre* in which he won the Bermuda Race three times running, a feat never repeated. He wrote several books on both cruising and racing and is a brilliant marine photographer, publishing *Yachtsman's Camera*, a stunning collection of his photographs, many of which can be seen in the Mystic Seaport Museum. Although no longer actively sailing, he remains a member to this day.

The most famous name to be entered in the Founders List was probably that of the immortal Sherman Hoyt. He was 75 years old when he joined and showed six Atlantic crossings in the 1930s as his qualification. By then, however, his name had become a household word in yachting circles on both sides of the Atlantic, with his helming the big schooners and the Js. He was always in demand as skipper of the classics and continued to win races when many of his contemporaries had long retired. He won the Fastnet in 1928 as skipper of the celebrated schooner *Niña*, and subsequently became Rear Commodore of the RORC, a singular honour for a foreigner.

What could have been a contentious issue in our Corinthian club is that Sherman was essentially a professional and it was he who deprived Sir Thomas Sopwith's *Endeavour* of what should have been a British victory in the 1934 America's Cup. *Endeavour* had proved herself the faster boat, winning the first two races convincingly, and was three minutes ahead at the lee mark in the third. A wind shift meant that she could lay the course to the finish, but Sopwith chose to



‘Yankee yachtsman’ Sherman Hoyt, a renowned racing helmsman

point above the layline when he had only to steer for the line to win. The wily Sherman had often sailed against Sopwith and knew that he always covered tenaciously, so he took *Rainbow* even further out to windward and drew *Endeavour* into a totally unnecessary tacking dual which he won, going on to finish more than three minutes ahead, an incredible gain of six minutes on the home leg. By very similar tactics Sherman evened it, two all, in the fourth, and then went on to win the series against a demoralised British crew, thus altering the whole complexion of the America’s Cup for more than half a century. His yachting obituary for the 1962 *Newsletter* was written by **Jack Parkinson**, then OCC Rear Commodore USA East, whose

father had been Sherman’s friend and racing contemporary.

Perhaps the boat which did most to increase Founder membership was the 63ft yawl *Bloodhound*. She was owned by **Myles Wyatt**, Commodore of the Royal Ocean Racing Club, but he took time off from racing to do a circuit of the Atlantic in 1952. His family of four all joined, but unfortunately Myles missed the deadline to be counted a Founder although he did qualify with the rest. In those days it was the practice to show all passages over 1000 miles in the *List of Members*, and Mary Blewitt, Dick Scholfield and Colin Mudie all show legs of this cruise as their qualifying passages. *Bloodhound*, it will be recalled, was later sold to Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Sir Myles, as he became, was elected Admiral of RORC and inaugurated the Admiral’s Cup series of races, the British equivalent of the American ‘Onion Patch’.

Another name to be conjured with amongst the Founders was the journalist **Weston Martyn**. He had become, as he puts it, ‘infected with the disease of ocean racing’ while living in New York in the early 1920s, and on his return to the UK in 1924 he contacted his old friend and fellow journalist **Lieutenant**

George Martin, who owned the lovely French pilot cutter, *Jolie Brise*. Martyr passed the infection to Martin and together, largely through the columns of *Yachting World*, they raised enough support in 1925 to organise an offshore long distance race –now the classic Fastnet Race. However this was to cost Martin his cherished membership of the Royal Cruising Club. There was a lot of scepticism about the safety of racing offshore at night, and when that conservative sage and exponent of cruising **Claude Worth** declared it unseamanlike to hold a public race in close waters, the acrimony was such that Martin was forced to resign. Seven boats came to the line in this, the first ocean race in European waters, from which the Ocean Racing Club was born (then without the appellation Royal). *Jolie Brise* won convincingly, but to dwell on that is to depart too far from Weston Martyr.

This race, of course, was not sufficient to qualify Martyr for the OCC, and if he is to be believed he sailed then with extreme reluctance:

‘I have never been to sea with a single big mainsail and my terror of the rig may be all nonsense. I hope it is, for next month I am sailing from Ryde to Plymouth via the Fastnet in a fifty foot cutter. I journeyed to Southampton some little while ago, and my friend, the owner of the cutter, believes I made the pilgrimage to have a look at the boat, whereas I really went to take some careful observations of her boom. I saw it – a mile of it – lying on trestles in the yard, and ever since I have been trying hard to invent an excuse plausible enough to enable me to back out of the Ocean Race without arousing the suspicions of my friend. My friend is counting on me, he is a difficult person to deceive, and he is very large and very strong. So I think I shall have to break a leg.’

Martyr, a native Devonian but one who had knocked about the world a bit, wrote lyrically about cruising in small boats. Despite his misgivings, he did sail in that first Fastnet and went on to cross the Atlantic in *Jolie Brise* the following year, thus qualifying as early as 1926. His voyage in the first *List of Members* shows 1925, but that must be an error as he could not possibly have crossed the Atlantic, sailed in the Bermuda Race, and then returned for the Fastnet in the same year. Had he remained a member there is little doubt that his writing would have won him ‘The Award’ in the early days. Now he might have won the Geoff Pack Memorial Award which has, in a journalistic sense, precisely the same motive – ‘to encourage cruising in small boats’. Martyr, like **Arthur Ransome** before him, had the ability to spin a most evocative yarn, in the sense before that term took on its present pejorative overtones. In the opening paragraphs of his timeless classic *The £200 Millionaire*, he writes:

'A little green sloop, flying the Red Ensign, followed us into port. She was manned solely by one elderly gentleman, but we noted that he handled the boat with ease and skill. It was blowing hard, and the little yacht ran down the harbour at speed, but when abreast of us she luffed head to wind, her violently flapping sails were lowered with a run, and she brought up alongside us so gently that she would not have crushed an egg. We took her lines and made them fast, while her owner hung cork fenders over the side and proceeded to stow his sails. Urged by a look from my wife which said, 'He is old and alone. Help him,' I offered to lend the lone mariner a hand. But he refused to be helped. Said he, 'Thank you, but please don't trouble. I like to do everything myself; it's part of the fun. But do come aboard if you will, and look round. You'll see there's nothing here that one old man can't tackle easily'.

We went aboard and found the green sloop to be one of the cleverest little ships imaginable. It is difficult to describe her gear on deck and aloft without being technical; suffice it to say, therefore, that everything was very efficient and simple, and so designed that all sail could be set or lowered by the man at the helm without leaving the cockpit. The boat was 30 feet long by 9 feet wide, and my short wife, at any rate, could stand upright in her cabin. Her fore end was a storeroom, full of convenient lockers, shelves and a small but adequate water-closet. Aft this came the cabin, an apartment 12 feet long, with a broad bunk along one side of it and a comfortable settee along the other. A table with hinged flaps stood in the middle, while in the four corners were a wardrobe, a desk, a pantry and a galley. Aft all this was a motor, hidden beneath the cockpit floor. A clock ticked on one bulkhead, a rack full of books ran along the other, a tray of pipes lay on the table, and a copper kettle sang softly to itself on the little stove.'

One Founder's name which still stirs the imagination is that of **Edward Allcard**. He owned the 34ft gaff cutter *Temptress*, still in the Club under the ownership of **Mark Fishwick**, a journalist and author of pilot books. Allcard made several remarkable voyages in her. His first was in 1949 with an 80 day non-stop singlehanded passage from Gibraltar to New York, which he recounted in his book *Single Handed Passage*. An even more gruelling return trip the following year took him into hurricane conditions approaching the Azores where *Temptress* had to be lifted out for repairs. The subsequent resumption of the voyage resulted in Edward's claim to fame, producing a tale which has gone down in the annals of yachting lore, when a beautiful young Portuguese stowaway, **Otilia**, appeared after several hours at sea. He eventually put her ashore in Casablanca when the story received

widespread coverage in the British and international press, resulting in her being flown to the UK by a newspaper while he continued alone to Plymouth. Hum claimed to have known the true story but took it to his grave.

In 1954 Allcard began a protracted 16 year circumnavigation in his next boat, *Sea Wanderer*, leaving *Temptress* mothballed in Plymouth for several years, selling her only after she had been badly damaged in a bizarre arson attack. She changed hands a number of times before Mark found her in 1973. Over the past 31 years he has put a lot more miles under her keel, including an eight year sojourn in the Caribbean between singlehanded Atlantic crossings.

However, *Temptress* can boast an even earlier connection with the Club. In 1929 she was chartered by a youthful Humphrey Barton (by his own admission, with little more experience than dinghy sailing on the Broads!) for an ambitious cruise from the Solent to Brittany and North Spain. The only major incident appears to have been hitting the bridge at Audierne but clearly this did not put him off, indeed it fired him to much greater things from which we are all the beneficiaries.

Many of these Founders, and those who followed, wrote of their exploits and thus left an indelible mark on those formative days in the development of ocean cruising. Throughout the years the writings of the few have had an influence beyond their numbers. Some of the older generation were inspired by the gritty prosaic prose of **McMullen** while others were attracted to the lyrical descriptive writings of **Belloc**. His essay, *The North Sea*, is still a classic which should be read by all after they have weathered their first gale at sea. The next generation was instructed by the precise writing of Hiscock or encouraged by the lighter yarns of Pye, while up to the present the wonderfully understated prose of Mike Richey continues to give courage to many a putative ocean sailor.

There are many famous names who missed the deadline to become Founders but had equal influence on the early days of the Club. It was the exploits of this handful of early members which gives a taste of the metal of those few who had the courage and initiative to cruise and race the oceans half a century ago. Their boats were small, their equipment was sparse, they hanked on their headsails and tied down their reefs. Often they had no engine so they had no electricity, relying on paraffin for cooking and lights. They navigated by the heavens and were lucky if they had a radio receiver let alone a transmitter, so they identified themselves by a hoist of flags. By modern standards their passages were slow, but they sailed not just to get there but for their love of the sea and their love of the challenge it presented. The landfalls they made were not encumbered by a forest of masts but by the beauty of nature often quite untrammelled by the trappings of modernity. They were the men and women who shaped the future of ocean cruising, and these same people founded the OCC.

III – EARLY DAYS

It is surprising just how much the Club was moulded at that inaugural meeting. Clearly Hum had done a great deal of thinking about how it would develop, since many innovations only relevant to a worldwide cruising fraternity were introduced from the outset. The minutes of the first meeting are rather stark, running to only one sheet of foolscap in Hum's not so fair hand. It must be said, however, that his signature bears a certain royal flourish.

MINUTES OF THE INAUGRAL (sic) MEETING OF
THE OCEAN CRUISING CLUB HELD AT THE R.N.V.R.
CLUB, LONDON ON THE 27TH JANUARY 1954

Founder members present were:-

Mr E.B.C. Thornton	Mr G.B. Heywood
Lt.Col. R.G.F. Scholfield	Mr J. W. Johnstone
Miss Sheila Busk-Wood	Mr Stanley Smith
Mr W.W. Phelps	Mr H. M. Austin
Mr C.C. Constance	Mr W.I.B. Crealock
Mr F.W. Morgan	Mr W.B. Howell
Mr J.J.N. Wyatt	Mr Colin Mudie
Mr E.W.R. Petersen	Lt.Cdr. A.G. Hamilton R.N.
Mr H.I. Hughes	Mr H. Barr
Mr L.G. Greenwood	Mrs H. Barr
Mrs Ann Davison	Mr H.D.E. Barton
Mr Ben Carlin	

Mr. Barton took the chair and explained the aims and objects of the proposed Club. A proposal was made by him that such 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 resubmitted for final approval at the next A.G.M.

The following members offered to serve on the committee:-

Mr W.I.B. Crealock	Mr Colin Mudie
Lt.Cdr. A.G. Hamilton R.N.	Lt.Col. R.G.F. Scholfield
Mr W.B. Howell	Mr H.I. Hughes
Mr G.B. Heywood	Mr H.D.E. 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.Dicken (both non-members). The results were announced by the former and were as follows:

Commodore	Mr. Humphrey D.E. Barton
Vice-Commodore	Lt.Col. R.G.F. Scholfield
Rear Commodore	Mr. Colin Mudie

The Commodore thanked members for electing him. He said that it was a great honour and 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 R.N.V.R. Officers' Association for allowing the use of their Club and granting temporary membership to all those present. The official proceedings then terminated.

At the first committee meeting, on 15 February 1954, it was proposed that Provisional Membership be allowed so that the would-be voyager could gain confidence by rubbing shoulders with the great and the good in the deep-sea world. The period of such membership was to be limited to one year, during which the member was expected to qualify or show good reason why he had

not done so. Otherwise he had to leave the Club at the end of the year. This appears to have fallen into disuse some time later, but was revived under the name of 'Associate Membership' in 1989 with exactly the same objectives.

At the same meeting it was also proposed that overseas branches be formed where there was a sufficient concentration of members. It is not clear what the thinking was behind the term 'overseas branches', but since the question of National Rear Commodores had not yet been suggested it appears that they were considering some form of semi-autonomous groups. This has caused confusion throughout the life of the Club and as recently as 1990 was the cause of considerable friction when 'branches' wished to collect subscriptions locally, thus taking financial control away from the Treasurer.

On 3 April 1954 the Commodore wrote to all members informing them of developments. He reported that the Secretary had 'written to the editor of every known yachting periodical in the world telling them about the Club', which no doubt explains why the 56 members that Hum was then able to report had grown to 86 by the 27 April deadline to be deemed Founders. Also, whereas the 56 that Hum reported were spread across five nationalities, the 86 members, three weeks later, covered thirteen. Clearly the Secretary's worldwide trawl was having some effect.

Hum went on to explain the diligence with which the insignia had been designed:

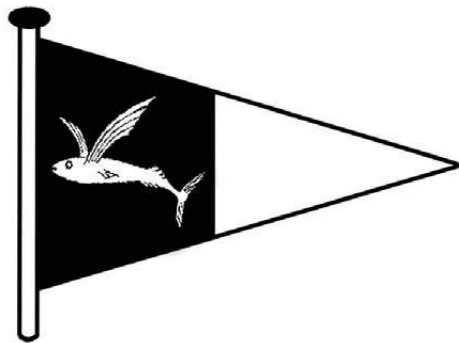
'Your committee had given the burgee and tie their most careful consideration. The Rear Commodore (Colin Mudie) was entrusted with the designs and he made two visits to the Natural History Museum in order to study flying fishes. He found there were about ten varieties! The one he has selected seems to be an admirable flying fish in every way and it will, I am sure, prove equal to its duties. The burgee has a dark blue hoist with a yellow fly and a yellow flying fish disports itself on the blue part of the flag. The tie is dark blue bespeckled with golden flying fishes. It is a tie of distinction and I am sure you will like it.'

It also received the approval of the editor of *Yachting Monthly*, who wrote:

'I like the burgee that the newly-formed Ocean Cruising Club has adopted. It has a sea-blue hoist and a yellow fly with a flying

fish in yellow on the blue. They have a tie too. How is it described?
Poisson-volant d'or azure flippant.'

Little did Hum or Colin realise how widely that distinctive burgee would be flaunted across the world over the next half century.



Hum rounded off his letter with thanks to the RNVR Club which had allowed the OCC the use of its premises for meetings and social functions. He reminded members that this splendid club offered country membership for one guinea. Not only was this good value, but it showed a touch of class as only the best institutions still conducted transactions in old-fashioned guineas despite that coin having been replaced by the sovereign in 1817.

There is no record of the original proposed Rules but it is interesting to read the objects as stated in the sub-committee's submission which was approved at a Special General Meeting on 28 April 1954:

OBJECTS

The objects for which the Club is formed are:

- (a) To foster and encourage ocean cruising in small craft and the practise(sic) of seamanship and navigation in all branches.
- (b) To issue bulletins containing names and addresses of members, information as to projected voyages in small craft, news of members and such other material of which the Committee shall approve.

- (c) To keep records of voyages made by members and to publish accounts of such voyages.
- (d) To collect information likely to be of use to members and to arrange for such information to be available to members on application to the Secretary subject to such terms as the Committee may from time to time decide.
- (e) To encourage the formation of local branches all over the world and to appoint honorary local representatives.
- (f) To encourage by any means social intercourse between the members and to provide amenities for the use of the members and their guests.

These Objects are identical to those existing today, and the rest of the Rules stand with only very minor changes. For a club that developed 'on the hoof', so to speak, this was remarkably prescient.

This meeting was enlivened by Ben and Elinor Carlin arriving in their amphibious jeep, in which they had qualified for the Club by 'driving' it across the North Atlantic. Under 'Any Other Business', Ben proposed that members arriving at meetings in their own vessel should have their subscriptions waived. The motion was not carried, but the whole attendance repaired to the street outside to join the throng of passers-by examining this strange contraption.

They had made undoubtedly the most original ocean passage of all those present at the first meeting. Ben had bought the vehicle at auction in the States for \$900 and made extensive alterations to make her fit for an ocean passage. In those more prudish days one other thing remained to be done before embarking in such close confinement, and that was to marry his long-standing American girlfriend. Two weeks later, in June 1948, they set sail, or more accurately, they started driving towards the Azores. They turned back twice before eventually getting going in earnest, but the weather was fine and at the end of a week they were 400 miles on their way. At that point the thrust bearing on the propeller shaft began to make 'expensive noises'. The bearing was taken to pieces, but the balls were found to be hopelessly chipped and broken, and they had no spares!

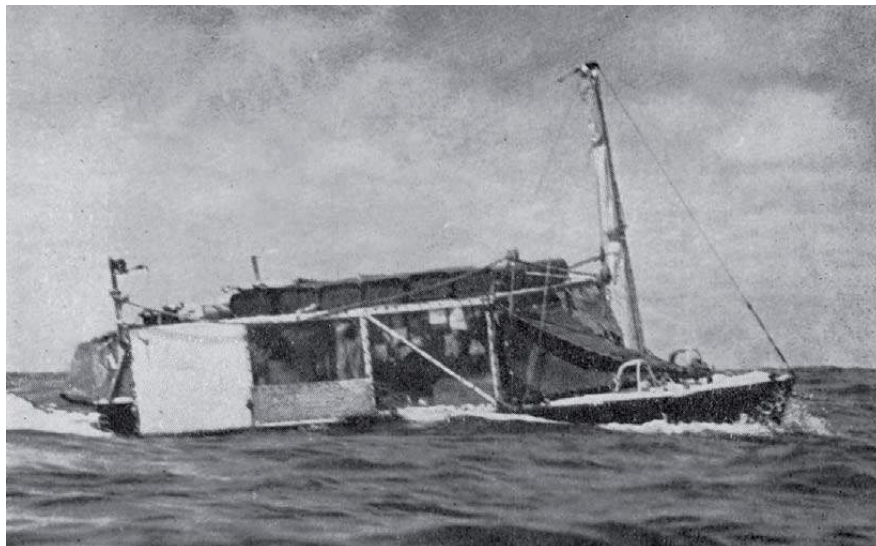
The weather remained fine and for the next ten days they just drifted. If it had

not been for the bitterness of defeat, life would have been quite pleasant, although the living accommodation provided by *Half Safe* could hardly have been called luxurious. Behind the two front seats there was one 5ft long bunk arranged athwartships – and nothing more! There was not even a stove to cook on. They ate all their food cold, except for caught fish which they ‘cooked’ on the hot exhaust. It was like living in a small saloon car. They were in the North Atlantic shipping lane and sighted quite a number of steamers, but hesitated to signal for assistance. They knew well enough that they themselves would be rescued, but they dreaded the thought of abandoning the jeep. It never occurred to them that there was any possibility that it too might yet be saved, but this is just what happened. Here is Ben’s graphic description:

‘After about a week I thought that it was time we did something about being picked up and started keeping night watches; vessels were hard to attract in daylight. We were still choosy and turned down many prospects because either:

- (a) They were east or southbound, or
- (b) Bound for Philadelphia, or
- (c) Too large and shiny, or
- (d) Too small and rusty.

Would you go to sea in this contraption?
***Half Safe*, in which the Carlins ‘drove’ around the world**



One night a large vessel acknowledged my SOS twice and took no further action. I'd like to meet that sonovabitch. We finally hooked a north-bound tanker heading, I thought, for Boston. When she stopped we had all our valuables packed ready to abandon ship and a hammer handy to tap a hole in the side of *Half Safe*. I shinned up a ladder and asked the captain – an old Norwegian and a gem – if we might come aboard. He replied, 'Hell, you're not going to leave that goddamned jeep lying around?' You can imagine how hard I swallowed.'

Half Safe needed considerable repairs which they could not afford, so they both took work for the winter and set off again in the summer of 1949. They towed two tanks of petrol but lost them in a blow, so it was back to Halifax and back to work for another winter. They finally left for the Azores in July 1950, this time towing a much improved streamlined tank holding 280 gallons. They were blessed with good weather, but after about a week the engine began to lose power. Ben took the cylinder head off, standing on the seat and leaning over the dashboard while the stationary jeep tumbled about. Elinor was seasick – most of the time. This Ben did three times, each time decarbonising the heads and pistons. After 31 days they waddled into Flores to be warmly welcomed by the islanders who were much taken with their 'zheep amfibic'.

They left the Azores for Madeira in mid November anticipating a week's passage, but in the event took 23 days, 13 of them being spent lying to a sea anchor in horrendous conditions. After they lost their towed tank they had insufficient fuel to reach any land, so raised the Azores on the radio and the Portuguese Navy said they would divert a destroyer. When it arrived it too had been damaged in the storm, which had reached 60 knots. Ben described sleeping conditions in the blow,

'Lying across the two seats with my shoulders braced against one side and my feet against the other, I could feel *Half Safe's* side panels springing in and out like a fiddler's elbow.'

They reached the Moroccan coast via the Canaries, but arrived with a heavy surf running. Being an Australian, Ben knew a thing or two about surf and neatly beached *Half Safe* on Africa. With little further trouble, apart from being arrested when they drove up the dockyard slipway in Gibraltar, they arrived in England in time for the Special General Meeting before continuing right round the world.

The first Annual General Meeting was held at the RNVR Club on 9 December 1954 and was followed by dinner at the price of 12/6d (62½p). It is not recorded

what dress was *de rigueur*, but it is known that there was some controversy. The more conservative members preferred dinner jackets, which caused difficulty for the likes of the Carlins who were likely to arrive, in their amphibious jeep, straight from sea.

Accounts for the first ten months were presented and showed a trading loss of £6.7.2d but a balance of £67.11.5d which, in the opinion of the Secretary, 'had established the Club on a sound financial basis'.

Income and Expenditure Account

Expenditure		Income	
Printing	£40. 8. 6	Subscriptions 1954	£134. 9. 9
Stationery	13. 7. 1	Subscriptions 1955	1. 0. 0
Postage	23. 2. 8	Sale of regalia	67.18. 4
Purchase of regalia	107.11. 2	Tickets for dinner	17.15. 0
15" Royal Typewriter	20.18. 0	Annual dinner	4. 4. 0
R.Y.A. subscription	2. 2. 0	Members' accounts	6.17. 1
R.N.V.R. Club donation		Sundry Revenue	7. 6. 7
to staff fund	2. 2. 0		
Expenses of inaugural			
meeting in London	2.18. 2		
Hon Secs expenses for			
meetings	4. 7. 6		
Dinner party expenses	22. 6. 6		
Sundry expenses	<u>6.14. 4</u>	Balance	£6.7. 2
	<u>£245.17.11</u>		<u>£245.17.11</u>

Reconciliation Statement

Cash at Bank	£28. 5.10
Stock in hand at cost	28.17. 2
Sundry debtors	<u>19.15. 6</u>
	<u>£76.18. 6</u>
Less	
Members' account	£6.17. 1
Ellams duplicators 2.10.0	<u>9. 7. 1</u>
Assets over liabilities	<u>£67.11. 5</u>

I have examined the foregoing accounts and
certify the same are correct according to the

best of my information and explanations given
me and as shown by the books of the Club.

A.C. Sandison

The Secretary reported the state of the membership as: Ordinary – 134 (made up of: British – 62, American – 51, Australian – 6, South African – 3, France – 4, Holland – 3, New Zealand, Belgium, Germany, Israel and South America – 1 each), Provisional (Associate) – 2, Honorary – 1. This list of nationalities differs considerably from the *List of Members* published at the end of 1954, but is doubtless explained by the number of British members who gave overseas addresses. That list also contains members from Brazil, Pakistan, and Bahrain.

The first Honorary Member to be elected was E. P. de Guingand (Buster) in recognition of his valuable work on the Rules. He was not qualified as a member but, being a lawyer and an old friend of Hum's, he had been dragooned to oversee legal matters. The honour was well repaid as he appears to have attended most committee meetings for many years and took a full part in proceedings. This is perhaps another example of the race-bred pedigree of the Club, as Buster was a leading member of the Royal Ocean Racing Club and campaigned his boats vigorously.

The Commodore again reported that the Committee were considering appointing Honorary Local Representatives at foreign ports, but nothing formal was done about this for some time. He also stated that a sub-committee had been formed to consider the appointment of Overseas Rear Commodores where there was a concentration of members, which seems to have been the latest thinking behind Object (e).

It was reported that an American member had suggested that a parallel annual dinner should be held in the States on the same day as the London dinner, but there is no evidence that this was put into effect.

The Commodore commended the diligence of the Hon Secretary in the production of the first *List of Members* – not a single mistake had so far been detected by any member. Although not qualified to be a member, Mostyn, who was wheelchair bound, voluntarily served the Club with great industry throughout the busy formative years.

The sub-committee considering Overseas Rear Commodores duly reported to the main Committee in October 1955 that they had agreed Rule changes, to be put before the next AGM, to enable National Rear Commodores to be appointed by a vote of the appropriate national members.

It is interesting to note that, at this same meeting, an application for membership was considered from 'Master Roger Townsend' aged 12 years, who cited five passages of qualifying distance. Although these were when he was aged from

5 to 8 years, he was unanimously elected as an Ordinary Member. However the Committee seem to have had further thoughts on the election of those of tender years, as an amendment to the Rules appeared the next year requiring a certificate of competence from the skipper where an application was received from a crew member.

Hum also announced at this meeting that he had received an offer of £300 from an anonymous member to allow the production of a journal of cruises leading to the award of a cup for the best cruise, along the lines of the RCC Journal and Challenge Cup. Much discussion ensued with Hum speaking forcefully against, perhaps influenced by the acrimony that had been caused when he won the RCC Challenge Cup in a borrowed boat. He was also very firmly of the opinion that his new Club should remain thoroughly egalitarian – if you qualified you were a member of equal standing and that there should be no divisive distinctions. It was resolved that Hum should use his persuasive skills upon the donor to allow the money to be invested, with the income provided used as a reward for an idea that furthered the aims and objects of the Club.

Founder Member **Doctor Stephen Enke** came over from California with his wife for the second Annual General Meeting, but must have been disappointed to find the attendance so poor that the start was delayed while waiting for a quorum. Nevertheless, or perhaps because of the scarcity of members, a great deal of work was done as the minutes run to five pages and included several innovations.

The election of National Rear Commodores was passed, but with an amendment sponsored by **Stephen Newmark** of Los Angeles. He suggested that, in view of the size and disparity of cruising areas, the USA be divided into East and West coasts. Doctor Enke further proposed that the one Canadian member – from British Columbia – be brought under the wing of the West Coast Rear Commodore, but national sensitivities prevailed and the lone Canadian was left on his own.

Hum told those present about the anonymous donation of £300, the income from which would be used to fund an annual award for the best and most instructive ‘writing, information, invention or idea that would further the objects of the Club’. Saying that the Club must be profoundly grateful to the donor who thought of this way of furthering its objects, Hum glossed over the considerable arm twisting which had taken place to steer the donor away from his original idea of a journal. Members will recognise the wording that eventually crystallised in the OCC Award, and became the foundation prize of the Club.

Having received this largesse it was felt necessary for the Club to appoint Trustees who would be entrusted with the care of Club property. In addition to

the £300, at that time the Club owned one secondhand typewriter, so clearly the main responsibility of the Trustees was the administration of what was becoming referred to simply as The Fund.

This fund was enshrined in a formal Trust Deed laid before the next committee meeting on 13 February 1956, by which time it had metamorphosed into The OCC Prize Fund, and so it remained, much to the confusion of members, until it finally fell out of the Rules in 1996. Doubtless Hum's aversion to any form of competitiveness was still influencing thinking, as any reference to the Prize was always qualified to make it clear that it was an Award for services to the Club. At this time there appears to have been no consideration of other trophies.

After two years the shine was beginning to wear off this new and exciting worldwide organisation, as at this same meeting the Commodore complained that no mention of the AGM and dinner had appeared in the press. Still puffed with their own importance, it was resolved to inform the yachting press in advance of Club events and send copies of *Newsletters* to 'all four British yachting publications'. On reflection, the Secretary had serious misgivings and wrote to the Rear Commodore saying that he considered such wide circulation would compromise the personal nature of the *Newsletter*. Tim Heywood replied saying that he was concerned that there was a danger of the Club being seen as 'a collection of marine snobs gathered together for the sole purpose of boosting their egos' and agreed that the resolution had gone too far. Consequently it was rescinded at the very next meeting, when it was agreed that suitably edited extracts of the *Newsletter* might be sent to the press and that a short history of the Club be sent to English Counties Periodicals Limited.

At the committee meeting on 4 April 1956 it was agreed to start a Port Index of Information and a Chart Library. Members were to be solicited to give their used charts and pilot books, and also to write in with information on ports not found in published books. Chich Thornton offered to organise the scheme, but no mention is made as to how it was proposed to store or access the material gathered. The Treasurer was able to report that The Prize Fund had been invested in the English Electric Company and was expected to bring in an income of around £7 a year. It was resolved that this should be supplemented from Club funds so that the annual Prize would be £10.

Although from the very outset mention was made of the appointment of Honorary Representatives at foreign ports, nothing formal seems to have been done until a note in the minutes of the April 1956 meeting indicated that two members had volunteered to be 'Port Representatives' for Durban and Cape Town. Their offers were accepted, but not until the next meeting in September 1956 was consideration given to the duties of these officers. Then, for the first

time, the title Port Officer appears, but only following much argument. Hum expressed the view that there was too much proliferation of the term 'officer'. He cited sanitation officers, rat infestation officers and numerous other menial duties which now carried that appellation. However he seems to have been outvoted, as Port Officers they became and remain so to this day.

This same meeting saw the election of the first National Rear Commodore, with **Doctor Gifford Pinchot**, a Founder Member from Connecticut, beating **Judge Curtis Bok** of Philadelphia in a run-off postal vote of US East Coast members. Gifford had qualified when he sailed his little engineless S&S yawl *Loki* to England, via Norway, for the 1953 Fastnet. Whether in high dudgeon or not, it is noticeable that Judge Bok's name disappears from the *List of Members* by 1960. At the same time a letter was received by the Committee suggesting Al Petersen of Brooklyn as a suitable candidate, but since the proposal wasn't in the proper form it was not put to the vote. This is perhaps just as well, as Al was enjoying adulation for his recently completed singlehanded circumnavigation and might well have won the vote, but would not have enjoyed the associated duties as he was an artisan, not an administrator.

By the time of the third AGM, on 3 December 1956, Club meetings were falling into a routine that has varied little to this day. The Secretary was able report that membership had risen to 214 people from 17 countries, an increase of 41 in the year. It is interesting to note that, from the outset, the number of American members was roughly three-quarters of that from the UK, and this proportion has been approximately maintained throughout the Club's 50 years.

Two entries for the OCC Award had been received, but neither was considered worthy of the prize. There was clearly no intention of diluting the dignity of the first tangible Club award by hurrying to get it recognised.

This was also the occasion for the handover of Secretarial duties from the faithful Mostyn Williams to **Harry Goodhart**. The new Secretary was, like his predecessor, an officer of the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, so not only were Hum's Chums coming to the fore again but the 'Lymington Mafia' was obviously alive and well. Mostyn was seen off with acclamation and a cheque for £25, which was quite handsome considering that the Club had just approved the accounts showing a surplus of £3,411d.

Either the Club was running very smoothly or a degree of complacency was setting in, as the next committee meeting is dated 9 October 1957, some ten months after the AGM. Hum was not going to give in gracefully, as the title of Port Officer was again under discussion. It was suggested that where these gentlemen were members they would be known as Honorary Area

Representatives, and where they were not, they would be Honorary Port Representatives. The distinction seems to have been a fine one which was unlikely to last. Indeed, it soon became the practice simply to refer to them all as Port Officers, with an asterisk to indicate those who were not members.

This meeting was also the occasion to announce the result of the USA West Coast ballot for Rear Commodore, when Stephen Newmark of Los Angeles beat Stephen Enke, also of LA. This seems to have marked a relaxation of formality in that the new Secretary actually included first names, but he still had not dropped the style 'Mr'. Doubtless in committee they addressed each other by surnames.

Among the many new members approved at this meeting was **WT (Bill) Snaith**, who felt himself qualified having just won the Newport to Santander race –following his victory in the Newport to Marstrand race two years previously – in his lovely yawl *Figaro*. Also, Founder Member **Rod Stephens Senior**, of Sparkman & Stephens fame, dragooned his son, **Rod Junior**, into becoming a member as he had been with his father in the 1931 Transatlantic race aboard *Dorade*. So it seems that the Club still held an attraction for the racing men.

Unfortunately, after only a year as Secretary Harry Goodhart felt that he could no longer devote enough time to the job and asked to be replaced at the next AGM. He must have been held in high regard, as after this short time in post it was unanimously agreed to give him a case of whisky for Christmas.

Because of the clash with Christmas functions, the fourth AGM was delayed until March and this has remained the practice ever since. The meeting was a model of brevity and a quorum was achieved without having to drag members in.

During the year membership had risen by 50, which in percentage terms is quite remarkable – a comparative rise today would represent a gain of almost 350 members – and must have included most of those worldwide who had qualified during the year. The international spread had also increased, with new members from Greece, Israel, Lebanon and Poland.

Both the Commodore and Rear Commodore were elected for a further term of office, there being no other nominations. There had been some discussion in committee on possible successors for the retiring Secretary. A female had been suggested but, although they considered her a more capable candidate, there seems to have been some resistance as **Harry Albrecht**, a non-member, was appointed, and it was decided that he would be offered an honorarium of £50 per annum. (From the researcher's point of view, Harry had one great advantage over his predecessor in that his writing was very neat and legible. On the other hand the level of formality in his minutes was, if anything, more extreme than

the previous Harry, who had been known to drop the occasional first name. Harry Albrecht studiously used the prefix Mr or Messrs, and even Madam. When writing to men, of course he used only surnames.)

The first winner of the OCC Award was announced – Founder Member Ian Nicolson, for his ingenious Tri-Jib. Like many owners of small boats, Ian had found that he never had enough space for all the heavy canvas sails of those days, so he designed and made a working jib on which could be laced a bonnet turning it into a trysail. This obviated the need to carry a separate trysail, and also the need to stow a wet jib below when changing down to storm canvas.

Clearly the Secretary's effort to get greater press recognition was having an effect, as *Yachts and Yachting* magazine devoted almost an entire page to a report of the AGM, including a detailed description of the Tri-Jib. However most of the page was devoted to rather weak anecdotes attributed to various members. Maurice Griffiths, editor of *Yachting Monthly* and a friend of the Club from the outset, was invited to the dinner and also gave the Club a good write up:

'RECENTLY I was invited as a guest to the Annual Dinner of the Ocean Cruising Club. It may be remembered that qualification for membership is to have done a one thousand mile ocean passage without a stop. Humphrey Barton, the Commodore, told me that membership was 264 and spread over 19 countries: 119 of them come from Great Britain; 93 from the United States; and of the remaining 17 countries, Australia and Sweden came next with eight members each. The dining room at the R.N.V.R. Club was filled to capacity and I was very interested to talk to some of the members. None of them seemed to think that he had done anything out of the ordinary, although several had sailed round the world. One, with two singlehanded Atlantic passages to his credit, quite sincerely remarked that he thought it was the only kind of yachting worth doing.'

Not to be outdone by his rival, Teddy Haylock, editor of *Yachting World*, devoted two whole pages to the progress of ocean sailing generally and the OCC in particular:

OCEAN CRUISING

'BEFORE the First World War ocean cruising was the sport of the very rich in yachts as big as ships and fully manned with professional seamen or of a few, often tramplike, eccentrics in little boats. Between the wars the numbers of the very rich

declined sharply, but an increasing interest in seagoing in yachts became manifest, principally apparent in the rise of ocean racing. The tendency at first was to use or copy the types of hulls and rigs that the professional small boat sailor found satisfactory. The Brixham Trawler, the Pilot Cutter and the Quay Punt were taken as the optimum types for keeping the sea. However, the demands of racing offshore quickly produced a breed of yachts as able as any of the earlier paragons to stay at sea, but with the additional advantage that, being faster, they did not have to keep at sea so long. Further development also made them often easier to handle than types used by the professional. Another development, principally due to offshore racing, was an increasing awareness that size alone was not a measure of seaworthiness. A small boat, well found, had in the last extremity as good a chance as a big one at sea, clear of the land, where weatherliness in a bad sea might make a difference in the chances of survival.

To get an idea of the amount of ocean cruising these days we have only to cast an eye at the latest list of members issued by the Ocean Cruising Club. Here are the names of some 200 members and their qualifying and other open-water passages of over 1000 miles. Only twenty-six of these members were elected for pre-war voyages. Against each name is given an average of about three passages and this when divided into crews probably gives as many as four or five hundred voyages in yachts less than seventy feet overall since the war. It must be remembered that these are only voyages of members of the Ocean Cruising Club formed three years ago and with a fast expanding membership. Incidentally the lists of this Club, with mention of voyages to all parts of the world, fire the imagination as no other catalogue of Club members.

Cruising on the oceans has become a known quantity and reasonable predictions can be made of the conditions and trials to be encountered. The sum total of this knowledge is increasing fast and with organisations like the Ocean Cruising Club it is becoming readily available to those intending to sail to almost any part of the world.

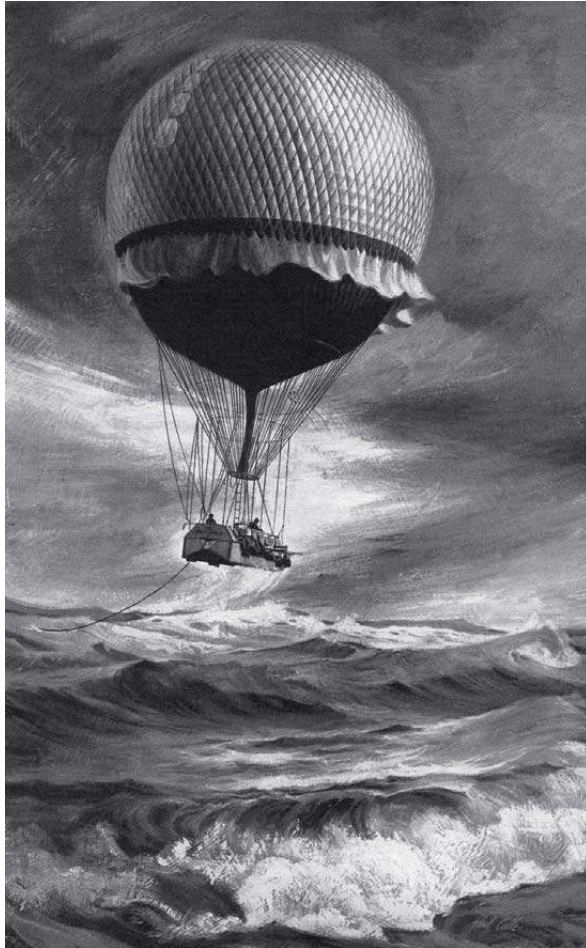
Everyone who has made a passage of more than a few days in a sailing yacht knows well the disinclination to hurry ashore at the end of it.'

The fifth AGM, in March 1959, was held at the *Cercle de la Maison de France*, but seems to have been a perfunctory affair with nothing contentious to report. The Commodore's statement ran to less than 100 words, half of which declared that the one entry for the Award was not considered up to the required standard for a presentation to be made.

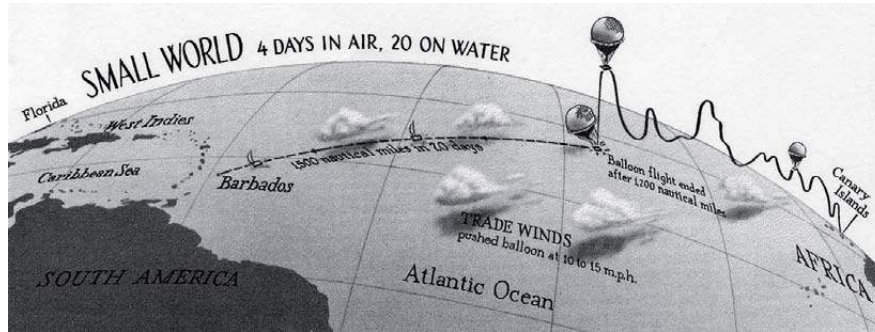
The AGM was followed by the annual dinner at the restaurant, so the Club seems to have moved up socially despite the splendours of the RNVR Club lauded by Hum after a previous annual dinner. Unfortunately scant reference to these occasions was made in the records so it is difficult to get a feel for the progress of Club social activities. However on this occasion Colin and **Rosemary Mudie** together with their ballooning companions, the Eiloarts, were all guests of the Club, though both Rosemary and Colin were members. Colin was a Founder, and Rosemary had been admitted at the committee meeting immediately preceding the AGM having 'qualified' on their remarkable transatlantic balloon/

boat flight the previous year. It is worth expanding on this adventure as, in Rosemary's case, it still stands today as the most extraordinary way of gaining ones spurs.

The previous year the Mudies had invited **Bushy Eiloart**, an old sailing friend, to dine with them in London. Talking about his crossing in *Sopranino*, Colin idly remarked that one day in the Atlantic in heavy seas and driving rain he had thought that above the water and weather in a balloon, where they would average the speed of the trade winds, it would be much more comfortable than the conditions they were



Small World – an artist's impression



A novel way to qualify

experiencing at sea level. Bushy immediately said, “Let’s do it!” Over the next year they researched and experimented until they were convinced it was possible, but one major snag remained – neither had ballooned before, and when they inquired about formalities they were told, ‘You will need a Pilot’s Licence, a Certificate of Airworthiness, a Registration Certificate, a Radio Operator’s Licence, a Transmitter Licence, a Certificate of Approval of Aircraft Radio Installation, and, of course, Insurance’.

Colin left his job to devote all his time to designing both the balloon and a car that would withstand the impact of a high speed landing in a rough sea and then become a boat capable of sailing, perhaps thousands of miles. With patience and ingenuity he tested a series of models of the gondola-boat – first a small one in his bathtub, then a one-eighth size in the Round Pond at Kensington. Finally, to the amazement of strollers, he and Rosemary launched a half-size model from Putney Bridge into the Thames to test its resistance to impact. The final design, of reinforced polystyrene, was self righting and proved that it could land undamaged at high speed at an angle of 30°.

By December 1958 they were ready, so shipped their unlikely craft to Tenerife in the Canary Islands where they hoped to ascend straight into the NE trades. Their take off at night, when the wind was meant to be at its lowest, was not propitious. Once the canopy was inflated they were committed, so when the wind began to rise they slashed the tethers but, instead of rising majestically into the air, they were dragged sideways across the beach. Equipment had been arranged in priority to be used as disposable ballast when needed, so Colin threw out three 60lb bags of non-essential rations, followed by two heavy bags of calcium hydride, but still they bounced over the beach. Over went more rations, but they dragged on towards the sea until they were bouncing off the wave tops. Another two bags later they rose clear of the sea to rock languidly beneath the canopy in the black night.

Their aim was to cruise at 200 to 300ft with a trail rope in the water. As they rose the weight of ropes increased, and vice-versa, thus controlling their height. If they rose until all the rope was airborne they would valve some gas. If they descended too low they would dump water ballast. Thus, in theory, they could continue until they ran out of gas or ballast. They had a water lifting bag on 3000ft of rope on a pedal driven winch, with which they hoped to raise up to 30lbs of sea water as replacement ballast. This same machine could be used to drive two horizontal propellers giving them a modest amount of emergency lift. Unfortunately they hadn't had time to do any flight trials and not all their gadgets worked to plan.

They drifted along making 10 to 15 knots, but several strong thermals had meant the release of too much gas so that gradually they ran out of planned ballast. In one violent thermal they reached 3400ft in cloud, then plunged down to bounce off the sea. The radio receiver was jettisoned, followed by the transmitter, then the generator, until they had nothing left to jettison but food. Bit by bit this was dumped until they stabilised at a few hundred feet, but the slack canopy told them that they hadn't much flying time left. On the fourth night they were sucked aloft into a thunderstorm, and soared to 4600ft before emergency release of gas checked their ascent. That was the end of their flying – there was not enough lift to check the subsequent descent as they plunged

An emaciated crew reach Barbados after 20 days at sea in the gondola



inexorably seaward. Everything disposable went over the side, but in the stygian darkness the flapping gas bag told them that the only way was down. With a few feet to go Bushy released the canopy and they made a heavy landing in which Colin broke his ankle.

After almost four days aloft they had broken the world ballooning endurance record and also covered almost half the distance to the Caribbean. But now their problems really began, as they could not hope to average more than 2 or 3 knots and they had 1500 miles to go with very little water. Their sailing rig worked well and fortunately they enjoyed fresh trades, but it was a rather emaciated crew who celebrated Christmas with an extra 1/4 mug of water and a teaspoon of dried milk with 800 miles still to go to Barbados. After twenty days they sighted land, followed by a small fishing boat who agreed a price to tow them in through the reef. Word of their arrival soon spread and a crowd of some 4000 cheered them ashore.

Rosemary later confessed to feeling sad that she would not qualify for the OCC as she had no port of departure, but Hum sent her a membership form with himself as proposer. Bill Wise remembers committee discussion on this tricky point, but Hum prevailed and to this day her qualifying passage is shown as 'Mid-Atlantic – Barbados; 1500 nm, Small World (Gondola), 15ft' – still the smallest qualifying boat in the *Members Handbook*.

It seems also to have been the practice to hold what in those days were described as 'cocktail parties' after Committee meetings. Now these have degenerated into simple Club parties, both less formal and more enjoyable. During 1959 it was decided that these parties should occasionally include a lecture by a notable sailing character, and since **Miles Smeeton**'s name was on everyone's tongue after his double capsize in the Southern Ocean it was proposed to invite him as the first speaker. This duly took place aboard *HQS Wellington*, the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, on the River Thames, and was attended by 80 members and friends. For a worldwide Club of fewer than 300 members it was an extremely good turnout. This august and now very expensive venue was doubtless facilitated by the Secretary being a 'master mariner' – and clearly one of influence since the ship appears to have been lent at no cost and became the regular venue for meetings and parties.

At the sixth AGM and dinner in 1960 Hum was no longer in the chair. His wife had died suddenly towards the end of 1959 and he had immediately resigned and asked Tim Heywood, the Rear Commodore, to hold the fort until a new Commodore could be elected. (Interestingly, the problem of premature retirement of the Commodore seems to have been dealt with casually whereas it was to be



Tim Heywood, Commodore 1960–1968

the cause of much vexation some 30 years later). The Vice Commodore, Dick Scholfield, had already expressed a wish to resign his flag as he was moving to the north of England, so this precipitated a wholesale changeover of flag officers.

Hum expressed a strong wish for Tim Heywood to be elected his successor and this was not opposed. **Cyril Holland-Martin** was voted Vice Commodore and **Frederick Morgan** as Rear. Hum himself was elected as the Club's first 'Founder and Admiral', a cumbersome title that would have had little meaning outside the Club and thankfully seems to have been soon dropped. At least they didn't name him 'Admiral of the Ocean Seas', a title Columbus claimed and one that would have been equally appropriate for Hum after his subsequent ocean wanderings. After Jessie's death he immersed himself in finding a boat suitable for long-term living aboard. He eventually bought *Rose of York*, a Laurent Giles' Channel Class, in Dumbarton, where he spent the winter fitting her out and, not surprisingly, became known locally as Hum Barton of Dumbarton.

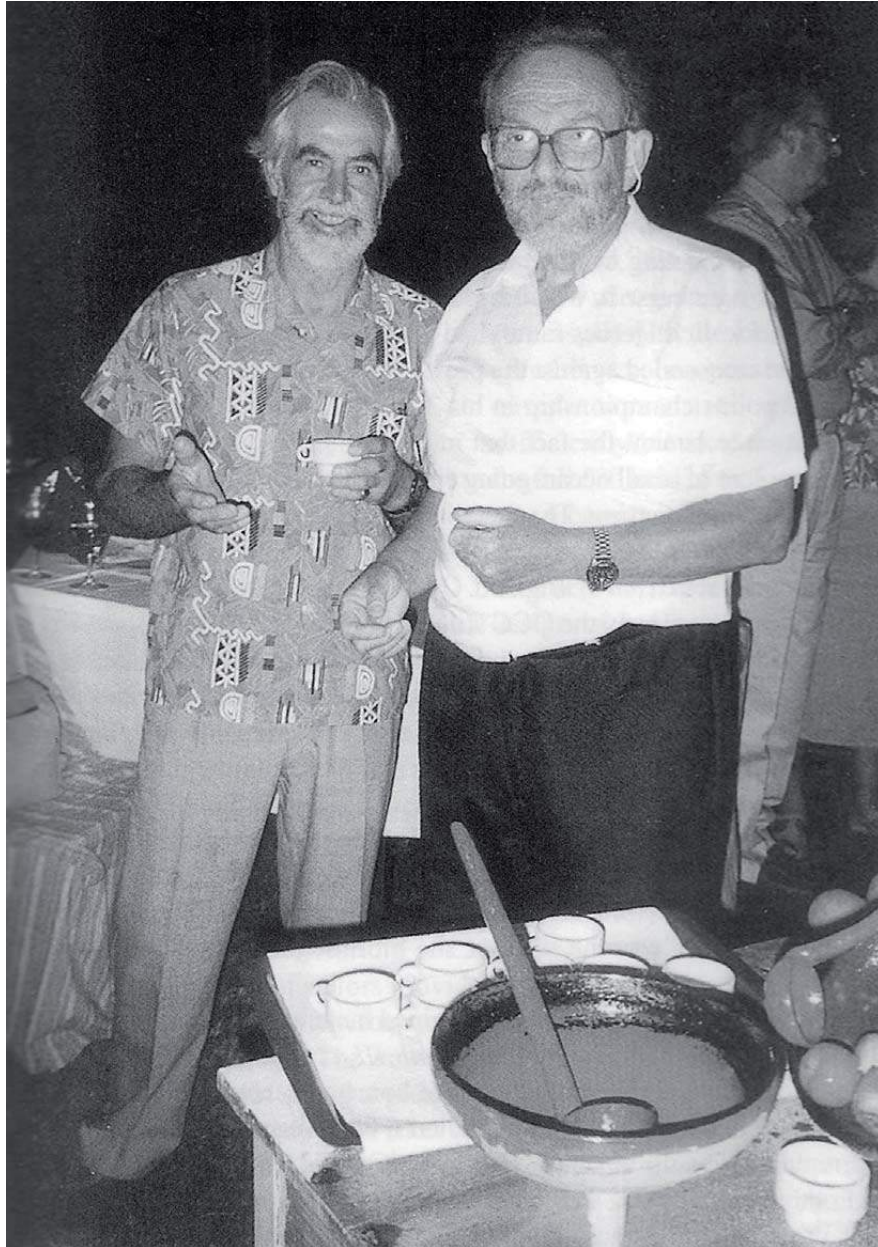
A guest at that year's dinner was **Bill Smart**, the editor of *Yachts and Yachting*, who spoke saying how much he admired the Club and offered to present a trophy to be awarded as the Committee thought fit. He was invited to attend a subsequent committee meeting where he suggested that the trophy should be a carved flying fish from Pitcairn or the Galapagos, to be presented annually for 'achievements in the sphere of the aims and objects of the Club'. The minutes then add, rather contradictorily, 'recipients need not be members of the Club'.

It is interesting to note that this meeting elected Adlard Coles and Erroll Bruce to the Committee, although they both continued to be high profile ocean racers after their triumph in the transatlantic races.

Again no suitable entries had been received for the Award, so it was resolved to send a circular to all members emphasising the objects of the Award and urging them to write up their exploits and ideas as, having not been awarded for three years, its value had risen to £30, a considerable sum for those days.

During the subsequent year the main committee business seems to have been concerned with getting the Port Representative scheme off the ground. The Secretary wrote a memorandum for the Committee, again raising the confusion with titles and suggesting simply Port Representative, as he too deplored the proliferation of the title 'officer'. Harry also produced a suggested letter to prospective representatives in which he proposed, *inter alia*, that they should send the Club pilotage and facility details of their area with the aim of producing a somewhat ambitious handbook along the lines of the Michelin Guide. It must be remembered that in those days there were virtually no published cruising guides and that most ports offered very limited facilities for visiting yachtsmen, so a friendly and knowledgeable local representative and authoritative notes from a local could be of enormous assistance. It was also suggested that the representative should be entitled to fly the Club burgee with the initials PR in the hoist. Where he should fly it was not clear, as it would have looked out of place in a suburban garden should the representative not happen to own a waterfront property with a flagpole. At the next committee meeting this was amended to the present Port Officer's flag, which looks appropriate anywhere.

It is interesting to note that from the outset the Committee's thinking was as much concerned with appointing UK representatives to help members visiting this country as it was with finding overseas candidates. As one member pointed out, England was foreign to overseas members and there were more of those than there were British. The very first to be officially appointed was **George Levick**, for Torquay. He was well qualified to understand the needs of the ocean voyager having accompanied **Bill Tilman** throughout his second voyage when they left Africa to port, a distance of 21,736 miles. Bill was renowned as



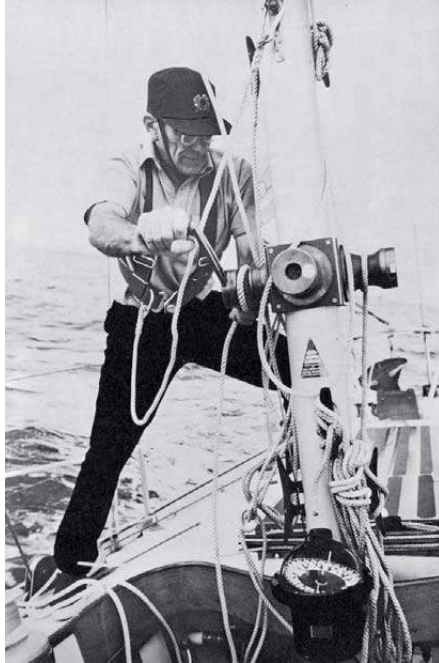
The author with Alfredo Lagos. Three generations of the Lagos family have welcomed members to their corner of Spain

a very hard skipper and few of his crew lasted that long. At the same time the Club demonstrated its worldwide status by appointing officers at New Caledonia, Pago Pago, Florida, Maryland, Sydney and Brisbane. To these could be added the name of **Alfredo Lagos** in Vigo, who had befriended Hum in his pre-club delivery days and automatically inherited the whole Club without being asked. Alfredo continues to this day, vigorously representing the Club and helping the many members who call.

The committee meeting in November 1960 brought in a particularly illustrious crop of new members. It will be recalled that in 1957 **Blondie Hasler** (of wartime Cockleshell Heroes fame) had proposed an east-to-west singlehanded transatlantic race, sailed against the prevailing winds and currents. Having won the RORC points championship in his 30 Square Metre *Tre Sang* he was in a good position to lament the fact that most of the effort and money devoted to the development of small ocean-going craft was entirely dominated by the ocean racing rules of measurement. The first Singlehanded Transatlantic Race (OSTAR) took place in 1960, sponsored by the *Observer* newspaper and organised by the Royal Western Yacht Club of England. Of the five competitors, three immediately joined the Club, so clearly the OCC still held some cachet even for such famous yachtsmen, much lauded throughout the world after the success of a race which had at first been regarded with considerable scepticism. Inevitably concern was expressed in some quarters about the danger of collision in such events and Hum coined the jingle:

Poor old Bill lies deep in the sea
He went fast asleep as *Rose* sailed free.
The self-steering gear held her true on course
T'was the steamer she hit brought news of her loss!

Francis Chichester, who had already gained fame with his solo flying exploits, won the race in his 40ft sloop *Gipsy Moth III*, crossing in 40 days. His wife, **Sheila**, accompanied him on the passage home and they both joined the Club on their return. **David Lewis**, who sailed a 25ft Vertue and went on to make some remarkable solo voyages, also joined, as did **Val Howells** who sailed a 25ft Folkboat and claimed to sustain himself at sea on nothing but a potent secret brew of rum punch. Blondie did not join the Club and neither did Frenchman **Jean Lacombe**, who sailed the smallest boat in the race, the 21ft *Cap Horn*, and finished more than two weeks after the rest. The French were not to be humiliated again, however, when **Eric Tabarly** trounced the fleet in the next OSTAR in 1964.



Francis Chichester during his solo circumnavigation

The Club returned to *Le Maison de France* for the seventh AGM and dinner in 1961. The main event of the evening was the presentation of the Award, but it is clear that the scheme was getting off to a shaky start as, despite the circular urging members to co-operate, the only entry was not considered sufficiently meritorious to present the full £30 held in the kitty. Again it was Founder member and would-be inventor Ian Nicolson, who was awarded £7.10s for his ingenious design of a demountable pipe cot that could be plugged together to make a jury mast.

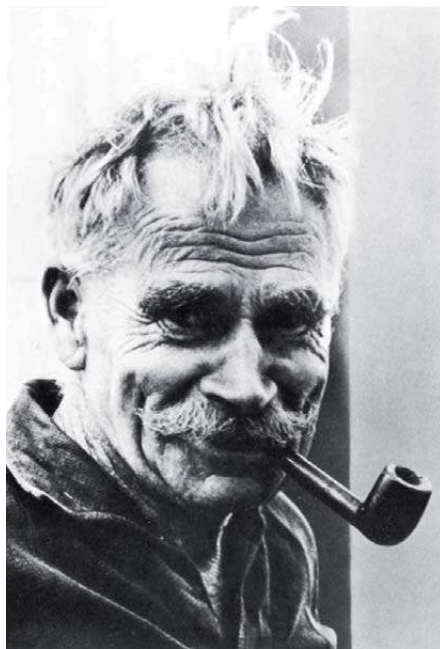
At several committee meetings the question of unpaid subscriptions had been raised, and there is a hint that all was not well with the Secretary's performance. A formula was found to make a tactful change, and it was announced at the AGM that it was felt necessary to have the secretary based in London and that **Commander Nock**, a non-member, had agreed to take over. It is difficult to understand why a non-member should be sufficiently interested to act as Secretary for a nominal honorarium of £50, unless it was that the contact with such an illustrious body of sailors provided a degree of reflected glory.

Not surprisingly, an early item for consideration at the next committee meeting was overdue subscriptions. The new Secretary reported that some £113 was overdue, which does not sound a great deal by today's standards – but with a total credit balance of a mere £600 takes on a greater significance. The Secretary agreed to address the matter, but by the next meeting it was clear that things were getting out of hand so it was decided to appoint a Treasurer to take some of the load off the hard-pressed Secretary.

Brian Stewart had anticipated the call and had already done some work, so was invited to make a statement. The accounts, Brian said, 'were in a mess. Some £290 was owed in subscriptions, some dating back to 1957'. It appeared that the previous Secretary had difficulty working with pounds and dollars, so

it was decided in future to quote all costs in both currencies. Since the culprits for most of the arrears were US members it was suggested that the Regional Rear Commodores should collect subs in their parish and submit a bulk cheque to the Secretary in the UK. This was found to be impractical, and instead it was decided to open a dollar account in the US and to round up the American subscription up to \$3. (An interesting reflection on the strength of sterling in 1961, since the 'home' subscription rate was still £1).

Meanwhile the Australian membership had progressed by leaps and bounds. Whereas there were only four Australian Founders, by 1961 there was a total of 37 members, easily the third highest national group. A comparable increase in overall membership would have produced a Club total of over 1000. (The rather grand title of Australian Squadron was suggested, but fortunately does not seem to have been followed up.) It was considered that it would be appropriate to appoint an Australian Rear Commodore and they were invited to make a nomination. **Walter Burke** was chosen, and in August that year they held their first local dinner, an occasion that developed into an annual event.



**Bill Tilman, who left a wake
that few dare follow**

The 1962 cocktail party was again held on the *Wellington* when the Commodore read out a cable from the newly appointed US East Zone Rear Commodore: 'Wish to report at a dinner New York Yacht Club thirty eight members and twenty guests toasted Her Majesty. Wish you and the Club all success. Jack Parkinson'. The party was followed by the usual lecture, this time by Bill Tilman who had joined the Club in 1956 after his second long voyage in his ancient pilot cutter *Mischief*. As will be seen in the next chapter Bill did not qualify as a Founder but, as an old friend of Hum's, he had been pressed on return from his first extraordinary voyage, leaving South America to starboard. His second was aimed at scaling some unclimbed peaks in the Kerguelen Islands but he lost his dinghy in the

southern ocean. With no means of getting ashore he turned back leaving Africa to port, and returned to Lymington via the Mediterranean to get another one.

Jack Parkinson seems to have been a lively Rear Commodore, as not only did he organise the successful dinner at the NYYC that year but came over for the eighth AGM in 1962. He was Club Historian for the CCA and had recently published a history of that club. Jack came from a well-established cruising family and, in 1953, founded the John Parkinson Memorial Trophy for ocean voyaging in honour of his father. It is not surprising, therefore, that he became a Founder Member of the OCC a year later. It is interesting to note that the presence of a USA Rear Commodore seems to have induced some relaxation in formality, as the Commodore actually used his first name when introducing him. However, the Secretary was punctilious in referring to him as Mr in his minutes.

Although not yet formally elected, Brian Stewart gave a very forthright Treasurer's Report stating that more than a quarter of the membership were in arrears with their subscriptions; some not having paid since the year of their election. This was to be a vexed question for the next 30 years. It is perhaps inevitable in a Club of the nature of the OCC that some crew members who join in the euphoria of a completed ocean passage then lose interest, but it was to be some years before the introduction of a joining fee deterred the casual Club joiner. The Commodore pointed out that although the accounts showed a Secretary's honorarium of £50, he had in fact been paid £200 under an agreement made to induce him to take on the job. This is amazing for a Club with a subscription income of under £300 which was trading perilously close to insolvency. To a degree the true financial situation was hidden by late-collected arrears which appeared as income in the balance sheet. Where the extra money to pay the Secretary came from is not clear, as the audited accounts were made to balance – it seems that 'creative accounting' is not a new thing after all! Nevertheless the accounts were approved, but a clear warning had been given to the recidivists.

In his report the Commodore was able to announce that membership was up to 395 and, since they were spread over 22 countries, it had been decided to add a section to the *List of Members* showing geographical location. However, to save on size, it was decided to include only the qualifying voyage in the list. Until then it had been the practice to enter all voyages of over 1000 miles, and one member from Denmark, **Carl Nielsen**, had entered eighteen passages over a two year period in his 51ft gaffer *Nordkaperen*.

Perhaps Harry Albrecht had not been as bad as the minutes suggest, as it was proposed by the Commodore and agreed by acclamation that he be made an Honorary Life Member. He was, after all, the longest serving Secretary up to that time on a purely nominal honorarium during a very busy period, and the only member Secretary. Or possibly the motive was less altruistic, since his good offices

as a Master Mariner continued to facilitate the use of the prestigious *HQS Wellington*.

1962 was a busy year for the Committee, there being no fewer than eight meetings. Commodore Tim Heywood was keen to tie up a lot of loose ends which had been hanging about for years so he appointed sub-committees to look into the perennial questions of Port Officers (Representatives), the *Newsletter*, the cost of 'servicing' members in view of the many non-payers, and the level of subscriptions.

It seemed also to have been a year of procrastination. The sub-committee reported that it cost 30 shillings a year to 'service' each member against a subscription of £1, so it was 'finally agreed to recommend to the AGM that the Annual Subscription be increased to £2 (or \$6)'. Meanwhile, Adlard Coles, being of the old school, suggested an increase to two guineas, which would have succeeded in confusing the dollar account even more. Despite this, at the next AGM the Commodore, after a long peroration on matters of finance, announced, 'the Committee had decided not to recommend an increase in subscriptions'. Meanwhile several economies were proposed. The Secretary was persuaded to accept a reduction in his honorarium of £50, London entertainment should in future be self-financing (a principle that has been strictly enforced ever since), and everyone was admonished to seek new members. Furthermore it was decided to 'name', in parliamentary parlance, persistent subs offenders by listing their names in the *Newsletter*, using the euphemism 'lost contact'. However, these stringencies did not deter consideration of more grand entertainment, such as a cocktail party at Earl's Court during the Boat Show and that the annual dinner be held at a City Livery Company.

The Admiral had sailed to the Caribbean in the autumn of 1960 and had clearly been unimpressed by the type of yachtsmen who inhabited the large and opulent boats which he encountered. He sent regular, lengthy letters to the committee, in one of which he suggested that the qualifying length overall should be reduced to 60 feet. This was keenly debated, and it was revealed that Jack Parkinson, Rear Commodore USA East, had suggested an increase to 73 feet. It is not clear if this was merely an attempt to achieve uniformity with the CCA or if he had thoughts of replacing his beautiful Concordia Yawl *Winnie of Bourne* with a bigger boat, but it is notable that his two qualifying passages, in 1927 and 1928, were in boats of not less than 58ft overall. (It is also gratifying to note that a persuasive attempt shortly afterwards by an old friend of Hum's to allow qualification for the crew of his new 75-footer was smartly rebuffed).

Francis Chichester then started another hare by suggesting a doubling of the qualifying distance to 2000 nautical miles. The Rear Commodore then confused

the situation even further by observing that one new applicant's qualifying voyage had been made in 1928 and perhaps there should be a 'statute of limitation' on eligible voyages. Clearly he had not studied the list of Founder Members, which showed several voyages of that vintage and one person, **Fredrick Thurber**, who had qualified in 1910. It was the Commodore's view that, 'it would be a mistake to bar the old salts (he was then 61), since at this stage in the Club's development they were more interested in quantity of members rather than quality'. It was therefore agreed to let these matters stand, as they have to this day.

Fortunately access to HQS *Wellington* did not cease with Harry Albrecht's passing as Secretary, as it continued to be the venue for both committee meetings and parties with no charge ever appearing in the accounts. Perhaps this is also an indication of the standing enjoyed by a Club which could boast the likes of Francis Chichester as a humble committee member! In December 1962 the winter cocktail party included a symposium on 'The Problems of Singlehanded Sailing'. The panellists were Francis Chichester, David Lewis and Val Howells, with **Alan Villiers** in the chair. Alan, it will be recalled, wrote a great many books about square riggers, including *By Way of Cape Horn* on his voyage around The Horn in a grain racer – hardly relevant experience to qualify him to moderate a discussion on singlehanded sailing. There is no record of the proceedings, but they must have been impressive since there were several requests for copies from the yachting press.

The 1963 AGM and annual dinner were again held at *Le Maison de France*, with the **Hon Max Aitken** of yacht racing fame as guest of honour. The Commodore was at pains to point out that a subscription rise had only been avoided by hard work and economy on the part of the Committee, including an agreed reduction in the Secretary's honorarium. How agreed this was is not recorded, but later in the proceedings he announced the resignation of the new Secretary and, with no replacement in the offing, the Vice Commodore, Cyril Holland-Martin volunteered to carry the burden.

The Commodore then gave a tantalising glimpse of an ingenious entry for the OCC Award from Stephen Enke, but could not say more at that time since the idea was under US patent and the Club must avoid infringement by early publication. However, closer examination by the Prize sub-committee later revealed that it was a device for setting headsails which was not considered appropriate to offshore sailing. Instead the Award – and 10 guineas – went to **Steven Bradfield**, who had developed a self-steering system for his boat *D'vara* while sailing from Australia to England. This is left equally tantalising as no details, other than it relied on bungee cord, are given.

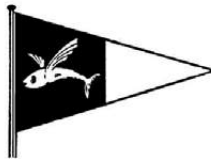
It seems to have taken the expenditure of four secretaries before it was recognised just how great the burden was. In 1961 a *Newsletter* sub-committee had been formed, presumably with the aim of taking some of the load off the Secretary, who not only carried out the normal administrative duties but produced a long and detailed *Newsletter*, doubtless with one finger typing. There is little evidence of this committee giving much help – indeed they seem to have hardly ever met. In 1962 a new face was voted onto the main Committee, one **David Wallis**, but he was to ‘hide his light’ for a further 18 months until it was noticed that his firm had printed the tickets for the annual dinner. (They had, in fact, been sub-contracted by the normal Club printer who had put a 100% mark-up on David’s price). The penny dropped and he was immediately co-opted onto the *Newsletter* sub-committee. He was a printer!

The Vice Commodore was quite enjoying the job of Secretary and continued for more than a year, but when David quietly suggested that he would be glad to help with the editing and production of the *Newsletter* the Acting Secretary did not demur. The very next issue had a much more professional appearance and was headed boldly ‘**1963 No.1 NEWSLETTER**’, suggesting that a numbering system was about to begin. However this was not to be and the Club has only ever officially issued *Newsletter No 1* which, doubtless, is now a collector’s item. It was to be a further year before the reader could enjoy a coherent system and a contents list.

The question of an official title for Port Officers would not lie down and, in 1963, in the context of compiling a port registry, it was again suggested that certain overseas appointees should be invited to send information on their area and be called Port Correspondents, as opposed to the real Port Officers who would be called Port Representatives. But despite the continued agonising over the name, the Secretary always referred to them in the minutes as simply Port Officers, which must have eventually worn down the opposition as slowly the subject was dropped. Even in those innocent days, however, the fear of litigation reared its ugly head and after much discussion it was felt that the Club was laying itself open if it published information which, if incorrect, could endanger a yacht. The ambitious plan to provide a ‘Michelin Guide’ of the sea was therefore quietly left to die.

1964 was the year of the second OSTAR and, as several members had entered including two from the Committee, it was felt appropriate that the Club should offer some formal entertainment to the competitors after the race. Despite the parlous state of the finances it was proposed to hold a dinner in either the Houses of Parliament or at least at the Fishmonger’s Hall (for the sake of the uninformed, this is not a high class ‘chipper’ but one of the grandest of the

1963 No. 1
NEWSLETTER



OCEAN CRUISING CLUB

ADMIRAL—Humphrey D. Barton

COMMODORE—Major G. B. Heywood, M.B.E.

VICE COMMODORE—C. G. Holland-Martin, Esq.

REAR COMMODORE—F. W. Morgan, Esq.

REAR COMMODORE (U.S.A. East Zone)—John Parkinson, Jnr.

REAR COMMODORE (U.S.A. West Zone)—Stephen M. Newmark

REAR COMMODORE (Australia)—Lt. Cdr. W. H. Burke, R.A.N.R.

HON. SECRETARY—Commander C. F. Nock, D.S.O., O.B.E., R.N.
37 Asmuns Hill, London, N.W.11

HON. TREASURER—B. A. Stewart, Esq.,
c/o Messrs. Stewart & Hughman Ltd., 3/4 Lime St., London, E.C.3

▲

False Dawn

Livery Companies' London dining halls). It was thought that this would particularly impress our American brethren, but the thought of a hundred tough ocean sailormen in white ties in the hallowed precincts of the Houses of Parliament or a Liveried Company makes the mind boggle. Amazingly, the planning went forward for a date shortly after the completion of the race until someone realised that it would be almost impossible to get crews and the OCC membership together when they would be gathered on opposite sides of the Atlantic. A cryptic note appeared in the minutes to the effect that the dinner was cancelled owing to logistical problems.

The Club had enjoyed a close relationship with all the yachting press from the outset, in particular *Yachting Monthly* and *Yachting World* as both editors were friends of Hum. Regular snippets of the Club's progress appeared and, as we have seen, it was expected that AGMs and parties were worthy of a report. This is good evidence of the Club's recognition within the sailing world as a whole, reinforced when BBC Television innocently sought permission to report on Club events – offshore cruising isn't exactly photogenic. That the Club was also recognised as a fount of deep-sea cruising knowledge was demonstrated when *Yachting World* asked to use the membership as a source of informed opinion for the first of their periodic articles on the ideal offshore cruising yacht. This was quite successful and **Bernard Hayman**, the new editor, wrote to the Club:

'Any editor is naturally pleased when an idea works and the *Yachting World* Questionnaire to the Ocean Cruising Club members undoubtedly did. In the first place, we had a nearly fifty per cent response which, considering that an appreciable proportion of membership must be on the move or gone away, showed that the members themselves did not object to being asked to be a 'guinea pig' in this way.

From my point of view the most satisfactory aspect of the answers was the high proportion of sense, or to put it another way, the minute proportion of nonsense. It would have been embarrassing for me to have been faced with overwhelming support for something which, as an editorial policy, I was not keen to promote.

What did surprise me, however, was the extreme conservatism in a few of the answers. Surely, to have twenty per cent of the members recommending a quadrantal compass card is astonishing, and in some respects even more surprising were the twenty-one per cent who wanted nothing to do with self-steering gear.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of members showed wise judgement and a respect for the sea which, after all, is what one would expect.'

The tenth anniversary of the Club was celebrated by a change of venue for the AGM and dinner to The Little Ship Club, but otherwise seems to have raised little excitement as it passed without mention in the minutes. The only way it was marked was by the issue of a summary of membership statistics which showed a total of 450 members spread over 21 countries. It was, however, a significant occasion as in many ways the Club had 'come of age'. Recognised and respected internationally, its opinion was being sought by authorities on deep-sea cruising matters. It had an Admiral who, in the Caribbean at the time of the anniversary, had shown a lead to the Club by making three Atlantic crossings in as many years since relinquishing his command. There was a stable and energetic Committee, with all the flag officers in their second term, and three national flag officers who took a keen interest in their overseas patches. While it might be considered rather careless to lose four secretaries in eight years, this does not appear to have affected the smooth running of the administration. It had an efficient voluntary Treasurer who, by dint of much delicate shuffling of the precarious finances, had succeeded in keeping the subscription unchanged over the entire ten years, even though it was hardly more than nominal.

However perhaps the most signal event was the issue of the first stiff-backed *Newsletter*. It had been recognised from the outset that this publication was a key factor in binding the far-flung Club together, since it was the only tangible thing that the majority of members ever saw for their money, but it had been slow to metamorphose from the badly typed and duplicated foolscap sheets of the early days, through slim printed flimsies, into a size and form that was to last for 25 years. David Wallis was not accredited as Editor but he was in all but name, and brought an expertise to the production which resulted in a much more professional product. This can only have done good to the Club's standing, as it was now fit to circulate to other clubs where it became a silent recruiting agent. Above all, Tim Heywood, who had just been re-elected Commodore for another term at the tenth AGM, had a firm grip on the Club and was determined to push it forward vigorously.

This smooth beginning is testimony to Hum's foresight in getting the main factors correct from the start. This resulted in a minimum of those changes which are upsetting to any organisation but particularly so to a putative, even experimental, attempt at a loose, worldwide fraternity of inherently independent folk. That it has lasted and prospered for 50 years, in very much the form in which it was started, reinforces the credit due to the Founders.

IV – THE NEWSLETTER

In pursuance of Object (b) of the club rules the Secretary wrote to all members on 3rd April 1954:

'Dear Members

I shall be very glad if you will let me have any news of ocean voyaging in small craft which may be of interest to members. I also require such Information for the Club records.

Ann Davison has very kindly presented to the Club the red ensign which she wore aboard *Felicity Ann* during the voyage to New York. She is busy writing another book and plans to return to New York in May and carry on with the voyage in little *Felicity Ann* which she left at City Island.

Bill Howell sails shortly in the 50ft steel ketch *Goodewind* for the States. The yacht is owned by Dr. Laws who has entered her for the Bermuda Race. As far as I know she is the only British entry*.

Victor Clark, who is on his way round the world in the 34ft. ketch *Solace*, is now at Kingston, Jamaica. He plans to leave Panama early in May.

The Commodore tells me that he is trying to track down a remarkable voyage which was made across the N. Atlantic in 1932 by Miss Anna Cedarblom, a young Swedish lady. The voyage was made single-handed in a 15ft launch with an outboard engine and calls were made at Lerwick (Shetland Islands}, the Faeroes and Iceland. From West Greenland the boat is believed to have been shipped back to Sweden.

* Records don't indicate whether they took part in the race, but it looks doubtful as a **Dr Small** qualified for the OCC in the same boat that year with a voyage from Cork to the Azores and back).

I hope that my next news bulletin will be more informative, but please remember that I am dependent upon you for information.

Yours sincerely'

Although this was first referred to as the *Bulletin*, it was clearly the start of the *Newsletter*, but wasn't given that title for another two years. It was realised from the very beginning that the *Newsletter*, in whatever form, was the only tangible contact that many members had with the running of the Club. Indeed, also from the outset, the few grumbles recorded were that it was poor return for the money. The Secretary was always at pains to emphasise that the *Newsletter* was only as good as the news he received, and he constantly cajoled members to send him information. It was also inevitable that, with so relatively few members sending news, the more vocal and interesting got more than their share of publicity. One or two faithful correspondents got so great a coverage that we are able to follow their progress in one issue after another, and it must be said that some make dull reading.

As members responded the Secretary's letters got progressively longer, still typed on foolscap, some running to six pages of close type. He promised to try and produce two a year and more or less succeeded. His early letters are a mine of information and show how the Club was gradually taking shape worldwide. Apart from routine matters they were largely about cruising members, but rarely did he quote directly from letters, preferring to paraphrase. This must have made for a lot of work as the likes of **Bill Crealock** were likely to send him a ten page missive which had, perforce, to be severely edited.

In his second letter, in January 1955, he reported somewhat laconically on the wreck of Victor Clark's *Solace* on Palmerston Atoll, referring to Victor's 'bad luck in getting ashore', when in fact half the starboard side had been torn out of the boat. He also reported that seven OCC boats – *Freelance*, *Havfruen*, *Carrina*, *Revive*, *Yasme*, *Seal* and *Enchantra* – had gathered in Antigua to celebrate Christmas in the first year of the Club's formation. Quite a good turnout even by present day standards. He ended with the admonition that subscriptions were due, £1 or \$3.20. He was a devil for punishment, adding the postscript, 'My appetite for news of long voyages in small craft remains insatiable'.

Mostyn's encouragement to report sailing news seems to have borne fruit as his third letter, in October 1955, had almost five pages about members on the high seas, despite his lament at the beginning that he had practically nothing to report. He tells of the wreck of *Solace* at rather greater length than his previous terse remarks:

'The weather deteriorated but as he was under the lee felt quite safe, especially as the natives assured him that the northerlies did not commence until December. Commander Clark and his Boy slept aboard. About midnight he awoke hearing the surf louder and closer and apparently abeam instead of ahead. The motion too had changed. On deck, he found they had swung round towards the reef, the wind having backed 10 points; a nasty sea was running and he now had a lee shore uncomfortably close. In swinging, the anchor cable had fouled a coral head and the ketch was snubbing badly. The sea got up very quickly, probably owing to the shelf and cliff edge formation. The winch was almost pulled out of the deck and the shaft bent, but Commander Clark managed to get the cable off the drum and round the Samson post. At that moment the cable parted and they were in a smother of breakers at the edge of the reef. At the critical moment of reaching the reef he says 'a seventh great wave' seemed to lift them on to the reef instead of driving the ship against the cliff edge, where they would have been match wood within a few minutes, and sunk in six fathoms. Successive seas flogged them across the reef until they were about twenty yards from the edge, and there they rested. It was an awful night, blowing a gale, raining, covered in spray, heeled over about 50 degrees, holed on the starboard side, the cabin a chaos and flooded.

The next four weeks were spent in hauling *Solace* across the reef, floating her in the lagoon, hauling her up the beach and shoring her up under the palm trees. The hole on her starboard side measured 19 feet by 6 feet.'

It is interesting to note that he also reports at length on Bill Tilman even though he had not yet become a member. Perhaps this was because he was an old friend and sailing companion of Hum's and they had designs to press him as



***Solace* at Porto Santo, soon after the start
of her three year circumnavigation**

soon as he got home. Bill was setting off on the first of his several high latitude voyages to facilitate his first love, scaling unclimbed peaks, which by then were only to be found at the ends of the earth.

In February 1956 the Secretary headed his fourth letter, **Ocean Cruising Club Newsletter**. There is no evidence that this was a conscious decision on his part, or by the Committee, but the minutes of a meeting in October 1955 also allude to '*The Newsletter*' so it appears that the name was arrived at empirically. Nevertheless, the *Newsletter* continued to be laboriously typed and hand duplicated by Mostyn, and faithfully kept the membership informed of the progressively expanding numbers who were crossing the oceans. Indeed, there seemed to have been a veritable explosion of deep-sea sailing in the two years since the club had been formed, or was it just that, at last, there was an organisation collecting this information whereas previously much had gone unsung?

The Secretary had obviously got his tentacles, out as his reports came from a great variety of sources. He noted that on 31 October 1955, 'The United Kingdom Radio' had reported that *Yasme* had left Panama for Tahiti the previous day, though why the BBC should be interested in a small boat setting out across the Pacific is not clear. He also quoted a paper cutting from Canada:

'A Vancouver paper dated the 9th November 1955 gives some details of John Guzzwell and his 18 footer *Trekka* in which he sailed across from Victoria B.C. to Hawaii in 29 days.'

Mostyn goes on,

'The paper suggests he may be the smallest ever to sail to Hawaii from the west coast of America. She was built by Guzzwell himself and it took 18 months. He is going to New Zealand and may then sail on to South Africa where he once lived. *Trekka* looks like a larger *Sopranino*, which was designed by Laurent Giles and sailed out to the States by Pat Ellam and Colin Mudie in 1951. *Trekka* is rigged as a yawl and she must be exceptionally fast.'

Trekka was in fact 20ft 6in overall, which does make her a bigger version of *Sopranino* at a little under 20ft. She too was of Laurent Giles design.

There were regular updates on the movements of Bill Crealock and **Ernest Chamberlain**, both Founder Members, who had bought and restored the old 105ft gaff schooner *Gloria Maris* in Newport Beach. They converted her to Bermudan rig, putting a 110ft pole mast in her for 'easy short-handed sailing'. At the time of Mostyn's report they were crossing the Pacific with a party of scientists, in search of poisonous sea animals from which to extract the venom so as to make an antidote. Bill eventually settled in California where he practised as a yacht designer, drawing the well-known Westsail series and later the famous Crealock 37, a sturdy cruising boat still very popular in the US. Bill has been in and out of the Club several times as his membership was allowed to lapse, but it is gratifying to learn that, on hearing of the Jubilee, at the age of 84 he has applied to rejoin.

Not all reported passages were as exotic or successful as Bill and Ernest's. In his action-packed *Newsletter* of 9 August 1956 Mostyn retold at length the trials and tribulations of new members **David Beard** and **Gordon Auchterlonie**, much of which is worth quoting:

'Mr. Beard and Gordon Auchterlonie left Lowestoft on the 25th October 1955 in *Skaffie* and arrived at Madeira on the 1st December

(their qualifying passage). *Skaffie* is a 20ft Bermudian sloop with a beam of 7ft 3in. They had bad weather most of the way and were dismasted off Cape Finisterre, losing their dinghy, their engine being flooded and put out of action. They carried on under jury rig and it took them nine days against head winds to cover the last 240 miles into Funchal. They made the West Indies safely but ran into serious trouble later when making for the Canal Zone. A hundred miles from Grenada their rudder split down the centre and with only half the blade they found it almost impossible to steer except down wind. They decided to try and make Curaçao.

When endeavouring to get to the south of Bonaire Island they were blown and washed inshore and being unable to tack finally struck the coral and the boat stranded. They scrambled ashore and after an all night walk, found help at the town of Kralendijk. With a bulldozer and many willing hands *Skaffie* was dragged ashore and transported across to the west coast of the island on a lorry. She was pretty badly damaged. She had five new planks and part of her keel replaced. Mr Beard says they cannot speak too highly of the Dutch Authorities for all their help and of the inhabitants for their assistance and the many necessities given to enable them to continue their voyage.

They left Bonaire Island on the 2nd April and made good runs until the 5th, when the wind increased and the sea got up. They were then about one hundred miles from the Columbian coast. The weather continued to deteriorate and they rode to a sea-anchor. On the 6th this carried away; at the same time they shipped a 'terrific sea' and Mr. Beard was washed overboard. He swam back although he had on oilskins. The rudder also broke again. They bailed out and hove to with just

a corner of the mainsail set, but with the wind still increasing and only a bit of rudder left, things looked black. On the 7th they again shipped a big sea which put them over on their beam ends with the mast in the water, the cockpit flooded and the cabin became a shambles. They thought for some seconds it was the end, then *Skaffie* 'came up slowly'. The dinghy had broken adrift and soon broke up completely. The chronometer had been thrown out of its case and had stopped. They were swamped once more but on the 8th the weather improved. They rigged a jury rudder with a boom and floor boards and sailed on, finally arriving at Colon on the 19th April after being becalmed and almost driven ashore on the islands south of Manzanilla Point. Their navigation for the last part had been mostly guesswork - no chronometer and a shark had taken the rotor off the log line. ...

I am sorry to say that after all their efforts they have had to give up for the present.'

The Mr Beard is of course, David Beard, still a member and now our Port Officer Brisbane.

Ben Carlin hadn't been idle since his reported departure the previous year in his amphibious jeep, *Half Safe*:

'He reached Hong Kong on the 6th May. The London-Calcutta 'passage' was fairly straightforward, the English Channel and the Bosphorus like mill ponds. Heat and several broken steering arms in Persia delayed him. Mrs Ben Carlin accompanied him in a small 5 cwt. van with spares and supplies. This van did very good work in Persia and covered several extra hundreds of miles getting the steering arms repaired many miles away from where *Half Safe* was stranded. They did not

arrive in Calcutta until the 15th July 1955, too late to continue their journey to Australia under their own steam. They therefore shipped the jeep and themselves to Fremantle, arriving on the 9th October, and motored across the continent to Sydney to keep some business appointments. Later they motored to Melbourne and Ben shipped with *Half Safe* back to Calcutta and Mrs Carlin came back to Lebanon, where she now is.

He eventually left on the 19th February and 'steamed' across the Bay of Bengal alone and picked up his new partner, Harry Hanley, at Akyab. Together they drove across the rough mountain track to Proune thence down the main road to Rangoon. They then set off down the Rangoon River, across the Gulf and up the river for 40 miles to Kyondo. There, after he says, 'much fun', the 39 miles over the mountains to the Siamese border took eleven hours solid driving. He marvels how *Half Safe* survived this pre-war road, which is now a 'giant's rosary' of granite boulders. The temperature in the jeep was 146 degrees.

The next stretch of 60 miles was almost as hard and took them one and a half days: impossible gradients up which the jeep had to winch herself a dozen times. Bangkok was reached on 26th March. Then on into Cambodia through Angkor Wat to Pnom Penh and entered Saigon on the 12th April. Stayed another week then drove north to Nha Trang. Here they went afloat again and steamed the 275 miles to Tourane. The passage from Tourane to Hong Kong was 530 sea miles which they covered in 79 hours (sic) arriving on Sunday 6th May. Ben says constant head winds slowed them down and they spent one day hove to and a second inducing a leaded up valve to function.

Hong Kong must have been a pleasing sight.

Their arrival was recorded on B.B.C. TV News on Tuesday the 15th May. After a rest, refit and no doubt some relaxation, Ben was heading for Hakodato on the north island of Japan. He plans to follow the Kurile islands and call at Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, and finally make Anchorage in Alaska. After that, going down the coast south to Vancouver should be child's play. He is full of praise for the jeep, and said the engine had never had a major overhaul since he left Nova Scotia in 1950.'

The whole 'passage' shows up as a most courageous enterprise. Good luck to his future progress.'

Bill Tilman got further mention having arrived home after successfully climbing the previously unexplored Patagonian Ice Cap. This involved a three week trek from Peel Inlet with all gear and food. They sailed home via the west coast of South America and Panama Canal. Bill then felt qualified to join and entered, modestly, 'South America to starboard, 20,000 miles', as his qualifying passage. Indeed, by the time his name first appeared in the *List of Members* in 1960 he had sailed 40,000 miles since the club was formed – all this in his primitive, gaff-rigged Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, which leaked as much through the deck as she did through the bottom. Hum recalled how, when setting out on a passage in her, he found Bill wringing out his socks before putting them on again. When asked why he didn't put on a dry pair he replied that he only had one pair.

Tilman seemed totally inured to hardship. Perhaps it was his wartime service that hardened him, but he was a born ascetic. He started climbing in Kenya in 1920 and went on to make several Himalayan sorties in the 1930s. He abhorred the elaborate and expensive expeditions and, together with **Shipton**, mounted a five month first exploration of the Nanda Devi basin at a total cost of £286, including return fares. During the Second World War he joined the Special Forces and worked behind enemy lines with the partisans in Albania and Italy. He didn't take to sailing until after the war, when he considered himself too old for the Himalayas but thought a boat the ideal way of finding unclimbed peaks.

There was also an update on Victor Clark, who had arrived in New Zealand after his year at Palmerston Atoll rebuilding *Solace*. He had expected to have to replace most of the jury work done, but when the surveyor saw the hand sawn

frames cut from local timber on Palmerston he said, 'Don't you touch them. You won't get as good a job as that done anywhere in New Zealand!'

In that, Mostyn's final *Newsletter*, he added that the Commodore had spent a lot of time at sea, his longest trip being a delivery to Naples in *Old Fox*, a 65ft yawl with a crew including his daughter, **Miss Patricia Barton**, and Mr Harry Goodhart, Mostyn's successor as Secretary. They sailed non-stop to Gibraltar, therefore qualifying for the OCC. It is not surprising that being the Commodore's crew they joined to a man, or a girl, in Pat's case. Pat, of course, is now Mrs Pocock, wife of recent Commodore, Mike.

Harry Goodhart, who took over the secretaryship from Mostyn, carried on the good work, laboriously typing and duplicating, but his first *Newsletter* was little more than a series of snippets of the many voyaging members. He reported the arrival in the Antipodes of David Beard and Gordon Auchterlonie who, it will be remembered, had had a rather trying start to their voyage. Even though the membership at this time was only some 250, there seemed to be an extraordinary number of them crossing the oceans. Harry's next *Newsletter* was another gem. He updated the South Sea wanderings of Victor Clark who, after his refit in New Zealand, sailed back to Palmerston to thank the locals for their help. On his way he called at the island of Tanna, as Victor puts it 'only recently decannibalised' to find that:

'There has been a recrudescence of a peculiar cult amongst the natives. They expect an American negro by the name of Jon Frum to come in a white ship, leading a convoy of cargo ships bringing them all the good things that the white man enjoys, which they will thus get without having to work for them. There had been mass demonstrations the week before my arrival, at which the leaders declared that Jon Frum would arrive the following Friday. Nothing happened, of course, and there was considerable feeling and some disturbances and rather repressed reaction. The next day, however, after dark, a white ship threaded its way into the anchorage and dropped anchor (*Solace*). The buzz went round quick that Jon Frum had arrived, and when the following morning the white ship was seen to carry a negro (poor

little Stanley), excitement was intense. We decided that as we couldn't produce the expected cargo, Stanley had better not pose as their Messiah, but not until we left five days later were they convinced that he wasn't Jon Frum. He was entertained ashore with lashings of food ...'

Harry had heard from Bill Tilman, who had become a member the previous year, but he didn't stay ashore long enough to take much part in Club affairs. He had left for Heard Island, an uninhabited, unclimbed rock some 2000 miles southeast of Cape Town but, not surprisingly, had difficulty recruiting crew. Finally he resorted to an advertisement in the local press: 'Sailing man wanted, willing to cook on small boat. Long voyage, no pay, no prospects, very little pleasure.'

Harry also reported on **John Guzzwell**, who had joined the Club the previous year after his solo Pacific crossing. John had left *Trekka* in Australia to join Miles and **Beryl Smeeton** in *Tzu Hang* on their planned return to England via The Horn. Harry seemed to vie with John for understatement when he reported that they had a 'narrow escape in the South Pacific', then quoted from John's letter:

'We left Melbourne, Australia on December 26th, 1956, bound for Stanley, Falkland Islands. We went along very well for 50 days during which we had made good some 5,000 miles when on the morning of February 14th at Lat 51° 17' S, Long 98° W, we were swept bare by a huge wave. Both masts went at deck level, two side hatches were completely smashed, the two dinghies went, the doghouse went at deck level, the bowsprit snapped off, the compass and most important the rudder was torn off. Mrs. Smeeton who was at the helm running the ketch off down wind under bare poles towing a warp was swept overboard but we got her on board again. There was 4ft of water below and while the skipper and his wife started bailing I covered up the 6ft by 6ft opening in the deck where the doghouse had been with floorboards and sails. It was not until the following day that the ship was reasonably safe. We were 1,000 miles from land.'

In what was to be the last of the Secretary's arduously typed *Newsletters*, in May 1958, he quoted a letter from Stephen Newmark, the Club's first USA West Coast Rear Commodore, which shows the suspicion with which the newfangled fibreglass was greeted. He said that he had raced in a 41ft fibreglass sloop which they had driven very hard but there was no sign of fatigue or deterioration.

Another sign of the times that one would be unlikely to read in today's politically correct world was a quote from **Batchy Carr** who was circumnavigating with his wife in their 60ft Colin Archer ketch, *Havfruen* – Batchy referred to taking a wife to Tahiti as being like 'taking coals to Newcastle'. *Havfruen* was the biggest yacht that Colin Archer had designed when he drew her for her first owner in 1894. She was built in Norway by the Porgsgrund yard and delivered in 1896, the year after they had completed Amundsen's *Fram*. Batchy bought her in 1947 and lived aboard for the next 27 years, completing 12 Atlantic crossings and a circumnavigation in her. She is now back in Norway and has been beautifully restored as a sailing exhibit of the Stavanger Maritime Museum (see photograph page 83). Batchy's son, Paddy, is a current member.

Harry reported on the first of the several accolades which were showered on Bill Tilman for his many extraordinary voyages. Bill followed Al Petersen to become the Club's second member to be awarded the CCA's coveted Blue Water Medal, for his circumnavigation of South America, but by the time of the award he was back at sea, this time in the Indian Ocean.

Ben Carlin's exploits were brought to a close. He had crossed the North Pacific from Hong Kong via Japan and the Aleutians, thence down the Alaskan Highway and across the States to Annapolis to complete his seven year circumnavigation. An incredible passage, any one leg of which reads like a far-fetched novel.

Club records are sparse over the period 1959–60, as was the next edition of the *Newsletter* which was one folded sheet in September 1959 after a gap of 16 months. But it was printed with the Club burgee at the letter-head. Black and white, of course, but a great step forward from the previous amateur efforts.

It reported that John Guzzwell had completed his circumnavigation in his 20ft 6in *Trekka*, making her the smallest boat ever to encircle the globe. John made some remarkably fast passages, on one occasion covering 1101 miles in a week with a best day's run of 192 miles. Victor Clark had also arrived home after his six year circumnavigation. He then lent *Solace* to the Island Cruising Club and settled down to write his delightful book, *On the Wind of a Dream*.

The May 1960 issue of the *Newsletter* was the first under the new Commodore, Tim Heywood, who appears to have written it entirely himself. It was, for this

issue only, inexplicably printed on quarto paper which must have played havoc with the filing system. Tim reported on an offer from **Marshall Wright** that the Club could not refuse:

'I am now well established in this lovely spot (Noumea) and we are all - wife, daughter, dog (shipped all the way from England), cat (local) - enjoying it immensely. So much so that I see little chance of our ever returning to Europe, except for holidays. At the end of June there was a Sydney-Noumea race for amateur yachts. Having let it be known that I was interested in sailing and a member of the O.C.C., I was put on the reception committee, otherwise all French of course.

Four boats started but ran into a cyclone of dangerous force on the second day out when two retired. This left two slightly battered survivors one of whom was Dr. Franklin Evans in his *Kochab*. The other was the *Malohi* skippered by its owner Neville McEnnally. Most of the lads were members of the Middle Harbour Yacht Club of Sydney and I signed application forms for membership of the O.C.C for at least four of them. One of *Kochab's* crew was Wally Burke, the Commodore of M.H.Y.C., a splendid chap. He would try and make speeches in French of which the ten words he knows would have been most useful if only he could have pronounced them. Well, here I am, an Englishman in a French paradise, and willing to be Area Representative or anything else for the O.C.C. and any of its members who visit us.'

As we have seen already, only two years later Wally Burke became our first Flag Officer Australia.

In the space of two *Newsletters* Bill Tilman had got back to Lymington to collect another dinghy and was off again for the elusive peaks deep in the southern ocean. Bill wrote as follows:

'You will be relieved to hear that we made the Crozet all right, so I have got that out of my system. The anchorage was quite good with a handy landing

place on a rock ledge. This was white with King Penguins, a rookery of several thousand sea elephants lay about like giant slugs, and albatross and giant petrel were nesting on the slopes above. Tufft ringed over 200 of them. The eggs made good omelettes and we knocked off a Penguin or two for stew. The mountains were disappointing. According to the Antarctic Pilot they are 5,000ft high and snow covered, whereas we made the highest about 3,200ft and the snow very temporary. In 10 days carrying and climbing Tufft and I cleared up the lot. Not climbing in the technical sense.

So after only 15 days there we pushed on to Kerguelen, 700 miles east in latitude 49. It is a big island 75 miles across, no danger of missing it as we might the Crozet. There are over 300 islets and lots of lovely fjords, rather like the west coast of Scotland. Anchorages abound. Along the west coast is an ice cap sending glaciers down to the sea on both sides. No height is given on the chart and I suppose no one has visited it. Tufft and I spent 10 days crossing it. We didn't get right down to the sea on the west owing to low cloud. It is only 3,600ft high, a surprisingly low figure for an ice field 12 miles across and some 25 miles long, fed by no big peaks in a latitude as low as 49.

The old boat is in good shape in spite of all she has had to put up with but the sails are getting devilish thin.'

This *Newsletter* also told of the progress of **Keith Laws**, who had left for Australia the previous year in his 50ft ketch *Goodewind*:

'From the Galas we headed for Pitcairn Island which we reached on 29th January after an uneventful but very pleasant voyage with mainly light to medium airs and odd calms. The reception at Pitcairn was magnificent and we took turns staying ashore as guests of the Christian, Young and McCoy families. The hospitality was overwhelming and we were very

reluctant to leave this wonderful island. John Christian, the chief magistrate asked what stores we would require. He was given a list, the island bell was rung, the inhabitants congregated and orders were issued. It was not long before a line of the islanders was heading beachwards to take the stores out to the yacht. The weather had been very good to us during our stay and the local narrow craft had no difficulty in getting the stores aboard. We still had supplies when we reached Tahiti a month later. (Perhaps Christian was still working on clearing his conscience for his previous mutinous behaviour). Nothing but praise can be given these wonderful people and the arrival of a yacht is something unusual. We were told that we were only the second yacht to visit the island en route from England.'

What a delight it must have been to cruise the Pacific in those early days!

The next letter, in November 1960, had reverted to the smaller format with yet another change of heading. It ran to 24 pages, but 17 of these were devoted to Hum's passage from England to the Canaries, and five to the Pacific wanderings of Australians **Harry** and **Pat Fink** aboard their home-built ketch *Kylie*. Hum had spent some time in Vigo where Alfredo Lagos slipped *Rose of York*. He had first got to know the Lagos family when he had called at Vigo on delivery trips, so their friendship with the Club now runs to three generations.

Whilst cruising yachtsmen may have been thin on the ground in the Pitcairn area, they were plentiful further west. Marshall Wright, having now been appointed as Port Officer for New Caledonia, had so many Club visitors that he reported blowing up his washing machine looking after them. We hear later that Marshall was threatened by the local washerwomen's protection society for taking away their trade with his newfangled machine. The Finks contributed to the overload having worked their way north from Sydney then out to the islands. Either they had been at sea too long or were suffering hallucinations from lack of drink, as all their references to radio frequencies were given in milligrams.

At last members began to send in more news and a number of Port Officers reported on activities on their patches, so that the *Newsletters* gradually got

fatter and more readable. Unfortunately there was a tendency to reproduce some long and tedious logs verbatim even when they consisted of little but daily entries, but these were more than offset by the yarns of the more intrepid. It appears that a *Newsletter* was issued when there was sufficient material, and not all were dated, but they began to settle into a twice-yearly pattern and, although still headed *Newsletter*, they were starting to resemble the *Journal* as we know it today.

Assuming that not all members reported their activities, it is amazing just how many were on the high seas by 1960. Until the appointment of the Australian Rear Commodore it had been very much an Atlantic club. Now we begin to hear more of what was happening on the other side of the world. **Edmund King** out of Sydney had just completed a circumnavigation, as had **James Crawford** from Florida. We hear of the Bradfields' wanderings in the dangerous Moluccas where they were arrested at gunpoint and escorted to the military headquarters in Ambon. There they were warmly greeted by the commander who bestowed the freedom of the city upon them and the navy provisioned them with as much as they could carry. **Ted Hollingsworth**, Port Officer Pago Pago, reported having three Club boats in at the same time. There were the obligatory 15 pages from the Admiral, who had arrived in Antigua which he reported as 'a simply delightful spot'. He describes with pride how he put *Rose* alongside the quay under sail, despite there being 'about a dozen other boats in the harbour'. He doesn't confess what his reply was when on arrival a dusky maiden asked, "Captain sah please, do you want a maid?"

The May 1961 issue contains, for the first time, a list of Port Officers, showing thirteen with a good international spread. This list included Founder Member Ian Nicolson as Port Officer Clyde, and a glance at the 2003 *Members Handbook* will show that he is still our man there, having carried the burden throughout the life of the Club. Furthermore, Ian has always been forthcoming with interesting news of members and goings-on in his neck of the woods. However the name issue was even further confused by the announcement that: 'Port Officers would be known as Club Officers followed by the name of their Port or Area'.

Bill Tilman was on his way again in the spring of 1961 and got a mention in the next *Newsletter* – which had again changed its form, if not its shape, as it was now headed with a list of flag officers and Club officials. Bill, having climbed the available unclimbed peaks in the southern high latitudes, had turned his attention to Greenland. His report is in stark contrast to Hum's – which describes the luxuries of sparsely populated tropical harbours – being all fog and icebergs:

'If you're in tropic seas this line from the Arctic will be welcome. We are now five weeks out from Belfast and it has been a long hard passage in wet, windy waters. We did well the first two weeks but the last three we've had only head winds, some of them Force 7. A week back we were only 50 miles east of Cape Farewell when a N.W. blow lasting three days set us 150 miles south. Yesterday we were closing the land again in thick fog and had just run her off to avoid a socking great iceberg about 100 yds. long and 100ft. high. At that moment the fog lifted, the sun came out, and close ahead stretched a magnificent piece of coastline fringed with great icebergs, backed by barren mountains and glaciers, and behind the Greenland ice-cap. What a landfall! It was a most welcome sight as we were beginning to wonder if we'd ever make it. We were just south of Cape Desolation. We have 200 miles to go to Godthaab where we shall have a few days to refresh, and then 40 miles to Umanal (lat. 71°N) where we hope to climb. It will take some time as winds in the Davis Strait are light and northerly. There are lots of icebergs about but as it is light all night they are not the menace one feared. Fog is the curse. The sun is out most of the day but the horizon is seldom clear enough for sights.

Crew are well and cheerful in spite of the cold.'

After several sorties to Greenland Bill reflected on climbing, thoughts that apply equally well to cruising:

'Mountaineering is happily not yet a competitive sport. There are no medals to be won, no records to be broken. The mountains, whether or not we overcome them, are the prize and there are as well the rewards which

each individual finds for himself, health, peace of mind, high endeavour, a sense of achievement, staunch companionship, and at the end of it all a store of mountain memories.'

John Guzzwell was also on his way again and gave a wonderfully understated account of his cruise that would have won a Club cup today considering that *Trekka* was home-built and only 20ft 6in overall. He left from Vancouver in early May and headed south for warmer water:

'After eight days we were south of San Francisco and into warmer latitudes, then our course started to curve away to the S.W. and towards the Islands. We were running along one evening with twins and spinnaker up, the boat steering herself, when I noticed that the steering was not acting as it should. Examination of the rudder showed that the metal stock had sheared off just inside the hull, leaving the rudder swinging below with no means of controlling it. After some thought on the matter I decided to fasten a G clamp to the trailing edge of the rudder and run two lines through blocks on the end of a spinnaker pole lashed across the after deck. The lines then ran to blocks on the coaming, then tied on the tiller. The only trouble with this arrangement was that it used up one of the spinnaker poles and I was unable to set the twin staysails without it.

We ran on towards the Islands with the small spinnaker up but the night watches and constant steering were taking much of the pleasure out of the passage so after 30 days I figured out a way of using the dinghy oars lashed over the stern to replace the needed pole. Soon afterwards we were running along with the twins and spinnaker up with the self-steering working. On the 32nd day we entered the port of Kahului on the island of Maui where we spent a few days before continuing on to Honolulu. We spent nearly eight weeks in the group before leaving for the west coast, a long passage of 2,800 miles

nearly all to windward. We eventually arrived at Santa Barbara, California, 37 days out after a very slow passage, then proceeded on to Los Angeles where we were bound.'

A pleasant little 6000 mile summer cruise for John and his new wife!

John had then intended to travel to England to build a larger boat on the lines of the Commodore's Donella class 44ft cutter, but got diverted when invited to join the OCC member **Baxter Still**, skipper of *Ticonderoga*, on a passage to Florida. John reported some magnificent sailing in this classic 72-footer, 'different to *Trekka* – almost as nice'.

The spring 1962 issue contained three book reviews – which were to become a regular feature of the *Newsletter/Journal* – all recently published by members, namely Francis Chichester, David Lewis and Ian Nicolson. The first two had written of their Atlantic crossings in the previous year's OSTAR – hardly cruising yarns, but they do shed light on the early days of singlehanded sailing with its reliance on some form of self-steering. Like the spin-off from racing cars to family saloons, so the pressure and money behind the rigorous requirements of the racing boat led to the development of reliable self-steering, now an accepted item on most cruising yachts. However, Francis's book did not receive unstinting praise from his reviewer, who wrote,

'The fashion of modesty in autobiographies is nowadays carried so far that one is often left wondering who on earth could have prevailed upon the author to record such a dull life. Francis Chichester's account of his magnificent sail westwards across the Atlantic to win the first single-handed transatlantic race suffers a little from the same thing. So anxious is the author not to pitch the story in an heroic key that much of the time we are treated to a sort of Mrs. Dale's Diary* of yachting: "Then I had breakfast of toast with some of Mrs. Philip Younge's scrumptious home made butter ..." and so on. But if this emphasis on the trivial, with a sometimes uncomfortably

* A long running British radio soap of the 1950s

intimate style, takes away from the book as a piece of writing (and one feels that less rush would have produced a better book) it does not entirely spoil it as a record of an amazing journey. Chichester's crossing from Plymouth to New York in 40 days was by far the fastest single-handed east-west crossing there has ever been, and this is an achievement well worth reading about.'

The review of Ian's book, on his slow passage to Vancouver in *Maken*, shows what a stark contrast there was between the 'modern' racers and the heavy displacement gaff-rigged cruiser of few mod-cons and, of course, no self-steering. The reviewer is daring enough to predict that the book 'could well be one of the last accounts of voyages in a boat of that nature as more modern craft become the only ones left'. He was a little ahead of the times.

Another innovation in this issue were the several reports from 'Club Officers', the latest pseudonym for Port Officers. They were responding to the Club's search for information on foreign ports and described the facilities available in their regions. Although at this stage uncoordinated, this was the beginning of the Club's Cruising Information Service which it was hoped would become the 'Michelin Guide' of the sea.

In 1962 there were, for the first time, two successive issues which were more or less the same layout. The cover page gave the names of the flag officers and other Club officials and the letter began with a 'Note from the Commodore', but they were not necessarily dated. One must divine the date of issue from the content and, even more annoyingly for the researcher, there were no contents lists.

The myth that tales of old boats would soon become extinct was quickly exploded when the Commodore reported news of his previous boat, *Lucent*, a Cornish Lugger of most primitive rig. (Luggers originated for coastal fishing and carried their sails laced to heavy spars which had to be 'dipped' when going about. This was done by lowering the sail sufficiently to carry the heel of the spar round the mast before rehoisting it.) Tim was anxious to hear news of the old girl and eventually ran her to earth in Miami. The new owner, **Roger Jameson**, was not a member but was soon to join and write some delightful tales for the *Newsletter*. Telling Tim how he had refitted *Lucent* for ocean cruising, he wrote:

'We changed her rig by adding a 16ft. bowsprit with 11ft. outboard which either sports a working jib or

250 sq.ft. Yankee. This once gave us 8.2 knots for about 20 minutes in calm Thames Estuary water - most alarming. We also gave her a pair of square yards, permanently horizontal, on which we hoist two upside-down staysails for self-steering. With this rig we can also hoist Yankee, 3 reefed main for steadiness, mizzen and mizzen staysail. This is our usual Tradewind rig and when we crossed the Atlantic we never had to steer, only make occasional adjustments. If the wind is on the quarter, we lower the leeward staysail and hoist whole main and topsail and substitute elastic for the lee brace. This works even better as we can set the spare staysail in its proper place on the stem-head and we then have 1,125 sq.ft., most of which pulls most of the time. No doubt you remember Lucent needs driving. We also put a Kentish cherry picker's ladder, cost 4s.1d. per rung, specially made, up the forward side of the mast to the hounds. It weighs about 80-90 lb. only, is of spruce, and is a feature which is most useful if unconventional.

We find her much stiffer when put down aft about 3 in. by stores and 480 cans of beer and then she goes to windward (close reach) with less ocean above you. In the W.I.s when we were light, you even got wet sitting on the square yards, but not so in the Bay of Biscay. We always drive her hard or else she goes sideways. Inside ballast seems to make for a comfortable roll and not too much of that. With a tablecloth, you can even neglect my first rule of seamanship which is 'always replace the cork in the rum bottle.'

This issue found the Admiral in Rhode Island, having cruised north through the Caribbean and Bahamas then up the East Coast to New York. The Committee were obviously feeling strong-minded as they only felt it necessary to devote eight pages to Hum's wanderings. The Bradfields also got eight pages, on their passage across the Indian Ocean and up the Red Sea in company with the Hiscocks in *Wanderer III*. Perhaps the most experienced ocean cruisers in small boats at that time, the independent Hiscocks never did join the Club, but their

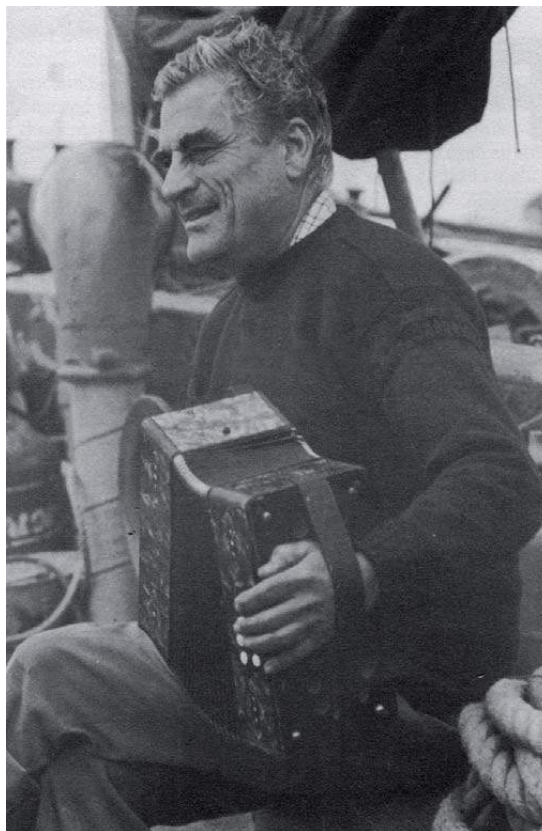
books soon became the bible to most aspiring ocean voyagers.

An interesting addition had crept into the *Newsletters* in the form of advice on particular points of seamanship. This has been obviated today by the many books and courses available on boat handling, but in those days very little was written down and it was most useful to receive the wisdom of the more experienced members. Francis Chichester wrote on self-steering and David Lewis wrote of his experiences in heavy gales.

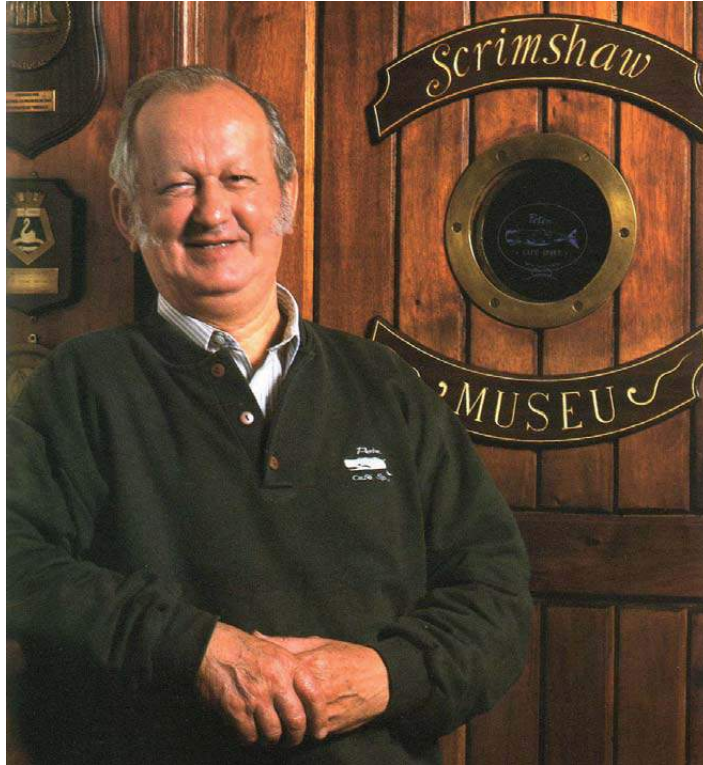
One correspondent, **Joseph W Outerbridge** from New Jersey, being of a statistical turn of mind, wrote that he had calculated from the 1960 *List of Members* that the

328 members had sailed a total of 1,797,028 miles in vessels of under 70ft. This was at a time when all declared voyages of qualifying distance were recorded in the list. He then teased his readers further by adding that he had just crossed the Atlantic again for the first time since his qualifying voyage in 1931 and, since he was now more than twice as old as he was then, he was gratified to find that he enjoyed it as much as ever.

The next issue was to be the first under the guidance of David Wallis and, as we have already heard, was boldly entitled '**1963 No.1 NEWSLETTER**', suggesting that a numerical serialisation was about to start. David's influence was also apparent on the contents as the Admiral's report was, to coin a phrase, admirably brief.



David Wallis, the Club's first official Editor



**Peter Azevedo at the door to his
fascinating scrimshaw museum**



Hum on ivory

After a brief flying visit to England Hum had returned to *Rose of York* in Newport and set off for home. He made a call at the Azores and there, inevitably, visited the Café Sport, presided over by the father of **Peter**, the present proprietor. Thus began the long association between the Azores and the Club in general and with the **Azevedo** family and the *Café Sport* in particular, a friendship enshrined in a good likeness of Hum engraved on a whale's tooth in Peter's famous scrimshaw collection. Hum sailed on for Lymington, but only stopped long enough for engine repairs before heading off south again. Unfortunately he could not find a long-term crew, so had to abandon his plans of wintering in warmer climes and instead returned to Falmouth. This was perhaps just as well, as he was then building a new boat in Norfolk and would be on hand to supervise its construction.

The overseas Rear Commodores were given pride of place in the *Newsletter* following the Commodore's report. Jack Parkinson, Rear Commodore USA East, told of arriving in Newport, Rhode Island in his new boat *Winnie of Bourne* and, when the driving rain cleared, finding that he was anchored next to the Admiral. This was their first meeting so they celebrated at the famous Ida Lewis Yacht Club. Jack also met Francis and Sheila Chichester in Buzzards Bay so they enjoyed sails on each other's boats.

Francis was not satisfied with his 40 day crossing in the first OSTAR and was determined to beat it, so crossed singlehanded again in 1962, this time in 36 days. Sheila then joined him for a short cruise before returning. Jack marvelled at Francis's self-steering, 'Miranda', which he described as being almost alive. He then expressed what must have been heard so many times around the world over the past 50 years, and what was enshrined as an Object in the first issue of Club Rules, 'On account of the OCC, I certainly meet some interesting and nice people'.

Although we were not told of it in earlier issues, it appears that Bill Howell had again abandoned his London dentistry practice and set off for his native Australia. This *Newsletter* picks him up singlehanded and engineless running down to Panama in *Stardrift*. Bill takes up the story in his usual racy style:

'In fact, in those 8 days I did 1,100 miles and was only 100 miles from Panama, and was rubbing my hands in smug anticipation of another record single-handed passage to hang alongside the scalp of my recent trans-Atlantic trip.

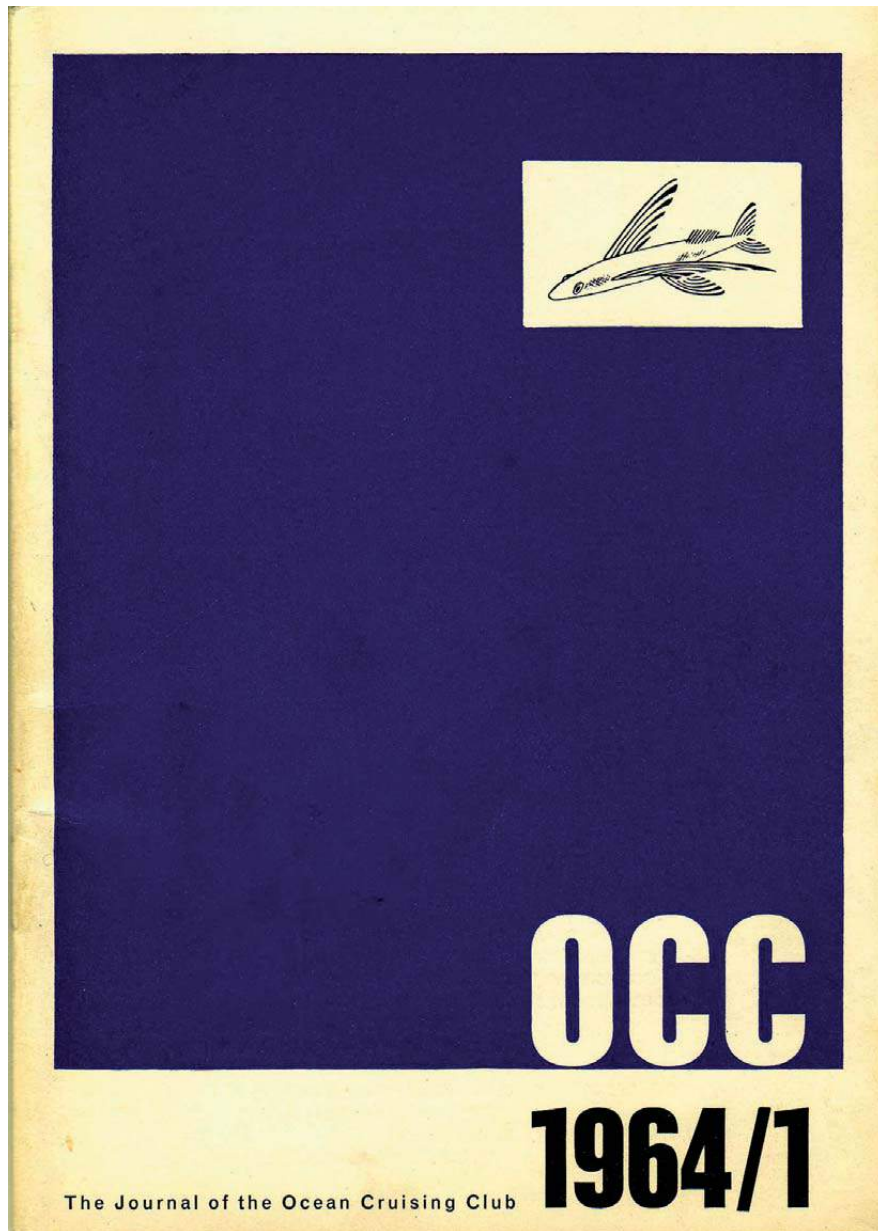
At 10.00 hours on the 9th day the trade wind was blowing force 6. At 11.00 hours it



***Havfruen*, now a sailing exhibit in the Stavanger Maritime Museum
(see page 70)**

stopped dead and I was completely and utterly becalmed - just like that! I've never known such a dramatic change. And for the next 10 days it just didn't come back, and the realisation was slowly forced through my bone-brain that here were the doldrums, a month earlier than usual.

During those 10 days I did manage to get some sailing in, making about 30 miles a day. But here I had to pay for that big lift I had



The first appearance of the word *Journal* -
the title *Flying Fish* was not to appear for another six years



**The inimitable
Bill Howell**

been getting from the trade wind current, which plunges into the Mosquito Gulf and then comes back along the Isthmus of Darien as a counter current. This counter current runs back to the east at about 30 miles a day, so that I was in reality standing still. In fact my sun sights on the 10th day in the doldrums showed that I was 95 miles from Panama, and it doesn't take an electronic computer to work out that I had managed to travel 5 miles in 10 days. And to think that I had rocketed through 1,100 miles in the previous 8 days!

Ten days of brooding over the Sailing Directions convinced me that I didn't have any prospect of relief from the doldrums until the middle of December, which was three months off, so I decided to call for assistance from one of the numerous freighters that were continually trudging past me on their way to the Canal. Finally a ruffle of breeze allowed me to hoist the big masthead genoa and off I went on a collision

course with a nearby steamer. He altered course and pretended he hadn't noticed me, but I fired a red flare practically into the bridge house and he then had, in all decency, to stop.

I offered the skipper 300 dollars for a tow into Cristobal, but he couldn't oblige as he had a booking into the Canal locks and he was already behind time. However, he promised to tell the Harbourmaster of my predicament, and gave me two bottles of beer, fresh bread and fruit, cheese and salami sausage, and a can full of ice-cold water. The beer and the water were real windfalls, as it was 95

Robin Knox-Johnson – the first man to circumnavigate non-stop solo (see page 95)



degrees F. down below in the cabin. Before they got warm, I drank the beer and then opened a bottle of rum, which I drank with the ice-cold water. By nightfall I was blind drunk, so I pulled down all the sails and climbed into the bunk.

At 03.00 I was awoken from a delightfully drunken sleep by the most infernal din. There were whistles blowing and engines roaring and megaphoned voices shouting. The cabin was lit up like day. My first reaction was: A bloke can't even get a decent sleep here in the middle of the Caribbean all by himself, when I realised that it was a rescuer, in fact, a United States guided missile destroyer, nothing less, the U.S.S. *Hoel*.

A giant mooring warp was fastened about *Stardrift's* mast and helmsmen and signallers were cascaded on board with Aldis lamps and walkie-talkie sets. A special tension device was attached to the warp so that, by measuring the drag of my hull through the water, they could tell when they were towing *Stardrift* at her maximum speed (now at last I know it's 7 knots). At lunchtime there was a flashing of semaphore signals between *Stardrift* and the *Hoel's* bridge; they wanted to know what I should like for lunch. A launch was lowered from the destroyer and lunch duly arrived: soup, veal escalope, french fried potatoes, asparagus, runner beans, cold slaw, apple pie and ice cream, coffee. In the afternoon another exchange of signals, and a request from the skipper to have dinner that evening with him and his officers in the ward room. Another special launch trip, an officer-yachtsman to take *Stardrift's* helm in my absence, and I was hoisted on board the U.S.S. *Hoel* to face the biggest barrage of cameras of all shapes and sizes that I have ever seen.

Full of food, I was delivered safely back

to *Stardrift* and about midnight the destroyer and her tow, looking like an absurd little water beetle behind the giant bulk of the warship, safely passed through the low breakwaters that enclose Limon Bay, the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. As a wonderful final gesture, Commander Slifer lowered his personal launch and had me towed to a safe anchorage, while the *Hoel* hove to like a watchful mother, then after my sincere thanks slowly steamed away into the night to lock through the Canal. After that experience, here's one man who's for the Stars and Stripes forever!'

Within a year of becoming Editor, David Wallis had introduced a stiff, coloured cover in dark blue with an emblazoned flying fish logo. Whether it was for reasons of economy or appearance is not clear, but it now measured 5in by 7in (127 x 178mm), the fifth change of size in as many years. Much committee discussion ensued on the question of the title. David suggested it be called a *Journal* but was overruled; it was to remain a *Newsletter*! However as not only the editor but also the printer he had the last word, and the next issue appeared with the almost subliminal wording, 'The Journal of the Ocean Cruising Club', smuggled aboard at the bottom of the front cover. However we had to wait until 1970 before this was big enough to read without a magnifying glass. Otherwise the cover contained only the simple wording **OCC 1964/1**, and so began the system of serialisation which is in use to this day. Thus the *Journal* was born within days of the unsung tenth anniversary of the Club's formation. In his letter, the Commodore referred to 'a News Letter with a difference' so it appears that he not only disapproved of the new title '*Journal*', but had decided to change the long accepted *Newsletter*. However, this is the only time the word is used throughout the issue, so the *Journal* was born unsung and almost by default. There is no record of Committee dissent but it is noticeable that the second issue, dated December 1964, had, in equally small lettering, the words 'Ocean Cruising Club Newsletter' on the inside of the front cover.

The Admiral was off again and wrote from Grenada aboard his new boat, *Rose Rambler*. It is possible that the *Newsletter* with details is missing as there is no mention made of the new boat apart from the letter-head. He left Tenerife in company with *Primavera* but they quickly lost contact as neither had radio. At 45°W, deep in the trades, he spotted a sail on the horizon so motored to close her. It was none other than *Primavera*, so they both hove-to for a



***Rose Rambler*, in which Hum made fifteen Atlantic crossings**

conversation. The crew of the latter were in distress as they had run out of paperbacks, and declared that they were coming over to do a swap. To Hum's surprise the entire crew rowed across, complete with a pile of books and a

bottle of gin. It was nearly dark before they deemed it prudent to return, having finished the bottle of gin.

Even though this anniversary edition passed unannounced, it did demonstrate how the Club had matured. From sheets of badly typed notes about the few members who were abroad on the high seas, the *Journal* was now a stapled booklet with a coloured cover displaying the Club's flying fish motif. Not only that, it now contained exciting notes from the four corners of the world. The Admiral had crossed the Atlantic for the seventh time; the **Griffiths** told of their homecoming to Hawaii, having circumnavigated; **Barklie Henry**, a new member who had qualified in a 50 ton motor vessel on a cruise around the Atlantic, wrote persuasively of the merits of 4500 mile range under power but convinced no one, including himself, concluding that if he had time he would do it under sail; **Colonel Line** told of his voyage home from Singapore; **David Hays** wrote of his Atlantic crossing in *Rose of York*, which he had just bought from the Admiral; and lastly, **Robert Ayer** of Maine recounted the launching in Bremen of his new boat *Premise* followed by her shakedown passage, describing his crew, one **Toby Baker**, as 'young, strong and salty'. Toby is now Rear Commodore USA NE.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the *Journal* was that it demonstrated the way the nature of ocean voyaging had advanced. Flag signals were now rarely referred to; self-steering, in all its many forms, was becoming accepted (except, as we have seen, by a conservative few) leading to a growth in singlehanded sailing which had previously been the preserve of the most intrepid; fibreglass was no longer viewed with suspicion; the size of yachts was gradually creeping up, testimony to the advance of boat gear; and the general confidence in ocean cruising was apparent from the lack of histrionic writing, although perhaps it was not necessary to go to the lengths of urbanity of Francis Chichester.

It can be assumed that only the Club's more literate members contributed to the *Journal* – there must have been many more at sea who had not time or inclination to put pen to paper. In ten years a trickle of ocean cruisers had grown into a steady stream, and numerous writers commented on meetings with other members in distant ports. The OCC was clearing achieving its primary aim of 'encouraging ocean sailing in small boats and social intercourse between its members'.

V – THE CLUB MATURES

The tenth anniversary found the Club on a firm footing, but there were still some loose ends to be tidied up before it could be said to be running on oiled wheels. While the Vice Commodore appeared to be enjoying his stint as acting Secretary, and it must be said that there was no apparent loss of efficiency, there was a clear need for a more permanent arrangement. Also, the much vaunted Port Officer scheme was beginning to stumble as, apart from one or two enthusiasts, little was heard from them. Finally, it was a great disappointment to the Committee that the Award seemed to be attracting very little interest.

The Secretary issue was soon resolved most satisfactorily. In response to an advertisement in 1965, a certain **Howard Fowler**, a retired Merchant Navy Officer but non-member, applied. He accepted the now salaried appointment at the handsome remuneration of £250 per annum – but he was not to get away lightly with this extravagance, as he was expected to take on the role of treasurer as well as secretarial duties. Howard went on to fill both posts for the next eleven years and became the lynchpin of stability within the Club. It is interesting to note that, despite not being qualified as a member, he was ‘instructed’ by the Committee to wear the club tie and fly its burgee.

The Club succeeded in holding the original subscription at the hardly more than nominal £1 or \$3 until 1966, but could not meet the cost of the paid Secretary so in that year they were doubled. There was a surprisingly low fall-off in membership, and most of those that left were defaulters so were not missed – financially. In those days of low inflation it is amazing how steady were prices and how low was the cost of service. Early dinners were often no more than a few shillings and the cost of borrowing premises was usually nil or negligible. It is interesting to note that, when prices rose substantially in the 1970s, a reduced price for functions was offered to ‘student members’, the first and only time that such a category was mentioned. The Committee was always meticulous in ensuring that social functions were financially self-supporting and were usually able to report a profit of a few pounds. However they were remarkably generous in recognising non-members who helped the Club. In 1964 a sum of £25 had been voted to buy a present for the Vice Commodore’s secretary, who had done extra work in the interregnum before Howard Fowler took over. If extrapolated on the basis of today’s subscriptions, that would represent £1000.

In retrospect the Port Officer problem was more apparent than real. Those few that did report showed that they were fulfilling a useful role. As mentioned earlier, the South Seas representative overloaded his washing machine through

the frequent demands of passing members and, according to Ian Nicolson, the Clyde was a hive of Club activity. Nevertheless the Committee agonised long over whether to continue the scheme. It was eventually decided to give it a greater plug in the *Journal*, and in 1966 a full list was published showing 22 officers covering eight countries or areas, together with an admonition to members to make use of them. The scheme slowly gathered way with a steady increase in PO reports which advertised their presence, encouraging members to use them so that it gradually became self-perpetuating. From then until very recently the back page of the *Journal* carried an ever-expanding list that was a ready reference for itinerant members who needed help or just a gam.

Despite much encouragement through the columns of the *Newsletter/Journal*, in 12 years there had only been four awards under the Prize scheme. As already described, two of these had been to the ever-enthusiastic Ian Nicolson, but there was a note of desperation to get the scheme going when one reward was insultingly reduced as not being quite up to scratch. The third, also previously mentioned, was made to Steven Bradfield, and the fourth, in 1966, went to **Michael Shaw**. This recognised his ingenious idea of having similar mast fittings for the main boom and spinnaker pole so that the former could be transferred forward for trade wind running, thus obviating the need for a second running pole in a small boat. The Committee felt that this was of little merit but worthy of recognition, so awarded Michael five guineas.

The main problem was that the concept of the Award was badly thought through from the outset. While the wording in the Rules allowed for written accounts, the first four awards, and others that failed, were all for ideas or inventions that helped ocean sailors. This was quite understandable in the early days, when to have a sheet winch was considered the height of modernity, but as boat gear improved and became more commercially available the scope for amateur inventions became ever more restricted.

The Club naturally wished to give some recognition to Francis Chichester when he made his much-vaunted singlehanded one-stop circumnavigation in 1967, but the only accolade available was the Award, although his voyage hardly fell within the definition of 'writing, invention or idea'. Nevertheless, the Award was made in the form of a cheque for 20 guineas plus an inscribed plaque, 'provided the latter did not cost more than £3'. The Queen then upstaged the Club by conferring a knighthood on Francis when he came ashore on the steps of Greenwich. Not, it must be explained, direct from the voyage.

When the following year **Alec Rose**, a Club member since 1964, quietly picked up his mooring having repeated Chichester's feat, the Queen also conferred a knighthood on him. Not to be outdone, the Club followed suit and



Gipsy Moth rounding the Horn

gave Alec the 1968 Award comprising a plaque and 30 Guineas. Clearly inflation was taking its toll – or was it that the Club thought that the extra 10 guineas made up for the lack of adulation received by Alec in comparison with the more publicity-conscious Francis?

That same year an Award was made to **Jim Griffin**, Port Officer Bahamas, who lived with his wife and four daughters aboard their lovely old 39 ton gaff ketch *Northern Light*. Jim had made the first really meaningful contribution to foreign pilotage notes with a lengthy guide to cruising in the Bahamas. Since his boat drew 8ft 6in he had obviously learnt the hard way, hence the cryptic heading to his article, *Going Ashore in the Bahamas*. Jim gave some timeless advice that is still worth quoting:

'White water is less than 6 feet deep: yellow water 6-10 feet deep; very pale blue water is 10-12 feet deep and the mild green waters are about 15-18 feet deep - after that the blue shades down to a deep royal blue at 20 fathoms and a rich navy blue at the 100 fathom line. Coral heads are distinguishable clearly as purple brown masses when seen 150 yards away from the crosstrees, but when sailing in waters in which there are known to be coral heads it is prudent to organise your sailing to bring the sun fairly high up above and behind you as you face forward on the lookout.'

It is not clear if the Award was given for Jim's writing or for an 'idea' to make short-handed cruising easier, since as well as the guide to water depth, he explains his use of lazyjacks to tame his main and gaff that together weighed more than a quarter of a ton. He may not have invented lazyjacks, but they were not much in evidence before then and largely disappeared with the advent of the lighter Bermudan sail. However, with the later use of fully-battened sails the problem of taming a heavy main again arose and the jacks were reinvented, very much in the form explained by Jim. He was given a cheque for ten guineas.

Clearly the meaning of the Award was becoming blurred, so in 1969 a sub-committee was appointed to review and clarify the 'Regulations for the Prize Fund'. The intention of the originators was clearly that this should be the premier accolade to be awarded to the member 'who had done most to further the objects of the Club'. Indeed, when in 1966 a suggestion was again made that a cup be presented for the most outstanding cruise of the year it was peremptorily

dismissed as not being practicable to administrate, the sub-text clearly reflecting Hum's original intention that the OCC was not a competitive club. So, for the first 26 years of the Club's life, the Award, in one form or another, was the only trophy. However, as other prizes were presented over the years it gradually took on a wider role than the more specific honours.

The sub-committee added fuel to the existing confusion by creating what appeared to be another trophy but, by calling it the Award of Merit, it could be interpreted as separate from or ancillary to the Award. They were obviously trying to justify the recognition made to the now Sir Francis and Sir Alec whose feats, although most meritorious, fell well outside the definition of the existing trophy. This new accolade was to be presented to 'any person or persons who shall have performed some outstanding voyage or achievement even though no entry shall have been submitted', very neatly encapsulating the achievements of the aforementioned knights. Unlike the Award it has always been open to non-members as well as members.

As if to confirm the wisdom of the sub-committee, **Robin Knox-Johnston** (see page 86), hove over the horizon right on cue to fit into the new definition, having made what was undoubtedly the greatest sailing feat of any member or non-member by sailing singlehanded around the world without a stop.

Robin and his brother **Chris** both joined the OCC in 1967 after sailing their little ketch *Suhaili* from Bombay to England via Capetown. Within weeks of arriving Robin read that Chichester was round Cape Horn and on his way up the Atlantic. If Francis got home as planned, the only sailing challenge left was to go round non-stop, so Robin announced his intention of doing just that. This was received with a degree of incredulity by the diehards who thought it foolhardy, and by and large they were proved correct.

Three years earlier **Eric Tabarly** had startled everyone by winning the second OSTAR convincingly even though it had started as very much a British race. This was the beginning of French dominance in short-handed ocean racing, and the French press made the most of it. Tabarly was awarded the Legion of Honour and became a national hero, *Paris Jour* proclaiming: 'Thanks to him it is the French flag that triumphs in the longest and most spectacular race on that ocean which the Anglo-Saxons consider as their special domain'. However, this xenophobic note was largely confined to the press and was noticeably absent among competitors, who regarded themselves more as fellow soldiers than the enemy. Indeed, Blondie Hasler wrote after the race: 'Eric has won in the superlative time of 27 days. I am delighted because he is French and because his boat was the first to have been designed especially for the race'.

The next OSTAR was scheduled for 1968 and Tabarly was known to be

building an enormous (by the then standards) trimaran, ostensibly for that race. Robin suspected the Frenchman had other ideas, so hastily started planning his circumnavigation. Clearly *Suhaili* was not suitable, so he put her up for sale and consulted the only man whose thinking was sufficiently radical not to be put off by the proposition – Colin Mudie. Colin's plans were certainly radical but even so no yard offered to build at a price anywhere near Robin's budget. Fortunately no one had made an offer for the rather spartan *Suhaili* so he started refitting her and planned to leave the following year.

News of Robin's intentions had got abroad, and a number of unlikely candidates came forward with half-baked plans to attempt the non-stop passage. However the Club had a special interest, since it was regarded as the focal point of knowledge on long distance sailing and three of the nine potential entrants were members. At that point the *Sunday Times* newspaper got in on the act and announced an award of the 'Golden Globe' to the first person to circumnavigate non-stop singlehanded and, should there be more than one, £5000 to the fastest. A committee was formed under Sir Francis Chichester, but when it became a competition the *Journal* editor's scepticism turned to bitterness. His very first words in the next issue were:

The Way of the World

'We have been overtaken by events. Since Robin Knox-Johnston announced his intention of attempting a non-stop circumnavigation the idea has attracted the news sense of big business. Scintillating increased circulation and kudos, it has turned the dream into a contest. What bitter irony that the very motives that inspire men to escape should be prostituted and dangled before us as a lure! Dreamers we may be but we are also realists. We know the way of the world. The taste is bitter.'

What happened is history and hardly relevant to this story. Suffice to say that of the nine starters Robin was the only one to finish. Tabarly didn't enter, but that other hero of the French press, **Moitessier**, did and he was a formidable opponent known to be like his boat, built of boiler plate. In the event Moitessier lost interest halfway round and carried on across the southern Atlantic instead of turning north to the finish. The French press were dismayed, but announced that as he was in the lead he could have won if he had wanted. In fact he was 20 days behind Robin when he passed the Horn.

Being a member, Robin was eligible for either OCC award, but it is simply recorded that he was presented with a suitably inscribed plaque. Since no money was given it must be inferred that this was meant to be an Award of Merit. Thus Robin joined the pantheon of solo circumnavigators recognised by the Club, but it was to be some years and several sailing feats later before he too was awarded a knighthood. Perhaps it was an indication of the rapid proliferation of sailing feats that Robin wasn't given more immediate recognition, although his boat was primitive by comparison with either Chichester's or Rose's and his non-stop passage was a far greater achievement. Indeed, Sir Francis Chichester was one of the first to recognise Robin's feat when he wrote, 'Knox-Johnston has scaled the Everest of the sea. He has earned himself undying fame and a secure place in the annals of achievement. We are proud of him.'

The Editor had the last word and couldn't resist a little *schadenfreude*:

IT HAD TO END IN TEARS

'In the last issue we anticipated the imminent return of the remaining round the world singlehanders, but we were sadly optimistic, as events soon proved, culminating in the Crowhurst tragedy*. Perhaps it was unfair to invite complete strangers to lend themselves to such an unequal struggle. After all, it takes a very special kind of personality to be a genuine solitary, and such a one is unlikely to come forward in reply to an open invitation with all its accompanying publicity. Only those who have experienced what amounts to voluntary solitary confinement with its alternating apprehension and boredom will appreciate the tensions and stresses that build up over extended periods, with the consequent failures, in boats as well as men. But it is over now. Perhaps Mammon is satisfied.'

On reflection the tragedy of the first singlehanded race was that it was so haphazardly organised, or not organised, whatever your point of view. It grew

* He is thought to have cracked under the strain and jumped overboard

empirically from a desire by one young man who wanted to improve on Chichester's feat the only way he knew how, into a dangerous junket, as the OCC editor had foreshadowed. Lessons were not taken from the OSTAR, which had been staged twice without loss. Boats in that race were then scrutinised for safety, one had to have sailed a qualifying distance, and it was sailed in relatively frequented waters where rescue was seldom far away. Once the press took hold of the round-the-world competition and proposed valuable prizes, it became a scramble.

The Commodore's old Cornish lugger *Lucent*, now owned by Roger Jameson, hardly knew herself when in 1964 the director of the Charles Darwin Foundation in the Galapagos asked to charter her to take parties of scientists to the outlying islands. Not only that, he then made a proposal that allowed Roger to, as he put it, 'fulfil what must be the dream of most members of the OCC – to take, as it were, a clean sheet of paper, and, basing the designs on the small experience that is his, design and build, at someone else's expense, the Ideal Ocean Cruiser'. Surprisingly, the Foundation had no boat of their own but had been offered considerable funds to obtain one. Roger explains the nature of his commission:

'The exact specification was left to me, to be agreed with Mr. Peter Scott, the naturalist, save only that the vessel should provide efficient inter-island transport for six scientists and should be as fast as possible, should she ever have to chase away poachers after the valuable fur-seals. I think the Director envisaged a motor cruiser with steadying sails, though I explained that I would have to rig her temporarily to bring her out from England. He was, I think, understandably perplexed when I returned thirteen months later, with a sort of sawn-off, bald-headed Brigantine; though whether it was his native reticence or the punch of her two auxiliary Lister diesels that forbade him to register anything but polite approval of my year's labour, I shall never discover. It was all fixed up with almost indecent haste, the whole contract being concluded within 24 hours of our first meeting, and it is to the enduring credit and faith of the

Director that he entrusted the funds of his organisation to the ruffian, bare foot and clad only in a pair of blue jeans, rifle on shoulder and bullets in belt, who wandered into his house one tea-time in April, 1963.'

Roger's good fortune didn't end there. After marrying his crew in Tahiti, he secured a 15 month assignment taking a Smithsonian Institute scientist to gather shells in the Society Islands. This was the sort of exotic job that most folk crave, but Roger confessed to getting tired of lying hove-to for hours off uninhabited islands while the shell hunter foraged ashore. After putting him off for good in Pago Pago Roger remarked wistfully, 'the crew are down to three, not including the cat, Asparagus Fred, the chicken, the cricket who sings like a lark and the two lizards whose duty it is to keep down the cockroaches'.

In retrospect it is surprising that there were not more small boats lost at sea in the early days. Or was it that communications were so sparse that few were recorded? Be that as it may, the first reported loss of a Club boat was that of *Poppy Duck*, owned and built by **Bill Proctor**. Bill had qualified in 1955 with Tilman on the latter's first foray into the deep south, and subsequently went on the successful assault on the Crozet Islands. If that hadn't put him off it would certainly have inured him to almost any rigours. Bill was also of the minnow brigade, having copied the lines of *Sopranino* and *Trekka* and built his own boat to that well-proven 19ft 8in Giles design. He left singlehanded in 1963, but it was not until the end of 1965 that his wife notified the Club that he had missed his last schedule in Port Moresby.

The Flag Officer Australia was alerted and he used his contacts throughout the area, but to no avail. Howard Fowler, the new Secretary and a navigation instructor, used the good offices of the *Sunday Express* since the editor was one of his pupils. They got things moving via their contacts, and it was through them that the only possible clue was unearthed. Their man in Sydney wrote in the idiotic style that one expects of journalese, 'Proctor, a short-sighted former Ministry of Works civil servant, vanished in July whilst sailing singlehanded round the World'. **John Boyden**, whose brother Tony built the America's Cup challenger, *Sovereign*, was a close friend of Bill Proctor and gave sage advice which the reporter quoted: 'Judging by the thickness of his glasses, Proctor's eyesight was poor and of all the fates that might have befallen him that of running ashore on a low-lying island seems the most probable'. It was later reported that natives on Bodi Bodi had seen 'a small craft being wrecked on a reef and a white man disappear over the side', but since they could not recall

when they witnessed this event, and recent photographs showed Bill to be burnt as dark as the natives, the report was not given much credence. No positive traces of Bill or *Poppy Duck* were ever found.

A light aside to the tragedy was the way the Club Secretary's conscience was taxed. Howard unexpectedly received a cheque for £20 from the *Sunday Express* for the story that they printed. He appealed to the Commodore for guidance as to whether he was entitled to keep it and, if so, should he declare such largesse on his tax return.

Around that time a name which appeared frequently in the *Journal*, and one which gradually took greater prominence in the sailing fraternity generally, was that of **David Lewis**. He had qualified on the first OSTAR in his 25ft *Cardinal Vertue*, but shortly afterwards built the catamaran *Rehu Moana*, designed by Colin Mudie. For a shakedown he took her to Iceland and back before entering the second OSTAR. After the race he picked up his wife and two little girls in New York, then continued west to make a three year circumnavigation, the first ever in a multihull. Clearly communications had improved since Selkirk's day as David wrote from Juan Fernandez: 'Fiona and the children are fine – the kids speak as much Spanish as English and rather regrettably have a command of fine old English nautical words that they hear from me'. Lewis was convinced of the merits of a catamaran for ocean cruising saying that it was faster, roomier and probably safer than a conventional yacht. He went on: 'It is an indication of our feelings that three months after reaching England we will be setting out for Australia in this same *Rehu Moana*'.

They left as planned but in his new boat, *Isbjorn*, and in 1968 reached Australia where he left the three girls and embarked his son Barry. Lewis had been commissioned by the Canberra National Institute to continue his studies into ancient Polynesian navigation, and the Club next heard from him in the Gilbert and Ellice islands in April 1969. Thus between 1964 and 1969 he sailed to Iceland and back, raced singlehanded across the Atlantic, made a three year circumnavigation, sailed to Australia, and then sailed back to mid-Pacific where he wrote:

'Truk in the Carolines is unique in its own right. It is one of a handful of islands that have retained their oral navigation schools where canoe captains learn by heart 'all the reefs and islands under the stars', and the bird zones and wave patterns for 1200 miles east to west and 500 northward, so they have the knowledge to range this whole sea area



Mike Richey and *Jester*

without chart or instruments. The men voyage for love of it. A recent excuse for a 180 mile beat over open ocean was to get the right kind of cigarettes!

The canoes are 25-30 feet long and massively built. Great squared cross-beams support the outrigger float on one side and the lee platform on the other. The dug-out bottom of the hull is attached to the strakes and end pieces by coir lashings and caulked with breadfruit sap (the canoes are built of breadfruit wood). The sheet and shrouds are also of homemade coconut fibre rope. These are 2 inches and 1½ inches diameter. In rough open sea they average 4½ knots on a reach and 4 on the wind. They don't sail very close and are normally steered by the sheet. Remember these are only 25ft sailing boats and that they carry 7 or 8 men and stores and often

cargo. Like most western Pacific craft, they do not tack. Instead they rake the mast the other way and swing the sail round, thus changing ends. The outrigger stays to windward.

Back aboard *Isbjorn*, shorn of charts and instruments, with the navigator Hipour in command, we retraced the old route to Saipan, 500 miles to the northward. Hipour cannot read or understand charts (his own picture is to us a more complicated one of islands 'moving' to new positions under the stars relative to the canoe), his 'sailing directions' had been handed down in great detail over generations.'

Lewis encapsulated this research in his fascinating book *We the Navigators*, and rarely failed to send the Club an account of his extraordinary wanderings throughout his long membership.

Mike Richey's name appeared frequently as a Committee member, but the first we hear of him in the *Journal* was in 1966 when he sailed *Jester* singlehanded to the Azores and back. He had missed the deadline to become a Founder as his early sailing days were spent navigating in ocean races which rarely exceeded 1000 miles. After wartime naval service, Mike became the founding Executive Secretary (later Director) of the (later Royal) Institute of Navigation with Mary Blewitt as an assistant. At that time he normally navigated *Foxhound* in offshore races while Mary often piloted her sistership *Bloodhound*. Over the years he navigated for most of the great names on both sides of the Atlantic, racing with the likes of Rod Stephens, **Alan Bond**, **Bill Snaith**, John Illingworth and many others. However, when he acquired *Jester* in 1964 he started sailing alone.

Mike had bought *Jester* from Blondie Hasler after the second OSTAR in 1964. She was basically a 25ft Folkboat, which Blondie had modified with an unstayed junk rig and totally enclosed accommodation so that it was possible to sail the boat without going on deck. Mike threw away the outboard engine and relied for auxiliary power on an 11ft sweep. In the event he made a fairly brisk passage, but his account tells us more about the obscure tricks of celestial navigation, for which he soon became famous, than about the sailing. In his article there were glimpses of the prose that we were later to enjoy, and his philosophical reflection on his first long passage singlehanded whetted our appetite for what was in store. Mike wrote:

'The ultimate problems in lone voyaging are, of course, human rather than technical. The fundamental one is perhaps how to create a more or less civilised way of living apart from the rest of humanity and the conventions of a community; habit is neither strong enough nor intellectually convincing. There is a need, if one is not totally to waste the experience, for a regulated existence, as a safeguard against boredom and lethargy. Solitude seems to heighten experience and the reward of arriving at a workable framework makes the whole experience infinitely worthwhile. The passage then becomes a microcosm of life itself. As Belloc says, 'There, sailing the sea, we experience every part of life: control, direction, effort, fate; and there can we test ourselves and know our state.'

Another lone sailor from whom we heard quite often was George Fairley. George was discharged from the Royal Navy because of his diabetes, and so bitter was he that he determined to prove his fitness for seagoing duties by making an Atlantic circuit singlehanded. He published this story in 1965 under the title *Wide Ocean: Small Boat*, then set off round the world taking as crew the secretary of the Diabetes Society. With no refrigeration for their insulin this had to be a risky undertaking, with the tragic result that Jean, his crew, died in the Pacific and George had to bury her at sea. Following this he beat back to Panama, sold the boat and returned to England.

George then bought a 28ft Twister and in 1970 set off again, this time with his new wife, Scilla. In Cartagena she fell ill but, not trusting the local medical facilities, they pressed on to the San Blas islands. Still no help was available so they sailed on to Colon, by which time Scilla was weak with constant vomiting. There the port doctor was not interested unless she was contagious. Pregnancy isn't catching so they spent a quiet week at anchor before transiting the Canal and pressing on across the Pacific. The third crew member arrived in Suva.

A loss at sea that was well documented was that of *Odd Times*. **Peter Rose** had crossed the Atlantic in his little 23ft gaff cutter in 1966 and was returning in 1967 with a friend as crew when he fell ill. He got progressively weaker until 300 miles off Newfoundland they sought assistance. This arrived in the form

of a Dutch salvage tug of vast proportions which took Peter aboard, where he soon lost consciousness. They took *Odd Times* in tow and steamed as slowly as they could, but even at idling revs the yacht broke up after a few hours.

Back in England Peter's condition could not be satisfactorily diagnosed, so he took the simple cure of marrying his French fiancée, Monique, and building a new boat. The second *Odd Times* was a 37ft gaff cutter of very traditional design. They set off again in 1968 and, after a winter in the Caribbean, took her up the Hudson, through the Great Lakes to Chicago and on down the Mississippi to the Gulf. Peter was a man of the cloth and once back home he secured a living at Feock on the River Fal in Cornwall where he could see his boat on her mooring from the pulpit. He remained a member until his death in 2001.

Bill Tilman continued his high latitude exploration but also continued to place his climbing ambitions ahead of concerns for his boats. Having lost *Mischief*, crushed in the ice off Jan Mayen Island in 1968, he bought a second Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, *Sea Breeze*, and returned to Greenland to pick up where he had left off on a previous trip. The boom broke in mid-Atlantic, so plans to try for Ellesmere Island were abandoned and instead he turned for Scoresby Sound in East Greenland, a place that had defeated him on two previous voyages. When close to their objective the engine failed, but they were offered a tow in by a Norwegian whaler. Tilman refused and sailed on into the night in light airs then, quite suddenly, it blew up violently putting him on a lee shore with ice all about. He couldn't claw off and was set onto a rocky islet. When she was pounding hard the crew climbed ashore with just their sleeping bags and by morning only a few feet of the mast was showing. In his tale of that voyage Bill sounded somewhat disillusioned with *Sea Breeze* when he quoted Milton:

'Fateful and perfidious bark,
Built in th'eclipse, and rigged with cursed
dark.'

Tilman then bought his third Pilot Cutter, *Baroque*, and set off for Greenland the very next summer. Between 1973 and 1977 he made a further five expeditions to northern high latitudes, using his boat to reach unclimbed mountains in the way that softer sailors go to explore new tropical islands. Critics would say that he carried his lifestyle too far, and perhaps he admits this obliquely when he quotes RL Stevenson in his book *In the Wake of Mischief*:

'In the joy of the actors lies the sense of
the action.
That is the explanation, that the excuse.'

It seems that the challenge of ocean crossing in minute boats did not end with the Founders, as several members continued to girdle the globe in *Sopranino* look-alikes. *Thlaloca*, at 20ft 6in overall, was only slightly longer but big enough for Canadians **Hein** and **Sigge Zenker** to qualify with a circumnavigation in 1966–7. On this voyage they didn't cross the North Atlantic, an omission they were determined to rectify. In 1968 they left Sheepshead YC heading east at the very time that the Bermuda Race was postponed because of an early hurricane moving up the Eastern Seaboard. They decided to continue, keeping a bolt hole under their lee, and were rewarded with a sparkling ride up the Gulf Stream with no more than about 50 knots on their stern. Halfway across the Atlantic they spotted two sails coming up astern, then heard radio traffic which indicated that these were the leaders in the transatlantic race. Suddenly a flurry of calls to the guard ship from *Ondine* and *Germania* demanded to know how a boat half their size was so far ahead. The Zenkers kept their silence.

By 1965 David Wallis was acknowledged to be the 'official' Editor of the *Journal* and his influence on the publication soon became clear. His appointment, however, was worded in a most unfortunate way in the minutes. They announced his promotion and congratulated him on his hard work to improve the publication, then in the same breath suggested that it might be possible to obtain some income from advertising to offset the Secretary's salary!

The Editor must have felt under threat when **Dudley Pope** joined in 1966. Pope was a well-known naval historian and at that time sailing correspondent to the *Evening News*. He was also a keen ocean sailor and qualified when he sailed *Golden Dragon* across the Atlantic. He seems to have gone soft in 1968 when he bought *Ramage*, a 53ft ketch with three double cabins and all the trappings for living aboard. Unfortunately, only two weeks after he bought her she was dismasted, and Pope wrote, 'As soon as I get time to breathe, I'll write a piece for the *Journal* on the question of losing masts in the Caribbean and the fact that the OCC burgee colours run if immersed in salt water!'.

Encouraged personally by CS Forester, Pope, as the *Daily Mirror* book critic put it in 1969, 'took over the helm from Hornblower' when he embarked on his highly successful series of *Ramage* books. These traced the career of a Royal Navy officer in Nelson's navy but seem to have left little time for the OCC as Dudley dropped out of the *List of Members* shortly thereafter. Perhaps that wasn't all bad as it would have been difficult to give credence to his writings in the *Journal* while immersed in the unlikely adventures of *Ramage*.

The *Newsletter/Journal* slowly developed a standard format. From the outset

there was a Commodore's comment on his sailing activities, and by 1966 there was a dedicated Editor's column. There was always an update on the Admiral's wanderings. Indeed, he never missed an issue from the date of his elevation in 1960 to his death in 1980. The Secretary had a column which usually included a desperate appeal for entries for the Award and news from members, both of which were still slow in coming. Nevertheless, many contributors wrote how they enjoyed the contact provided by the publication, which was, after all, its main objective. A useful innovation from 1967 was the printing of a pull-out section listing new members, who continued to join at the rate of 40 to 50 each year.

While the layout and content took on a standard form, the title did not. The subliminal word *Journal* continued on the front cover, then suddenly, in 1968, the frontispiece announced in bold type **Ocean Cruising Club Newsletter 1968/1**, but this was to disappear in the very next issue which reverted to the minute lettering inside and out. As well as the lettering, the colour of the cover was rarely the same two issues running; varying from navy blue to sky blue. In 1970 the Editor suggested the name *Flying Fish*, which was readily accepted by the Committee although one member, who shall remain nameless, preferred *The Red Herring*. The new title was followed by 'The Journal of the Ocean Cruising Club' which remained the same for the next twenty years*. Even the colour settled down to a gentle pale blue.

The *Journal* varied in length between 30 and 80 pages, presumably dependent on how much copy was available, but it was never short of interest. In almost every issue some member or other was being congratulated on completing his circumnavigation, and transatlantics were ten a penny. There was still a tendency to print a litany of dull routine when short of articles, but there was also a lot of fascinating stuff which showed how life generally and even small boats were becoming more sophisticated. The Club also felt sufficiently confident to flex its muscles on behalf of the impecunious when it challenged English Harbour, Antigua on the question of mooring fees. In 1966 the Admiral wrote:

'The Friends of English Harbour, who are permitted by the Council to run this harbour, are not friends to yachting folk. They have just put up their charges, which now nearly equal the most expensive U.S. marina, which has water, electricity, telephone, ice and every possible facility at each berth. Here

* After 1970 the terms *Journal* and *Flying Fish* become synonymous in this history

there is rarely water, no plug-in electricity and no ice. The showers and heads are an absolute disgrace and no one ever uses them. There is in fact nothing here except the little Nicholson shop and the Admirals Inn. But what really infuriates us is that the 'Friends' now propose to charge every yacht 8/6d a day for anchoring anywhere in this natural harbour. I have visited several hundred harbours in the North Atlantic and at every one anchorage is always free, a rare exception being the Beaulieu River. Most of the charter yachts are leaving here and making St. George's, Grenada, their base where anchorage is free and there is an excellent yard with every possible facility - a lift, water, electricity, showers, restaurant, ice, skilled labour - the lot. That is where I shall probably spend next Christmas. I have been paying \$30 for a berth alongside the dock for 12 months. I now have to pay \$34 a month!'

After a terse exchange of correspondence the Club received a very conciliatory reply from the dockyard manager, who openly admitted that trade had been badly hurt by the wide publicity:

'Berthing fees have been virtually halved, and will remain low until we have improved matters sufficiently to warrant high fees. The 'anchorage' fee about which there has been very bitter comment was in fact a misnomer, and should have been called a Dockyard landing fee. All visitors to the Dockyard are charged a sum of 50 cents at the gate, which goes towards the upkeep of the buildings, and the anchorage fee was introduced as a similar charge for those coming in from the sea. It was however, set at the rather high level of \$2.00 BWI per day. This has now been changed to a landing charge of 50 cents per day, or \$2.00 per

month. We feel sure that no one will object
to paying this small sum.'

Thirty love to the Club!

In 1968, in response to further urging by the Editor, **Ronald Clark** wrote from Bolivia describing sailing at 12,500ft on Lake Titicaca. He was Commodore of the Boliviano Yacht Club, but since the majority of their boats were of the motor variety, and there was rarely any wind, he didn't find the sailing very challenging. The greatest interest in his yarn was the description of bringing the 1000 ton steamers up the mountain on mules, presumably piece by piece.

Readers may recall that when Victor Clark arrived back in Bequia in 1959 after his eventful circumnavigation, he was solicited by a small boy who turned out to be the son of John and Bonnie Staniland, both Founder members. He was also the godson of Ann Davison, so had salt water in his veins. It is gratifying to note that Ian did not rely on his questionable early passages, but joined in his own right in 1969 after another Atlantic crossing in his parents' new boat, the 46ft schooner *Carrina*. John remained a member throughout his life, and Bonnie and Ian are still members.

Whilst the fare at the idiosyncratic *Maison de France* was doubtless splendid, the price began to deter members so in 1964 annual dinners migrated to The Little Ship Club and stayed there for the next four years. However, with the finances never more than just solvent it is surprising how the Club felt able to entertain so many guests. Even in the early days, with subscriptions still at only £1, at one dinner the entrants in the recent OSTAR together with their wives, the auditor and his wife, and a possible benefactor and his wife, were all invited as Club guests. The minutes usually record a short-list of possible speakers of considerable note, but regrettably there is rarely reference to who actually spoke.

In 1966 one of the Club's four French members turned up for the annual dinner and was obviously somewhat overwhelmed by what he found. He had qualified in 1964, but the record shows only that he had sailed out of Cannes in 1962 and returned to Toulon in 1964, a distance claimed to be 15,000 miles. Since the straight line distance is less than 100 miles he obviously went round something somewhere but for the rest we are left to guess. However, he was clearly overcome by the occasion and felt compelled to write to the Secretary:

'Dear Sir,

I want to tell you that I so much enjoyed meeting
you, Commodore Heywood, and all the members I

encountered. The mood of this club is what I thought it was: most friendly.

When Commodore Heywood had the delicacy of talking about me, I balanced whether I should reply or not. I still wonder if I should have done; but, at that moment, I thought that many people had already made a speech, that my English was hesitating, that perhaps the patience of the members would not endure it . . . and also, that day had been so stressing for me (owing to passport trouble), that I was in poor condition.

If I had spoken, I should have said that, so odd it may be, I found out that, as a foreigner, I was a member of the majority in O.C.C.! Do not look for another reason than the only possible explanation: the prestige of a British Club. I am proud, indeed, to wear the tie of a club of your country, whose pavilion is the most encountered in distant harbours.

Among other British Clubs, of course, I am glad to have been admitted to O.C.C.: how to remain insensible to what happened during the dinner; my neighbour asked, as an ordinary question to her neighbour: "Have you been to Australia?" and he answered, with the same simplicity: "Yes, I have".

Owing to the quality of the members, the world sounds like a private garden ...

As you know, Frenchmen are not so "Club" as you are; so, we expense treasures of imagination to demonstrate our usefulness.

As you see, I am afraid I should have talked too long if I had made a speech at the dinner ...

Faithfully yours,

OLIVIER STERN-VEYRIN'

Perhaps it is just as well that he didn't speak as the principal guest and speaker was Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin, GCB, DSO, DSC, who apparently made an excellent speech and Olivier might have upstaged him with his command of English.

It is not clear from the record what particular affinity the Rear Commodore

USA East, Jack Parkinson, had with the monarchy, or whether he erroneously regarded the OCC as an extension of the British Empire, but he reported in 1966 that the local branch of the Club again dined at the New York Yacht Club and again he reported having toasted the Queen. A nice touch, since in those august premises they were constantly reminded of American yachting supremacy by the enduring presence of the 'Auld Mug'.

The 1968 dinner was to be the first with Brian Stewart in the Commodore's chair after Tim Heywood had carried that flag for two full terms. Brian (see photograph page 140) had qualified in 1952 during the transatlantic race aboard *Lutine*, the Lloyds of London boat, but did not join the Club until 1958. However he was soon on the Committee and, as we have seen, took a firm hold of the finances in 1961, carrying that burden until Howard Fowler became the paid Secretary/Treasurer in 1965. He was a keen offshore racing man, winning the 1962 RORC Class 1 championship with his 19 ton *Zulu*. He also used her for sail training, competing in many of the Tall Ships races.

At the 1968 dinner, held on 31 March, Mrs Rose was a guest while Alec was in the Southern Ocean on his way round singlehanded, emulating Francis Chichester. In welcoming Mrs Rose the Commodore said that rumours that Alec was overdue at the Horn did not worry her as she was sure he would round it on April Fool's Day. The very next day he was sighted at the Horn, much to the delight of the Club and confusion of the rumour mongers. It is often forgotten that Alec had set off at the same time as Francis the previous year, but was run down at night in the Western Approaches by a vessel which didn't stop. Then, on returning to Plymouth for repairs, his *Lively Lady* was further damaged by falling over in the yard, delaying him until the following year.

It became the practice at that time to invite a notable member to attend the annual dinner as Guest of Honour so that members could hear of their adventures. At the 1969 dinner it was the turn of a rising Club star, Michael Richey, who had bought Blondie Haslar's *Jester* and who, in the 1968 OSTAR, had the distinction of being last by such a margin that he had felt in danger of being forcibly rescued. Mike was introduced as 'the Club's philosophical singlehander', and for the next 30 years we were to enjoy his yarns and regular instructive column in *Yachting Monthly*.

However, the show was stolen at that dinner by Frederick Thurber, over from the States and, at age 86, thought to be the Club's oldest member. He certainly held the record for the earliest qualifying voyage, with a passage from New York to Havana in 1910. His real claim to fame, however, was that his

next voyage was credited as 'marking the beginning of deep water cruising in small boats' when, in 1911 with two companions, he sailed his 25ft yawl *Sea Bird* from Rhode Island to Gibraltar via the Azores. This doesn't quite square with Hum's record in his book *Atlantic Adventurers* where he shows several transatlantic passages before this date. Nevertheless it was a stout effort when one considers the primitive accommodation:

'The cabin, which was to be our home for 40 days, measured 8 by 6 feet and had 4 foot 6 inches headroom. The transoms had hard cork cushions; one transom was built out a foot so that one could recline on it without having to lie under the side deck. As the other was almost entirely under the deck with less than 12 inches between the deck and the cushion, one could turn over only with difficulty!'

They were planning, rather optimistically, on an average of 100 miles per day in order to reach Rome to attend a motorboat race, which allowed them only 40 days. Frederick's yarn ends in Gibraltar three days before the event, which they doubtless missed, but not before they had weathered some very heavy gales which obliged them to spend considerable time hove-to or riding to an improvised sea anchor, which he describes:

'A sea anchor such as we used consisted of an ordinary 20lb anchor and a piece of oak 4 feet long by 6 inches wide by 1½ inches thick. Through the centre a hole was cut large enough to go over the stock of the anchor, and notches were placed at either end for the flukes to fit into. The board was then firmly lashed to the flukes. The weight of the anchor would sink the board about 15 feet below the surface and the resistance caused by the board dragging through the water held the *Sea Bird's* bow to the seas. We had out about 50 fathoms of cable, which kept the anchor two seas ahead of us.'

Frederick died in 1972 in his 90th year, and remained a member to the end.

At the same time, the social life of the Club's antipodean members was falling into a routine, with annual dinners and events organised by Wally Burke, Rear Commodore Australia. He adds in his report that as a member of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia he would welcome members at Rushcutters Bay, and as an ex-Commodore of the Landfall Harbour Yacht Club those facilities were equally available.

Despite the loss of the Club's leverage through the departure of Harry Albrecht,

lectures and parties were still held onboard the salubrious *HQS Wellington*. However, committee meetings seem to have been held wherever a member had a connection at the time, as they rarely met at the same venue twice running. Throughout the 1960s they oscillated between the RNVR Club, the RORC, the Little Ship Club, *HQS Wellington* and, latterly, with a Commodore who was Chairman of the Sail Training Association, on one of their vessels if they should happen to be in the London Docks. To ring the changes further they prevailed upon the Port of London Authority to let them hold a meeting and party at their headquarters in the autumn of 1970. The Committee never seem to have had to pay for a meeting room wherever they met, so it appears that either they had many influential contacts or that the Club still had sufficient prestige for other clubs to be glad to offer them their facilities. However, by 1971 some clubs began to levy a charge and it is noticeable that from then on the venue was often the Cruising Association, with whom the Club had enjoyed a close relationship since its inception, or at a member's private residence.

Throughout the 1960s and early '70s the Admiral continued his peregrinations in the North Atlantic, but often found it difficult to get satisfactory crews. For years he eschewed any form of self-steering, but while in the Mediterranean he spotted a boat with what appeared to be a new type of gear. It turned out to be the prototype of the now widely-known Aries. Hum ordered one, and soon took delivery of the second to be built. Unfortunately he bent an actuating arm shortly after it was fitted and a new one was delivered by none other than the inventor and builder, Nick Franklin, who was then persuaded to crew Hum across the Atlantic. For many years thereafter the advertisement for the Aries had a photograph of *Rose Rambler*'s stern complete with the gear. Hum usually sought the young to crew him and once managed to find, in his words, 'two charming young girls'. In praise of Aries he wrote to the *Journal* that he had signed on a permanent crew member that could not hear or see what was going on. The mind boggles!

He wintered in Malta in 1967–8 and caught up with old acquaintances, not always with a happy outcome. He wrote:

'Geoffrey, a retired Commander, RN, and I were invited aboard a very nice English motor yacht one evening for drinks by her charming lady owner. She, the yacht, was moored stern-on to the dock with a rather long narrow gangway and was rolling slightly. Half way across I regret to say I lost my balance and the very light hand rail broke. The

Commander, with the utmost promptitude and courage, instantly plunged into the sea. But I remained perched on the gangway. When in due course he surfaced, looking rather like an anxious walrus searching for its young, I said, "What are you doing there, Geoff?" He said, "I'm down here to rescue you. What are you doing up there?" So I said, "I've stayed up here to rescue you. Let me pull you out". A happy evening was had by all but that is the second time that I have not fallen into the water and I fear I may have blotted my copybook.'

Hum usually called at Lymington on his way round, but occasionally took a short cut straight to Gibraltar if there was no need, as he put it, 'to go and count the grandchildren'. He often wandered down the African coast before going out to the islands, and one incident in Agadir shows that Britain still ruled the waves, or thought it did. Hum explains: 'an official came to take away our passports. I refused and sailed at once. They must be told that if they want Englishmen to visit their ports they should treat them with some courtesy'. He was beginning to show his age, however, and became somewhat accident prone. In a heavy blow off Finisterre he fell and broke two ribs. He was hospitalised in Vigo with some other complaint, and managed to contract meningitis in Trinidad. His eyesight was so bad that he couldn't read the sight reduction tables but, as he said, 'the old boat knew her way across'. This led him to conclude his 1969 epistle:

'If you should meet a white haired, half blind old man with a walking stick tottering down a quay it will be your aged Admiral, and he may need a helping hand. The walking stick has other uses: it is also an excellent dinghy boat hook and is useful for catching waitresses!'

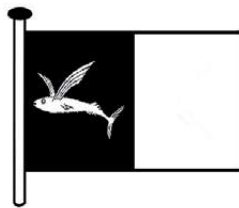
Hum did make a catch but it wasn't a waitress! Having groped his way to Grenada at the end of 1969, he arranged to have a cataract operation in the local hospital but not before his dim vision allowed him to recognise 'a very charming and experienced English sailorwoman, Miss Mary Danby, whom I had met briefly in Malta two years previously. We were married in St George's, Grenada on January 15th 1970 and my right eye was operated on four days later'. What



Hum and Mary aboard *Rose Rambler*

Hum later privately admitted was that he couldn't really see who he was marrying but was delighted when he found out.

With the Admiral settled down in the care of the young Mary, of 'trim lines' as described by one American correspondent, it was good to read how they had sufficient company in Prickly Bay to enjoy an impromptu rally as opposed to the more organised affair some 35 years later. **Jock Hardwicke** of *Nanise* wrote that on entering the Bay he found the Admiral in *Rose Rambler*, Peter and Monique Rose in *Odd Times* and the Stanilands in *Carrina*. A good omen and an indication of the proliferation of members across the world.



VI – A REFLECTION

For many years Mike Richey wrote an occasional column for *Yachting Monthly* under the title ‘*On Reflection*’ and now, almost 40 years later, he again reflects on his first singlehanded voyage:

‘And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: “Quiet now. Be calm”. And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm.

This passage (St Mark from the Jerusalem Bible) reminds me of an incident long ago in Faial in the Azores. It was 1966 and my first ocean passage alone in Jester. In those days the islands were still remote, wholly maritime, by and large untouched by air travel and the tourist trade. There were no marinas and, in Horta at any rate, no hotel or what one might call a restaurant. Neither were there normally other yachts in the harbour, just the fishing fleet and one or two tenders. The great whaleships were a thing of the past but the industry thrived and the graceful little whaleboats would lie at their stations until rockets fired by coastal lookouts alerted the crews to a whale blow and the crews, like lifeboat men, would drop what they were doing and double to the boat slips. Launches towed the whaleboats out to where the whales had been sighted, sometimes, I was told, as far as 30 miles off. Four great Sperm whales were towed in during my stay.

Jester lay alongside the stone quay to long mooring lines and interested onlookers would stroll by and sometimes wonder that you had come all this way alone; occasionally they would thank you for coming to see them. On the evening in question I noticed an arresting figure, bearded with long uncut hair and unusual attire who clearly wished to make contact. His rig had something of the Sikh about it and by way of breaking the ice I asked if he was Sikh. He misunderstood and said he was quite fit. We passed to other matters and soon it became clear that the purpose of his call was roughly speaking evangelical. In passable English and a civilised conversational tone he explained to me the meaning of the gospels and the significance of the Deity, which he referred to, quaintly but reverentially, as Sir God. I found myself beguiled by the homely way he talked about the Lord and the disciples, as though he knew them all personally – as in his way I suppose he did. He told me of the phenomenon of Mount Pico, the Fuji-like crater on the neighbouring island which was dedicated to Mary Magdalene, and how sometimes on her feast-day a cloud in the shape of a cross would form over the peak. He passed me a

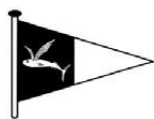
photograph of the phenomenon, an obvious fake, although clearly not to him.

It started to blow a bit and I asked one or two of those standing about to give me a hand warping *Jester* to a quieter berth. But the prophet would have none of it. Why are you so fearful, he asked; have you no faith? He would ask Sir God to calm the waters, which indeed he did and in due course (once the squall was through) the wind dropped and, as in the gospel, there followed a great calm. *Jester* stayed where she was. The prophet, like any tradesman who had accomplished his task, prepared to leave but before doing so he offered thanks. In all the circumstances I thought it would seem churlish for me not to join in. The holy man then went on his way, leaving his new disciple behind. I suppose to the casual onlooker St Paul must have seemed rather like that.

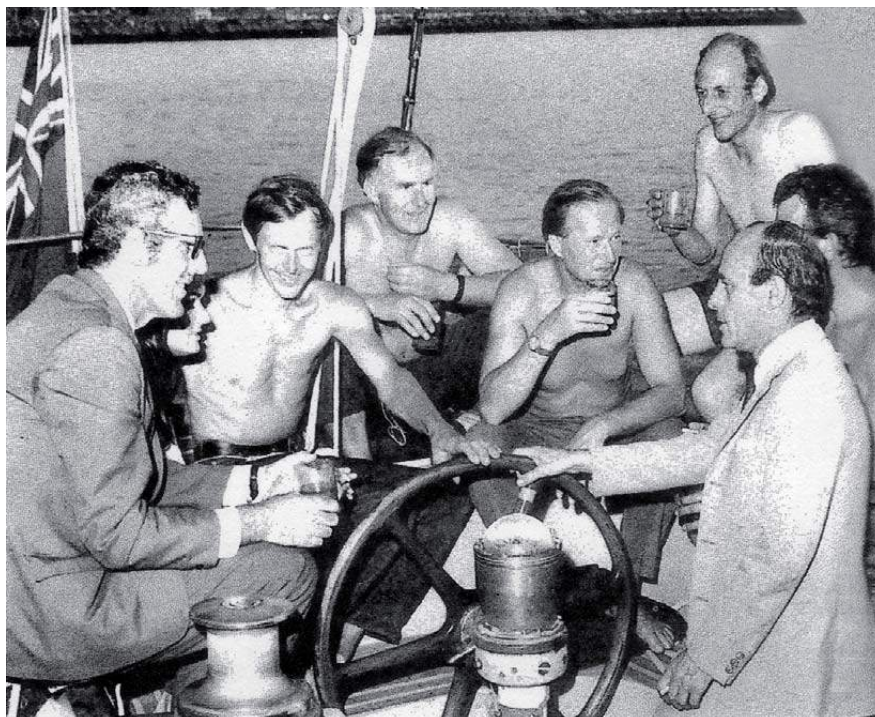
I think of the guru of Horta from time to time with both affection and amusement. But what strikes me now looking back is how lame the purely scientific or reductionist explanation of such matters sounds. That the whole thing can be explained by coincidence is obvious, but coincidence is no more easily proved than the miraculous, and further neither possibility necessarily precludes the other. This somewhat shaky line of thought leads me to ponder the way people personalise their boats. Like pets they are named, and are often credited with powers beyond those inherent in their design and construction; like people, they are credited with a will of their own. 'I am so glad', wrote Blondie Hasler some forty years ago when I had just bought *Jester*, 'that you now have my little boat that has always looked after me so well'. 'They tell me', wrote Belloc many years before, I suppose thinking along similar lines, '... that a ship has no being at all, that a boat is not a person, but is only a congeries of planks and timbers and spars and things of that sort'. He clearly thought quite otherwise but concludes, not very helpfully, that this is simply to open up the debate between realism and nominalism (which holds that it is all in the mind anyway).

That *Jester* had looked after me over the years seemed to me fairly obvious, never more I suppose than during the ultimate storm we went through on the way back from Nova Scotia in 1986 when she was rolled over and dismasted, the fore-hatch sucked out and so on. But there was nothing personal about that, nothing I would thank the boat rather than her designer and builder for. Quite different, however, was a less sensational occasion when in 1993, sailing back from America alone, the boat exercised to the full her magical powers to prevent us getting run down. We were well off the shipping routes, the conditions entirely favourable with perfect visibility and a force 3 well out

on the quarter so that the wind-vane gear could have no difficulty holding the course. I turned in, as was my habit whenever possible so that at any rate fatigue would not contribute to my vulnerability. I awoke quite suddenly after an hour or so to find the boat hove-to, the sheet slack and the fully battened sail weather-cocking. We were quite still. About half a mile to port the steaming lights of a ship could be seen and indicated a safe passing. But it was equally clear that had we carried on and not mysteriously have taken all way off by heaving to, a collision situation would have resulted. On this occasion I thanked the boat, as it clearly behove me'.



The first Club Rally, Gibraltar 1971. Peter Carter-Ruck (centre right) entertains aboard *Griffin III*. Other Club members include David Nichol (second from left) and Mike Taylor-Jones (top right)



VII – THE CLUB COMES OF AGE

In 1968 a young London solicitor qualified on a most unlikely passage from the Shetland Islands to Plymouth, a distance said to be 1002 miles. He was **Peter Carter-Ruck**, of whom we shall hear a lot more. Within a year he was on the Committee and a year later he proposed that the Club should hold a rally in Gibraltar. Fortuitously, Jim Griffin, the energetic Port Officer for the Bahamas, had migrated back east when his lecturing contract in Nassau expired in 1969. He was then appointed Director of the Hellenic Offshore Sailing School, but after two years accepted a job on the technical staff of the Gibraltar Dockyard. It did not take Jim long to offer his services as Port Officer, just in time to take on the organisation of the Club's first distant rally. Since the year 1971 coincided with the biennial Middle Sea race out of Malta, and a number of British boats would be entering, Buster de Guingand used his influence in the RORC to persuade them to organise a UK to Gibraltar race as a feeder for both the Malta race and the Club rally.

Five boats raced out – Peter Carter-Ruck in the RORC's club boat *Griffin III* with the Club Secretary as navigator, **John Foot** in *Water Music III*, the well-known French yachtsman Eric Tabarly in *Pen Duick III*, *Sea Wraith III* and *Casino*. Eric won by a margin of two days over second boat *Griffin*, completing the course in five days, half the time estimated by the RORC. The Admiral, now accompanied by Mary attending her first Club function, met the competitors in Gibraltar together with three other Club boats staging through. Almost all competing crews were elected to the OCC at a special meeting on board Jim's boat, *Northern Light*, bringing in 22 new members. These of course included the Secretary, Howard Fowler, and surprisingly, since the French are not great club people, Eric Tabarly. Gibraltar town provided several prizes and the Club presented *Casino*, the smallest boat in the race, with an antique silver pepper mill in the form of a ship's bell. Hum and Mary gave a ladies' prize, which went to **Christine Porter** who had sailed there in *Zest* with member **John Rock**.

It is interesting to note that the subsequent passage to Malta was the cause of some controversy as the distance was not quite the 1000 miles required to qualify. Some boats decided to make a race of it, so the Committee adjusted the course to take it over the magic limit, but this was not within the Rules. In a clear case of gerrymandering the Committee created a theoretical voyage of 'Med Passage, Gibraltar OCC Rally, 1002 miles' and two new members came in under this umbrella. However, in the same minutes it was pleasing to note that an application for a passage in a 71ft boat did not attract the same laxity and was rejected.

John Rock's *Zest* was a standard Bowman 36, a well-built yacht but not to John's satisfaction. They sailed on to the Caribbean and, while in Barbados, he mused on the problem of finding the ideal deep-sea yacht, eventually concluding that the only way was to design his own. There were many boats around the Caribbean which had crossed an ocean so, with partner Chris, he set about a survey. Over the next 12 months they amassed a wealth of detail from experienced sailors in the way that *Yachting World* had done on two occasions without ever taking their findings as far as the drawing board. John writes:

'This survey only served to confirm my own thoughts that what was required was a heavy displacement boat, about 33-36ft overall with a good beam and, if possible, a flush deck. Although of glassfibre, she must be made to look like a wooden boat and have some character. A teak deckhouse and teak laid deck were a must. The problem was, how small a boat could be designed with a flush deck and yet still look right? After measuring the freeboard of every boat we could lay our tape on during the next twelve months, it was decided it could be achieved with 33 feet. Sketches were made - hundreds of them! Then one day I saw her in my mind, put her on paper and there was the Tradewind. The hull was to be made of glassfibre, using the foam sandwich method. As work progressed and more people heard about the design, we had a steady stream of visitors. Then it happened one of them asked 'Will you build one for me?' Interest snowballed and soon another friend wanted one. It was evident that my 'one off' was a 'one off' no more. At this point I decided go mad and use the foam sandwich hull we were building for me as a plug in order to produce a set of moulds. This was done and before there was a completed boat in the water, fifteen had been ordered, and this without any advertising or promotion.'

And so the famously sturdy Tradewind was born; conceived and built by an

amateur, but a boat which beat the professionals at their own game. She was an out and out deep-sea cruising boat and remains popular to this day. The 35 and 39 followed the 33, and today the 25, a pretty little gaff-cutter, can be seen swanking around the Solent with a somewhat older John at the helm.

The early '70s saw a number of changes at flag rank, starting with the long overdue promotion of Buster de Guingand to Rear Commodore UK in 1971. He had either been an elected or a co-opted member of the Committee since the Club began, and had been tireless in furthering its aims despite not becoming a member until 1958. The flag rotation seems to have got out of synchronisation as the very next year the Vice Commodore, Freddy Morgan, retired and Buster was promoted into his place.

From joining in 1968 Peter Carter-Ruck was on the Committee within a year, and took Buster's place as Rear Commodore UK in 1972. The very next year, as the minutes so charmingly expressed it, he 'lost a ball' when appointed Vice Commodore on the untimely demise of Buster. The Secretary was then somewhat at a loss to describe the appointment of the Club's first lady flag officer, **Bridget Livingston**, as Rear Commodore. Unfortunately for Bridget it was not to be for long as she lost in a run-off vote at the 1974 AGM to **Jean Jonas**, who formed a hard racing partnership with her husband **Harry**. Misfortune struck again when Jean died less than three months later. The post of Rear Commodore was then left vacant until the 1975 AGM when Harry was elected to replace her.

During this time of changes at the top the minutes record a suggestion from **Tom Flower**, ex Rear Commodore Australia, that the OCC should copy the American practice of allowing retired flag officers to fly a Rear Commodore's flag defaced with a letter R in the lower half. This was well received at home so the question was put the US Rear Commodores who, surprisingly, were remarkably ambivalent so it was quietly dropped.

David Lewis next reported in 1971, telling of his intention to sail singlehanded to Antarctica. He added that he hoped to plant Club burgees on bits of ice claiming them in the name of the OCC, 'if not to amuse the penguins'. He had modified *Isbjorn* with ice guards round the propeller, three watertight bulkheads and a low profile wheelhouse, but unfortunately son **Barry** put her on a reef and she was a write off. David then bought a heavily built, flush-decked 32ft hard-chine steel sloop which he named *Ice Bird*. He fitted her with an observation dome from which he could steer while entirely enclosed, which was just as well as the conditions he encountered often did not allow even the shortest excursion on deck. His first leg in 1972, 6000 miles from Australia to Anvers

Island, took three months, during which he broached and lost the mast in force 11. David describes the conditions after the knockdown when the weather worsened further:

'The sea's surface was white and driving, more like a mountain blizzard than sea, and enormous hollow waves, that had increased frighteningly since the night before, were breaking heavily in thundering cascades.'

David wintered, if that isn't a euphemism when speaking of conditions down there, at Palmer Base, and in 1973 he continued his circumnavigation. Conditions were even worse than on the first leg:

"Fear and dread. God help us", I wrote, and put the log away. The hurricane continued unabated. The anemometer needle came hard up against the 80 knot stop more frequently than ever until the wind broke the instrument around noon. The seas grew steadily higher and broke even more furiously. I crouched over the whipstaff, my eyes glued to the strip of vibrating sailcloth outside the dome that was my wind direction indicator. We were running downwind at an angle to the enormous, heavily breaking seas. CRASH. My world was submerged in roaring chaos as a mighty hand rolled *Ice Bird* over, not urgently, upside down.'

The mast had gone but David reached Cape Town under jury rig three weeks later. Remarkably, the Club did not recognise this epic cruise until 1978 when David was given the Award, but, mercifully, no gift of money. At last it had been recognised that an award of a few pounds to someone who had made such a titanic voyage, hailed worldwide, would be an insult. After such a long gap between the action and the award, the minutes refer appropriately to 'commemorating the incredible voyage'.

Malcolm Robson had told us in the 1970 *Journal* of the loss in the Atlantic of his 40ft 1911 cutter, *Banba IV*. It is difficult to understand just what happened, but from his sketchy explanation it appears that the mast shifted when about 900 miles out from Cape May. He was concerned that it wouldn't stand up to a blow so they put up distress flares to a passing ship and abandoned her. He must have convinced his insurers of the validity of his reasoning as we next heard from him in 1973 when he had bought the famous Illingworth boat, *Maid of Malham* and had set off again, this time round the world. Apart from shooting dead some robbers who boarded the yacht in Guyana they had a largely trouble free passage until they were about halfway to Tahiti. Then the heel fitting tore out of the keel allowing the Pacific to pour in. Again Malcolm

gives little explanation and none of any attempted repairs. They were just two aboard, but managed to pump her for several days until they saw a ship in this most unlikely bit of ocean. Again they were taken off and abandoned her.

One of the problems of navigation in the 1950s and '60s was time. While Slocum claims to have navigated with a kitchen clock, one hand of which was missing, most sailors prefer a more accurate timepiece. However, until the advent of the accurate, crystal-controlled wristwatch, the alternative chronometer was a considerable outlay begrudged by many shoestring cruising men. The answer was to rate one's clock and correct it frequently against a radio time signal. But that required a long-range receiver and the sweat of finding the appropriate station amidst the crackle and hiss that was always present. Malcolm told us the answer in the 1972 journal:

'But don't despair. If you are a navigator of great and continued experience, brave and fearless and an extrovert, I can offer you two solutions. The first is to invest about £6 in a battery-powered electric kitchen clock (plus 10p for the battery) and if it varies more than 10 seconds a month, which is most unlikely, throw it overboard and get another. The battery lasts a year. Alternatively buy about six cheap Russian pocket watches at thirty bob a time, hang them on six hooks, wind daily and take the average. If you find yourself out more than a second/week, I will personally post you six more free of charge.

Checking your chronometer kitchen clock, etc. at sea is by comparison child's play. It is done either by asking a passing ship the time or by radio. As ships are always in the way when you don't want them and never when you do, you will have to depend on GMT by Radio. Anyone who can read can do it with the aid of Vol. V, Admiralty Radio Signals. And a radio set. And a cool head.

Suppose for example you are stooging about the eastern Atlantic trying to locate, say, Rockall, where it is your intention to find out if it is possible to develop it as a 'Get Away from It' package deal holiday place. You want to check your GMT having set out a month previously from Boston, Mass. From BBC Radio 3 you can only get the Amadeus String Quartet. From Radio 4 the Archers seem to be on all day. Radio 2 not a sound, you are too far from Daventry. Your nerves aren't up to Radio 1. You thumb through Vol. V and begin again. Ah, yes, Radio Tomsk on 364 Kcs but the sounds of a visit to a plastic caviar factory don't help much. Radio Tibet? Try 654 Kcs – is that really 'Letter from America?' But this is ridiculous. Strasbourg on 1096 Kcs but (Vol. V tells you) half strength on Tuesdays and Fridays. Rugby, deep down among the bass notes at 16 Kcs, but changed, without notice, on even months (perhaps) to 14,562, 14,589 or 14,982 Mcs. All

right then – Montreal on 2145 Mcs but (says Vol. V) not between the 7th to 15th of each month. Today it is, you think, the 8th.

Desperate now, what about the trebles? Washington on 5 Mcs – only groans. 10, 15, 20, all whistles and bathwater running. Even Auntie BBC thinks of you on the ‘metre bands’ if you have the quarterly timetable aboard, if you can tune in to 6.467 Mcs before the pips, if you can mentally make a wave-bounce calculation and be sure that you are included in the transmission for Queensland, Atlas Mountains and Upper Wimbledon, if it isn’t Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Saturdays only, Saturdays and Sundays omitted or the first Friday after St Candlemas. Rome and Venice I see don’t give time on any public holiday, and they include in this major Saints’ Days so your chances are remote.

Even if you are dead lucky and as, in a super-fruit-machine, every one of thirty-five variables are all working for you at the same instant, and – lo, there it is – faint but clear. Bleep bleep – bleep – blaap – bleep – booooooing – silence. Or perhaps, boing – boing – bam – bam – bam – silence. Or any one of 16 different time signals: BBC, American standard, International standard, ONOGO, Japanese Rhythmic, Russian Roulette etc. I have even heard a gentleman telling me in an earnest confidential voice that he is “Say-ash-who and ven ze note changes eet vill bee joost zero neuf quinze heurs JayEmmaTay”.

I give up. Why not let’s just point the boat towards the sun and squint through the holes in the coconut shell? At least we shall arrive back where it all started.’

One of only a handful of German members, **Joergen Meyer** had a lifetime ambition to sail around the world but could not find the money or time until he retired in 1971. He was 64 when he quietly left the Elbe unsponsored and unsung, with no ambition other than to prove himself to himself. In 350 days, with scant regard for the seasons, he circumnavigated singlehanded in his 34ft sloop *Paloma*, with only three stops – Panama, Port Moresby and Cape Town. Joergen used the second leg, of 8700 miles, as his qualifying passage and wrote an account for *Flying Fish* gently and modestly saying, somewhat surprisingly, that his lasting memory was the kindness and helpfulness of the many sailors he met in foreign ports.

The following year Joergen was awarded the Benrus Citation, the rather obscure aim of which is to honour those ‘who conquer time in the service of mankind’. Fellow recipients were Alan Bean for 59 days in space, a mere bagatelle compared with 350 days in a 34-footer, and Henry Kissinger, who visited 12 capitals during a 40,000 mile, whistle-stop diplomatic offensive. Joergen was credited with ‘the quickest-ever circumnavigation of the earth’, but how this squares with Robin Knox-Johnston’s 313 days, only three years earlier, is a mystery.

Joergen left the Elbe only two years later with the intention of circumnavigating non-stop. This time he had a transmitter, and was last heard from after six months at sea when he gave a position in the Roaring Forties roughly on the date line, but nothing further was heard.

At about this time the Club began to show its age in a regrettable way, in that the list of obituaries of the early members continued to lengthen. In 1972 it was the turn of Sir Francis Chichester to haul down his flag. Despite his triumph in the first OSTAR he was never satisfied with either his performance or that of his boats and continued to strive for more ambitious goals almost to the end. Francis was a restless soul, who shunned the rules of competition made by man and instead chose to pit himself against the forces of nature and human frailty. Only a few weeks before his death he was again racing in the OSTAR, but had to be taken off when he was too ill to continue. With his passing the OCC lost one of its most illustrious members and the country a great adventurer. At his funeral in Plymouth the service included that most fitting prayer of St Augustine which starts:

‘Blessed are all thy saints, O God and King, who have travelled
over the tempestuous seas of this mortal life, and have made
Thy harbour of peace and felicity.’

The shadow of the ill-fated Golden Globe competition, which Francis had unwittingly triggered, was to intervene yet again. OCC member **Nigel Tetley** had made a very gallant showing in a most unsuitable boat until it broke up when almost in a position to win the £5000 for the fastest circumnavigation. He was made a consolation award of £1000 and wrote a successful book, the proceeds of which went to building another trimaran in which he planned to enter the next OSTAR. He moved aboard the new boat with his family and seemed well over his setback, even accepting an invitation as speaker at the 1972 annual dinner, but tragically took his own life only a few weeks before the event.

There is no doubt that Buster de Guingand was destined to become Commodore, but shortly after being elected Vice he fell ill and died in 1973 without being able to attend a Club meeting in his new rank. Throughout the 19 years that he served on the Committee he was also a committee member of the RORC and served a term as Vice Commodore of that club. Buster was born of a sailing family – his austere Victorian father was reputed to shave and put on a wing collar and tie before going on watch. He qualified for the OCC in 1956 but was foremost a racing man and was a popular and regular navigator in major races both sides of the Atlantic. He navigated on *Carina* or *Figaro* when they came

over for the Admiral's Cup and Fastnet races, taking his own cook aboard – he insisted that only a native could cook local food properly. One of several obituaries described him as 'a clever, kind and droll man, who was always cool and in good heart under the most trying circumstances at sea'.

At the start of one Fastnet they grounded heavily on Hampstead Ledge causing the liferaft to inflate, but Buster restored the dismayed owner to his wits by a long stare through his monocle, a device unknown to the Americans. He was navigating for **Dick Nye** in *Carina II* in the very heavy weather 1957 Fastnet, during which they were accompanied by the usual OCC American Fastnet trio which included William Blunt White's *White Mist* and Bill Snaith's *Figaro*. During the hard beat down Channel most of the fleet retired, and only 12 boats of the 41 which had crossed the starting line were to finish. *Carrina* was damaged early in the race when she fell off a wave and broke several frames forward, but they carried on and virtually pumped their way to cross the finish line first, upon which Dick made his famous remark: "OK boys we're over; let her sink".

That same year of 1973 also saw the death of Bill Snaith who, it may be remembered, waited until he had a couple of transatlantic races under his keel before joining in 1962. Bill was principally a racing man, being a member of the US Admiral's Cup team throughout the 1960s and making several sorties across 'the pond' in his lovely yawl *Figaro* when visiting the Solent in Fastnet years. Of his crossings in 1961 and '63 he wrote his only book, *Across the Western Ocean*, which is full of gems that so well describe the pleasures of both the racing and the cruising man. On night sailing Bill waxes lyrical:

'At times, the ink-black of night is relieved by the light of the stars. Then the spars and sails swing in measured arcs against a dark field picked out by diamond points, and the swing of the masthead and spreaders ticks off the bright giants: Betelgeuse, Vega, and Arcturus; or the even brighter planets: Venus, Saturn, Jupiter. When the moon rises, the spars and sails stand out starkly against the dark sky, or are silhouetted by the gleaming carpet runner laid down on the sea.

But the rarest pleasure of all is that, in this lonely immensity, you are not alone. Though the dark magnitude isolates you in your own sensations, you are conscious of your shipmates. They, too, are enveloped in their own mythos. Few words are spoken during night watches in order not to disturb those sleeping, but each man knows his job and you silently expect him to do it when the time comes. But, sitting in the darkness, you see them picked out in a variety of man-created light.

Through the night, these varied hues of darkness melt, one into the other, until with the paling of the eastern sky and the first edging of the horizon, it is time to call the navigator to take his

morning stars. And, as he brings the first star down to the horizon in the sextant, you jot the time at his crisp call "Mark" which not only fixes your place on earth, but seems to put an end to the night and herald the coming of day.'

That navigator was a youthful Mike Richey, and whether he was responsible is not told, but as they whistled for a wind some scholar wrote in the log:

*Whene the winde dothe notte blowe
We dothe notte goe.*

The following year the Club lost another old faithful – not in the sailing sense, as Mostyn Williams had been confined to a wheelchair for 50 years after contracting polio in his youth, but as a stalwart who did much to get the Club onto its feet in the early days. Nevertheless, he qualified for the RORC and raced offshore on several ocean races. He was also a member of the Royal Lymington YC and the Lower Pennington SC and was made a Life Member of all three. He was press-ganged by Hum to become the unpaid Secretary almost before the OCC had begun and served tirelessly for three years before emigrating to Kenya. An inadvertent compliment was later paid to him when the minutes recorded the search for another invalid to take his place! Mostyn never qualified for the OCC but was made an Honorary Member on retirement.

Also in 1974 Jack Parkinson, former Rear Commodore USA East, died. Jack, it will be remembered, was in the habit of toasting the Queen at OCC parties held at the NYYC, and was a keen and active Club Officer throughout his seven years in the post. He was the son of the famous helmsman **John Parkinson** who steered America's Cup defenders as well as racing his own schooner in Bermuda races. Jack crewed in several transatlantic races, and later sailed over in his own boat *Winnie of Bourne* and went on to cruise in European waters.

In 1974 **Bill East** took over from **Eric Lewis** as Rear Commodore USA West, and enthusiastically reported his intention to organise local dinners and even a West Coast *OCC Newsletter*. This last ambition failed to reach fruition but Bill did later pleaded that a page in *Flying Fish* be devoted to his news. Founder **Chick Larkin**, who qualified in 1928, took over from **Bunny Rig** on the East Coast. He was then 72 years old with a formidable list of ocean races under his keel and was still navigating for **Tom Watson**, the president of IBM, aboard *Palawan*.

For several years the *Journal* seems to have been littered with the obituaries of early members, but in 1972 it was enlivened when the first photograph appeared. It was, appropriately, of a youthful **Peter Azevedo** who was then promulgated as the official Port Officer for Horta in the Azores. He had acted in that capacity

since the Club began, as not only was he a friend of Hum's but of all yachtsmen of any nationality with his welcome at the *Café Sport*. By 1974 Peter was sending regular summaries of members passing through and it is surprising to learn how dense the OCC transatlantic traffic was 30 years ago.

In 1973 the *Journal* caught up with the Griffiths in New Zealand, sailing their home designed and built 53ft ferro-cement cutter, *Awahnee*. They had qualified in 1964 with what was credited as being the first ocean passage in a ferro-cement boat, and went on to make a relatively conventional sortie round the world *en famille* via Panama and Suez. Then in 1966 they made what was claimed to be the first windward circumnavigation south of all continents. When their next son was born in 1970, Nancy and Bob decided to put him ashore with friends and make a shorter circumnavigation in the wake of Captain Cook, below 60°S. With three stalwart young New Zealanders aboard they left at Christmas aiming to make a 100 day circuit as opposed to Cook's three years. On the tenth day out they rediscovered the Nimrod Islands which, having been found and named in 1828 but never again sighted, had been declared nonexistent and expunged from the charts in 1952. They reached the Antarctic Peninsula after 29 days, 4500 miles out and more than a third of the way round the world, to be told by the local doctor that Nancy was again pregnant. They explored the Peninsula for three weeks, finding an interesting anchorage which is no longer available:

'We anchored in the crater of an almost submerged active volcano, Deception Island. Ice and snow cover its rim and steam rises from boiling hot springs along the shore inside its five mile diameter crater. For the brave there are hot baths in the shallow water. In Whalers Bay huge boilers and storage tanks sit at weird angles, pushed off their foundations by the eruptions, and lighters and winches are buried in ash. All three bases on Deception Island, British, Argentinean and Chilean, have been abandoned since the eruption in 1968, and we are told that where *Awahnee* sailed across the crater in 1971 there is now an island 900 feet high.

From there they made a non-stop 7300 mile passage back to New Zealand, arriving at Bluff whence they had departed 111 days previously. Nancy then

rejoined their son ashore while Bob sailed coastwise to Whangarei, but only 60 miles from home *Awahnee* was struck by lightning and dismasted. Nancy flew with her enlarging family to San Francisco, while Bob stepped a new mast before making a two-stop passage across the Pacific to join her, by which time their daughter had arrived. In 1972 they were awarded the CCA Blue Water Medal for their three circumnavigations, but there is no evidence of them being recognised by the OCC.

Having had a good run in the late '60s the Award again fell into disuse, and despite exhortations in almost every *Journal* it appears that nothing merited consideration for several years. Then in 1972 a new member, **Bob Salmon**, wrote of his dismasting in that year's OSTAR, describing his simple jury rig made from two spinnaker poles. He received the Award, the citation saying simply that he was given a token sum of £5, (decimalisation the previous year had sounded the final death knell of the more snobbish guinea), from which one might infer that once again the Committee was not particularly impressed but felt it had to give it to someone. While Bob's rig was not particularly ingenious, what was remarkable was that he had qualified for the OCC only the previous year, while crewing aboard a large trimaran involved in the Gibraltar Rally. To enter OSTAR only one year later in his 24ft sloop, let alone sail home under jury rig, was deserving of the Award on its own.

Bob wanted to enter the next OSTAR, but by then it had become far more of a rich or sponsored man's indulgence. In the same spirit in which John Rock couldn't find his ideal boat so designed his own, Bob considered that he could no longer compete against the monster yachts so set about organising his own mini race. The Royal Western Yacht Club at Plymouth was not interested in staging a rival race to the now well-established OSTAR, so Bob took his idea to Penzance, where he was welcomed. The race was restricted to boats under 21ft 6in, with a stop at Tenerife and a final destination of Antigua. It was immediately popular, especially with the French. Legislation prohibited boats of that size racing offshore from France, so many putative ocean racers came over to England where the restriction did not apply. Eleven nationalities started in the first race in 1977, and it continued successfully every other year until 1983 when Bob could no longer afford the time or the money to organise it. It was then taken up by France, despite their earlier objections, and continues to this day as the Mini-Transat.

In 1973 the name **Clare Francis** gained a currency normally the preserve of macho males. She wanted to go to America and, like Hum 20 years before, she eschewed the boredom of an airliner, instead sailing her Nicolson 32, *Gulliver G*,

to Newport by the direct route, unsponsored, non-stop, singlehanded and largely unnoticed. She used this as her qualifying passage for the OCC, but that was only the beginning. Next year Clare teamed up with **Eve Bonham** to become the first all-female crew in the Round Britain and Ireland Race. It was a heavy weather year and many of the men retired, but not the girls. They were bitten. A year later Clare entered the French *L'Aurore* series of singlehanded races and beat the Frenchmen at their own game. This led to sponsorship for the 1976 OSTAR in *Robertson's Golly*, an Ohlson 38, when she gained national fame and sympathy when the BBC broadcast film of her in mid-Atlantic in floods of tears trying to winch in a jib with water breaking over the boat.

The sailing world was then astonished when this upstart woman was asked to skipper a yacht in the 1977 Whitbread Round the World Race. Again with Eve, but this time crewed by a bunch of tough young men, Clare raced *Accutrac* around the world against the best, the only team to complete the entire race without a crew change. She then came ashore, married one of the crew and settled down to writing rattling good novels which have earned her as much fame in the writing world as did her brief but spectacular sailing career. Eve also went on to great things, but staying in the sailing milieu. In 1981 she skippered *Hello World* in the TWOSTAR, citing it as her qualifying passage. Since then she and husband Michael, also an OCC member, have cruised extensively in the North Atlantic in their two *Gemervescences*.

In 1974 **Murray Davis**, who had been a member since 1960, announced that he was changing hats. He had started the successful American magazine *Sail* in 1970, but was abandoning that for a new venture, *Cruising World*, which he intended to be more informative to the cruising man. Thus the Club gained another influential friend in the editorial world. Very soon he was co-operating with *Yachting World* and the Club in their survey of the 'Ideal Cruiser', the results of which were published in *Flying Fish*.

It is interesting to compare the 1974 results with those of the 1964 survey, when members had been shown to be very conservative, especially with such newfangled things as 360° compass cards and self-steering. Ten years later no one wanted a quadrantal compass and only 8% would go without self-steering. 'Ideal' length overall had increased to between 30ft and 40ft, but a majority still preferred wood or wood composite to the newer GRP. Engines too had gained in popularity, no one saying they would go without one (which suggests that the likes of John Guzzwell and **Lin** and **Larry Pardey** hadn't responded to the survey). However members still showed their resistance to innovation in that no-one wanted solar panels and refrigerators took a very low priority. Surprisingly, the percentage preferring a split rig had only dropped from 75%

to 64% despite the introduction of lighter Dacron sails, preferred by 98%, which had obviated the main reason for the reduced area of individual sails provided by ketches and yawls.

Colin Mudie, always in the forefront of radical yacht design, sketched his idea of the Ideal Yacht from the statistics the survey provided. He extrapolated that if there was a reduction of 11% in those wanting a split rig, that trend would continue. He therefore drew a very modern looking sloop, but sympathised with the third of respondents who preferred a flush deck, interestingly confirming John Rock's findings in his private survey two years previously.

It is interesting to note from the various trans-ocean passages during the 1960s and '70s that an increasing number of voyagers complained of poor trade winds. Earlier yarns spoke of blissful running under a blue sky studded with pretty little clouds, the boat steering true for days on end, but latterly one reads of fickle winds and even beating into light southwesterlies where one should expect a constant NE trade. And this was before *El Nino* became fashionable!

Perhaps because of the interesting speakers, the annual London dinners became very popular despite the cost. At the 1973 dinner Eric Tabarly was the principal guest, and on this occasion it was decided to honour him by wearing dinner jackets. Eric's reply to the invitation was that seamen don't dress up and he had no intention of doing so. So reefers it became, and Eric duly showed up bringing along *père* Tabarly, who pointedly wore an RORC tie, demonstrating that one didn't have to have qualified for the OCC to have done a bit of sailing. When called upon to speak, Eric stood up, smiled disarmingly, said "I am honoured to dine with my brothers", and then sat down. An unusually large number of French members had travelled over for the dinner, but if they had come to hear Eric's erudition they must have been disappointed.

In 1974 a record 113 members and guests attended, many more than today. The guests on that occasion were members **Maurice** and **Marilyn Bailey** who, it may be remembered, had been rammed by a whale in the Pacific and spent 117 days in their liferaft. Maurice was said to be a beguiling speaker, who managed to persuade his audience that the ordeal wasn't all bad. Certainly their book *117 Days Adrift* is fascinating, and when one considers how hard it is to write an article about a four week ocean passage in a large yacht, one has to admire a writer who can hold the reader's attention when describing four months drifting in a 5ft diameter liferaft.

In 1975 the ever-vigilant Ian Nicolson, Port Officer Clyde, had spotted the **Bancrofts**, **Marji** and **Den**, who had just crossed to Scotland from Maine.

Ian's critical eye had appraised their fine 42ft wooden cutter, *Dovekie*, judging that Maine building was almost up to Clyde standards. They continued to the Med for the winter, and there met Hum and Mary who signed them up as members. It wasn't long before they were welcoming members to their idyllic corner of New England as Port Officers for Smith's Cove, where they annually held one of the most popular OCC gatherings up to the time of Den's death in 2002.

It is difficult and somewhat invidious to pick out just a few ocean wanderers when, by the middle 1970s, so many members were on the high seas making Club history and displaying the flying fish burgee in every corner of the globe. The Editor made his statutory grumble in each issue of *The Journal* asking for more news, but to the historian those early numbers make fascinating reading. In particular they show just how the oceans were no longer the preserve of the very adventurous nor the realm of young toughs in small boats, but were becoming the highway of the many with initiative and enterprise to strike offshore. The Atlantic was a mere pond, the Pacific was becoming a playground, encircling the globe was commonplace; few challenges were left. Inevitably, the higher latitudes were the next seas to which the more hardy members were turning and of which one hears progressively more.

This is not to suggest that the global expansion of ocean cruising was caused by the OCC, or even principally driven by its members, but there is no doubt that the high profile of the Club, and the publicity given by *Flying Fish* and the major yachting magazines of the activities of its members, succeeded in doing exactly what the Club set out to do – 'encourage ocean cruising in small craft'. It was a snowball effect. Cruising men were demanding boats and equipment better suited to the oceans, and the development of fibreglass for hulls, synthetic fibre for sails and stainless-steel for fittings, made them more durable and easier to maintain. The more demand there was the more ready were the manufacturers to compete, so the mass production of boats began – not always with pleasing effect and not always suited to the oceans. Ian Nicolson was particularly scathing in his criticism of 'modern boats', describing them as floating cottages unsuitable for sailing off soundings. While not a sympathiser with the OSTAR, Ian praised it as providing at least a few proper sea-going yachts every four years. As with all new vehicles, many were being used far outside their specification so that light displacement family weekend boats were seen crossing oceans, thereby encouraging others to do likewise. In 1976 alone there were 130 new members signed up, a record for any year thus far.

It is clear that, by the time the Club approached its 'coming of age' in 1975, it had become an altogether different animal from that which had been conceived and born 21 years earlier. It was no longer the elite gathering of hardy sailors

which created it, but had evolved into an egalitarian fraternity where if you qualified you could join. In 1975 Peter Azevedo's statistics showed that 159 boats of 17 different nationalities had called at Horta. No one had envisaged this explosion of ocean cruising which, paradoxically, had an adverse effect upon the OCC. Its prestige attracted many entrants from this mass market who had little interest beyond the cachet attached to membership, and after their qualifying passage took little further part in the Club. Hum later admitted that he had never dreamed the Club would take off at such a pace and become so influential worldwide, but he was delighted with the outcome.

In a formal sense the Club was still very much what the Founders had designed. The Rules had stood the test of time very well, but not without some healthy questioning. The 'amateur' status had caused some disquiet as early as 1969, when sponsorship for ocean races was becoming commonplace, but it was decided to leave the matter to the discretion of the Committee rather than to tie it too tightly. In an aside in the minutes of the first London meeting after the 1971 Gibraltar Rally there is a hint that the proficiency of certain skippers was in doubt and it was suggested that there might be a need for the Rules to call for evidence of their ability. No individuals are named, but this would have been extremely delicate ground to tread and there was no further reference to the issue. The 70ft length overall rule was again challenged in 1976. Bigger yachts were becoming common and it was thought that some suitable members were being excluded by this restriction, but again the old rule prevailed. One inadvertent casualty of this limit was Hum's son **Peter**, who in that year had sailed on a 75ft native canoe from the Gilbert Islands to Fiji. The whole contraption was lashed together with coconut fibres and they bailed continuously, but the rule stood and it was another 12 years before Peter made his qualifying passage.

The Committee must have regretted its 1971 sleight of hand (when it had fiddled the distance from Gibraltar to Malta to allow race participants to qualify) when, inevitably, other would-be members tried to get admitted with the same passage. In 1976 three applicants declared that they had gone the long way round Gozo and thus stretched the distance to more than 1000 miles. They were admitted by fudging the definition of their passage rather than starting a running argument, but that passage has not been allowed since. Someone then questioned if the Mediterranean was even an ocean 'within the meaning of the act'. This was rather facile, since one could qualify by sailing within sight of land from the UK to Gibraltar but be many more miles from land in the Med. The question of age was also put to the test in 1976 when one **Xavier Perkins**, aged three, applied. While the Committee did not doubt that he had sufficient miles under his nappy, they felt that he was too young to be considered an active member of the crew.

VIII – THE PROPER YACHT

The history of the OCC has been inextricably intertwined with the history of the development of small modern cruising yachts, and yet in some ways the link is contradictory. The Club's ideals, and its early members' aims, demanded tough, 'go anywhere' small boats. A few demonstrated that it was possible to sail safely across big oceans without a deep pocket and with little more knowledge than that within the grasp of most people. Their success, and the proliferation of high profile ocean racing, triggered a demand for boats which was met by the mass builders, at first mainly in France. The result was hardly what the serious cruising man was looking for and indeed was an anathema to one in particular.

In 1960 a young New York University physics professor named **Arthur Beiser** bought a 58ft ketch which was well beyond his budget. She was *Minots Light*, well known on the US Eastern seaboard as one of John Alden's most beautiful creations. To say it was an impulse buy would be to deny that Arthur had coveted her from the day he first saw her, but his tale of her purchase well illustrates his philosophy on matters of choosing a partner, and is worth repeating here.

'In looking for a yacht, intangible feelings are as important as tangible facts. I am a believer in love at first sight as essential an element in choosing a yacht as in life generally. Five minutes after meeting Germaine, I knew our lives would become intertwined; we have now been married for 50 years. Five minutes after seeing *Minots Light* in 1957, I knew our destinies were going to mesh too. On a November day three years later Germaine, our daughter Alexa, then aged three, and I went to City Island, New York to check on our 32ft sloop *Petrouchka*, stored there for the winter. To our surprise *Minots Light* was a few boats away, a swan among mere ducks. She had that day been put up for sale, the price was right (although four times my annual salary), and the yard's broker allowed me to climb up and look her over.

Wow!

Just then Alexa had to go to the bathroom which was at the far end of the yard, and Germaine went off with her. "Quick," I said to the broker, "I will buy *Minots Light* if I can sign the papers before Germaine gets back, because she is a sensible person and will want us to sleep on it and by tomorrow somebody else will have grabbed the boat." The broker raised his eyebrows, even higher after I proposed \$500 (all I then had in the bank) as a deposit, but he wrote fast, I signed fast, and the disgracefully inconsiderate deed was done barely in time. A few days later I

was offered half again the price by another admirer, but I just laughed at him.

I do not offer this tale as a paradigm – of course mature consideration should have a place in such matters – but I would not think much of a life never salted by unbridled lust.'

Several years later Arthur took the bold decision to resign from his teaching post, cruise extensively and try to make a living from his writing. The result was successful on both counts. Arthur and **Germaine** crossed the Atlantic in *Minots Light* in 1963 and joined the OCC the following year. In 1966 he published *The Proper Yacht*, a classic in the study of the requirements for the 'ideal' long term liveaboard boat. A second edition was published in 1978, and although now out of print it is timeless in its sound commonsense advice on choosing the yacht to meet your requirements. Arthur's pocket may now be a lot deeper than it was when he scraped to afford *Minots Light*, but his tale is an object lesson which demonstrates, to coin an expression, that 'fortune favours the bold'.

In 1980 Arthur wrote a lengthy article for *Flying Fish*, closely examining the merits of *Minots Light*, of traditional construction and layout, and her successor *Quicksilver*, at the other end of the modernity scale. Rather than repeat that advice, which has been overtaken by time, he now gives us his trenchant views on yacht construction and design which bring us right up to date with his thinking:

It is 40 years since I published *The Proper Yacht* and since then I have had no reason to change my view of what a proper yacht should be: 'A fast, handsome, seaworthy sailboat capable of ocean passages, one that a man and a woman can live aboard indefinitely yet sail coastwise by themselves. ... There are many requirements a sailboat must fulfil to be really satisfactory: it must be solidly built, easily handled, and so on. But these are the barest minima. To my mind, unless one's spirit soars at the sight of a boat, unless one instantly sees oneself at its helm under a blue sky with porpoises leaping alongside, it just won't do. ... I believe that of all the elements that go into a proper yacht, the one that should never be compromised is beauty. ... There is no excuse for an ugly sailboat, and every reason to insist that a vessel meeting almost any reasonable set of requirements ... be a pleasure to the eye as well.'

The first edition of *The Proper Yacht* consisted of eight chapters that analyzed the various specifics that go into such a paragon, together with descriptions of 38 yachts, from 29ft to 61ft overall, that more or less qualified. Only eight were series-built. The rest were one-offs designed and built to suit their owners' wishes. In those days it was entirely normal to commission a one-off and plenty of able designers and skilled builders were available to

bring it into being at a not too outrageous price. Series-built fibreglass yachts had entered the marketplace only a few years before, and nearly all of them, because of fears about the suitability and durability of the material, and because the ingredients were then cheap, were overbuilt. As a result many are still sailing today, and indeed one of my grandsons is bringing back to life a veteran 26-footer. But custom boats in wood, steel, and aluminium were still the rule.

The second edition of *The Proper Yacht* appeared 12 years later with an updated text and descriptions of 58 yachts, only one of which, my own *Minots Light*, had featured in the previous edition. Now 22 were series-built in fibreglass: the future was in clear sight. The costs of yacht building had started to soar, and one-offs, already uneconomic in the smaller sizes, were becoming so in the larger ones as well. In 1977 we had asked McCurdy and Rhodes to design a 50ft sloop for us to be built in aluminium. Bids came from six excellent yards on both sides of the Atlantic, and the cheapest was well over twice the cost of a new centreboard Swan 47, which was comparable in many respects. Since the McCurdy/Rhodes yacht's secondhand value after a few years would probably be no more than that of the Swan, it did not seem a wise investment, and we ordered the Swan. Like most Swans, *Quicksilver* turned out to be a joy to sail, swift and mannerly, which helped to compensate for our not being the troop of celibate monkeys it was planned for on deck, and in the sleeping arrangements.

About fifteen years ago the publishers asked me to prepare a third edition of *The Proper Yacht*. By now one-offs under 60ft were rare and it was not easy to find good yards that were interested – more money was to be made from larger craft, with 100-footers proliferating and still bigger ones soon to come. Yachts of the size a man and a woman could manage by themselves were almost all series-built. What advice would I have for a seeker of a new yacht? Very little, because the multitude of choices about the elements of a yacht that once existed have mainly vanished to leave (apart from the colour of the upholstery) just one: take it or leave it. All I could think of were rather basic things to avoid: ultra light displacement; general flimsiness (begin an evaluation by jumping up and down on the deck); sandwich construction below the waterline; interior moldings that prevent access to the hull, especially in the bilge; deck-stepped masts and rigging terminals that merely fit into slots in the mast; inadequate lifelines; and so forth. A page would cover them. And certainly I could find nowhere near the 58 examples of proper, or even almost-proper, yachts of the previous edition. So no new *Proper Yacht*.

Today the target customer for a new yacht is usually a charter



Minots Light – one of John Alden's most beautiful creations

company, not an individual sailor. Charter boats do not need to survive gales at sea, to have the autonomy that large tanks and

stowage space afford, to be able to sustain the good life on board for weeks at a time, to be especially reliable (chase boats are always nearby), to have berths that can be used at sea or a place for wet oilies or provision to carry a dinghy on deck without getting in the way – the list is endless. But the boring sameness and general unsuitability for serious cruising of most of the series boats around does not mean that finding the right vessel is totally impossible, just harder than before. If enough money and courage are available, one can look for the few builders of one-off medium-sized yachts that still cling to life. However, I am not sure how closely they approach the virtuosity of, say, Wolter Huisman, whose current projects are unfortunately all leviathans. (A quarter of a century ago Mr Huisman wanted very much to build the 50ft McCurdy-Rhodes sloop for us.) This does not mean that the result now need be less than entirely sound, only that the wealth of experience and expertise once available for medium-sized one-offs is no more.

A few excellent series builders, such as Nautor and Oyster, are still with us, but their gold-plated sliver of the market is tiny. A less exalted but larger and still respectable niche is occupied by firms such as Hallberg-Rassy and Moody. Then a big jump down to mass builders who turn out thousands of boats every year. Economies of scale, rigorous cost control, and occasional hints of corner-cutting mean quite moderate prices. If tempted by their products, I suggest chartering an apparently suitable candidate first and, if it still seems promising, go on to buy the service manager of the charter company a beer and ask him about his experiences with that boat and with others of the same builder. It will be an enlightening and perhaps depressing tale. But who knows? Sometimes a fairly good yacht turns up from a large-scale builder. What will never turn up again is the variety that once was normal, which I think represents a loss to civilization.

What do Germaine and I sail these days? Sixteen years ago we bought the first Moody 58, a fibreglass sloop built in Moody's own yard by old-school craftsmen. (The current Moodys are mass-produced, not badly, by Princess Yachts.) It was just what we were after, a large, fast, handsome sloop that could be adapted (with such additions as electric winches) to a couple no longer young who cruise several months a year, usually by themselves, and want to be able to go anywhere in safety and comfort. If we were building *Ardent Spirit* today, there is little we would change other than her hull colour from soulless white to elegant black, which we did soon after buying her.'

Arthur and Germaine have continued their membership of the Club and have settled in the Mediterranean for their middle years, cruising for about four months annually.

IX – THE NEXT CHAPTER

The history of the OCC does not fall neatly into chapters, but the year 1976 was one of change and consolidation and does make a convenient break. The Club had a new Commodore, Peter Carter-Ruck and, after a spell of eleven years, Howard Fowler gave way to **Peter Pattinson** as Secretary. The RTYC had become the permanent London gathering place for meetings and dinners, while overseas flag officers in Australia and on both coasts of America were similarly establishing a pattern of Club rallies, both social and sailing. Membership had reached 1000, spread over 30 countries, and qualifiers alone represented more than two million miles of sailing. In his annual report that year the Commodore described the Club as ‘without frontiers or equals’. Perhaps the most singular milestone was that Hum, at 75, had started to act his age by confining his cruising to the Mediterranean after fifteen years of annual Atlantic crossings, which had brought his total to 20 and Mary’s to six.

Peter Carter-Ruck had taken only eight years between qualifying in 1968 and becoming Commodore in 1976. He was yet another keen ocean racer, owning a series of boats named, most appropriately for a lawyer, *Fair Judgment*. Also in that year of change both the Vice and Rear Commodore were replaced, Harry Jonas being promoted to Vice while the irrepressible Bill Howell moved into the Rear Commodore’s slot. Together with Peter they made a formidable team with many thousands of ocean cruising and racing miles under their keels.

The outgoing Secretary, Howard Fowler, was not qualified for membership when he took on the job, but from the outset he had taken the Club’s interests to heart. His four predecessors in the first ten years of the Club’s existence had never served long enough to get on top of the job but, to be fair, they were all volunteers or working for nominal honorariums, and were not able to devote the hours necessary to serve the ever increasing membership. Howard was unfailingly friendly and helpful to members, and put the administration onto a sound footing which did much to bind the Club together. However, at the age of 70, he too found it too much so decided to retire for the second time.

His replacement came with a sound pedigree. Not only was he a farmer but he also ran the Welsh Cruising School and was an ambitious ocean cruising man. He qualified in 1972 with a passage to the Azores and back, but prior to that he had circumnavigated Iceland on his way to Jan Mayen Island at 71°N. While ashore there a sudden blow put his Nicholson 32 *Courante* on a dangerous lee shore. Peter graphically described the assistance given by the Norwegians:

‘On the shore they had 30 foot steel dories which were mounted



**Peter Carter-Ruck, Commodore 1975–1982,
at the helm of *Fair Judgement***



Brian Stewart, Commodore 1968–1975, at the helm of *Zulu*
(see page 110)

on 60 foot trailers. We were put on one of these with four of the boatmen, and a huge caterpillar tractor backed the dory into the breaking surf. The 100hp engine was running at full speed and as one huge breaker came thundering towards us, the lashings were let go, the engine was put in gear and we shot vertically upwards. It was very frightening for those who haven't done this sort of exercise before.

With remarkable skill, the Norwegians were able to bring the dory alongside *Courante* and stay just long enough for one of us to jump. The first to go was Jim who made a perfect landing, the next was Keith who landed in a mess, then Nicki who landed

very neatly, followed by me. I did the splits from which it took three days to recover. Last was Anna who, standing on the bulwarks ready to jump, suddenly lost her nerve. Fortunately, one of the Norwegians, as a farewell gesture, pinched her behind which launched her with a shriek to land in a heap on *Courante*.'

The nimble Nicki had gone on to more ambitious things, becoming the first woman to cross the North Atlantic singlehanded and non-stop in 1971.

Peter had only just got himself established as Secretary when, in 1978, he had a near-fatal accident that set him and the Club back a great deal. He was struck down at night by a motorcyclist, suffering a fractured skull and other injuries from which he took months to recover and which left him with permanently impaired senses.

In one way 1976 started badly. Great Britain was experiencing an economic crisis with prices of goods and services increasing almost daily, which forced the Club to make a substantial increase in its subscription. Two issues of the *Journal* alone were absorbing most of the Club's annual income, so, in an attempt to recoup some of that cost, it was proposed to sell *Flying Fish* to the public at 50p per copy. However there is no evidence of the success or otherwise of this initiative. Having missed the opportunity to put the question of raising the subscription at the 1976 AGM, the Committee felt it could not wait a year so called a Special General Meeting in November when a resolution was passed raising subscriptions from £2 to £4.50. At the same time the fall in the value of the pound was recognised, and the dollar alternative was calculated at 2:1 instead of the previous 3:1. Again this had very little adverse effect on membership. However the squeeze was being felt all round, almost doubling the cost of the annual dinner in only two years.

In retrospect, 1976 saw only the beginning of the Club's financial problems. While the bold step of more than doubling the subscriptions provided a temporary palliative, it did not last long as inflation continued to erode its value at an alarming rate. It is one of the problems of an international organisation that if the headquarters country experiences a financial crisis it affects the entire membership, despite the innocence of the majority. Also, the success of the Club in attracting so many new members was at once its strength and its weakness. The cachet of membership was still sufficiently appealing to attract many 'one-off' ocean sailors, who paid their first subscription and then took no further part in the Club – including not paying their dues. This led to the decision in 1980 to alter the Rules to enable the Club to levy an entrance fee, should the Committee consider this necessary to deter the casual member.

Unfortunately funds were so low in 1979 that no *Flying Fish* was published

during the entire year, and again in 1982 the first issue had to be delayed until sufficient members had paid their dues for the printer's bill to be paid. The gap in 1979 is particularly regrettable, as it was the Club's silver jubilee year and very little of the activities were placed on record.

While it is clear from the obituaries of notable early members contained in Chapter VII that many of the old guard were swallowing the anchor permanently, at the same time a new generation were joining who were to represent the Club in many senior positions over the next 30 years. By 1971 five of the six Commodores who were to serve over the next 24 years were already members, and other names who are still very active today were appearing. The evergreen **Betty Lindsay-Thomson** was first on the Committee in 1974, as was **Mike Butterfield**. **Martin Walford** seems to have been a committee member for years, starting as early as 1972, by which time Bill Wise was serving his third term. Names still familiar today started to appear in the Journal.

Andrew Bray, currently a Rear Commodore and editor of *Yachting World*, but then on the staff of *Yachting Monthly*, first wrote in 1977 on singlehanded systems after his qualifying passage in the 1975 Azores and Back Race (AZAB). Another *YM* journalist and our present Membership Secretary, **Colin Jarman**, wrote a strong riposte to the Vice Commodore's criticisms in 1978, proposing a library of information on foreign ports which became the basis of the system in use today. Again in 1977, the young journalist **Libby Purves** treated us to one of her pungent yarns now familiar to *YM* readers, describing a very Irish race out of Schull which bore a lot of resemblance to the OCC Smith's Cove 'bang and return race' of more recent years. Libby goes on:

'The Commodore announced the result in the bar after the race,
"There has been an unforeseen disaster. The computer was
accidentally blown off the starting boat into many fathoms of
water due to the violence of the explosion of the starting gun.
Your committee has therefore decided to draw the names out of
this hat in which it just happens that we have written ..." '

From a rather hesitant start with the first Club rally in Gibraltar in 1971, sailing meets gradually took off so that within ten years there was a greater frequency of small rallies than there is today. After a series of short local meets, the next ambitious one was in the Azores in 1977, organised by **Giles Chichester** (son of Sir Francis) and Mike Butterfield. In the event Giles was the only one to arrive, but he went ahead with the Club's planned entertainment, ably assisted by Peter Azevedo who by this time was acting *in loco parentis* to any passing OCC boat. Mike failed to get there due to the late completion of his new boat,



Long-serving Secretary Peter Pattinson

an occurrence which continues to dog him to this day. Peter gave Giles a beautifully polished whale's tooth engraved with the Club burgee, asking that it be used as a trophy. It was subsequently decided to award it to the crew who had completed the longest non-stop voyage during the year. It was resolved to buy a stock, up to an amount of £250, but there is no record of this being done.

That same year Peter Pattinson organised a Club rally at Baltimore, Southern Ireland, which did slightly better with three boats arriving in time for the party. These included that frequent transatlantic commuter Bob Ayer in his beautiful wooden yawl *Premise*, whose launch in Bremen in 1974 was mentioned at the end of Chapter 4. As on that occasion, Bob was again crewed by the 'young, strong and salty' Toby Baker, our current Rear Commodore USA North East.

In *Flying Fish* 1977 we read of member **Simon Richardson's** intended expedition to Smith Island in the Antarctic. He had a team of eight including Bill Tilman who, at age 79, had tired of his annual sorties to the Arctic and grown wary of wooden boats, having lost two in the ice, so chose to go with them in the seemingly bullet-proof steel converted tug *En Avant*. They victualled in Rio and left bound for the Falklands at the end of 1977, but nothing was ever heard of them again.

Tilman's passing was the end of a most extraordinary life which spanned many demanding activities, any one of which would have been counted an outstanding achievement in lesser men. He won the Military Cross with bar on the Western Front in the First World War, later taking up coffee planting in Kenya – where he spent his leave cycling 3000 miles across Africa, living off the land. He started climbing with Shipton on Mount Kenya and went on to make some outstanding climbs in the Himalayas, including leading the 1938 Everest Expedition. In 1939 he rejoined the Royal Artillery and served throughout the Second World War, being awarded the DSO for his service with the Italian partisans. On one occasion capture was avoided when the *guerillas* smuggled him out from under the Gestapo's noses in a coffin. They buried him in the local cemetery, resurrecting him later that night.

After the war Tilman took up sailing as a means of reaching unclimbed peaks, and enthralled members with his beautifully understated yarns in many letters to the Club. He took risks, and consequently achieved things which more cautious sailors would not dare to attempt. In *Mischief* he penetrated Lancaster Sound ahead of the first ice-strengthened supply ship, and in *Baroque* he sailed further into the Arctic than any yachtsman in history when he reached 80° 04' North. Despite the daring nature of many of his exploits he only lost one man during all his many expeditions.

That he always had difficulty recruiting crew is not surprising – there were

simply not enough men available with the stamina to undertake the rigours expected of them. About one Arctic passage he wrote, 'I regret that some of my crew adopted the unseamanlike habit of wearing gloves at the helm'.

Tilman's achievements were not all physical. He wrote fourteen books, not mere expedition logs but well-crafted writing which endures in its own right. He was awarded a Doctorate of Laws by St Andrews University in recognition of the breadth of his scholarship. The loss of *En Avant* with all her crew was a sad and untimely end for the young members of the expedition, but for Tilman, who had flirted with that sort of danger for so long, it seemed almost a fitting finale. Perhaps his life is best summed up by the epitaph:

'Life for him was an adventure; perilous indeed, but men are not made for safe havens.'

In the same (1978) issue of *Flying Fish* the loss of another boat is recounted, but without such tragic consequences. **Nick Skeates** had designed his 7 ton wooden cutter *Wylo* and qualified on the first leg of an intended circumnavigation. He and girlfriend Dorothy wandered on across the Pacific to New Zealand, where they spent Christmas refitting at Whangerei, before turning north to fill in some gaps left from their westbound passage. *En route* from Tonga to Suva they ran into heavy weather, with frequent showers and constant overcast making sights impossible. Since dead reckoning suggested that they would arrive in darkness they decided to heave-to rather than risk a night approach to a strange harbour, but suddenly a slight clearance showed them surrounded by white water with *Wylo* surfing in onto reefs. She was driven high onto the coral and quickly pounded a hole through the side. They calculated that they were most likely on North Astrolabe Reef, which had a lighthouse in the centre of the lagoon, and this was confirmed when they got a brief glimpse of the light through the mist; just sufficient to get a bearing. There was no hope of getting *Wylo* off so they packed as much survival gear as they could into their fibreglass dinghy and struck out in the direction of the light. Nick describes rowing away from their little home:

'*Wylo* was getting smaller now, and so was our world. There was just Dorothy, me, and the dinghy on a choppy grey lagoon. I looked at Dorothy, her face framed by her yellow anorak against the greyness.

"I'll marry you," I blurted out.

The sea got choppy but the lighthouse looked good. It was a proper solid smoothly tapering one.'

It was unmanned but open, so they spent the night inside, and next day rowed

back to *Wylo* but it was too rough to board. Nick poignantly describes the approach to his stricken boat:

‘As I got there I rowed past charts, letters, odd pages of books, and horribly familiar wooden parts of the hull and accommodation drifting across the lagoon. I knew she was finished. She was still heaving on the reef, but completely awash, and I couldn’t even get aboard in that surge. Grabbing a bunk cushion I rowed slowly away in a daze, picking up bits of flotsam, things I knew, and absent-mindedly dropping them back.

I stared at the wreck of my *Wylo*, and wept.’

Nick’s impulsive proposal was accepted, so the two of them returned to Whangerei and set about replacing their lost boat. The result was *Wylo II*, designed and built entirely by them in the space of two and a half years, including stitching the sails. She was very much a one-off to meet their particular requirements, but several sets of drawings were sold and many are still to be seen.

A new name in the *List of Members* 1978 was that of **Tim Severin**, who had just made a northern transatlantic passage in his leather boat *Brendan*. She was designed by the ever-versatile Colin Mudie, who has drawn yacht lines for construction in virtually every known material, including straw. *Brendan*’s lines were taken from those of the Irish leather *curraghs*, which had been sailed out of the west of Ireland for centuries and are still in use on the Shannon. Tim sailed her to Newfoundland as part of his research into the legends of early travels by St Brendan in the 6th century. He wished to show, in the way that the *Kon-Tiki* voyage and David Lewis’s Pacific travels had done, that ocean crossings in those days were perfectly feasible with the craft known to have been in use at the time. They built the *Brendan* with an ash frame covered by 49 cow hides, heavily steeped in wool grease. Tim remarked that during building they became so saturated themselves that they couldn’t stop the dogs following them to the pub. A wonderful bit of Irish back-handed humour was overheard at the launch: “Sure they’ll make it! But they’ll need a miracle”.

They did make it to Newfoundland, taking the ‘stepping stone route’ via the Hebrides, Faeroes, Iceland and Greenland, and did much to reinforce the theory that the likes of St Brendan could have visited the North American mainland with the materials and techniques available to them. Tim was the speaker at the 1978 annual dinner and apparently kept his audience spellbound.

However, the inexorable rise in the cost of the dinner had reduced the attendance to a mere 60. Clearly the charge of £10 was stretching members too far, so the Committee set about finding a cheaper venue than the Royal Thames Yacht Club. It was reported in the minutes of the next committee meeting that the

Secretary had booked a room at the Great Western Hotel for the Jubilee dinner at a cost of £7.50, but that is the last one hears of the suggested move down-market.

In the event, the Jubilee dinner in 1979 was held at the RTYC and was well attended despite the cost of £10. It was also much enhanced by the presence of the Admiral and Mary. The guest of honour was, most appropriately, the Commodore of the RCC and old friend of Hum and Mary, **Dr Ronnie Andrews**. He gave a lively speech, much praising the ideals and the success of the Club in its relatively short life, especially compared with the RCC which was to celebrate its Centenary the following year. It is pleasing to report that the friendship kindled between the two clubs has endured to the extent that a great many members now belong to both.



The energetic Gaston Trough – first leader of the Continental Section

In 1977 the Belgian section of the Club was formed under the leadership of **Gaston Trough**. He had joined the previous year, having made a transatlantic passage in his boat *Jocus II*, and from the outset he became Port Officer Antwerp. Gaston was a man of action and influence. He arranged a formal inauguration ceremony in the magnificent Antwerp Town Hall, hosted by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City, at which the Alderman for Culture addressed the 40 members and potential members. Mrs Detiege's

welcome was effusive, even drawing on the city's famous forebear for emphasis:

'As Aldermen of the City of Antwerp we particularly appreciate your visit to our city to form a Belgian section of the Ocean Cruising Club, and I extend a hearty welcome to you. The presence here today of such a distinguished delegation underlines the value

of your initiative, and we are very honoured indeed that you found the opportunity to visit our city, which this year pays homage to one of our most famous citizens, Pieter Pawel Rubens.'

Martin Walford, representing the Commodore, replied saying that he regretted that his connection with the Lord Mayor of London was not such that he could guarantee a similar event in the Guildhall for visiting Belgian members. The weekend's activities were rounded off with spectacular fireworks over the Scheldt, which Gaston did admit had more to do with 'Rubens' Year' than with the OCC visit.

The following year Gaston was appointed to the London Committee, rarely missing a meeting. He was a most energetic and innovative leader, and in 1980 was officially promulgated as Rear Commodore Northern Europe – the Belgian Section was beginning to take on the form which had been envisaged for overseas branches at the outset but until then had not matured. They acted with a degree of autonomy, holding their own AGM and dinner and organising social and sailing get-togethers, including an annual rally on the UK East Coast to give the English and Continental members an opportunity to get together. They also organised a cruise in company for putative members from Belgium to Gibraltar, thus attracting a good crop of recruits from the European mainland. Gaston's influence wasn't confined to Antwerp, as on arrival in Gibraltar participants were entertained at Government House.

The Belgian branch also opened their own bank account and collected Club subscriptions locally, remitting them in bulk to the Treasurer – not, however, before deducting certain expenses which caused great confusion in the main account. Indeed, it set a dangerous precedent which was later cited by a faction in the USA which tried to institute a similar scheme.

Sadly, records show that the only Founder Member from Belgium, **Hugo van Kuyck**, died the year before the formation of his nation's OCC branch. There is little doubt that he would have been a keen member of that group despite his age, as his love of boats and the sea endured to the end. He had been frustrated in his ambition to sail around the world when the 1939–45 war caught him in Panama aboard his steel cutter *Askoy*, built to his own design. He sold her, joined the US Corps of Engineers, and landed with them back on the European mainland in the first hour of D-Day. His efforts for the allies during the war were recognised by the Order of the British Empire. After the war Hugo was a leading light in Belgian yachting, being President of the Royal Belgian Yacht Club for ten years and the Low Countries' representative on the Council of the International Yacht Racing Union.

In 1978 Gaston organised an anniversary meet at Blankenberge which attracted members from France and Holland as well as many Belgians. Their guest of honour was Dutch OCC member **Cor Elenbaas** who had qualified with a transatlantic passage in his home-built 27ft plywood sloop *Holhander*. He enthralled the party with his vivid account of being imprisoned in Haiti. He had been set onto a coral head during the night and waded ashore to seek help, upon which the police promptly locked him up for illegal immigration. Next day he talked his way out of prison to get his papers, but returned to find his boat stripped of anything valuable, including his papers. So back into jail! Eventually he was given permission to travel to the capital, where he obtained duplicates from the Consulate, but on returning to the boat he found her empty of everything moveable so gave her away and returned home to build another.

A year later the Continental rally was held in Nieuwpoort and the Commodore, Peter Carter-Ruck, sailed over to join them. (The meet was a prelude to their later cruise in company to Lisbon, where the four participating crews were entertained by the Belgian Ambassador. Lisbon being 1007 miles from Nieuwpoort it just counted as a qualifier, so the rally brought in a further crop of new members.) The Commodore was clearly impressed by what he saw in Belgium, and this doubtless prompted him to use the 1980 annual dinner to propose a close examination of the Club's development. He admonished members that:

'The time has come to take stock and consider the development of the Ocean Cruising Club. Bearing in mind the nature of the Club it is at once our strength and our weakness that we combine so many people united in deed and purpose but of necessity spread thinly across the globe. It is not sensible to hope to organise worldwide membership from a single centre and indeed there is no good reason why we should want to, apart from the need for a co-ordinating body somewhere to target our aims. The existing command structure is too loosely formulated, with four worldwide rear commodores nominally responsible for the administration of formidable territories, which plainly is asking too much of them.

The answer is to hive off into local groups, each with its own executive officers, call them rear commodores if you will, with the responsibility of running their own shows

and integrating new members as their prime responsibility. We need people with a flair for organising, like Gaston Trogh. As Executive Officer for Northern Europe he is giving a clear lead, with dinners and rallies at regular intervals, giving members in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany the chance to meet and cement common bonds.

Follow his lead. All you need is the ability to organise and the determination to make your local group known. 'My brothers of the sea', Eric Tabarly once called us. Put flesh on his inspiring words and get something started.'

It was a particularly good occasion on which to launch this initiative as there were a number of influential overseas members at the dinner. These included Gaston Trogh, USA East Rear Commodore Harvey Loomis and two other members from the States, **Jean Maton** from France, and Wally Burke, one time Rear Commodore Australia, over from Sydney. **Peter Green**, Chairman of Lloyd's of London, was there as a guest, and the speaker was new member **Willie de Roos**, fresh back from his singlehanded voyage through the North West Passage. David Wallis wrote movingly of his impressions of Willie after the dinner:

'Our chief guest was Willie de Roos, the singlehanded conqueror of the North West Passage and a living yardstick for the rest of us. Modest and determined, Willie is truly a man for all seasons and the sight of the tall figure trudging off into the soft Knightsbridge midnight rain left this scribe with the feeling that he had met a man cast in the Homeric scale.'

Willie was subsequently awarded the CCA Blue Water Medal for this outstanding passage.

In his same report, Peter Carter-Ruck challenged the Prime Minister over his observation on the recent stormy Fastnet race in which several lives were lost:

'It was, in my view, right and important that, as the premier international cruising club, we should make our contribution to that debate. In my reply to Mr Heath, after emphasising that I certainly had no prejudice

against offshore racing, having competed in over 50 offshore races including four Fastnets, I disagreed wholeheartedly that in ocean racing 'much higher risks are involved'. Can it seriously be suggested that the risks undertaken by, for example, Sir Alec Rose, sailing singlehanded round the world, were less than those undertaken in an offshore race? What weather forecasting or rescue services or two-way radio could have helped your member, Robert Putnam, when he was dismasted off the Azores recently?'

Australia was the first to take up the Commodore's challenge to 'hive off into local groups'. Under Rear Commodore **Sid Yaffe** they elected **John Tavener** as Club Captain, tasked to assist with the administration of the branch. They levied a local subscription so as to have a kitty to cover the cost of their newsletter and other incidentals, and generally organised themselves in the way that had been envisaged from the outset. Indeed, the first issue of the Rules states as one of the objects, 'To encourage the formation of local branches all over the world and to appoint honorary local representatives'. Australia also expanded their Port Officer coverage with the appointment of **Keith Dunkley** for Melbourne, where he served for 15 years, organising local annual dinners and rarely failing to attend the Sydney dinners.

David Wallis, the Editor, took the opportunity to summarise the Club's first 25 years in his editorial for the 1980 issue of *Flying Fish* and, like Ian Nicolson, he had a somewhat jaundiced view of yacht development:

'As we celebrate our Silver Jubilee, let us pause for a moment to reflect on the past quarter-century and the development of the Club. Horizon cruising was still largely an unknown quantity in 1954, and indeed it was difficult to find the nucleus of yachtsmen with the necessary qualification of a thousand-mile passage in their log books who formed the members, but the magic of the concept quickly caught the imagination of blithe adventurers and provided the spur that has pushed the membership far beyond the thousand mark.

Perhaps the greatest contrast between then and now has been in the yachts that we sail. Wooden hulls and spars are fast becoming bygone; witness the various preservation societies springing up as nostalgia rages, but what of the newest offerings? Hulls with a quaint resemblance to pregnant cows, decorated

with garish stripes more at home on ice cream barrows, decks so flimsy that parts have to be protected from straying feet; rigging that tumbles down at the failure of the least nut and bolt: examples are plentiful, representing the progress of the state of the art as the century enters its final quarter.

The people who sail them are a different breed, too, with fine paper qualifications who could not swing a sounding lead or scull a boat to save their lives, and are not afraid to call out the rescue services like a kind of marine AA when a halyard fails and the auxiliary proves temperamental.'

Having retired to the Mediterranean, the Admiral and Mary based themselves in Malta for the winters and sallied forth each spring to spend the summer months exploring Greece and the Adriatic. In the winter of 1976 a young couple arrived in their small engineless boat, *Seraffyn*. They were **Lyn** and **Larry Pardey**, who had built their boat in California and taken seven years to reach Malta. Hum persuaded them to join the Club, and members were to hear a lot more of them as they continued to wander the world.

While in Malta, Hum was informed that he was to be awarded the CCA's Blue Water Medal – not, as is usual, for a specific voyage or achievement but for his 'services to yachting'. The citation reads simply, 'without date'. It is easy to think that Hum's real sailing started with *Vertue XXXV*, but that was in the middle of his seagoing career and a feat only attempted after he had accumulated a vast amount of experience over the previous 40 years.

Hum had won the Little Ship Club's first North Sea Race in 1930 and had some hair-raising experiences in primitive boats during the war. In his book *The Sea and Me* he describes how he found himself skippering a large navy gig with a small army crew. He had found her near derelict, and all he could get in the way of gear resulted, to say the least, in a parish rig. She carried dipping lugs on two masts, so he rigged a single shroud to each mast and shifted it over to the other side every time they tacked. They sailed her out to Foula, the westernmost of the Shetland Islands, but on the return they got caught in a rising gale so ran off to lee for the shelter of Easter Sound. Visibility closed in and dusk was upon them, but with the only alternative a dangerous night at sea in an open boat with a crew sick and exhausted from bailing, Hum ran her in towards the lee shore with a sinking heart. At last he identified Easter Sound and describes their entrance:

'It appeared to be a mere gap in the cliffs and the whole place seemed to be a mass of seething white water. It looked hopeless but there was nothing to be done except run on and hope for the best. Soon we could hear the roar of the sea on the rocks which

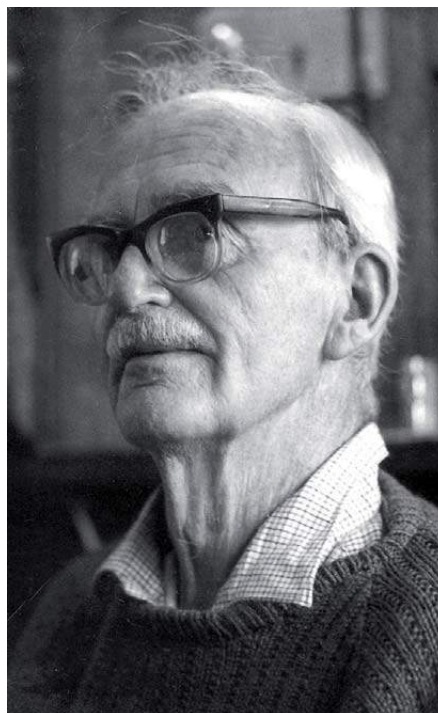
gradually became louder and louder. By the time we had reached the entrance it was a thunderous din that fairly put the fear of God into one. The seas were hurling themselves on to the rocks and halfway up the cliffs, a chaos of wild water. I glanced astern. An enormous sea was coming along, a great mass of unstable water, and it was on the verge of breaking. Would it break? The crest was spattering spray. Up went the gig; up and up she went, gathering speed until we were on the crest, going like smoke with gunwales awash. A fleeting glimpse of Grutig Voe ahead. We were looking right down into it! Then, quite suddenly, we found ourselves in the smooth waters of the Voe.'

Forty years later Hum was still at sea, but his time was drawing to a close. Only two years after the award of the Blue Water Medal, *Flying Fish* reported his passing.

X – HOME IS THE SAILOR

The name of Humphrey Barton has been an enduring theme throughout this history, not just because he was the Founder but also because he was so influential in the development of deep-sea cruising throughout its formative period after the war. He raised awareness of the possibility of crossing oceans in small, well-constructed boats by his much-publicised transatlantic voyage in *Vertue XXXV*. He went on to form and lead the first worldwide fraternity of deep-sea cruising folk and he led by example for the rest of his life, never once failing to write of his adventures to the end. Hum was the very embodiment of the Objects of the OCC.

When he died in October 1980 aged 80, messages of sympathy poured in from around the world and the affection and respect in which he was held can best be expressed by repeating some of these tributes. The first word came from *Journal* Editor, David Wallis:



'The Spectacle Man has gone. This news will be received with sadness by the natives around the Caribbean Islands who perhaps recall the eccentric old Englishman who had a habit of rowing ashore armed with a boxful of discarded spectacles which he used to distribute as a kind of largesse among people for whom the idea of a visit to an oculist was an unimaginable luxury. It explains Humphrey Barton's occasional appeals for discarded spectacles and displays an aspect of his character unsuspected by many who knew him as a somewhat formal, plain-speaking man.

It was old age that finally vanquished the old lion. Towards the end he had endured more ill health than would have been necessary to scupper lesser men and he was sailing his beloved

Rose Rambler almost to the last. Writing to this scribe a bare week before he slipped his cable Hum was describing with enthusiasm the marina at Larnaca where he had fetched up, a refugee from Mintoff's Malta which had proved inhospitable and doused his dreams of ending his days in the Blue Sisters hospital.

Born in Wimbledon, Surrey, he lived an adventurous life, learning to fly fighters in World War I at the age of 17. He afterwards joined Callender's Cables and served with them around the world until he teamed up with Laurent Giles in 1936 as a marine surveyor.

When the Second World War began he served with the Royal Engineers with the rank of major, subsequently rejoining Laurent Giles until his retirement in 1959. He first came to public notice in 1950 with his epic passage to New York with Kevin O'Riordan. He wrote *Vertue XXXV* on his first Atlantic passage, and then *Atlantic Adventurers*, which took three years of research and was reprinted several times with a translation into French. This work formed the kernel of an idea for linking these wandering spirits into an association and marked the beginning of the Ocean Cruising Club.'

Peter Carter-Ruck, the Commodore of the day, wrote:

'By one of those coincidences in life, the first year in which I met Hum was 1954, the year the Club was founded. I was interested in a Laurent Giles 43 footer lying at Falmouth, and Hum did the survey for me. I didn't meet him for some time, having been unable to attend the survey, but when I did I found it a most rewarding experience. A year or so later the late Rev Henry Kendall, Warden of St Edward's School, Oxford, and himself a great sailor, asked if I knew 'an amazing yachtsman' by the name of Humphrey Barton.

Regrettably it was not until the 1960s that I really got to know him, having of course already read *Vertue XXXV* and *Atlantic Adventurers*, and I could not but be impressed by his charm, diffidence and modesty. With his outstanding record and the lasting memorial to his endeavours in the shape of the Ocean Cruising Club, he is to me one of the immortals.'

From across the Atlantic founder member Carleton Mitchell added:

'Hum was undoubtedly one of the outstanding yachtsmen of our time. Our courses converged infrequently, alas! But his personality and charm will never be forgotten, nor his exploits aboard *Rose Rambler*. The yearly distances Hum put astern over such a long span of time, plus his activities as Founder and Admiral

of the Ocean Cruising Club, are an enduring memorial and continuing inspiration to all who go to sea.'

Hum's daughter Pat reflects:

'How do I remember my father? What has he passed on to me that I treasure most? Undoubtedly the answer must be that he has bequeathed me a very deep and abiding love of sailing and an extremely healthy respect for the sea.

I learnt to know my father best when sailing with him delivering yachts in the mid fifties. We shared many a grim watch together and many that were a great delight to us both. He loved to find new cruising grounds and to gather new harbours and anchorages into his already vast repertoire. He would always share in the excitement of exploring unknown places. The few motor boats we delivered we both found tedious. But the many beautiful sailing yachts from 7 to 70 tons that we sailed with crews large and small to North European and Mediterranean ports gave us both great pleasure and satisfaction.

Above all my father was proud of his seamanship. He could handle a yacht under sail to perfection; he loved sailing in and out of port instead of switching on the engine. But, just as important, he knew how to handle men, how far to drive a tired crew and how to inspire them to follow his leadership. Founding the Ocean Cruising Club was just one of the ways in which he has encouraged many cruising people to follow their own ambitions and to enjoy the great and varied sport of sailing.'

Founder member and racing rival, Adlard Coles wrote:

'I am glad to have been invited to give my recollections of our late Admiral, Humphrey Barton, who was one of my oldest sailing friends and a close contemporary.

Hum was one of the partners with Laurent Giles and Partners which he joined in 1936 and could be termed the sailing partner as it was his job to go on the trials of the new yachts designed by the firm and, when required, to deliver them to their owners. His professional training with one of the leading yacht designing firms, coupled with his intensive sailing experience with new boats, endowed him with a knowledge of yachts which was quite unique; there was nothing in a boat that he could not do, whether in sails and rig down to hull construction and accommodation below. He was experienced in ocean racing as well as cruising.

When in America for the Bermuda and Transatlantic races in 1950, I saw Humphrey at the New York Yacht Club shortly after his crossing in *Vertue XXXV*. He looked tired after his 47 day passage

and the ordeal in the storm in which he had broken 'a few ribs' so was recuperating before going as sailing master in *Gulvain*.

My last meeting with him was when he came to a reception given for him in 1979 by the Royal Lymington Yacht Club to mark the occasion of his award of the Blue Water Medal of the Cruising Club of America, the highest honour which the club can confer. This, I think, was a fitting tribute to one of the greatest amateur seaman of our time.'

Colin Mudie, founder and professional colleague, contributed:

'Everybody has his heroes and Humphrey Barton has been one of mine since I first met him in 1946. There are many reasons, of course, but one of them must be the manner in which he practised what might be called 'creative seamanship'. Anyone who saw him sailing a big cutter out of St Peter Port hard on the wind in a strong breeze and luffing his masthead neatly one by one over a row of moored yachts as he came to them, knows what I mean. To see him leave a lee quay in Cherbourg with all hands on the spring or to moor at speed with precision and confidence a few feet from disaster, was both a pleasure to behold and an education in the arts of seamanship. Who will forget the way he used the pumps that were keeping some old vessel afloat to jet across Bournemouth Bay when the engines failed?

I first fell into the Hum orbit when I was an apprentice with Laurent Giles and Partners. Although I was in the design end of the business it was, fortunately for me, thought to be a good thing that on occasions I should accompany 'Mr Barton' on surveys. Thus it was that on one occasion I found myself well up in the bows of a thirty square metre pushing strongly on the great man's feet to insert him right up into the pointed end. Lesser surveyors used torches and non-committal words.

Later I had some sea time with him, mostly ocean racing. In *Tilly Twin* in a great Fastnet gale year we were sporting a new kind of crosstree socket and as we bashed out past the Bridge buoy all the lee crosstrees fell out. Before even our mouths fell open Hum ran up the mainsail, and I don't mean hoisted it, lashed the weather crosstrees in firmly, slid down to deck again and gave us hell for hesitating to cross some rival vessel.

I was boat keeper on *Vertue XXXV* before the great voyage and I have always suspected that I was earmarked as the very ultimate reserve for his crew. I have mixed feelings about some of the dangers of the passage but I have always wished I was there when Hum's porridge leapt out of his plate into Kevin O'Riordan's sleeping bag. It was, recorded Hum, in the immortal words, 'Bad luck for both of us.'

Ian Nicolson, founder member, Port Officer Clyde and fellow surveyor reflects on Hum as a man of his time:

'Many people look upon the 20 years starting in 1945 as the golden age of yachting. It was still a truly amateur sport, limited in its appeal, free from commercialism, innovative without being gimmicky, with roots in tradition yet interesting, progressive and a great pleasure to everyone concerned. In that era the leading firm of European designers was Laurent Giles and Partners, and Hum Barton (one of four partners) was their surveyor. He did not carry out a vast number of surveys, under 700 which by current standards is a modest number. But such was his standing that he was in constant demand, his opinions were widely sought and his judgement was trusted. The reasons for his prestige are obvious; he was often at sea in all weathers, and he knew the factors which make a boat safe, sea-kindly and reliable.

As a yachtsman he was unusual in that he was a successful racing man yet he cruised widely with enthusiastic enjoyment. Some of his cruises had more than a touch of the racing element in them; for instance there was his 23 day voyage along the French coast which covered 22 harbours in a boat only 21 foot 6 inches on the waterline, with no engine. And this was no glorified dinghy which could be tacked on a button and ghosted into a windless land-locked rabbit-hutch of a harbour. How many sailors, amateur, pseudo amateur or professional could equal that record?'

Finally, perhaps the present writer could be allowed space for a few reflections on Hum as I knew him in his old age. We met in Malta when he was 76, some 30 years my senior, but we got to know each other well in the two years we had together on that island. I had joined the OCC two years previously, but before I knew of its existence the name Humphrey Barton was etched on my mind as one of the greats.

I recall holding a party for the large crew of a visiting yacht, watching the young paying court to Hum with a degree of reverence usually reserved for popes or presidents. Once, when the party was on *Rose Rambler*, Hum took me aside and whispered that it was his and Mary's wedding anniversary and asked me to propose a toast. I was somewhat diffident as the other guests were Batchy Carr and **Charles Nicholson**, both of Hum's age and all four of us ex-fighter pilots, they in the First World War and me after the Second. I valiantly tried to dredge up flying stories to match theirs, but couldn't compete with Hum's four engine failures in one flight, each time landing in a field to make repairs.

Hum had accepted that there were few deep-sea miles left in him and greatly

relied on Mary for the heavy work, be it up the mast or on the foredeck, but they were usually the first away in the spring and often the last back of the several Med commuters who wintered in Malta. But by 1980 his time had come; after fighting many an illness successfully he was flown home for a mercifully short spell in hospital and, as Mary put it, “was spared the final indignity of living ashore”.

Despite his addiction to ocean crossing Hum always spoke nostalgically of gunk holing. I like to think that his restless soul found peace in the way that the inimitable Belloc describes it:

‘I love to consider a place which I have never yet seen, but which I shall reach at last, full of repose and marking the end of those voyages, and security from the tumble of the sea.

This place will be a cove set round with high hills on which there shall be no house or sign of men, and it shall be enfolded by quite deserted land; but the westering sun will shine pleasantly upon it under a warm air. It will be a proper place for sleep.

The fairway into that haven shall lie behind a pleasant little beach of shingle, which shall run out aslant into the sea from the steep hillside, and shall be a breakwater made by God. The tide shall run up behind it smoothly, and in a silent way, filling the quiet hollow of the hills, brimming it all up like a cup – a cup of refreshment and of quiet, a cup of ending.

Then with what pleasure shall I put my small boat round, just round the point of that shingle beach, noting the shoal water by the eddies and the deeps by the blue colour of them where the channel runs from the main into the fairway. Up that fairway shall I go, up into the cove, and the gates of it shall shut behind me, headland against headland, so that I shall not see the open sea any more, though I shall still hear its distant noise. But all around me, save for that distant echo of the surf from the high hills, will be silence; and the evening will be gathering already.

Under that failing light, all alone in such a place, I shall let go the anchor chain, and let it rattle for the last time. My anchor will go down into the clear salt water with a run, and when it touches I shall pay out four lengths or more so that she may swing easily and not drag, and then I shall tie up my canvas and fasten all for the night, and get me ready for sleep. And that will be the end of my sailing.’

XI – THE WRITING ON THE WALL

In the early 1980s, following Hum's death, the Club settled into a steady routine and one is tempted to resort to the excuse used by Sir Arthur Underhill in his brief history of the first 50 years of the RCC when he remarked, 'after 1924 the Club had no history'. But this would be to fall into the trap which befell the executive of the time who, in retrospect, permitted a degree of complacency which was almost the downfall of the Club.

For several years Peter Pattinson had used the services of his partner, **Shirley Marsham**, as his assistant, but the fairly nominal honorarium did not stretch to many hours of paid time and certainly not the hours required to chase the many subscription defaulters. So, in 1981, they asked to be replaced at the next AGM. For too long the Club had relied on the goodwill of the Secretary, paying scant regard to the amount of work involved, but with a membership of almost 1700 spread around the world it was clearly time to put the administration on a more professional footing. In fact the membership was recorded at an artificially high level, as a survey showed that almost half failed to pay on time and many never paid again after their first subscription. The post of Secretary was advertised and, although still at a miserly stipend, several applications were received. However, before a decision could be made Peter offered to carry on, but at a much enhanced salary. This was eventually accepted by the Committee, but with some trepidation as the subscriptions had just been more than doubled, from £4.50 to £10, and a considerable loss of membership was anticipated.

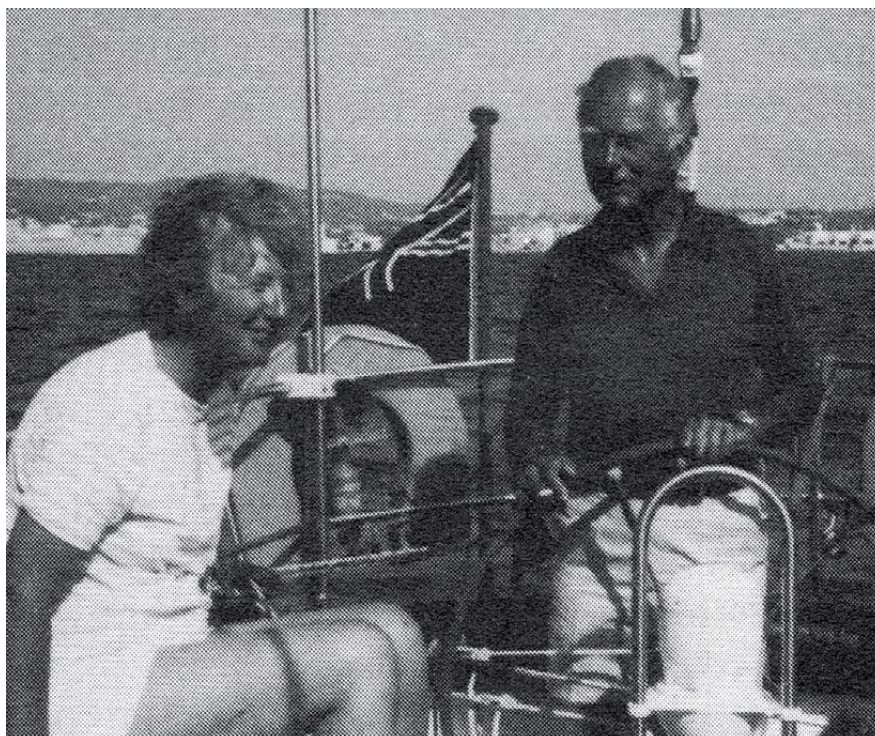
The decision to accept the Secretary's terms was partly prompted by the upheavals about to occur at flag rank. The Commodore had asked to be replaced a year early, after seven years in office, and the Rear Commodore, **Nick Greville**, indicated that he did not wish to stand for re-election owing to pressure of work. Thus the whole upper echelon was about to change. Peter Pattinson was well established as Secretary and the stability and experience he provided was essential at such a time of turbulence. The Vice Commodore, John Foot had, it will be recalled, joined the Club after the 1971 rally to Gibraltar when he qualified in his boat *Water Music III*. He was first elected to the Committee in 1976 and promoted direct to Vice Commodore when Harry Jonas retired from that post in 1979. John was a full-time businessman and had recently been elected Vice Commodore of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, an onerous post since the Commodore of that Club is traditionally drawn from royal ranks and carries little burden. However, despite this heavy load he agreed to being proposed for Commodore of the OCC. **Desmond Hampton**, who had completed a term on the committee, agreed to stand for Vice, despite having just declared his intention

to sail in the first BOC Around Alone race later that year. Rather surprisingly, Peter Pattinson said that he was willing to stand as Rear Commodore. How that could possibly have squared with his position of Secretary is not clear.

By the time of the formal election of these officers at the 1982 AGM, not only had Peter and Shirley agreed to continue but Nick Greville was persuaded to serve another term as Rear Commodore. So what had promised to be a wholesale change of Club officers turned out to be largely a case of rearranging the deck-chairs. However, the next year Nick Greville again pleaded pressure of work and was replaced at the 1983 AGM by **Howard Gosling**.

It is easy to be wise in retrospect and to recognise this as the root of subsequent problems, but the game of musical chairs on the Committee had been going on for too long with the same names cropping up with predictable regularity. Undoubtedly efforts were made to attract new blood, but these were met with the same lack of response common to most clubs, with the result that the willing few tend to go round and round. Indeed, a resolution was passed in

John Foot, Commodore 1982–1988, with Nicky aboard *Water Music*





Admiral Sir Alec Rose

1983 that the expiry dates of flag officers and committee members should be shown in *Flying Fish*, in the hope that more volunteers would be encouraged to apply, rather than relying on last minute arm twisting.

A year after Hum's death it was felt appropriate to consider appointing a new Admiral, and Sir Alec Rose was approached. He wrote a charming letter of acceptance which well sums up the standing of the Club even in the eyes of so great a sailor:

'I take up my pen as your newly elected Admiral to write a few lines to you all for inclusion in *Flying Fish*. When the Commodore approached me on behalf of the committee and asked me if I was prepared to be your Admiral I was rather overwhelmed, but very honoured. For anyone to fill this position, left vacant

by the death of our much loved and respected Humphrey Barton, is asking a lot. He was a man who stood out alone, who was never happier than when tasting the salt spray on his lips.

I remember being enthralled and excited when reading his account of his Atlantic crossing in *Vertue XXXV*, and reading of his plan to form the OCC. At that time the eligible members were a very select few, and even in 1964, after the Single Handed Transatlantic Race when I became eligible, the numbers were comparatively few. I felt 10ft tall when invited to become a member.

Now, after circumnavigating the world singlehanded (and as Humphrey Barton would have approved) under my own resources, and having the tremendous honour of being knighted by Her Majesty the Queen, I find myself Admiral of what is the most select club of real sailors in the world. No title or wealth or knowing somebody who can pull strings can get one elected to membership of the Ocean Cruising Club. I pledge myself to uphold this rule, and to fill this office with, I hope, dignity and honour to the Club.'

It was thought appropriate to recognize Hum's contribution to the Club by creating a suitable trophy in his memory. Perhaps his aversion to competition would have caused him to raise a heavenly eyebrow, but that sensitivity was overcome when his twin children, Peter Barton and **Pat Pocock**, proposed to award a cup for annual competition, to be known as The Barton Cup. They subsequently produced a handsome chalice mounted with a club burgee taken from the brooch that had belonged to their mother, Jessie, to be presented annually to the member completing the most outstanding voyage during the year.

It is remarkable that this was only the second real trophy in a club that had been in existence for 26 years, but perhaps that was more testimony to the strength of Hum's feelings rather than lack of generosity. As already noted, the first would-be competitive award was scotched by Hum after an anonymous donor offered to provide money to fund an annual recognition of merit. The money was subsequently diverted to the Award, which has muddled along ever

since. Some years later the editor of *Yachts and Yachting*, Bill Smart, made a generous suggestion when he was guest of honour at an annual dinner, saying he wished to give a trophy to be awarded annually to the person who had contributed most towards the aims and objects of the Club. However nothing further was heard, so perhaps the hand of Hum was still influential even though by that time he had gone off cruising. Next, in 1977, came Peter Azevedo's handsome piece of scrimshaw, which seems to have made a brief appearance and then fallen into disuse, since little more is heard of it.

Then, in 1981, the Barton Cup made its appearance – and at a very appropriate time as the Club was about to hold its most ambitious and successful rally to date. That year, a pursuit race was organised to coincide with the return of boats from the first two-handed transatlantic race, subsequently dubbed the TWOSTAR, in which several members were taking part including two all female OCC crews – **Kitty Hampton** and **Rachael Hayward**, and **Liz** and **Anne Hammick**. The race was arranged to finish at Horta in the Azores, starting from any point more than 1000 miles distant, and arrival was to be as near as possible to noon on 2nd August to coincide with the start of Horta Sea Week to which the Club had been invited. It was a great success with boats coming from both sides of the Atlantic. Sixteen boats finished the pursuit race with ten reaching the finish line on 2nd August within sight of each other. A Continental contingent, under the leadership of committee member **Geert Vandendriessche**, met in Ponta Delgada in July before the Horta meet and several boats sailed on to join the main rally.

Mary Barton flew out clutching the new Barton Cup, which she presented at a dinner in Horta where some 80 members and friends attended. The first winner was **Wendy Moore** who had sailed non-stop from Northern Ireland in her 27ft sloop, crewed by one other adult and her two children aged ten and eight. Again the Club received much hospitality from the local people, especially Peter Azevedo who had, appropriately, been made an Honorary Life Member the previous year. It is interesting to note that the next committee meeting had to consider applications from 50 potential members, a record for any one meeting and confirmation of the success of the rally.

This Azores Rally and Pursuit Race set a pattern, with meets there almost every other year for the next 15 years. The OCC burgee became such a familiar sight in Faial that this mid-Atlantic island almost became an outpost of the Club. Indeed, it was not unusual to be asked by a local simply if one was from 'the Club'.

Just in time to come to notice, an Irishman by the now familiar name of **John Gore-Grimes** joined in 1981 after an unremarkable Atlantic crossing. This, however, was to be about the least spectacular of his long passages and in 1982

he sailed his Nicholson 31, *Shardana*, to 70° N on the west coast of Greenland. This earned him the second annual award of the Barton Cup, but was only the prelude to many Arctic sorties, several more of which were rewarded with Club trophies.

The trophy famine changed in the early 1980s, as within the space of three years the number of awards doubled. The Rose and the Rambler medallions were struck and the new Commodore, John Foot, presented a set of meteorological instruments set into a wooden cube, to be known as The Water Music Trophy. In 1984 an Awards Sub-Committee was set up under the Vice Commodore, firstly to consider the definition of the new awards and subsequently to allocate them annually. This set a pattern that has continued to this day. The sub-committee decided to have a medallion struck, suitable for bulkhead mounting, to be given to all award winners in addition to the actual trophy (where there was one) which would be retained only for the year in which it was awarded.

Contradictorily, one of its first recommendations was that **Richard Broadbent**, a non-member, should be given the OCC Award. Richard was taking part in the Around Alone race when he turned back to rescue a fellow competitor. He was in the Southern Ocean approaching Cape Horn when Richard was alerted that **Jacques De Roux** had overturned with considerable hull damage, so he beat back to the last known position and found the wreck at twilight after several hours of searching. Jacques, with great Gallic aplomb said, 'I have a slight problem, could you possibly take me aboard'. His boat sank within 15 minutes. Since this award was for members only, it suggests that there was confusion with the Award of Merit which is open to all. However, having been told he was to receive an award, Broadbent heard nothing more about it.

Perhaps the most interesting proposal at that time was for a 'Youth Sail' Sponsorship Scheme for underprivileged young people. In essence it would provide sailing opportunities for youngsters perhaps unemployed or at risk, or from deprived backgrounds, with the aim of encouraging personal growth and development. The berths would be provided by the Ocean Youth Club for a seven day cruise. All members would be invited to suggest candidates and the Awards sub-committee would do the winnowing. It was a most altruistic and forward-looking scheme, particularly considering the parlous state of the Club's finances but, despite further references in the minutes to the scheme being considered, there is no evidence that it ever came to fruition.

Whether it was as a result of a good dinner or a genuine desire is not known, but after being guest of honour and speaker at the 1983 dinner, **Peter Blake**

applied to join. He had qualified with a crossing of the Tasman Sea in 1970, before his high profile racing passages which at the time of joining could have disbarred him on the grounds of being a professional. Up until 1985 the Rules were quite clear that one had to be an amateur, but at the AGM that year it was unanimously agreed that this requirement was anomalous in that many, such as Peter, might well be professional sailors but at the same time they were keen, deep-sea cruising men and that to disbar them would deny the Club some admirable personalities. Sir Peter, as he was to become, remained a member up to the time of his tragic death in 2001 when he was shot dead by pirates near the Amazon River town of Macapa.

In addition to the Azores Rally, the early 1980s saw an ambitious programme of Club rallies worldwide. Australian Rear Commodore Sid Yaffe, together with Club Captain John Tavener, announced a whole series of events. In 1981, to demonstrate that it was not all soft sailing down-under, they held a most successful mid-winter rally to Shark Island, and their autumn cruise to Tambourine Bay the following May attracted some 80 members and friends. Later that year the Australian annual dinner at Middle Harbour Yacht Club, Sydney was attended by 82 members and guests, rivalling the London dinners.

Three days after their annual dinner it seems that most of the participants came to the line for the Sydney-Suva race. OCC member **Lou Abrahams** in *Challenge* took both line and handicap honours, although the fleet was led for most of the way by Sid Yaffe in his immaculate *Patsy*. John Tavener reported that there had been a great amount of interest shown in the Club and that he anticipated a surge of membership. However, somewhat contradictorily, Sid wrote in the next issue of *Flying Fish* on the problem of the nature of the Club being adversely affected by the influx of too many racing yachtsmen:

‘The OCC was founded long before there was the current predominance of long distance ocean racing. For instance, in the last few years there were at least two sponsored races out of Sydney which were over 1000 miles and consequently the majority of our new members are racing yachtsmen. I made it very clear that I welcomed the new members who have become eligible to join the OCC. However, I did express some fear of losing or not recruiting the cruising types who do not go to sea merely to win races but who sail for the sheer love of adventure, going to somewhere new, their love of the sea and their love of their boat, however old and decrepit it may be. If this is happening in Australia I feel it must be happening in other parts of the world, particularly in England.’

The Commodore replied:

‘We are very much aware of the problems which you mention and certainly it would be wholly contrary to the spirit of the Ocean Cruising Club, and the purpose for which it was founded, if genuine simple long distance cruising yachtsmen were to feel there was no place for them in the OCC because they were crowded out by the number who joined after racing passages. So far this has not happened in the UK, principally because we have not the long distance races taking place from here. The problem arises of course when a number join the Club after a race who will all at least know one another, whereas the solitary yachtsman, for whom the Club was founded, may not, and will therefore feel himself outnumbered. I do not think there is anything very practical that we can do about this except to hold as many rallies and gatherings as we can and to make sure that everyone feels they are welcome and that no-one is left out. Indeed, I think this is very much the function of the Flag Officers of the Club.’

The Australians’ concerns were never borne out in Europe or America, and indeed the racing men were, in the early years, the strength of the Club rather than its weakness. It seems that the racers enjoyed the camaraderie of cosy meetings in a relaxed cruising setting since, although they sailed in close proximity as opposed to the cruising men’s lonely furrow, they rarely socialised as part of their racing programme. Only when a race ended at a distant venue did they get together, more often sailing from their home mooring direct to the line and back from the finish. Perhaps in reaction to this routine, some of the UK racing members have throughout been most active in Club affairs. It is interesting to note that under Any Other Business at the 1995 AGM a member suggested that, in view of the rapid expansion of the Club, it might become necessary to limit membership numbers. This elicited the immediate riposte from Australia, when they received the minutes of the meeting, that the OCC was an egalitarian club and that the only qualification for membership was as stated in the Rules and that they would brook no thought of limiting numbers. Australia by then had 170 members, the third highest national total after England and the USA. Indeed, when the Club’s Events Diary started being published in 1985, almost half the activities in the first list took place in Australia.

1982 was the year of the first Spring Rally, held at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club’s premises at Gin’s Farm on the Beaulieu River, an event which has been held each year since without exception. Other rallies were held at Gibraltar, at Vilamoura in Portugal with a cruise in company to the Azores, and at several locations in the UK, though none became firm annual fixtures like the Beaulieu

Rally. A meeting in Piraeus, Greece was proposed but there is no evidence that it ever took place.

The Continentals continued their ambitious programme of winter meets and summer cruises. In 1982 Gaston Trogh tendered his resignation from the Committee as he intended to go off long distance cruising, but so valuable were his efforts on the Club's behalf that a position for him had to be devised. Thus the post of Roving Rear Commodore was invented. He duly went off to the West Indies, returning for a committee meeting the next year to report that he had secured the services of Port Officers in Martinique, St Thomas and Puerto Rico. Gaston was replaced as Rear Commodore Europe by Geert Vandendriessche, who had faithfully served a term on the London committee and been most active on the Continent.

In 1981 **Jan Swerts Gaston** was recruited to the club by Gaston, having just arrived back in Antwerp after a four year circumnavigation. Jan had departed in 1977 to go uphill, solo, around the Five Great Capes in his 30ft Van de Stadt sloop *Tehani*. Unfortunately he lost her on a reef off Tahiti, but went on to New Zealand where he found another Van de Stadt, this time a 41ft Rebel named *Peti*. After months of work he got her fit for sea and resumed his circumnavigation via the Cape of Good Hope. His final ocean crossing included a two month non-stop beat from Rio to the Azores. Jan joined the swelling ranks of Belgian members which by 1984, when the *List of Members* first showed nationalities, boasted 75 – out of all proportion to their population.

In 1982 **Gulshan Rai**, the first Indian citizen to become a member, joined with a qualifying passage of 1080 miles across the Arabian Sea, and for almost half the life of the Club has been the sole representative from the Sub-Continent. He became Port Representative for Bombay (now known as Mumbai) in 1980, which stood him in good stead before he qualified. In 1979 Gulshan had attempted to sail from England to Bombay in *Jaykus*, a 27ft Albin Vega, but had lost her on a reef in the Red Sea. He was sailing with his wife Ujwala and a *tindal* (a combination of servant and a paid hand), which caused no end of embarrassment when the three of them were confined to the liferaft for three days. He and Ujwala, accompanied by a new *tindal*, returned to Hamble two years later and bought a new Dolphin 31, naming her *Jaykus II*. They were not having a lot of success fitting out, as Gulshan openly confesses in his book *Sailing the Oceans*, but our man **Dick Snell** saved the day:

'In this maelstrom of crisis, where the project is scraped together on a shoestring budget, appears an angel. Captain 'Dick' Snell. He is a corinthian yachtsman and the Port Officer, in honorary capacity, of the Ocean Cruising Club. The premier objective of

the Ocean Cruising Club is to foster and encourage ocean cruising in small craft and the practice of seamanship, etc etc. The secretariat of the Ocean Cruising Club is based at Worcestershire, who inform Capt Snell, that his counterpart, Port Officer for Bombay is at Hamble.

The ocean yachtsman that he is, Capt Dick Snell takes one look at our plight, our plans in shambles, and involves himself fully with our project. He drives us around Southampton, from the factories to the junkyards, to get us the spare equipment thirty to seventy-five per cent cheaper. It is incredible but true. Looking for a spinnaker pole, he drives us to the world famous Proctor spars factory and gets us an aluminium alloy boom for £15, while at any chandler it would be £100, and to a scrapyard for a slightly used spare CQR anchor.

To get these extra articles, he bulldozes his way where men were concerned and browbeats them, and charms the salegirls. He also has a look at our navigation methods and finds Ujwala's system of working out positions based on the Berton's tables as too old-fashioned and cumbersome, where there was room for error in view of too many calculations. He sets to teach her a labour-saving, quicker, shorter method of astronavigation, of kindergarten simplicity, based on air navigation tables.'

Gulshan sent his first report from Bombay in 1981, with mouth watering statistics such as abundant teak, shipwrights' labour at £1 a day and diesel at 6p per litre. As a customs officer he has also proved useful to members having trouble with the inevitable Indian bureaucracy.

Not only Gulshan, but several Port Officers in remote areas wrote to *Flying Fish* with local information which was not otherwise available in those days when pilot books were scarce. In the same 1981 issue **Robin Boyd**, who was on the home stretch of his circumnavigation in *Ballerina*, wrote a veritable treatise on rounding Cape Agulhas with statistics enough to frighten even the hardiest of members. Robin was frustrated trying to punch his way round on Christmas Eve, so while waiting for more favourable conditions he made a close study of conditions round that stormy cape. The USS *Ramapo* was said to have measured a following wave at 112ft, and South African member **Bruce Dalling** was pitchpoled in his little Vertue when sailing with the Agulhas Current into a southwesterly.

One contribution in 1984 turned out to be the forerunner of a professional career for Anne Hammick. In August she and her sister Liz set off aboard their 31ft *Wrestler of Leigh* for an Atlantic circuit, between them writing detailed notes on their exploration of northwest Spain, continuing in subsequent issues of *Flying Fish* to cover the areas they visited. Anne became the second editor

of *Flying Fish* in 1990 and now divides her time between that task and the many pilot books that she has either written or edited on behalf of the RCC Pilotage Foundation.

The OCC itself never organised these various contributions into a publishable form other than through the Club's Cruising Information Service, but Commodore John Foot was keen that we should share our knowledge as widely as possible. He was in a good position to spread the word, as he was not only Commodore of the OCC but also Vice Commodore of the Royal Thames and a member of both the Royal Yacht Squadron and the Royal Cruising Club, a formidable combination. Somewhat ambitiously, he said that he would organise a meeting of worldwide cruising associations so as to create machinery for the dissemination of cruising information. He set in train a series of meetings which developed into the Conference of Cruising Yacht Clubs, which continues to this day. Its aims were, and still are, to pool cruising information and avoid duplication of publications. In 1984 the Vice Commodore wrote at length in *Flying Fish* proposing a more formal scheme so that the Club could organise its vast store of knowledge on distant places, but the size of the task and the dispersion of members continued to frustrate its progress so that to this day it continues on an ad-hoc basis.

Across the Atlantic things were also afoot. **Steve Vercoe** was appointed Rear Commodore USA West where he was, conveniently, First Officer on the liner *Queen Mary* at Long Beach, California, an ideal venue for Club dinners. Together with the energetic **Don Marshall**, Port Officer Long Beach, they arranged a series of most successful meetings aboard the *QM* and sent a rather cheeky photograph to *Flying Fish* showing member **Harry Perlberg**'s handsome 50ft cutter *Unicorn* flying the Club burgee sailing past the *QM*, also sporting the burgee. Their first dinner aboard attracted a good turnout, including founder members Bill Crealock and Patrick Ellam. Bill, it may be remembered, wrote some interesting letters in the first days of the Club about his exploits in the 105ft gaff schooner *Stella Maris*, which he had restored and sailed on scientific exploits in the Pacific. He, of course, went on to be a most successful designer of stout ocean cruising boats, much coveted among the deep-sea fraternity. Patrick was the intrepid canoeist who, with Colin Mudie, set the Founders' record for the smallest qualifying vessel with their transatlantic in the diminutive 19ft 8in *Sopranino*.

On the East Coast Rear Commodore Harvey Loomis, spurred on by **Emily Potter** and **Phil Zweig**, had started a pattern of winter rallies which included a couple of splendid dinners at Sloppy Louie's at New York's South Street Seaport, then moved on to some successful parties at members' homes. In 1984 the

energetic Emily took over the flag from Harvey. After a gathering at the prestigious but expensive New York YC she moved the winter function to Connecticut's Mystic Seaport Museum, an immediate success with members travelling from as far afield as New York and Boston. Under her leadership the East Coast went from strength to strength and Harvey wryly noted that the best contribution he made to the Club was to recommend Emily as his successor. With member and later husband **Forbes Morse** she sailed many thousands of miles in their Swan

Emily and Forbes Morse with the author in New York



43 *Blythe Spirit*, joining Club rallies in the Azores, Ireland and England. Emily served two terms as Rear Commodore East, and on retirement in 1991 was made an Honorary Life member, but sadly lost a long battle with cancer eight years later.

So popular was the Club becoming in the States that in 1984 there was a call for a second USA East section to be formed in Florida, but it was to be a further ten years before this was brought to fruition. Further north – and one hopes in deference to her length of tenure rather than geographical ignorance – until that year *Flying Fish* showed Port Officer Sally Norwood as responsible for the separate country of Halifax, Nova Scotia, which ranked after Germany in the alphabetical index.

Since many of the OCC in the US were also members of the Cruising Club of America, there was a close contact with that club from the outset. In 1984 the CCA announced their intention to hold a transatlantic rally to the Azores and north Spain the following year, and as OCC member **Bill Blunt White** (whose father of the same name had been a Founder member) was currently CCA Commodore, the OCC was invited to join with boats from both sides of the pond. In the event, ten boats of four nationalities met in Ponta Delgada for several days of jollifications meticulously organised by Emily Potter and **Ed Greeff**, Port Officer Oyster Bay. Half the fleet then sailed on to Horta, where more members from both sides of the Atlantic joined the rally for further celebrations ably assisted by Peter Azevedo and **João Fraga**. The town was as generous and hospitable as always, laying on receptions and tours in the delightfully relaxed Portuguese style.

Again the fleet split, half going on to Bayona where a gruelling ten days had been arranged by Alfredo Lagos, Port Officer Vigo, who appeared determined to allow not an hour to pass without some form of entertainment. There the rally became most cosmopolitan, eight different national ensigns being seen in one fleet anchorage. Perhaps the most interesting vessel was the Argentine-flagged *Halcon*, owned by the President of La Coruña Yacht Club, **Aurelio Fernandez Large**, who was also Port Officer Coruña. *Halcon* had been built in Argentina in 1937 and was in German ownership in 1939 at the time of the Battle of the River Plate, when the German battleship *Graf Spee* was scuttled. The owner, aided by some of the lightly interned German officers from the *Graf Spee*, sailed her to the Canaries in 1941 from where they were repatriated to Germany. After the war she was owned by the Commodore of the Tenerife Yacht Club, who entered her in the 1972 Tall Ships Race from Plymouth to Tenerife. Unfortunately – or fortunately, depending on your point of view – they had trouble in the Bay of Biscay and put into La Coruña, where Aurelio bought her and has kept her ever since. Several more boats joined at Bayona,

rank being provided by the indefatigable Roving Rear Commodore Gaston Trogh who had popped down from Antwerp. This part of the rally set a pattern for regular Bayona meets arranged by Alfredo over the next 19 years.

This very ambitious rally lasted some four weeks in all, but meticulous planning ensured that it was a great success. To have reached the Azores from almost anywhere required a passage of qualifying distance, so those new to ocean crossing arrived full of euphoria, an ingredient which guarantees a convivial meeting. And so it was, creating not only a lot of transatlantic friendships but a good crop of new members and further sealing the bond between the CCA and OCC. One participating American family, the **Warrens** from Charleston, SC, created and have maintained a record by all five joining the Club and all remaining members to this day.

In 1983 the qualification rule had again come into question. It is not clear what triggered the discussion as none of the Committee were exceptionally long distance sailors, but **Roger Hayward** was of the view that modern boats and navigation equipment (we were then in the SATNAV age) meant that the 1000 nautical mile qualifying passage was no longer a sufficient challenge to prove one's worth as a deep-sea sailor. He proposed a graduated distance according to size of boat: 1000 miles up to 40ft LOA, 2000 miles for 40-60ft, and 3000 miles above 60ft. This was put to the 1983 AGM and a lively discussion led to no conclusion other than to think about it. Nothing further was heard of the proposal, which is perhaps just as well as the Committee would then have had to adjudicate on boat length as well as passage distance. No doubt applications would have been received from some who had completed 1000 miles but in an extraordinarily long 40-footer, in the same way that boats tend to shrink in marinas!

Again the reasoning is not clear, but at that time it was proposed that the qualification be amended to include the words, 'predominantly under sail'. There were known to be early members who had qualified under power – indeed, one had written at length in the *Journal*, although his conscience demanded that he made a token protest saying that he hadn't the time to qualify under sail. However, the proposal was never put to the vote and therefore not included in the Rules. Notwithstanding this loophole, there have been no known applicants from power boaters for many years.

Despite the vast extent of ocean voyaging by members during the Club's first 30 years, very few lives were lost. Unfortunately trend that was reversed in 1983 when four members lost boats, taking a total of five lives with them.

Graham Adams was returning from the two-handed Plymouth to Vilamoura

Race in his Rival 38, when in the Western Approaches they were overtaken by a very heavy gale. It had been well forecast so they were prepared for it but, while running under storm jib some 100 miles from Land's End, they were completely overwhelmed by a breaking wave. *Adfin's Rival* was damaged below the waterline and began taking on water faster than they could pump. They kept her afloat for about three hours but eventually had to abandon her in, by then, atrocious conditions. Their liferaft was driven before the wind and seas with Graham and his crew, **Brian Wilmot**, clinging to the grab lines. It was repeatedly capsized and the two chambers began to separate. By the time a rescue helicopter could reach them Brian had died of hypothermia, but Graham was rescued after two hours in the water, at which time the wind was measured at 60 knots gusting 80.

John Tavener had recently taken over as Rear Commodore Australia when in April 1983 he entered the Junior Offshore Group Tasman Cup Race. His boat, *Waikikkamukau*, was overwhelmed in heavy seas just off the Sydney Heads and John and two companions were lost. A fourth crew member, who was below at the time and not clipped on, swam ashore, but it was thought that the others were unable to unclip their harnesses and were pulled down. It was a great blow to the Club in Australia, as John was one of the driving forces who had taken that branch from strength to strength. He was succeeded by **Michael Le Bars**, a fellow racing yachtsman.

Richard Sharp built a 37ft Endurance in ferro-cement in Durban and qualified in 1979 by sailing her back to his home port of Falmouth, England. After a couple of years he set out on a circumnavigation but was short of funds so, with his inexperienced girlfriend Tima, undertook an out-of-season delivery from Tahiti to San Diego. In mid-Pacific they were overtaken by Hurricane *Raymond* with winds of 140 knots. Richard sent Tima below, but while he was on deck the boat went completely over. Tima recovered 27 hours later, having been knocked unconscious by the flying radar console, but the boat had been swept clean and there was no sign of Richard. Tima reached Hawaii after 40 days under jury rig.

To round off this disastrous year Desmond Hampton ended the first BOC Around Alone race on the shore of southern Australia. He had chartered *Gipsy Moth V* from Giles Chichester for the race and had reduced her overall length by 2ft to comply with the race criteria for the top division. On the second leg, from Cape Town to Sydney, Desmond fought out the lead with the eventual overall winner, **Philippe Jeantot**, and was within hours of the finish when he came to grief. Having negotiated the difficult, oil-rig strewn narrows of the Bass Strait he tried to get a few minutes sleep before the turn towards Sydney, but overslept and was rudely awakened by the corner of Gabo Island. *Gypsy*

Moth was fast in a rock cleft right under the lighthouse with no hope of getting off. The two keepers were quick to the rescue, one from Kent and the other a Yorkshireman, whose accents at first persuaded Desmond that it was all a continuation of his interrupted dream. The premature end to the race meant that Desmond was back in London for the February committee meeting when he offered his resignation as Vice Commodore. It was unanimously rejected.

1983 was not the end of members' misfortunes as the very next year two of our intrepid ladies came to grief, but both with happier outcomes than the previous year's disasters. Roger and Rachael Hayward had joined in 1977 after sailing their 35ft sloop *Loiwing* across the Arabian Sea when on their way home from a foreign posting. They had cruised in her extensively since, including the first Azores Rally in 1981, when Roger sailed her out while Rachael was busy crewing for Kitty Hampton in TWOSTAR, and Rachael skippering her home with Mary Barton. However Rachael, not in the first flush of youth, hankered after competing in OSTAR. Sadly Roger was diagnosed with terminal cancer, but he bravely supported her ambition and together they prepared what was essentially a family cruiser for this exacting test. In 1984 Rachael was one of three female entrants, the other two being well-known and well-sponsored French girls with state-of-the-art craft. Rachael had no pretensions other than to finish, and the Club was agog as one after the other the French girls either foundered or retired while Rachael plugged on steadily at the back of the fleet. She had only to finish to take the ladies' prize. The champagne corks were almost drawn when the disastrous news arrived that, in thick fog and with all her electronics down, she had overshot the finishing line and gone heavily aground on the rocks beyond. *Loiwing* was declared an insurance write-off, though she was later recovered and rebuilt by a local man.

On the other side of the world **Margaret Hicks** had an equally unpleasant encounter in the Pacific. Margaret had qualified in 1979 at the outset of her intended circumnavigation in her Hurley 21, *Anonymous Bay*. The boat was originally a Hurley 22, but when it was judged too large for the Mini-Transat she took a chainsaw to the bow. To the last it had a rather ungainly chopped off front end, but that did not prevent her sailing it singlehanded halfway round the world. Her description of Papeete 20 years ago sounds very familiar today, and it was her escape from there which brought an abrupt end to the voyage. Margaret writes:

'Anonymous Bay was 21ft overall and although an immensely seaworthy little vessel was not exactly the epitome of comfort. I often think that I must be a masochist to endure such cramped conditions and have sometimes thought 'I don't sail my boat, I

wear it.' Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties, I had arrived in Tahiti in one piece and the weather at long last looked more settled and returning to normal. I thought the worst was over.

Personally I do not care for Papeete. Under normal circumstances I would never go there. With its pall of polluted air, heavy traffic, high road death-rate and all the noise and dirt of a busy city, it is hardly my idea of the South Pacific. I have to admit, however, that it can be very useful to find somewhere mid-Pacific with all the amenities of a modern port. With these circumstances in mind, as soon as repairs were finished, I planned my departure for the following day. It was a Friday, although never for one moment did I think of the old sailors' superstition. After all it was only an afternoon sail, just across the way to Moorea. The sort of thing I have done many times before from Southampton to the Isle of Wight. Of course I would never commence a long voyage on a Friday but this little trip could hardly count.

Crossing the Moorea Channel is not always the easiest of passages since the sea can be very confused. That particular morning, however, it was ideal with the wind just N of E, force 4 with excellent visibility; indeed perfect conditions for my little *Anonymous Bay*. Minutes before I raised anchor, a friend rowed over to take a photograph; this was to be the last picture of *Anonymous Bay* floating on the surface rather than lying beneath it! To test the outboard I motor-sailed out of the harbour and through the pass and all was well. Oh! how I enjoyed that exhilarating sail with Moorea's distinctive outline drawing closer and closer. It was good to be at sea again, though I was conscious of that mixed feeling of excitement and apprehension I always experience when visiting anywhere for the first time. Once past Point Aroa the wind and sea moderated and I began the run downwind along the N coast parallel to the reef. The scenery was breathtaking; no wonder Moorea is reputed to be one of the most beautiful islands in the world.

One of the problems of entering a strange harbour singlehanded is that one needs prior organisation. For this reason I like to prepare well in advance, so I hauled down the mainsail. I much prefer manoeuvring under foresail and it improves visibility. Frequently I peered through my binoculars, searching for the gap in the reef. There it was, little more than half a mile ahead.

I had already observed several local fishing boats – *bonitiers* as they are called. Two passed me at a safe distance, one to port, the other to starboard. A third in the vicinity of Club Mediterranee was approaching on my seaward side. Suddenly, without warning, it altered course and came heading towards me at high speed. Because of its speed I estimated it would clear my

bows easily – no problem. Then to my horror it changed course again and came charging at me. What could I do to escape? I had no wish to maintain my rights as a vessel under sail, but without instant ‘lift off’ my sedate 4 knots gave me no chance to manoeuvre out of the way. For those brief agonising seconds it flashed through my mind that I was about to lose everything that mattered to me. My life, as I had planned it, would now cease but there was no time to dwell on such thoughts. *Anonymous Bay* was rammed on the port bow and the *bonitier* ploughed through, cutting her in two. One moment I was sitting in the cockpit admiring the view, the next I was in the water swimming for my life. Thank goodness the water was warm! A rope became entangled round my left arm so I had to free myself as I had no wish to follow tradition and go down with my ship. While I was treading water, it suddenly occurred to me how incongruous it was to sink wearing a sunhat more suitable for racing at Ascot! Whatever else one might say, I certainly went down in style!

One of the *bonitier's* crew called out to ask if anyone was left on board – the only words any of them spoke the entire time. A bag floated by with some papers inside so I grabbed it thinking it might come in useful. Then I was hauled aboard *Bruno III* PY 1097. I was careful to note the boat's number. The crew accidentally impaled my leg on one of their large fish hooks – charming! – but by now they were far too concerned for the safety of their own vessel which was trapped in the mast and rigging. My little boat put up a good fight and tried to take her killer down with her.'

From the time of her arrival in Tahiti Margaret had been dubbed '*La Dame de Mer*', so her sinking made good headlines in the local papers the next day. She was not insured, but the determined Dame eventually won a settlement in the courts, which was a somewhat pyrrhic victory as she never received a penny. There was some small compensation however, when she was made the first recipient of the Rose Medal for the most meritorious short-handed voyage.

There was some leavening to this disastrous period by the launch of the Pardeys' new boat, *Taleisin* (see page 197), which they had built themselves in Long Beach. Port Officer Don Marshall was in attendance and presented them with a new Club burgee. Not content with building the boat, Larry designed and built a novel self-steering system whereby a vane hinged on the backstay operated a trim-tab on the main rudder. The whole structure weighed only 8lbs, a great saving of weight over conventional systems. At 30ft overall *Taleisin* was a quantum leap from the little 24ft *Seraffyn* in which they had made their home and cruised the world for the previous 12 years. They were next heard from in

December 1985 in New Zealand, having taken over a year to wander down across the South Pacific. Lin wrote enthusiastically that it was still possible to get off the tourist track and find virtually unvisited islands:

'The winds were almost always aft or on the beam as we ran to Samoa, Western Samoa and then reached south to Tonga. In the wondrous Kingdom of Tonga we found a special kind of paradise. First we sailed through a tiny pass in the coral reef at an island called Nuiatapotabu, a place where less than ten yachts have stopped. The islanders came out bearing gifts, friendly, warm, most spoke some English and our visitors usually brought some friend along who spoke English quite well. My guitar worked overtime for ten days as we got to know these kind hearted people who farm small plantations, fish and cure coconut for the small amount of money they need to earn. We were invited home by several families. We made gallons of popcorn for the children and they put on a sports day for us on the village green, lawn tennis, volleyball, teterball, horses to ride if you didn't mind being bareback. When one family invited us home for a Sunday feast it was served on beautiful mats on the floor. Yams, taro, taro leaves smoked with fish, chicken, papaya stew, coconut and pineapple punch, the list goes on and on. When we left, they gave us the fine mat that had been used as a table. We were able to return the hospitality on board, over thirty of the villagers coming out to have fruit punch and a sing along.'

As predicted, yarns of Arctic and Antarctic voyages began to appear in greater numbers and in 1984 we hear of the **Ericksons'** qualifying voyage. They had decided that they were getting soft in Hawaiian waters, so headed north to Alaska in their 36ft Hans Christian cutter *Valhalla*. They had the interesting experience of maintaining exactly the same magnetic heading the whole way, the large change in variation swinging them northeast as they made nothing to find the westerly winds. At their landfall in Sitka they found half a dozen other yachts and it was rare not to have the many idyllic anchorages to themselves. Not once did they see a cruise ship.

That same year **Mike** and Pat **Pocock** wrote of their northern circuit in *Blackjack*, the 38ft cutter which Mike had originally designed for member Rodney Barton, and later bought from Rodney after crewing for him in TWOSTAR. Pat and Mike had the area almost to themselves, only meeting one other foreign boat in Icelandic waters. It was a particularly good year for ice, and they had to search the north coast for small floes to photograph – being their first expedition into Arctic waters they were determined not to return empty-handed, so to speak. They went on via the Faeroes to Norway and

Sweden just in time to watch the 1000 boat start of the Round Orust race, a sight that set them longing to be back in the barren northern waters.

Mike Richey's name is synonymous with *Jester*. We read earlier of his first lone passage when he took her to the Azores in 1966, and of his early philosophical musings on solo sailing. He sailed alone, not from any aversion to humanity but because it provided good thinking time without outside interference. He loved his navigation and made one Atlantic voyage with the express purpose of testing the methods of the ancients. He almost lost *Jester* in 1986 but was taken aboard the *Geestbay*, a passing banana boat, and they both survived. However, in 1988 there was to be no reprieve from a knock-down and this time only Mike survived, but he was to treat us to some most poignant words on the death of *Jester*. It was a heavy weather race and they had ridden out several gales before, 40 days out, they were finally overwhelmed. Mike describes the blow that was to be the end:

'At about 0800 the wind came in again rising quickly to gale force and getting up a steep and confused sea. 'Some of the breakers quite frighten me' I wrote in the log. 'They come at you hissing, generally just across the wave train, and carrying you along for a while, generally on your beam ends'. By 1000 it was blowing perhaps force 9 with visibility affected but the seas flecked rather than covered with spume. There was not much I could do but hopefully wait for the storm to pass. At about 1030, surveying the scene from the control hatch with as much equanimity as I could muster, I saw a plunging breaker coming at us from the port side and said out loud 'Oh hell, here's a knockdown', as indeed it proved to be.

The boat was smashed down to starboard and carried along with her mast below the horizontal until the wave had passed and the weight of the ballast keel brought her upright again. She was full of water with floorboards, cushions, books, charts, sleeping bags and food all floating free. More importantly, the starboard side-hatch had been stove in, totally demolished with only its bronze hinges hanging loose.'

With the hatch gone the boat was terribly vulnerable and Mike made a decision that he has regretted ever since. He activated the EPIRB. But by the time succour arrived the gale had passed and he had the boat pumped out and was not contemplating abandoning ship. However he was strongly advised to do so and describes the agony of the decision:

'The advice to abandon the yacht came as a blow. I asked for a few minutes to consider the matter but I found it very difficult to

think. With a plane circling overhead and a 60,000 ton ship standing by, and after forty days on one's own at sea, a balanced judgement was almost impossible. Would that one had had a friend with whom to discuss the issue. The response I felt must be quick, positive and decisive. I agreed to accept the Coast Guard's advice ...

I got the boat under way, one reef down, the boat sailing as prettily as she can and then suddenly felt I could not go through with it. I contacted the aircraft again and said, now emotionally fraught, 'Do you think the captain would be very annoyed if I decided to go on?' The question must have sounded as silly as it was rhetorical and I don't remember the reply. I then asked if I could talk to the pilot man to man, irrespective of what the authorities had said. What, I wondered, would he do in my circumstances? 'I don't know' he said, 'I have never sailed the Atlantic singlehanded. It must be your decision, but I think you ought to accept the Coast Guard's advice'. He could scarcely, I imagine, have said anything else.'

Mike was taken aboard and a tow attempted. He described his last sight of *Jester*:

'In due course, I was given a cabin facing aft and some dry clothes. After a shower I watched *Jester* through the scuttle at the end of her long tow. I suddenly realised she was getting smaller. I had taken a quick turn on the king post with a hawser far too large whilst getting aboard, and I suppose it had jumped. 'That's that' I said out loud, without emotion, for there could be no going back. But as I watched her recede into the distance, looking as trim and pretty as ever, I realised how much I had loved her. Men personalise their boats as no other artefact. I felt I had failed her, that I should have stayed with the boat. It was one of the unhappiest moments of my life and a passage occurred to me from the sad soliloquy at the end of Joyce's story *The Dead*: 'Better pass boldly into that other world in the full glory of some passion than fade and wither dismally with age'. *Jester* had been if anything a passion.'

The passion did not die with *Jester*, as a trust was formed to build a replica which Mike continued to sail for the next 15 years.

We were to get a taste of things to come when, in 1985, a certain **Willy Ker** applied for membership with a passage from Iceland to Salcombe in his Contessa 32 *Assent*. Not a bad voyage in a boat of that size – one which, skippered by his son, had already won her class in that fateful 1979 Fastnet Race when storm

force winds caused a number of boats to founder. Willy has gone on to make some incredible voyages with *Assent*, of which we shall hear much more.

At the other end of the globe we caught up with the exploits of **Warren Brown**, who had joined in 1962 after a transatlantic to Sweden from his home port of Bermuda and immediately became our Port Officer for that most attractive



Warren Brown's powerful *War Baby*

island. In 1987 John Gore-Grimes wrote of their sortie to Antarctica in Warren's 61ft sloop *War Baby*, ex-*Tenacious*, Ted Turner's Fastnet winning boat in the stormy 1979 race. John joined ship in the Falklands when she was already six months out, having crossed into the Pacific through the Panama Canal and thence via the Galapagos and Chile. It was interesting to learn that penguins in the Falklands had discovered a neat way of avoiding the tourists, by nesting inside the fenced off mined areas which were still extensive at that time.

Aboard *War Baby* they enjoyed a degree of luxury not given to most when cruising even in milder climes. John describes the blow they encountered on arrival at the Antarctic peninsular:

'We entered Maxwell Bay at 0600 with the wind consistently above 50 knots. The barometer was now 975mbs and for the next 30 hours we were a-hull moving slowly from one end of the bay to the other. For a 17 hour period the wind was constantly above 55 knots and we registered several gusts of 80 knots. Between driving spray and snow, conditions were fairly unpleasant at the helm but off watch I could climb into my comfortable bunk with sheets, pillow, pillowcase and duvet, to sleep soundly. *War Baby* is such a strong boat that you got no impression below of the howling and miserable conditions which existed outside.'

They seemed to visit most of the Antarctic research stations and it was interesting to compare the very different conditions enjoyed by the various nationalities. At the Argentinean base at Pendulum Cove they found a very basic set-up with rough wooden benches and tin mugs but 14 healthy bearded men and one girl enjoying their isolation, while at the American station at Anvers Island they joined the incumbents at a pizza party in the mess and bought Irish whiskey at the store.

Warren was awarded the 1987 Barton Cup for this extensive voyage.

That same year, 1987, Mike and Pat Pocock set off again on a more conventional cruise – a circumnavigation. Unfortunately, while in the islands off Venezuela Mike had a mild heart attack so Pat sailed him to Curaçao for advice. It was not encouraging so they turned for home, 4000 miles non-stop. After suitable treatment he was pronounced seaworthy, so they set off again on what turned out to be a 70,000 mile circumnavigation lasting seven years.

There had been a dearth of awards for some years, but a most interesting one was the 1987 OCC Award of Merit to **Colonel Chowdhury** of the Indian Army, recognising the first circumnavigation by an Indian yacht. There seems to have

been a muddle as the Committee, having announced the award, were embarrassed to discover that the Colonel was not a member, so promulgated him for the one year. However, since the Award of Merit is open to non-members their confusion was unnecessary. Why the gallant colonel was singled out is not clear as he was not the skipper, merely the 'team leader', but since the skipper was subordinate in rank no doubt that counted for more when it came to recognition. However, he did write a lengthy article from which one learns that they steered 'with the help of a wheel', and that, perhaps unsurprisingly, 'after twelve days beating against the wind there was a loss of appetite'.

Their boat was a Swan 36, bought in England where she enjoyed the name of *Guinevere of Sussex*. This they changed to *Trishna*, meaning 'the urge to attain and accomplish a deep-rooted desire'. However it is doubtful that their desire was for such weather that they encountered as, even allowing for a little exaggeration, they were particularly unfortunate. In Biscay, during the delivery to Bombay, they experienced '60 knots of wind and waves over 40ft high' and later it was even worse off Good Hope with 'winds of 65 knots and waves 40–50ft high'. They had little respite in the Caribbean with 'continuous winds over 30 knots for 7 days'. In the Tasman they experienced 'a storm and three gales', again with '60 knots and 40ft waves', and off Brisbane the 50 knot wind caused 'huge waves to break over the boat'. Thank goodness the weather has improved! In 1989 the Colonel announced that he was coming over for the presentation, which was hastily arranged at the RORC. He turned up with extended family, his brother arriving in a Rolls Royce, and celebrations went on into the night.

Hot on the army's heels around the world was our man from Bombay, Gulshan Rai, of whom we have already heard. He completed his circumnavigation in 1988 and was awarded the Barton Cup. Unfortunately, having made the decision to award him the cup, the committee then realised that he had recently been struck off, having not paid his subscription. However in 1990 a solution was found by reverting him to Port Representative, in which capacity he has served the Club valiantly ever since, being only surpassed by Ian Nicolson for his frequency of contributions to Club publications.

On a more serious note, the 1987 issue of *Flying Fish* reported the sad news of the death of founder member Chick Larkin, one time Rear Commodore USA East. He could not rival **William Thurber** who recorded the first qualifying voyage in 1910, but his 1928 Pacific crossing in *Mollilou* stands as one of the earliest. Oddly, he quoted Newport California to Honolulu, and Newport Rhode Island to Bergen, as his two qualifiers in the first *List of Members*, and it was on this second passage in 1935 that he navigated the famous *Stormy Weather* to

victory in the Transatlantic Race. He was much in demand as an ocean navigator, and at the time of his death he was the only person to have won the Mixer Cup four times. This is the trophy awarded to the navigator of the winner of the Bermuda Race, in which he sailed 18 times. Chick remained a member to the end.

1988 recorded a much-merited award, that of the Rose Medal to **Mark Wilson**. Mark is the stepson of erstwhile Rear Commodore Harry Jonas, and the 1983 *Flying Fish* reported on an all OCC wedding when Mark married Amanda, the daughter of another recent Rear Commodore, Rachael Hayward. They sailed south together in 1986 aboard their 43ft steel ketch *Hanne*, and were rewarded with the Barton Cup for a thoroughly seamanlike cruise. Regrettably, Amanda left Mark in Chile so he disconsolately turned for home, alone. One could not fail to feel for him when he wrote so poignantly:

‘With the coming of evening the wind dropped as I left the Segunda Angastura and anchored in silence behind the low headland of Punt a San Isidro in flat grey water. I was gripped by sadness to be turning away from so many of my dreams.’

And the next day when he finally got away:

‘It was dark when I passed the lights of Punta Dungeness. Behind me the flares of the oil production platforms hid the outlines of the Land of Fire. *Hanne* moved to meet the ocean swell. For the first time in my life I began to feel the kind of fear that doesn’t go away.’

After 62 days and 8000 miles he dropped anchor in Falmouth:

‘I stood in the cockpit, the engine switched off, in a light rain. Halyards banged against metal masts in the marina. Birds sang. Very English birds. Fields climbed the hills the other side of the river. Real farming fields. I felt very clear headed, not at all spaced out. I waited for it to be late enough to call my mother, asleep a few miles away. Waited for it to be time for my life to start again.’

It would be wrong to give the impression that all other sailing paled by comparison with the deep south brigade, when other members were being just as courageous but in perhaps more congenial waters. While the high latitudes were getting crowded, one of our members was messing about on the equator without another yacht in sight. **Ann Fraser**, a lady of certain years who confesses to returning home for the birth of a grandchild, sailed her Contessa 32 *Gollywobbler* to the West African coast to visit waters where perhaps fewer

yachts have been seen than around the Horn. She left the boat in the Canaries in the summer of 1989 and returned in November that year with members Willy Ker and **Noël Marshall** to sail for places most of us have never heard of. Ann's aim was Guinea Bissau, but her reasons are not very convincing:

'The link was a Portuguese charter skipper also in trouble with his gearbox. Over mutual commiserations and glasses of wine, he happened to mention the Bijagós Islands, "You must go there, they're just like Africa used to be". That phrase intrigued me. All sorts of images came to mind – spear-waving savages and cannibalism – yellow fever and 'the White Man's Grave' – colonial administrators and *stengahs* on the veranda? And where were the Bijagós, for God's sake? (A glance at the Atlantic chart identified them as an archipelago off the bulge of West Africa, part of Guinea-Bissau, formerly Portuguese Guinea).

The announcement that I was going to sail *Gollywobbler* to West Africa brought a hail of doom-laden predictions. "Do you realise they killed 100,000 people there during their War of Liberation?" The unease was scarcely lessened by a fishery consultant who told me that during World War Two an Italian submarine had fetched up on Bubaque, one of the islands, and the crew had been eaten by the natives.'

Get there she did and wasn't eaten, but persistent engine and gearbox trouble dogged her throughout, and crew were sometimes a major problem:

'Back in Bissau, Willy dismantled the engine while we waited for Maurizio and Lesley. They arrived exhausted but in good spirits, having had a marathon 2½ day journey from Banjul via bush-taxis, ferry and even a hired donkey along the 3 km of footpath from Senegal into Guinea-Bissau, all the while loaded with their own kit plus the new gearbox.'

Unfortunately the crew, who had shown such initiative to get there, turned out to be less than ideal. After a week during which the gearbox was installed they left for the Cape Verdes, but the girl was continuously seasick and never left her bunk. Her partner was an excellent crew but when his girlfriend caught dysentery in Santiago they both decided to return home, leaving Ann crewless for the forthcoming Atlantic crossing. However she reached her next rendezvous, sailing singlehanded in company with a Belgian yacht for a 17 day passage to Antigua. Ann was awarded the 1990 Rambler Medal for her innovative West African cruise.

A little nearer home, the annual dinners at the Royal Thames were always popular,

but the cost was creeping up, particularly for those outside the London area for whom its location meant considerable extra expense. An alternative was found in the Royal Lymington Yacht Club and the first 'outside London' dinner was held there in 1987. It was a sell-out, with 100 people attending and a long waiting list. The move was clearly popular – the Royal Lymington YC was most welcoming and the price was right, so it was decided that this should become the venue every other year as it has been ever since.

During the early 1980s *Flying Fish* had settled down to a good balance of cruising yarns, pilotage information, Port Officers' reports and the occasional instructive article on sailing problems. However, the last category stretched the bounds of taste when a lurid description, complete with diagrams, of the action to take for urinary tract obstruction was published under the heading *Won't Pee, Can't Pee*, written by **Mark Witoszka**. The article earned the Editor a mild rebuke from the Commodore and the odd raised eyebrow in the correspondence columns. If this had been the worst of the Editor's transgressions it could have been tolerated, but unfortunately it was not. David was seriously ill but had not told anyone, and as he became progressively worse during the late 1980s the quality of the magazine suffered.

While the journal had given the impression of tranquillity within the Club, the reality under the surface was very different. The Secretary continued to report a bumper crop of new members each year but, wearing his Treasurer's hat, he should have been more alert to the financial consequences. More members meant more administration and more non-paying members meant double the work in chasing them. In fact the Club was sinking under the weight of its own success.

XII – DIFFICULT TIMES

In 1985 Peter Pattinson again gave notice that he wanted to give up the Secretaryship. He had married his faithful assistant Shirley Marsham the previous year and together they had served the Club very well for most of their ten years in harness, but it was time for a change. After interviews, it was announced that member Geoff Hales had accepted the job. Geoff had qualified in 1971 with a 1002 mile passage from Gibraltar to Malta. However, he more than proved his credentials by taking the handicap prize in the 1976 OSTAR, and as a past Technical Editor for *Yachting World* he appeared well qualified for his duties.

With hindsight, it should have been noticed that Peter Pattinson was winding down. He had never fully recovered from his accident in 1978, and running the Welsh Cruising School placed heavy demands on his time. Consequently Club affairs were sometimes neglected and grumbles from members, especially overseas, were becoming more voluble. In fairness, although Peter had negotiated a significant rise in 1981, he had up until then worked long hours for the Club for a purely nominal honorarium, and by modern standards his revised stipend was still extremely modest. It has often been said that members should offer

their services voluntarily, but with such a far flung association it is difficult not to become reliant on a few home-based individuals, and it is unfair to ask those who carry the burden to do so for no remuneration. The administration being centred on London immediately placed a restriction on the number of members close enough to offer effective help, while the inevitable delay between Committee decisions being made and being communicated to the membership at large meant that it could be months before action was seen to take effect.



Secretary Geoff Hales

The dividing line is sharp between the amateur outfit which drifts along and the professional organisation which gives a guaranteed service to its members, and the OCC had for too long tried to exist between the two. It must be acknowledged that the Club was uniquely difficult to administer. In fact, **Peter Johnson**, in his fascinating *Yacht Clubs of the World*, used that very adjective in describing the OCC as occupying a unique position with its dispersed membership and its qualification requirement. This, almost by definition, meant that it was populated by marked individuals, even eccentrics, and with many of them on the high seas it was difficult to achieve coherence and a balance of service to members. Thus the obligation to pay ones dues was not particularly strong and it is understandable that many did not find their subscriptions a high priority.

Geoff Hales' terms of employment were on a daily basis with an estimated two days per week but he found, in those days of systems incompatibility, that he could not transfer Club records onto his computer. This exercise apparently took most of his time for the first year, with the consequent neglect of other matters. It is not surprising, therefore, that members' complaints, especially those overseas, multiplied at an alarming rate.

It had been the practice for financial matters to be dealt with almost exclusively by the flag officers and the Secretary/Treasurer, and the majority of the Committee were unaware of the downward spiral which was developing. The reduction of services to members led to a decrease in applicants and an increase in non-payers, which further reduced the income. The Rear Commodore, Howard Gosling, tabled an estimate of financial expectations at the beginning of 1986 which painted a depressing picture. The Committee therefore used its powers to increase the joining fee to £10, but the Rules still required AGM approval for a change of subscription and, since they were already past the deadline for that year, any change would take more than a year to have effect. The Club solicitor was therefore asked to draw up a rule change which would give the Committee authority to alter subscriptions without reference to the membership, but this change would, of course, have to wait for AGM approval. Meanwhile goodwill and good money were trickling into the sand.

Geoff was able to produce only draft accounts for the 1986 AGM, these showing a loss of some £3500. Subscription income was down despite an apparent increase in membership numbers. Secretarial costs were up and accumulated funds were perilously low. There was insufficient money to print a second *Flying Fish* that year.

What went on ex-committee is not clear, as there is no record of the flag officers' discussions with the Secretary/Treasurer, but, despite the recent

revelations of the Rear Commodore, there is little mention in the Minutes of financial problems until it was proposed in September 1986 that subscriptions be increased to £16 per annum. The reasons for this dearth of recorded information perhaps demonstrates the tightness with which the flag officers controlled Club finances – or failed to control them, as subsequent events were to show. Also, since most criticism would have been directed at the Secretary/Treasurer, his recording in the minutes was perhaps not overly detailed. At this meeting there was also some discussion of allowing Life Subscriptions, which topic the Treasurer dismissed as ‘mathematically fascinating but very unattractive in practice’. However, on a positive note, it was decided to try to attract advertising in *Flying Fish*, which was clearly successful as the very next issue contained several useful entries. This was another nail in the coffin of amateurism, but it must be said that it did not detract from the magazine and in some ways gave it a more authoritative air.

The 1986 accounts were finally tabled at the 1987 AGM, but again the current year’s statement was not available. The situation was further confused by the decision to change the Club’s financial year to the end of October, to allow a more up to date picture to be presented at the AGM. However, this meant that the next accounting period covered 21 months which led to a much distorted picture at the following AGM.

In September 1987 the Secretary/Treasurer held long discussions with the Continental Section. A mutiny was brewing. They felt that they were running a successful branch without any financial assistance from central funds and stated an intention not to pay the increase in subscriptions. They did, in fact, pay a local Continental Supplement to help defray their additional costs, but they felt they should have a subvention from central funds to cover the expense of attending London meetings. Their arguments were dubious and dangerous. Such support would have opened the way to charging for expenses by other members at the very time when funds were perilously low. This was rather a surprising turn of events as until then the Continentals had run a healthy organisation which was cited as a model for the rest of the world. However, there appears to have been a growing lack of confidence in the London Committee by the Continentals, as they were shortly to demonstrate their disquiet in more dramatic fashion.

In November 1987 the Secretary/Treasurer produced a draft budget which showed the rocks drawing closer at an alarming rate. He estimated that on the basis of two days’ work per week his costs alone would almost equal previous subscription income, and pleaded that he needed at least three days to discharge the duties fully. The message was clear – the Club could not afford him on the present arrangements. It was agreed to try to find someone willing to do the job

for an honorarium, but since the present incumbent seemed to spend much of his time chasing backsliding members, even if a volunteer could be found any interregnum would result in further loss of income. Much vigorous discussion took place, as this was the first time that the full state of the finances had been revealed to the Committee. Some members agreed to help the Secretary/Treasurer on a voluntary basis and several other initiatives to reduce costs were proposed.

At the next Committee meeting, in January 1988, further proposals to improve the finances were discussed, including the previously dismissed scheme of Life Subscriptions. At this point the rather brief and terse minutes show that **Colin Fergusson** wished it to be recorded that the Committee had no idea of the financial situation before the Secretary's recent budget. This was fair comment, but perhaps a little late in the day as it was nearly two years since the Rear Commodore had briefed the Committee on the seriousness of the situation. Why Colin chose this occasion to blow the whistle is not clear, since he was present at the previous meeting in November 1987 when stark revelation of the true financial situation had been made.

The Commodore, John Foot, had indicated to the Committee the previous year that he did not wish to serve his full term, and at the January meeting he asked to be relieved at the forthcoming AGM. He proposed Desmond Hampton, the current Vice Commodore, as his successor with Howard Gosling, who had previously served two terms as Rear Commodore, replacing Desmond. He offered to continue to serve as a Committee member. However, these plans were to be dramatically upset by a last minute intervention. With only minutes before the deadline for the submission of nominations, Colin Fergusson handed in a counter proposition at the Secretary's house. He proposed a hitherto little-known member by the name of **Jack Ruben** as Commodore and Giles Chichester as Vice, and in this was seconded by Gaston Trough, erstwhile Rear Commodore Europe. Desmond promptly withdrew his name as he did not consider a contested election for Commodore to be healthy for the Club. This counter-proposal was the first positive demonstration of lack of confidence in the hierarchy of which Desmond was a senior member, and it could have been an unseemly struggle before the assembled Club if there had been a run-off election at the AGM. As it was now past the deadline for any further proposals the scene seemed set for the uncontested election of Jack as Commodore. The choice of Vice Commodore would still be a contest between the known quantity of Howard Gosling, and Giles Chichester who had recently shown little interest in Club affairs.

Clearly there was considerable disquiet over the maladministration of the accounts, but this sudden turn of events appears to have taken the Committee

by surprise. There was understandable concern for the wellbeing of the Club if the two senior Flags Officers were to be replaced by little known members, but the wheels were put in motion for an orderly handover. Giles arranged to introduce Jack Ruben to Desmond, a meeting attended by some Committee members. They subsequently expressed considerable reservations as to his suitability for the post of Commodore, and were unanimous in their opinion that to install him would not be in the best interests of the Club.

Further examination of the Rules revealed a provision whereby the Committee were empowered to elect a replacement flag officer to serve the remainder of the term of one who resigned before the expiration of his period of office. A precedent had already been set on the very first change of Commodore when the Committee had elected Tim Heywood to replace Hum in 1960. Deliberations took place as to who might be able to re-unite the Club and it was considered that Mary Barton, the widow of the founder and an established Committee member, was the only person who stood a chance of succeeding in this nigh impossible task. She was persuaded to let her name go forward and the Committee, with one abstention, elected her to take over from John Foot, the lack of opposition being explained by Colin Fergusson's absence from the meeting.

There was thus no vacancy in the post of Commodore to put before the membership at the AGM. In retrospect it should have been recognised that this move would not go unchallenged, and the proposers of Ruben, not surprisingly, took the arrangement as being a means of excluding their candidate. They were firmly of the opinion that, one proposal for the post of Commodore having been made, they were fully entitled to make a second. Furthermore, since their candidates were intended to bring in new management after the questionable performance of the current flag officers, they saw a re-election of some of the old guard as largely a 'rearrangement of the deckchairs'.

With only weeks to go to the 1988 AGM Mary was thus handed a chalice which, if not exactly poisoned, was at least heavily tainted. She held a Committee meeting on 21 March, at which Colin Fergusson again argued strongly that the Club had been mismanaged by the previous flag officers and that the election of Mary as Commodore was not valid. He went on to argue that she would have no support, but this was firmly refuted by other Committee members.

The well-attended AGM was opened with a statement from the departing Commodore, John Foot, who explained the background of his decision to relinquish his flag and the propriety of Mary's appointment as his replacement. This, however, did not satisfy Ruben's supporters and Colin Fergusson immediately raised a point of order, maintaining that she had not been elected legally. This was vigorously debated between **Mary Falk**, Committee member



Mary Barton, Commodore 1988–1994 and Admiral since then

and solicitor, and Peter Carter-Ruck, ex-Commodore and internationally renowned litigation lawyer, who wished to see a contested election between Mary Barton and Jack Ruben. After considerable debate the mood was clearly in favour of the status-quo, the point of order was defeated, and Mary remained in the chair.

The position of Vice Commodore was then put to the vote. After several recounts it was declared a dead heat, 25:25, which placed the Commodore in the invidious position of having to exercise her casting vote. This she did, understandably, in favour of Howard, but this was again seen by the opposition as a means of perpetuating the old regime. To say the subsequent dinner was a little tense would be to state the obvious and it soon became clear that the arguments were far from over.

The accounts for the 21 month period since the last statement were put before the meeting and showed an abysmal state of affairs which reinforced the case of those wishing to see a change. They were heavily qualified by the auditors, but nevertheless were passed after much acrimonious argument.

Having lost the issue of elections, Giles started canvassing for support for a Special General Meeting on a motion of lack of confidence in the hierarchy. His feelings were understandable, despite the judgement of the AGM that the new Flags and Committee had been legally put in place, but it must have been clear that to continue the argument on another tack was going to be extremely disruptive and detrimental to the wellbeing of the Club. Nevertheless he persisted, circulating a petition that heaped opprobrium on the Committee and was so virulent in its condemnation that, whatever the outcome, a rift was being driven so deeply through the Club that it would take years to heal. The Commodore attempted a reconciliation by inviting Giles to join the Committee and work for the good of the Club from within, but he refused.

Clearly, the Secretary had lost the confidence of the Committee and the Club at large, and the search for a replacement was intensified. **Jeremy Knox**, a member of nearly 20 years' standing, was eventually selected and set to work with a will. He found a muddle that would have daunted anyone of lesser mettle, and quickly recognised that the job was too much for one man. He therefore recommended that an Honorary Treasurer be found, so an incumbent for this second post was urgently sought. The takeover date was fixed for 16 May and a line was drawn under the Hales' account as of that date, since prior to that the funds appeared to be almost irreconcilable. Much midnight oil was burned by the Committee, and Jeremy, assisted by his wife **Caroline**, made prodigious efforts to get the accounts in order.

The cupboard was virtually bare so the Commodore and several Committee



Secretary Jeremy Knox and Caroline, whose combined energies helped restore the Club to health

members each made substantial unsecured loans to start the new account, and two paid large Club bills out of their own pockets. Additionally there was a considerable injection of capital from the newly introduced Life Subscriptions and one member used his company's resources to fund a mass mailing. Jeremy offered to defer his remuneration until the finances were restored and thus, in fairly short order, the Club was able to continue trading from a position of relative financial stability.

In due course the call for an SGM was sent to the Secretary, together with sufficient facsimile signatures to make it a legitimate demand. On checking closely however, it was apparent that some signatories were no longer members and that others had not paid their subscriptions and were therefore disenfranchised. It is also possible that some had signed up to a resolution that differed from the one submitted to the Secretary. He asked to see the original signatures before sending out the notice but, although promised, they were never forthcoming. Nevertheless the meeting was called, but before the date of the SGM a number of signatories wrote saying they had been misled by the

blandishments of the proponents and wished to point out that their supporting the call for an SGM did not mean that they were in sympathy with the motion.

Battle lines were drawn at the London Rowing Club on 23 September 1988 to hear the motion: 'This meeting has no confidence in those London Flag Officers and members of the Committee responsible for the affairs of the Club between March 1986 and March 1988, on the grounds of mismanagement of the Club and abuse of the Club Rules and calls upon them to resign'.

The Commodore opened the meeting by explaining that a great deal had been done to right the mistakes arising from the undoubted mismanagement over the previous two years, and that to call such a meeting before corrective action had had time to take effect was both ill conceived and disruptive. Giles Chichester, speaking for the motion, maintained that the Club was still being run by the 'self-perpetuating group' who were responsible for the mistakes that had run the Club into near bankruptcy. However Peter Carter-Ruck, his erstwhile supporter, now sought to soothe matters by declaring his support for the Commodore and Vice Commodore, and weakened the motion further by asking that only 'one or two Committee members offer their resignations, thereby creating vacancies for new blood'.

Skirmishing continued until that venerable patriarch **Loftus Peyton-Jones** rose to speak words of such sagacity that their influence on the meeting was palpable. He summarised the whole sorry saga, not sparing any of the players, with such eloquence that it soon became clear the motion was lost. He called for its withdrawal. Peter Carter-Ruck then returned to the fray but, amazingly, with words of such emollient that a stake was finally driven through the heart of the opposition. He too called for the motion to be withdrawn, but Chichester and his supporters were so blinded by their convictions that they forced a vote despite it being clear from the mood of the meeting that they would be heavily defeated. Defeated it was, and members hoped that it signalled an end to the months of disruption which had caused so much animosity and division.

Clearly, news of the Club's troubles had spread, as applications for membership slowed to a trickle, only 24 being received in the first half of 1988 when double that number had been nearer the norm. With the diversion of Giles Chichester's motion out of the way the path was clear for putting the Club's affairs in order, and Mary Barton and Jeremy Knox, with a number of willing Committee members, worked long hours to this end. Rigorous pruning of the membership list and vigorous arm-twisting of backsliders improved the cash flow which, together with the earlier measures to provide capital, slowly restored the finances to health. The amount of business doubled, decisions were taken and acted upon, and a far greater sense of purpose is apparent from the Minutes.

At the 1988 AGM a motion had been passed allowing postal voting, but this was not to apply to Special General Meetings. This had become a bone of contention during the preparations for the SGM, as the protagonists of the motion considered that their case would be more widely supported if postal voting was allowed. However, there was no provision for this in the Rules as they stood at the time, so such votes were disbarred. An Interim Edition of the Rules was hurriedly published to include the recent amendments, since the previous edition was dated 1979. Whether by design or accident is not clear, but it is noticeable that postal voting was to be allowed at the AGM while, contradictorily, flag officers could only be elected by those 'present and voting'. Very sensibly the Committee then undertook a wholesale revision of the Rules and produced a tidied up version in 1990. Even so, they varied very little in any material sense from the first issue published in 1956.

This new edition of the Rules included a provision for Associate Membership, doubtless conceived as part of the drive to widen the appeal of the Club and increase the paid-up membership. However the 1979 edition, which this replaced, already had an allowance for Provisional Membership which had been in existence since the first issue of the Rules in 1956 and which sanctioned application by those who stated an intention to qualify. If accepted they were obliged to qualify within two years, otherwise they automatically ceased to be members.

Oddly, the new Associate Membership contained no such restrictions, so that once elected they could remain 'associated' indefinitely. This held the danger that a subordinate class of members could be created, but the threat was small as the Club held little attraction for those not genuinely interested in becoming deep-sea sailors. Indeed **Phil Brooks**, Port Officer Boothbay Harbour, wrote in defence of the system two years later, but made the point that it should be safeguarded by the introduction of a time limit. It was further vindicated in 1993 when the septuagenarian **Ed Kendrick** became an Associate having crossed the Atlantic with Irving Johnson in *Yankee* almost 40 years earlier but in a vessel of more than 70 ft. Later that year Ed became an honest man by crossing to Ireland in the 40ft *Astral* with a group of mature New Englanders led by Atlantic veteran **Larry White**, shortly to become Rear Commodore USA East.

Secretarial duties were gradually rationalised. **Mike Taylor-Jones** volunteered to become Treasurer, Anne Hammick took over the organisation of Cruising Information, **Peter Aitchison** took charge of rallies, particularly sailing events for the young, while **Fred Brown** became responsible for Regalia and new lines of stock were agreed. Colin Fergusson was invited to lead a revamped Awards sub-committee and to make his own choice of members, but he declined. This was unfortunate as he had been instrumental in persuading Mike Taylor-Jones



**Lin Pardey aboard *Taleisin*, showing their novel self-steering vane
(see page 177)**

to take on the Treasurer's job voluntarily and his inclusion in the new organisation could have done much to assuage remaining bitterness. Instead Kitty Hampton took the Awards sub-chair and assembled an international committee. **Chris Watney** tabled a paper with many sweeping proposals and circulated a questionnaire to all members seeking views on the way forward. There was a general air of vitality which could not fail to communicate itself to the membership as a whole. Indeed, by the time of the 1989 AGM new members were coming in at an unprecedented rate.

It is easy to think that the troubles of the Club were of world shattering consequence, but life went on for the 90% of members not directly affected. The 1988 Azores pursuit race was the most successful to date with 17 boats entering and ten finishing, despite the very heavy weather encountered. The energetic Emily Potter had her largest ever Mystic meeting with over 200 folk attending, and plans were afoot for a summer sailing rally in Maine. Two well-attended and profitable winter meetings were held in London, and the 1989 annual dinner was fully booked. Regalia sales were up, despite a significant increase in prices, and advertising in *Flying Fish* continued to grow.

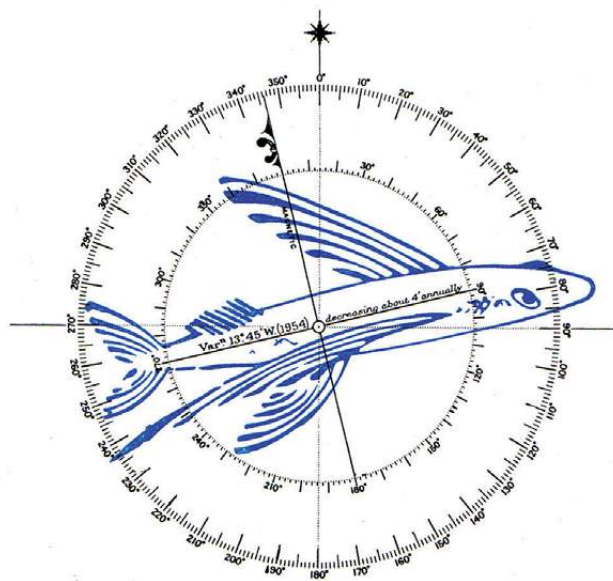
There are no published figures for membership immediately before the 'troubles', but there is little doubt that a number resigned who, together with those recidivists weeded out, represented a considerable loss of members. Perhaps the greatest loss was about 100 Continentals. Through Gaston Trogh, who had seconded Giles for Vice Commodore, they had largely backed the proposers of the motion of no-confidence so it is not surprising that a number of them became disillusioned. However they were a great loss to the Club, as they were a young and energetic section who had shown the way with several initiatives which had attracted many enthusiastic new members.

Under Mary's leadership the Club went forward by leaps and bounds, and in her Commodore's Report at the 1989 AGM she was able to describe a much more encouraging state of affairs. Understandably, overseas members were still feeling a little confused when their knowledge of affairs at home had to be gleaned from the previously desultory *Newsletters* and *Flying Fish*, but within weeks of taking over the post Jeremy mailed copies of both (and to this day they have been issued without break or delay). Mary also travelled widely (entirely at her own expense) to reassure members of the health of the Club, flying to Mystic for the Museum gathering in her first year as Commodore and to Australia for their 1989 annual dinner.

The energy of the Secretary was also most apparent. What had been a desultory and irregular *Newsletter* developed into an informative quarterly bulletin which

flying fish

1990/2



Ocean Cruising Club Journal

The revitalised 'Fish' (see page 202)

kept members abreast of plans and happenings, while Club records became ordered and coherent – making the task of this historian a great deal easier. Under the previous regime it appeared that most business was conducted under the headings of ‘Matters Arising’ or ‘Any Other Business’, but now there was a structure to the agendas and minutes that progressed items clearly in an ordered fashion. Jeremy showed great wisdom, not just in his secretarial duties but in his constant and staunch advice to the Committee. However, it was becoming clear that the task was still too much for one officer, so the following year the duties were spilt, membership and subscription matters being taken on by **Graham** and **Avril Johnson**.

Just when things had returned to normal and all appeared well within the state of the OCC, the erstwhile malcontents again reared their heads. Since Mary would have completed the period of John Foot’s term as Commodore by the 1990 AGM, the position technically fell vacant and proposals for her re-election, or that of another candidate, should have been called for in the *Newsletter* or *Flying Fish* in time for inclusion on the agenda. That this was omitted did not escape the notice of Colin Fergusson and Giles Chichester. They tabled a motion for the 1990 AGM deploring the omission, and a series of most intemperate letters were received by the Commodore and Secretary to the point where the former had to ask Giles for an apology. However, at the meeting the Commodore was re-elected by acclamation and the mood was so clearly in support of the Committee that to have pressed the motion would have made the proponents look even more ridiculous than they had previously, so they withdrew at the last minute. Giles resigned from the Club but an apology never was received.

XIII – RENAISSANCE

With a far flung club like the OCC there are inevitably gaps in communication, especially through the healthy gossip which helps to make a club tick. This was largely compensated for by the much improved and regular *Newsletter* produced by Secretary Jeremy Knox. He developed a regular format, with snippets on members gleaned from around the world, rally reports, small ads, and – most important – a two year rolling diary of Club events. It came out quarterly, on time, and did much to restore confidence after the recent upheavals. As a further step to transparency a ‘Know your Committee’ feature was begun, in order to introduce Committee members to the Club at large.

Chris Watney’s paper on the way forward had included a need to modernise *Flying Fish*, which had remained outwardly the same for the 25 years of David Wallis’ editorship. In 1988 David produced a suggested new cover design, but the Committee rejected it as too modern. However they did agree to change to A5 size, having stuck with the smaller quarto – which had meant having the paper specially cut to size – long after the introduction of the new metric sizes, and for one issue in 1989 *Flying Fish* was a slightly larger edition of the old style. However, David’s next attempt to modernise the cover, with a compass rose overprinted with a rather mean-looking flying fish travelling west to east, was agreed. Unfortunately the compass rose was not quite central and showed 15°15’ Westerly variation, which would have been correct for the English Channel in the middle of the war. It also had some messy and meaningless position lines and soundings sketched in around it. Nevertheless, it was certainly a move away from the past, although not entirely approved by the elder brethren who had made their boat bookshelves to fit the handy little size of old.

Unfortunately, despite the enhanced outward appearance, *Flying Fish* was otherwise in decline. David was not a well man, but he never confessed how ill he was and refused help to the end. Anne Hammick, recently back from her north Atlantic circuit with sister Liz, for which they had deservedly won the Barton Cup, offered to help, as did Mary Barton, but he steadfastly refused any assistance. David did not blame the scarcity of issues entirely on lack of funds, but showed his conservative attitude towards modern techniques in his editorial in 1987:

An unbelievable eighteen months have elapsed since we were last able to publish. The secretary blames non-payment of subscriptions. He may well be right, though I think that the policy of computerising the club has a lot to answer for. Bigger organisations than ours have come to grief on the same rocks.

Computers give undeniable advantages, but they are impersonal, and still need human guidance.

In his next issue he let his frustration boil over when he complained of 'the incompetent bungling of the previous Committee'. Some of the trouble could, however, be laid at David's own door as both proof-reading – which he insisted on doing himself – and layout became more and more confused towards the end. It is difficult to remove a stalwart worker, especially one who has been in post for 28 years with little remuneration, but in retrospect a formula should have been found when dealing with such an important aspect of the Club. He died in harness in the spring of 1990 having just sent the latest issue to the printers.

It was a pity that David left us on a down slope, as he had given so much of his time to the Club and had developed the former *Newsletter* from a badly printed sheet of foolscap into a compelling collection of seagoing yarns between stiff covers, bearing the distinctive logo of our worldwide fraternity. He had thus become a friend of thousands, even more so to those who sent in a scrappy manuscript which appeared in print as an elegantly worded article. He was very well-read and gave us the benefit of many well chosen aphorisms and quotations in odd corners of the magazine. Only a year before his death his long service was recognised by the award of the Water Music Trophy. A further piece of silverware was added to the Club's growing collection when, following his death, David's sister, Mrs Mary Coulter, presented a handsome engraved salver in his memory. Simply called the David Wallis Trophy, it was decided that it should be awarded annually to the member who had made the most valuable contribution to *Flying Fish*.

On David's death Anne Hammick stepped into the breach, initially on a temporary basis, and started by tidying up the front cover. The compass rose became central, the messy spider's webs around it disappeared, and keen eyed members will note that the variation became 13°45' West, correct for 1954 (see page 199). Anne also brought greater order between the covers with a regular and predictable sequence of information. The Commodore got a column and even the Admiral wrote in her first issue. She enlisted a team of proof readers who between them managed to expunge virtually all errors from her first and subsequent issues.

In her first editorial in the 1990/2 issue Anne quoted a rather plaintive letter, but perhaps it pointed towards a weakness that had crept in:

'Reading *Flying Fish* I often feel that one needs to be a member of an inner clique to contribute – everyone who writes seems to know everyone else! We recently spent some time on the

Amazon, but I don't imagine that an account of our adventures would interest other members, as none of them know us.'

The writer was invited to join the 'clique' by contributing, but unfortunately she didn't. However, there is no doubt that a few eloquent members seemed to hog the pages, despite the Editor's frequent pleas for more folk to write, as she could only work with the material provided.

A more gratifying letter was received from Founder member Ernest Chamberlain in Gibraltar, reminding us of the sailing he had enjoyed in the old days and saying how much he would like to hear some other old-timers' reminiscences. We were rewarded with a rejoinder in the next issue from fellow Founder **Joe Cunningham** who, like several of the originals, had qualified in a little Vertue, his being named *Ice Bird*. It was an appropriate name, as he explained in an article published the following year. He was a practising doctor in Newfoundland and visited many of his patients, winter and summer, by boat. What more enjoyable way of carrying out his duties than under sail? Joe thought. So he had a Vertue built in Southampton and sailed her back, qualifying with a 26 day singlehanded passage from Ireland to Madeira. His article was accompanied by some delightful sketches which somehow brought it alive better than any photographs.

This reminiscing had started a trend. In the same issue we heard, after a long gap, from old timer, if not founder, **Roger Fothergill**. He had bought *Tern IV*, one of Claud Worth's famous boats, many years previously and in the early days of the Club had regaled members in his inimitable style with the many lively incidents that befell him, always stretching one's credulity. This recent admonition to the old hands got him going again and now he stretched our belief even further. In his later years he had taken to sailing smaller boats, which gave him considerable problems with overweight crew:

'This same Miss B distinguished herself again later on that week. She and three others were with me in an open centreboard sloop beating into a jumpy sea when, losing her grip somehow, she fell with a crash between the centreboard casing and the lee gunwale. Now I have already hinted that Miss B was a woman of weight. I put the helm down in a flash and got the vessel about, as otherwise this sudden transference of ballast might have capsized us. As she didn't get up immediately, and fearing that she might have been hurt, I hove the sloop to and went to offer a helping hand. I gave a polite pull, which had no effect at all, and finally a jolly good heave – nothing stirred. The awful truth dawned on me. Stuck fast by Jove! Wedged like a cask, 'bung up and bilge

free’.

How to shift her was the problem: it called for a jack, which was a thing we didn’t have – a man can’t think of everything and cargo screws went out with the windjammers. I collected the rest of the crew and, grasping whatever seemed to offer a convenient handhold, without enquiring too closely as to its nature, we tailed on and hove with might and main but couldn’t start her an inch. Stifling a suggestion which was almost on my lips for someone to strike up a chantey, I cast about me for some other method. And it was then I noticed that by some happy mischance the two sweeps with which the vessel was equipped had both been stowed on the same side of the centreboard casing instead of one on each side and, in short, Miss B was lying on top of them. Calling to mind the man who said ‘Give me a fulcrum and I will move the Earth’, I mustered all hands again, one to each end of a sweep, and with a quick ‘Heave Ho’ we broke her out like a bale of cotton, none the worse for wear and quite unruffled in spirits.’

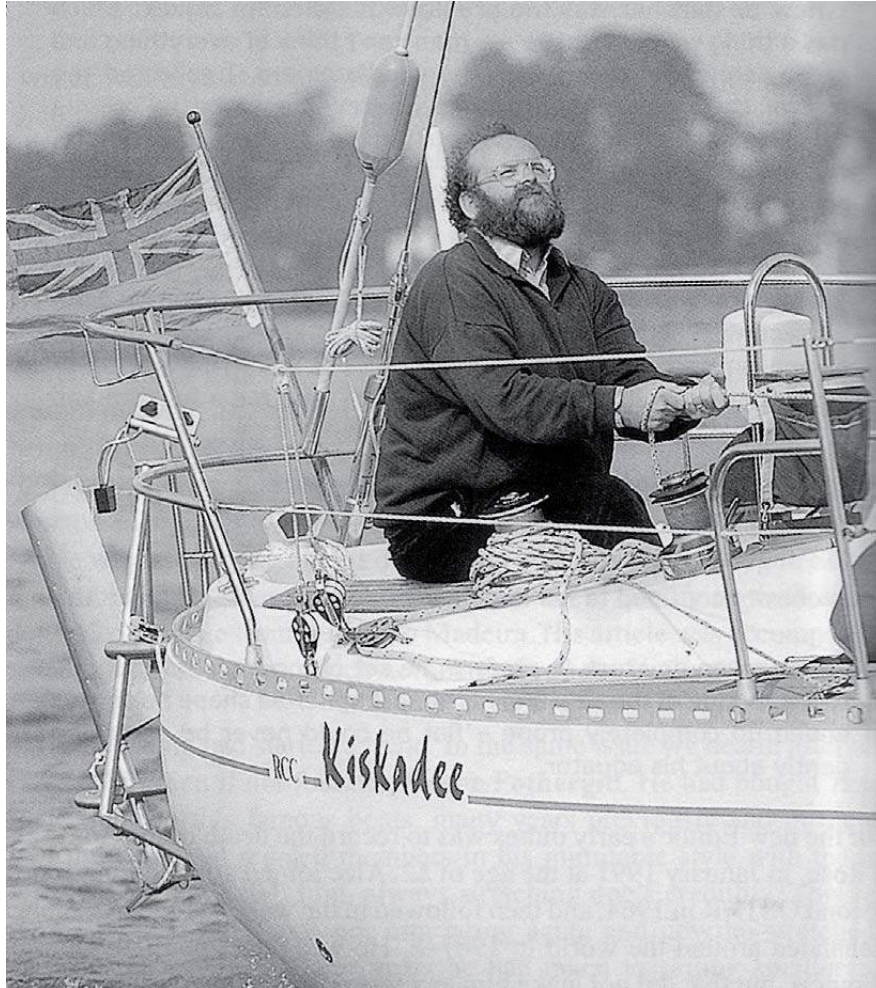
Nor was obesity confined to his female crew; of one male member he reports:

‘When given any task to perform he set off on all fours, but due to the motion of the ship and his almost spheroid shape he always ended up completely prone – flat he could never be – rocking gently about his equator.’

One of the new Editor’s early duties was to record the death of the Admiral, Sir Alec Rose, in January 1991 at the age of 82. Alec joined after coming fourth in the second OSTAR in 1964, and then followed in the wake of Francis Chichester singlehanded around the world in 1967–8. He was never publicity-conscious like Francis, but that did not make him any less of a seaman – he just did things quietly and in turn was afforded just as much respect. As Admiral he rarely missed an AGM and on occasions took firm charge when circumstance demanded. Always approachable and courteous, he was well summed up by a member who wrote in *Flying Fish* after his death:

‘I only met him once or twice, but was impressed by his down-to-earth attitudes and friendliness towards the people around him, while at the same time giving off an aura of a person who has achieved great things. I have always felt respect for Sir Alec, who will be greatly missed by us as members of the OCC and will leave a tremendous gap at the highest level of our Club.’

Another of Chris Watney’s initiatives, in conjunction with Andrew Bray, Editor



Geoff Pack – a big man in every way

of *Yachting Monthly*, and **Geoff Pack**, the Assistant Editor (both ocean sailors of considerable experience), was to organise a symposium on Long Term Cruising to be run jointly by the Club and *YM*. The first event took place in September 1990 at the College of Nautical Studies in Warsash, providentially on a glorious September weekend so that delegates could soak up the imparted wisdom with a backdrop of yachts sailing on the Solent. It was a great success and was the prototype for a series of five such gatherings over the next 12 years. The programme was gradually refined so that during the space of 48

hours a wealth of information could be delivered by a number of experts in their fields, and the seminars became acknowledged as the accepted way of launching timorous but ambitious deep-sea sailors. Indeed, they began to attract delegates from all over the world, one seminar having representatives from Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Australia and the Continent. They also produced a welcome yield for the Club, the last being almost embarrassingly profitable.

The following year Geoff deemed his family of three children under six years were old enough to undertake some long term cruising of their own so, armed with the insignia of a Roving Rear Commodore, they left for an open-ended cruise with a slow circumnavigation in mind. Within a year, however, Geoff was invited back to be interviewed for the job of editor as Andrew was moving over to take charge of *Yachting World*. Geoff had a predicament. He had left a pregnant **Loulou** and family in Trinidad and she was within days of the limit allowed for flying. If he accepted the job there was no time to sail home and he was loathe to abandon their long-cherished family ambition. However, he did take the job and Loulou packed up the family, sold the boat and flew home within the few days of grace remaining. Shortly after taking up his new post Geoff was promoted to Rear Commodore UK so his rank and connections were re-established, but this time with more clout.

One of Andrew's last projects before changing magazines was to revive the series of 'Ideal Cruiser' surveys which had previously been undertaken by *Yachting World*. A wide and deep questionnaire was circulated to all members, with a very good response, and the results showed a marked move forward from the still fairly conservative views expressed in 1974. The majority preferred a production GRP cutter with an overall length of between 39ft and 47ft. This compared with a wooden split-rig of around 35ft overall eighteen years previously. The majority wanted fully-battened mains and over 80% would have a roller headsail. Electrical requirements had made a quantum leap, with over 90% wanting a refrigerator and more than half wanting a separate generator. It was heartening to read that the number one priority for navigation was still the sextant, however there were no purists left who wouldn't take a GPS along. An artist produced sketches of a boat representing the average views, and she turned out to be a fairly conservative, fin-and-skeg, aft-cockpit cruiser, dubbed the Flying Fish 43. Some years later, when Andrew had a boat designed by **Rob Humphreys**, he used many details taken from the survey results.

During the years of muddle the trophies had been neglected. No OCC Award is recorded between 1982 and 1988, though *Flying Fish* suggests that some were decided upon but never actioned. Similarly there is no record of the OCC Award of Merit being awarded before 1987. Mary and her team were determined to

bring things up to date, and generously spread awards around the world to deserving but overlooked members, some retrospectively.

The Award of Merit was given, undated, to **Martin Creamer** for a 1983–4 circumnavigation without modern instruments or charts, intended to show that prehistoric movement around the globe was perfectly possible in the absence of such impedimenta. **Dr John Bockstoce**, the curator of the New Bedford Museum in Massachusetts, received the award in 1988 for the first traverse of the North West Passage under sail from west to east, followed by a non-stop passage to New York which he used as his qualifier when he joined the succeeding year. In that same year **Mike Birch** also received the accolade for his incredible recovery after colliding with a whale and nearly sinking his trimaran, *Fujicolour*. In 1989 there were a further three Awards of Merit – **Ewen Southby-Tailyour** for the invaluable assistance rendered to the Royal Navy during the Falklands war through the coastal survey that he had made previously; Robin Knox-Johnston, who had recently left the club but continued to make a great contribution to sailing generally; and the skipper and crew of *Creighton's Naturally* for their skilful rescue in the southern ocean during the previous year's Round the World Race.

At about this time Sid Yaffe, Rear Commodore Australia, boosted the appeal of the local branch by presenting a handsome trophy specifically for Australian members who had started or completed a meritorious voyage from home waters. It is a heavy piece of carved teak, depicting a vessel sailing over a background outline of their continent. Like the Barton Cup, it is not competitive and therefore is not always awarded. Three recipients have taken both the Australian Trophy and the Barton Cup in the same year.

One of our earliest *Newsletter* yarns was of two young men attempting to sail from the UK to Australia in a small boat named *Skaffie*. One of them rejoiced in the name of Gordon Auchterlonie and the other was David Beard – still a member, and Port Officer Brisbane for the past 20 years. Perhaps the most difficult qualifying voyage is from Falmouth to Gibraltar, a distance of 1020 miles all with the temptation of many attractive harbours under one's lee. Multiply that five-fold and the temptation would be almost overpowering, but in 1991 David stuck it out to become the first person to circumnavigate Australia both non-stop and singlehanded. It was not in the same 20ft *Skaffie* which had given us so much entertainment in the second year of the Club, but in a 35ft steel Adams sloop of the same name. He had hoped to complete the circuit in 70 days but in the event took 68½, and raised considerable funds for his chosen charity, *Save the Children*. No one could rival David for the most meritorious short-handed voyage and he was awarded the 1991 Rose Medal, as well as the Australian Trophy.

The early 1990s witnessed a veritable explosion of intrepid voyaging, giving the Awards sub-committee serious difficulty in sorting the merely meritorious from the truly outstanding. As already mentioned, members were having to explore further and further afield to find the challenge of somewhere new, and they were not found wanting. Inevitably the ice sorted the men from the boys, and there were plenty of men with voyages deep into both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

It is difficult to understand what drives the 'ice men' without having experienced the thrill and the fear of being in so hostile an environment, but clearly the attraction is addictive as those who sail in such waters cannot resist going back time and again. We heard earlier from John Gore-Grimes about sailing with Warren Brown in Antarctica, and only three years later Warren himself wrote about his sortie north into the Greenland ice. His boat gives a greater degree of confidence than John's Nicholson 31 or Willy Ker's Contessa 32, but even at 61ft things can get worrying. Warren described how they were beset off the west coast of Greenland in 1990:

'On the night of 15th August we left for Qaqortoq (Julianehavn). That night is one I will always remember, having never felt quite so nervous at sea. We had hoped to reach Qaqortoq late that night, but Greenland Radio announced that a F8 gale was in the offing. *War Baby* headed for a gap between four very large icebergs (I estimated their size to be about 250,000 to 300,000 tons each) and we were soon in the middle of them, with weather conditions changing very rapidly. Darkness fell, the wind came dead ahead at about 30 knots true, and a dense fog came in so that one could see neither the bow nor the stern. I was not too worried at that point – but then the radar went out and we were blind. Not being able to pinpoint the icebergs we hove-to, and tried to keep *War Baby* in approximately the same position as when we lost the radar. It had been out for some eight hours before one of the crew noticed that the shock cord holding the main boom topping lift away from the mainsail had come loose and wrapped itself around the radar, shorting it out. I did indeed feel foolish, but also the fog had been so thick that we could not have seen the snarl on the radar mast. I now realize why all boats on the Greenland coast carry two radars.'

But even a boat as big and seaworthy as *War Baby* cannot prevent accidents. After leaving Greenland for Ireland they were running before storm force winds when:

'One of the crew, who had been ill, had not fastened herself properly into her bunk, and had then gone to sleep with both

arms inside her sleeping bag. As *War Baby* took a violent roll both bag and occupant were tossed some 15ft from the top bunk on the port side of the main saloon, over the top of the table and onto the cabin floor to leeward. She was in considerable pain with a dislocated shoulder, a blow to the head and perhaps even more serious injuries. We did not have enough sedatives to take her all the way to Ireland, and with storm conditions we could not retreat. There was no option but to get her off *War Baby*. A single side band call via Greenland Radio to a doctor in Qaqortoq confirmed that we were treating her in the correct manner, but that we should make all efforts to get her to a hospital. An hour later Greenland Radio put us in touch with the *Merkattze*, a large German hospital ship on her way to Hamburg and, through great good fortune, only some 125 miles astern. After ten minutes on the radio they agreed to take off our injured crew member. By increasing her speed to 14 knots and cutting ours to 4 knots by trailing warps astern we arranged a rendezvous for early that evening – at the time the decision was made we were doing 8 to 10 knots under bare poles in 55/60 knots true wind.

Designed to take sick crew off trawlers in bad weather, the *Merkattze* was equipped with inflatable dinghies and special derricks to keep them well away from the side of the vessel. As I kept *War Baby* hove-to in breaking seas and winds of well above 50 knots true, a trained rescue crew wearing hard hats transferred the casualty aboard from our leeward side. Soon we saw the rescue dinghy being hoisted two decks high, the ship almost disappearing in the heavy seas. We were indeed fortunate.'

While little ice is to be found at Cape Horn it is equally hostile, as experienced by **Denise Evans**, **Wolfgang Neuhuber**, and **Michael Johnson** who all reported on that corner of the world in the same 1991 issue of *Flying Fish*.

Denise sailed her Tradewind 33, *Dunlin of Wessex*, from Wales to the Magellan Straits, but that was the easy part. A less determined sailor would have given up, but with her crew of son and friend they forced a passage into the Straits against incredible odds. They were driven back by fierce winds and currents so many times that the signal halyard almost wore through with the frequent changes of courtesy flag as they crossed from Argentine to Chile and back again. Denise describes their first attempt:

'In the evening the wind dropped, enabling us to run down the coast on a course to clear the dangers lying southeast of Cape Virgins. We plotted the changing bearings on the light, calculating that the tide would start to run into the Magellan Straits soon after the light came abeam. But in the early hours the wind got

up again, rapidly rising from westerly F5 to F9 and above, and with wind against tide the seas grew to a 'full, rolling boil'. It was obvious that we could make no headway. Storm jib and triple-reefed main were too much for the mast, which shook and thrummed madly, even with no sail set. Fearful of losing it we once again turned tail, streaming warps.'

For a whole day they lay out at sea, hove-to or a-hull:

'Towards evening the wind moderated and we put up a scrap of sail, only to take it down almost at once, and by 0330 on 17th November we were lying a-hull again with the tiller lashed down. As the glass started to fall in the early hours of 18th November the wind dropped and went round to the north. Once again we headed for the Cape, keeping well inshore this time so as to be clear of Roca Virgen. We rounded the Cape and anchored in 39ft halfway between it and Punta Dungeness, little realizing how well we were to get to know this spot.

Innocents that we were, we expected to be able to move on up the Straits with the next favourable tide, though it was clear that we also needed a northwesterly wind. By the early hours on 19th it had shifted obligingly. We weighed anchor at dawn, cheerfully ran up our brand new Chilean courtesy flag and streamed the log as we headed towards Punta Dungeness. As we passed the point the wind backed to the west, rapidly rising to gale force. This was no coincidence, it was a rule: at the start of the west-going stream the wind freshens from the west. A no-win situation. Disheartened, we turned back to Fondeadero and anchored in the same spot, now hoisting the Argentine flag. It was tempting providence, Boswell observed with gloomy prescience, to fly the Chilean flag.

The following day at 0530 we made another sortie. The wind was northwesterly F6 and the glass 993mbs and going down. Motor-sailing with the tide in our favour we made good progress for about 20 miles. The wind then increased to gale force and headed us towards the Fuegian shore, which is low and indistinct except for the flares at night. The seas became shallow and dangerously steep and we were obliged to hand the sails and run back to our Fondeadero against the dying tide.

During the next day, at anchor, it blew very hard. The glass rose steadily until it reached 1008mbs at 1930 when it started to fall, whereupon the wind swung round to the northwest. We made ready for a third attempt. By 0200 on the 22nd we were approaching a line of oil rigs that stretches right across the Magellan Straits – there are about fifteen of them at varying intervals apart. As the tide turned in our favour the wind, true to

form, blasted us from the west and soon got up to F9/10. We kept up a little sail for as long as we dared in the hope of making up into Bahia Posession, on the north side, but a terrifying squall soon disabused us and we were back to steering downwind under bare poles, with the fearful menace of the oil rigs looming ahead. With the great wind and the tide behind us we were swept down at tremendous speed towards the low-lying point, which we could just make out in the welter of white water surrounding it. As we rounded the point, surfing down the breaking waves and heading towards the shore to regain our Fondeadero, we could feel the boat being pulled away towards the dreaded Sarmiento Bank. The engine was too weak to help us. Desperately hoisting a scrap of main we rushed into the shallows and flung out our anchors. Safe once more, we were very tired and thoroughly demoralized.'

Surprised at the lack of progress in their position reports to the local radio station, they were asked if there was a problem. Having spent more than a week trying to get into the Straits their main problem was shortage of food but Fernando, the friendly radio operator, assured them that he had plenty; it was just a matter of getting it to them. They arranged a rendezvous and after much difficulty landing they met Fernando himself with five stout marines laden with food. After pleasantries they were launched back into the surf by the waist deep marines and regained *Dunlin* in the darkness. Denise takes up the story:

'Next morning, 24th November, I spoke to Tommy on the VHF and thanked him and his marines for their most generous help. He gave us a reasonable forecast, and with the wind in the northwest and the glass dropping it seemed wise to make another attempt. The prospect was bleak, but soon, to our surprise, the wind eased and backed to the southwest, allowing us to sail on a northerly tack. Darkness found us clawing our way past the northernmost rig, which was brilliantly lit by all manner of coloured lights. By a happy chance the wind drew more to the south, allowing us to lay a course for Caleta Munciones at the western end of Bahia Posession. Numb with cold, we reached the anchorage at dawn. It is recommended by the pilot as suitable for small craft in westerly winds. No sooner had we anchored about ½ mile offshore in 30ft using both CQRs than the wind blew furiously from the southwest and we had a very bumpy day of it with the chain snubbing badly. Caleta Munciones is exposed to a considerable southerly fetch, and for hours on end the wind and sea howled past, drenching the boat and making rest difficult and sleep impossible. At noon on the 26th the wind eased for a few hours, during which we were able to re-anchor a few miles further south and closer in shore, ready for the next onslaught.'

In fact, it never came. The wind freed them and they were able to make progress through the Straits, reaching Punta Arenas after 14 days of brutal sailing. Denise left the boat there and returned the following season to explore Cape Horn and the Chilean Channels before completing the circumnavigation of South America. Her account was aptly named *In Tilman's Wake*. He used it as his qualifying voyage – she won the Barton Cup!

A simple transposition of the latitude of Denise's southern stamping ground takes one north to Maine where new Port Officer **Marjorie Bancroft** was preparing to launch the first of her many rallies. Marji had taken over from Bob Ayer, who had for many years welcomed members to that idyllic coast, but she was well placed to capitalise on her situation at Smith's Cove. In that sheltered bay she entertained a fleet of OCC boats which grew annually, drawn by her freshly picked mussels and blueberry muffins, until at the Millennium Rally some 40 yachts of six nationalities flaunted the Club burgee in the bay below her house. The meet became a byword for success, and each year, led by her irrepressible husband **Den**, the ralliers yarned and sang the night away. In addition to the American members summering on that coast, Marji's rally was also timed to catch those who were Europe-bound, several making it their point of departure for the Atlantic crossing.

Michael Johnson's tale of doubling the Horn makes one think that Denise made the right choice by going through the Magellan Straits. He and Becky were on an unconventional circumnavigation out of Norfolk Virginia which had started in 1988 with an east-to-west passage around the Horn. Their boat was a tough Westsail 32 named *Aissa*, in which they made the classic doubling – from 50°S in the Atlantic to 50°S in the Pacific – in 25 days. The direct distance is around 1200 miles, but *Aissa* covered 1961 miles and reached almost 59°S on her beat round. They were awarded the 1990 Barton Cup for that leg of their cruise, but had more fun to come. Michael didn't write about that passage for *Flying Fish* – perhaps there isn't much to tell about beating for three weeks – but we heard from him a year later after they had enjoyed some soft sailing in the Pacific. We pick up the story off New Zealand:

'Both Becky and I were below when, without any unusual noise, *Aissa* was lifted up and began to go over to port. As we continued over I became aware that *Aissa* was not going to right herself. I was on the starboard pipe berth and Becky at the table. I crashed into the overhead skylight, seeing the blue glass whale up close (*Aissa* has a stained glass skylight) and realised that *Aissa* was upside down. I remember wondering if we would go right on through 360° or roll back upright the way we had gone over. We

seemed to hang upside down momentarily and then *A/issa* righted herself by rolling on over. All below was chaos. Cans of food, broken table, cushions, charts, ketchup, books, broken glass, kerosene, water all mixed together without a place left to stand. Becky was in a heap near the stove and at first made no response to my calls, but finally groggily said she was alright.

I looked out on the deck, knowing what I was going to find but still finding it a sight I had hoped never to see. The deck was swept clean of mast, boom, rigging and dinghy. The lifelines and stanchions supporting them were smashed, the pulpit a twisted mass of tubes, the boom gallows jagged and broken. The wire standing rigging was off to starboard, attached to the mast and boom, which I could see pulled at the chainplates. I was concerned to put distance between the hull and the mast as there was a danger that *A/issa* might be holed and mortally wounded by the spars still bound to her. Becky checked the bilges while I used the bolt cutters to cut the shrouds and stays. I cut the backstay above the turnbuckle – then the running backstays – then the three port shrouds.

I went below and we pumped the bilges – the water was controllable. The starboard fuel tank had broken away but was still sitting upright in the engine compartment with the filler pipe open and slopping out fuel. Both batteries had also broken loose but were undamaged though drained. I reconnected the batteries and braced the fuel tank to keep it from turning over. The engine checked out and I tried to start it – it ran. I shut it down and went back topsides to check on the mast, only to find it had chafed through the halyard and was gone.'

They motored to Dunedin in southern New Zealand for repairs before continuing their uphill Five Cape circumnavigation.

Reported in the same action-packed *Flying Fish* 1991/2 was **Maureen** and **Jem Tetley**'s attempted return from the Azores to the UK a few years previously. They had called in at the islands on their way home across the Atlantic after sailing their faithful Swan 36, *Carte Blanche* in the 1986 TWOSTAR. It was a year of persistent easterlies and they were beset with rigging problems. First a lower shroud went at the bottlescrew, and while making repairs they were knocked down by a heavy breaking sea which did more damage. They were forced onto the unfavourable tack until the shroud was strengthened then, after two more days of slogging under reduced canvas, another shroud went, this time at the top, just as the wind went abaft the beam. For the first time they could have laid the course, but the weak starboard rigging now forced them onto the unfavourable gibe. In a lull one of their crew managed to go up the

mast and make a repair, after which they struggled on, again in rising easterlies, for another ten days. Then another bottlescrew went, and to take the strain off the mast they had to run before it, away from home, trailing warps. Nearly three weeks out they gave in and shaped a course for Coruña, or as near as the wind would allow, arriving there after 23 days for a distance made good of 900 miles.

Halfway around the world, another intrepid OCC lady was enjoying the tropics. **Rona House** had forsaken chilly Maine for the Far East and had an adventurous passage in the Java Sea aboard *Cacique*, her Vancouver 27. This sea is not considered safe even for a fully-crewed yacht, but Rona was singlehanded. After a tough 24 hours on deck while they cleared the land and the last of the shipping, she was able to go below for a rest. Only minutes later she was brought up all standing when *Cacique* speared a ship that had apparently altered course to examine the seemingly crewless yacht. She rushed forward to fend off her assailant but he sheered off without a word, despite the attraction of Rona, stark naked, disentangling the wreckage on the foredeck. The bow was a mess and she had broken three ribs (hers) but she was making good progress when the next misfortune struck – a virulent bug which laid her so low that she couldn't hold down any food and had lost 15lbs by the time she staggered into Singapore a week later.

After repairs she and *Cacique* set off up the Malacca Strait, but when hoisting a foresail the halyard parted and she went over the side. She grabbed a sheet as she fell, but after being towed for half an hour she gave up trying to climb aboard and struck out for the shore some six miles away. About an hour later she was picked up by a fishing boat which eventually caught *Cacique*, but then tried to claim salvage. Having negotiated her way out of that situation (she doesn't say what her state of dress was) she had a light passage across the Indian Ocean until they approached the Maldives. There she was approached by a heavily-crewed, high speed vessel which smacked very much of smuggler, if not actual piracy. With a loaded flare gun by her side she kept up a conversation with imaginary crew below for some ten minutes while they ranged alongside. They left her untouched, but only days later another boat was boarded in that same area and stripped (the yacht, not the crew).

Fate, or other demons, hadn't quite finished with her but, after a tough beat up the Red Sea, the well-seasoned Rona was quite up to repelling a lecherous Suez Canal pilot who offered to waive the \$200 per hour towing fee in exchange for certain favours.

Perhaps not Barton Cup stuff, but certainly a well-deserved Rose Medal.

That Cup was hogged for four successive years by the southern explorers. In

1991 Willy Ker and *Assent* sailed south in the autumn heading for the Falklands – the same Willy whom we last heard of dismantling Ann Fraser’s engine in West Africa two years earlier. This time the roles were reversed, Ann joining Willy in the Canaries for a second go at the wild African coast before he continued singlehanded to the Falklands, where *Assent* remained for the winter.

In the southern spring of 1992 Willy rejoined *Assent* (see photograph page 232) together with member **Laurence Ormerod**. They left the Falklands in unseasonable weather, wearing fur hats to avoid sun-stroke, and called at Puerto Williams to top up with stores and diesel enough for two months. However, Willy added laconically, ‘we are told that in extremis it is possible to bring down a penguin with a rugger tackle and a seal with an ice axe’. They rounded the Horn, for the sake of it, and then bore away for the Peninsula, again in unseasonable weather, this time wearing shorts. It didn’t last and they had a boisterous crossing to Deception Island where they arrived in the dark and had to anchor outside for the night. In the morning:

‘We scuttled in through Neptune’s Bellows (the portentously named entrance) and anchored in Whalers Bay inside the crater of Deception Island. It is not the snuggest of anchorages, shelving very quickly off the beach of volcanic ash and the holding is not too good, but we were glad to be there as the glass dropped to 965mb, the wind blew hard and horizontal snow whirled past the hatch.’

But there were compensations:

‘The following day, 7 February, we found hot fresh water by digging at the base of an ice slope. A very pleasant bath followed, with one foot in almost scalding water and the other propped on an ice shelf.’

One begins to understand the fascination, when Willy waxes lyrical about this ‘utmost end of the earth’:

‘The afternoon became calm and, one by one, magnificent landmarks broke out of their cloud covers – Trinity and Hoseason Islands, and then the Antarctic mainland itself for the first time. The evening grew ever more amazing as we drew nearer to our target, Liege Island. The ice cover increased, including bergs 250ft high (by sextant), whales sounded close by us, and a huddle of penguins was spotted on the projecting toe of an iceberg. It was an overpowering experience – nothing can prepare you for Antarctica.’

They worked their way south but were eventually beaten:

'We were about three miles from the entrance channel into the Argentine Islands (and Faraday) when we hit thicker ice. From up the mast I eventually spotted the way: it did not look encouraging, but I felt there might be a way in. In any case, I could see the masts of the base over on the other side of an island only a mile away – could almost taste the beer! The end of the road was a nasty squeeze between floes, which pushed poor *Assent* over and I thought might strip the stanchions off at deck level. It was time, at 65°15'5S, to turn around.'

After a month of ice dodging they returned to Port Stanley, where Willy left the boat for a second southern winter. In the spring he rejoined her, again with Laurence but this time accompanied by Laurence's wife, **Jill**. They spent Christmas in the Patagonian Channels, and after the Ormerods departed Ann Fraser returned for the passage to Easter Island. He then singlehanded to Vancouver via Hawaii, then worked his way north to the Aleutians where he was joined by that other ice aficionado, John Gore-Grimes. By then Willy had covered 13,000 miles since leaving Patagonia and was on the threshold of his next quest – Wrangel Island, off Siberia in the Arctic Ocean.

At Nome on the southern entrance to the Bering Strait they had to wait a week for their Russian visas, so they made a run north to fill in time and possibly visit acquaintances. They were hopeful of landing at Point Hope, but conditions didn't permit so they turned about at 68° 22'N, but did become the first yacht to visit Little Diomed. Back at Nome their visas for Provideniya were waiting so they made the short passage to Siberia which they didn't find inspiring:

'The approach to Provideniya is not very thrilling. Rather drab barren hills with the odd streak of grey snow flanking the entrance, while the town itself can be identified by the pall of black smoke belching out of the power station chimney – no Clean Air Act here! It is hard to describe the total dereliction of a place like Provideniya – buildings go up but are patently never maintained, roads are built but the pot-holes never filled. On our way up to the flat we climbed up a flight of concrete steps, of which two had collapsed and the gap had been filled with an old wooden pallet. My abiding impression is of a very friendly and decent people struggling to keep their heads above water.'

It was too late to explore further so Wrangel had to wait for another season. The crew left in Dutch Harbour and Willy pottered for two months through Alaskan waters and slowly south, singlehanded, enjoying the first of the autumn colours after the cruise ships and sports fishermen had departed. He laid up in

Vancouver, British Columbia, and the following year trucked *Assent* over the Rockies and relaunched at the Head of Lakes, where a local warned him not to attempt Lake Superior in 'that little boat'.

65°S to 68°N represents more than a third of a circumnavigation and must be about as long a cruise as it is possible to make in a North–South direction. Adding in a longitudinal displacement of halfway round the world, much of it singlehanded, makes this a most formidable cruise for which Willy twice received the Barton Cup – in 1992 and again four years later.

If Willy regarded John Gore-Grimes as his ice mentor, **Hugh Clay** in turn did his apprenticeship with Willy, and in 1993 he put it to the test down south. Hugh had bought *Aratapu*, a 38ft steel sloop, in Australia and qualified with a trip to New Zealand in 1990. He left her in Tasmania for a couple of years, then returned in 1992 to bring her home to the UK. Crewed by Club member **Mandy Beecroft**, *Aratapu* ran down the Southern Ocean to the Horn, crossing the Date Line on Christmas Day (see photograph page 232), and spent the summer exploring Tierra del Fuego and the Chilean Channels. They then left South America to starboard via Robinson Crusoe Island, the Galapagos and Panama, getting back to England in June 1993.

The fall of the Iron Curtain had gradually opened whole new cruising areas in the Baltic Sea, and this writer was one of the first to explore it in 1992. While *glasnost* was, in theory, meant to welcome visitors, in practice the traditional suspicion of and hostility towards foreigners had changed little, one's movements were severely constrained and it took weeks to obtain a visa. For the first time in over 50 years it was possible to sail into St Petersburg, but one had to stick to a cleared route and could not stop along the way, and once there facilities were extremely primitive and security a major problem. The canal through to the Finnish lakes had also been cleared to non-Scandinavian boats, but again the bureaucracy was daunting, while the Baltic States offered waters which had not been explored by western yachts for 70 years, with navigation marks of about the same vintage. A Club rally in Helsinki in 1992 attracted only four boats, but was sufficient to spread the word about this wonderful area so that the burgee soon became a familiar sight and a Port Officer Finland was appointed in the person of **Max Ekholm**.

At the southern end of Russia **Alan Logan** was exploring the Black Sea in his 44ft ketch *Katy II*. He had sailed to Odessa in 1989 and been invited by the Russians to return two years later to advise on developing yacht tourism, yet was given the same rough treatment by the authorities who were convinced

that his aim was to foment revolution. Against great odds and with admirable persistence he made perhaps the most extensive cruise of the Black Sea by any foreign yacht. The following year he went north to the Baltic and again did a lengthy cruise within the limits allowed. He was a fluent Russian speaker and did much to persuade the authorities that it was in their interest to make foreigners welcome. On both trips he wrote at length in *Flying Fish*, compiling what amounted at the time to the first English-language cruising guide to either sea. His efforts were rewarded with the David Wallis Trophy for 1992.

John Maddox, as Rear Commodore Australia, was most punctilious in reporting the goings on in his territory, but his members were rather more coy when it came to telling us of their adventures. John whetted our appetite in 1987 when he described **Geoff Payne's** *Skookum*, the bullet-proof steel cutter which he built in Vancouver, taking four years to complete. She was designed by Geoff's nephew, **Alan Payne**, so she came with a good pedigree, but we heard little of her for several years, other than snippets from John. However, we got a veritable feast in 1994 when Geoff brought us up to date after 50,000 miles had passed under her keel. From Vancouver he and **Margaret** had cruised Alaska, then gone south to Antarctica arriving there late in the season. Geoff describes the conditions:

'We entered the southern Chilean waterways well into autumn, and it was as pretty as a picture up around Isla Chiloe. Southern Chile and its folk were a delight to be amongst – Margaret and I had both learned Spanish especially for the voyage. Thus relationships with the authorities always went smoothly. Fishermen to whom we chatted showed us where to anchor away from the wild williwaws and said that they preferred to work the southern waters in winter when the winds were quieter.

By any standards other than those of eager adventurers the weather at first was appalling! Cloud, rain and wind in colossal quantities, turning to heavy snow by the time we reached the Magellan Strait. Temperatures down to minus 10°C, icebreaking out of fjords that froze overnight, and falling flat on our faces on ice-covered rocks taking the dinghy painter ashore. Wrecks of ships spectacularly speared onto rock pinnacles in mid-stream were equally chilling. But the wind nearly always came from astern and down channel after channel we ran, wing and wing in flat water, stupendous scenery rising up either side of us and always finding a snug cove for the night. Occasionally the very top of the cordillera ridge was revealed – we were right up beside the Andes. They towered above us. The setting sun once turned all the new snows to pink.'

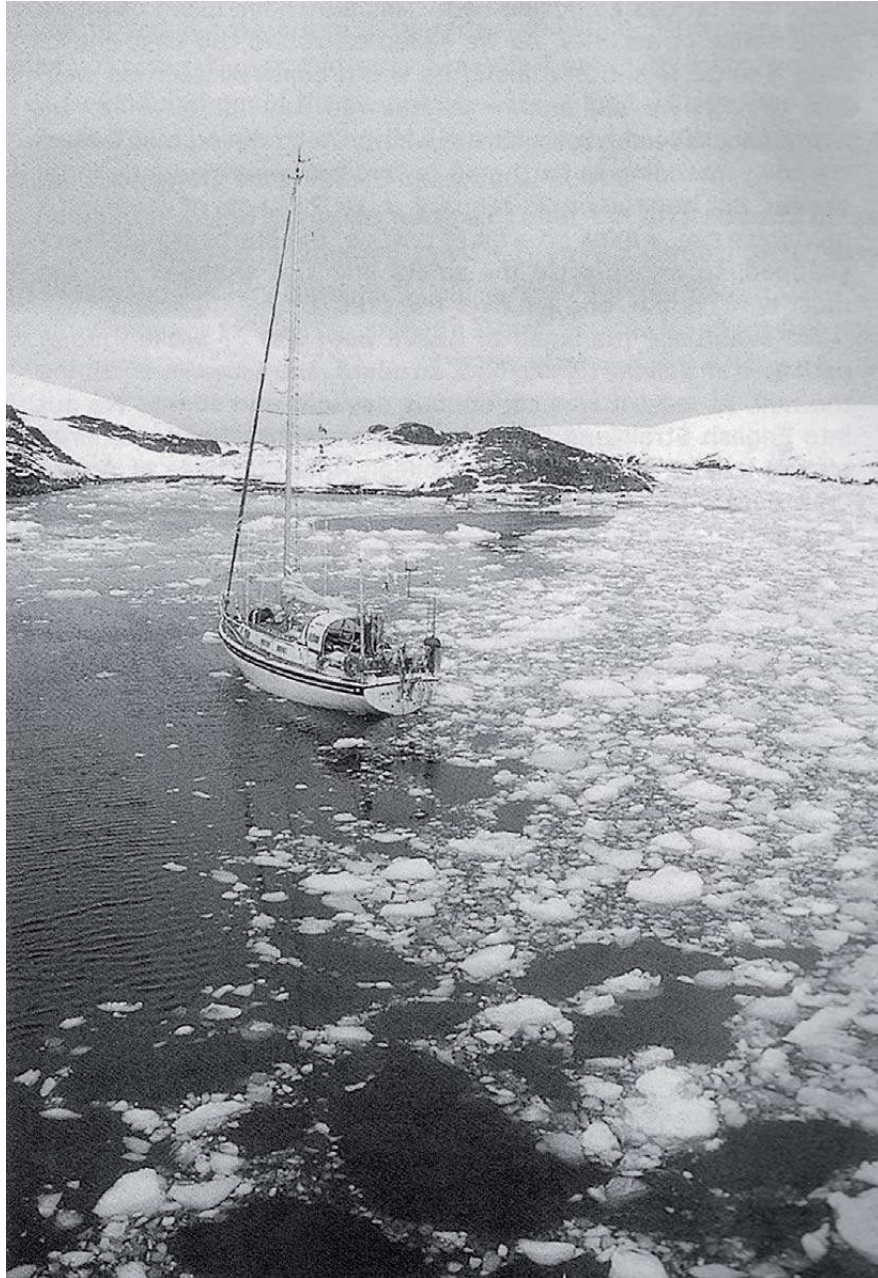
Geoff and Margaret used the Falklands as their base for two years, visiting the Peninsula, South Georgia and the Horn so that they got to know the area well and felt comfortable joining the locals in unlikely anchorages:

‘Three times we have run the Lemaire Strait – two times, I should say, because we overstood it altogether one awful night (the barometer had been down to 957 millibars). There the Pacific meets the Atlantic in tidal turmoil. A tide-rip came upon us – a breaking wave all along the horizon and we were caught close in on Staten Island. In this mass of white water birds plunged, fish jumped and even a whale spouted. Fascinating, were we not being pulled about all over the place. No wonder there have been four hundred recorded shipwrecks off Staten Island. With hatches closed and harnesses on we worked the sheets and with good windward ability and big diesel backup were soon back in the clear. Conventional wisdom says to stay well clear of exposed shores, but with experience, smart tacking and the echo sounder we learned to sneak inside the kelp line, behind reefs, holing up in tiny coves until the worst blew by. Sharing such a niche might be one of the incredibly rugged local crab fishermen, in a wooden craft so crude you wouldn’t want to cross Sydney Harbour in it.’

Geoff’s narrative is rather shy of dates, but he was awarded the Barton Cup for 1993 making it four in a row for the southern adventurers.

It must have been coincidental, but these years that have been dubbed ‘Renaissance’ were perhaps the most adventurous on record for the Club. There is no doubt that reading of others’ intrepid voyaging is infectious, driving the less adventurous to push a little further in the knowledge that it can be done, and any one issue of *Flying Fish* in the early 1990s carried such a feast of adventure that even the most timid were stirred to put to sea. We saw earlier how both the Atlantic and the Pacific were becoming crowded with members but, 20 years on, no corner of the oceans was sacrosanct. And if one had to make a commonplace circumnavigation, then make it unusual in the way that the **Reverend Bob Shepton** did aboard his Westerly Discus 33, *Dodo’s Delight*.

Starting in 1993, Bob took a rolling crew of disadvantaged ‘lads’ round the world – but not by the conventional route, and after a most unpropitious start. At the prescribed time for departure they were still short of a wind generator, but after being blessed by the Bishop with a suitable fanfare of trumpets they had to leave Falmouth on schedule, so slunk the four miles to the Helford River to await delivery of the recalcitrant item. They sailed south down the Atlantic calling at the Falklands before making for the Peninsular, but not without incident:



Where water ends and ice begins ... *Dodo's Delight* in Antarctica

'We noticed that evening that the outer wires on both aft lower shrouds were beginning to de-strand at the top near the Talurit fittings, so rigged safety lines with 12mm sheets tensioned with block and tackles alongside both. This may have lulled us into a false sense of security. As we sailed on round the east end of King George Island and along its south coast all seemed well, and though we did anchor in Maxwell Bay for a while, we eventually sailed on towards the well-protected haven of Yankee Harbour, intending to fix the aft lowers more permanently in its shelter. But at 0400 on 23 January, in 18-20 knots of wind and a moderate sea, we fell off a bit of a wave, the starboard aft lower snapped, to my surprise the safety line also snapped and the mast bent, broke, and fell over the side.

We eventually managed to heave both bits of broken mast, both sails and all the rigging back on board, and without puncturing the hull. At least it was continuous daylight and sunny. We put into English Strait and Discovery Bay on engine, and anchored off the helpful and hospitable Chilean Antarctic base of Arturo Prat. Here we set about re-jigging the bottom section of the mast and cutting the shrouds down to size. This we eventually raised as a new 18ft mast.

We considered various methods of getting back to the Falklands, including an offer of help from a Chilean Naval rescue ship, but eventually decided to sail. If **Shackleton** could do it in a leaky old boat like the *James Caird*, we could do it in the well found *Dodo's Delight*! Of course it was not like that and we had a good passage, leaving on a lovely sunny morning. To our surprise we found that by putting the No 1 jib on its side – ie. the foot acting as the luff – and sheeting it right back to a block on the aft cleat (the lads called it 'windsock sailing'), and with the trysail acting as a main, we could reach at 4, 5 and later even 6 knots and more when surfing. We had nothing more than force 8 touching 9 and took just over seven days for over 700 miles, with some use of engine in calms. Perhaps not fully a jury rig? Still ... a bit of adventure at last!

A new mast was flown out by the RAF and they went on to complete a two year, Five Cape circumnavigation.

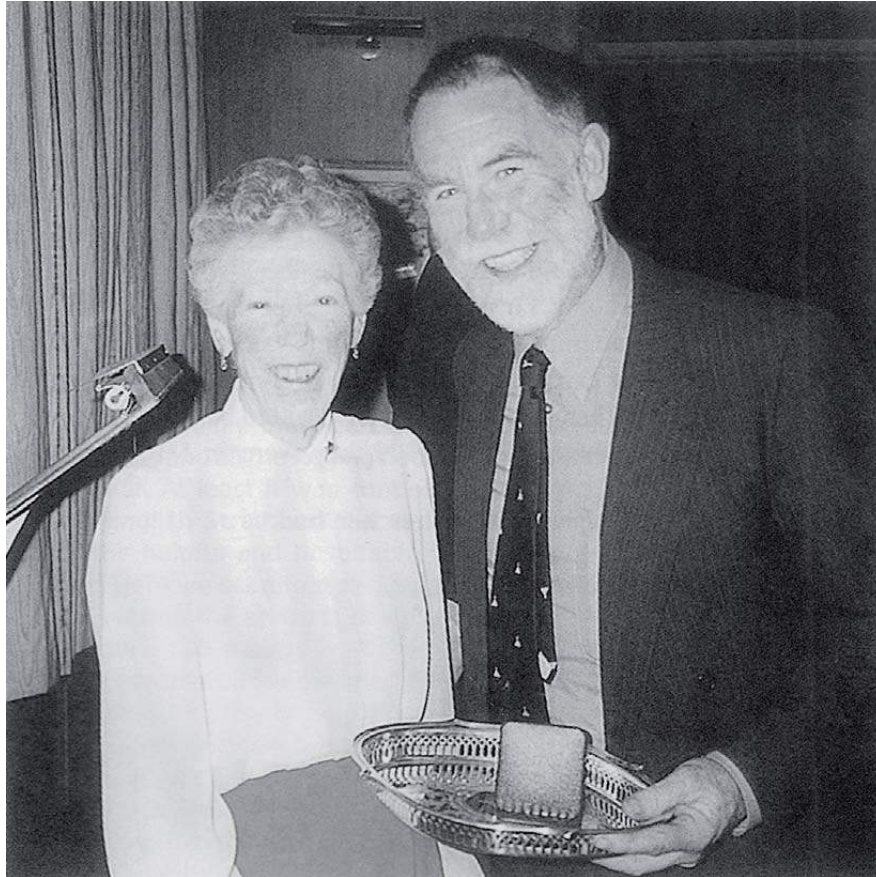
Paddy Barry is, as his name implies, an Irishman in every sense of the word, and sailed his 40ft Galway Hooker *St Patrick* with a gang of tough fellow countrymen whose music usually heralded their arrival almost before the boat was in sight. He qualified with a passage from the Canaries to Bermuda in 1986, but that cured him of soft warm-water sailing and he too turned to the ice. The first time we heard of his exploits was from fellow Irish member,

Terry Irvine, who had joined Paddy in Greenland in 1993 and qualified on the way back across the Atlantic. *St Patrick* was built of wood, lots of it. Like Tilman's old pilot cutters, she was not the ideal boat for ice, but aluminium sheathing around the waterline gave some protection. However, she had the advantage of being designed to carry heavy turf out to the islands off the west coast of Ireland and could therefore take a large load of humans. They were eight up, including a party of climbers, and used Umanaaq as a base from which the shore party were able to climb local peaks.

Their ambition was to get as far north as Thule, but they stopped off on the way for the climbers to attempt the Devil's Thumb, a vertical pillar, from the foot of which the whaling captains would survey Melville Bay to see if the ice would allow passage to 'The Great North Water', said to be an ice free polynya and home to scores of whales. At 74°53'N they were in 5/10 pack getting

St Patrick pushes her luck





**Paddy Barry receives the David Wallis Trophy
from Admiral Mary Barton**

heavier when their lead came to a dead end, so as the season was late they gave up and turned south for home. But that had whetted Paddy's appetite and, like the other ice addicts, he could not resist returning.

Whilst there was no shortage of activity at sea, it was felt by some that the Club was stagnating. The recently circulated questionnaire had invited suggestions for any innovation designed to make the Club more attractive and to give better service to members, and in 1993 Toby Baker wrote at length proposing the introduction of cadet members who would enjoy a reduced subscription during their early, struggling years. This was considered so radical that a further

questionnaire on this particular point was distributed with the *Newsletter*. The replies were finely balanced, but at that time the finances were not sufficiently healthy to accept any overall reduction of income so it would have meant raising the full members fee.

Meanwhile, Mary's tour as Commodore was drawing to a close, and to avoid any recurrence of the recriminations which had dogged the previous change the Committee were at great pains to make the election of new flag officers as transparent as possible. The Commodore-elect had stated that he would not stand opposed, to obviate any division and dissent, and that he would only stay for one stint of four years so that there should be no suggestion of repeating the old treadmill.

During her term Mary had put the club firmly back on its feet after the severe knock-down six years earlier. She had been supported by an energetic team with Howard Gosling as her staunch Vice Commodore throughout, and in those six years the Club had undergone a slow but very significant change. The setback had been salutary, as from the somewhat amateur outfit of the 1980s the Club had been transformed into a thoroughly professional organisation. It had previously stumbled along with an overworked, underpaid Secretary who was responsible for almost everything. In consequence, no matter how diligent he was, things got overlooked or forgotten. This was tenable when the Club had been a mere handful of members, many of whom knew each other, but once it had grown to over 1000 it needed a tighter organisation. Being a club that relied on written communication to hold it together it was inevitable that, when their letters remained unanswered, members had begun to feel neglected.

By 1994 there were two paid Secretaries and a paid Editor, all of whom were right on top of their jobs, assisted by an army of volunteers. The Club was bonded together by a quarterly *Newsletter*, which kept us informed of members' doings without them having to sweat over a full-scale piece for the more formal *Flying Fish*. This, meanwhile, had taken on a modern outward appearance and between the covers was a veritable feast of thrilling travels as well as much useful instruction on matters nautical. The finances were thoroughly sound and new members were joining at an unprecedented rate. Thus when Mary handed over to this scribe in 1994 he was moved to coin a Confucianism – 'He who lands on the crest of a wave should not stand still lest he should sink'.

XIV – PORT OFFICERS : A TRIBUTE

In his report of the inaugural meeting Teddy Haylock, editor of *Yachting World*, wrote somewhat hopefully that it was the Club's intention '... to appoint local representatives. Thus, a member sailing into some harbour half-way across the Pacific would be met by a friend and all his wants attended to', and this was enshrined in the first issue of the Rules in 1956. Perhaps it was a little ambitious, and for all the good intentions the scheme got off to a very slow start. There was even discussion of abandoning it altogether when there was a dearth of volunteers in the early days. However if they had given it up there is little doubt that it would have been invented in another form, as Port Officers are now such an integral part of the Club.

It was not until 1961 that Port Officers were listed in the *Newsletter*, so it is hardly surprising that the scheme made a hesitant start since there was no way of finding out who they were. The first list showed 13, but by 1966, when next published, this had grown to 22. Two names, however, appear in neither list but must be credited with being our earliest standard bearers.

The first is Alfredo Lagos in Vigo, who was once described as having been a Port Officer since before the Club began as his father had befriended Hum prior to 1954. The family is now into the third generation of honorary members who so generously look after passing sailors. The second, of course, is Peter Azevedo in Horta (see photograph page 239), who is a friend of every passing yachtsman but who reserves a special welcome for members. Again, three generations of the Azevedo family have looked after us and no doubt will continue to do so in their mid-Atlantic haven.

It would be invidious to go on listing in order of merit, but a glance at the lists of Port Officers over the years will identify those who have given long and outstanding service. First amongst these is doubtless Ian Nicolson from the Clyde. As a Founder Member, Ian has been our man on the Clyde since the beginning of time – OCC time, anyway – and is the only person to have appeared in every Port Officers List over the 50 years of the Club's existence. He has hardly ever failed to report on northern happenings for *Flying Fish* and was the first and second recipient of the OCC Award. He is currently writing his 23rd book on boats and sailing, so is a mine of information on matters nautical. Technically too late for this history, but relevant to the story, is that the Scottish members had, by 2004, become so numerous that they warranted their own Rear Commodore and at the Golden Jubilee celebrations Ian was raised to that rank.

The 1966 list shows another name which has been a constant until very

recently, that of Warren Brown, who served the Club from his outpost in Bermuda for over 30 years. We have read of Warren's outstanding cruises in *War Baby*, but he has spent sufficient time at home to help the many members who pass through his popular parish. Also in that second list is Jim Griffin, who started out as our man in the Bahamas, where he lived aboard his grand old pilot cutter *Northern Light*. Jim moved his seat of authority three times so he became in a sense a roving Port Officer. He sailed to Greece and there hoisted his flag, before moving on to Gibraltar to fly his pennant on the Rock for many years.

The same 1966 list contained a name which can still be found in the current *Members Handbook* (previously known as the *List of Members*), but now the next generation – that of Bob Ayer. Bob senior joined in 1961 and immediately took on the Port Officer's duties for his attractive cruising ground of Maine, holding that office for 30 years.

A famous name, but one who started as a humble Port Officer, was Alec Rose who carried out those duties at Portsmouth from joining in 1965 until his death in 1991. He was still shown in the 1990 list as being our Admiral and a knighted Port Officer. Perhaps members found it a bit daunting ringing a knight of the realm to ask where they could empty their holding tank, but Sir Alec was just as approachable to any member right to the end.

It is in the popular cruising areas that Port Officers are most often called upon, and the Club has been particularly well served in the Caribbean by several long-standing officers. **Bill Fowler** dropped his anchor in Antigua in 1966 after his qualifying passage and has based *Xicale* there ever since. He was followed to the Caribbean in 1972 by **Dick Morris**, who put down roots in Tortola and is still our PO there today. Non-members, but equally welcoming, were the **Knowles brothers** in Barbados who served the best flying-fish butties in the north Atlantic. On the southern fringe of the Caribbean a warm welcome has for many years been forthcoming from **Harold** and **Kwailan La Borde** in Trinidad – provided, of course, that Harold hadn't just finished another of his many home-built boats and was doing a shake-down round the world. Although he didn't become a member until 1990, and was not promulgated as Port Officer until 1996, he had been well known to the Club for many years and was first reported in the *Journal* of 1966.

Perhaps the most patient of our entire faithful band was **Jim Wales** in Buzzards Bay. His office overlooked the entrance to the Cape Cod Canal with a snug mooring beneath it, and yet this writer was his first visitor in 20 years. And that was only a social call.

The prize for longevity must go to Ed Greeff who covered Long Island Sound from his home port of Oyster Bay for 20 years and only retired when he reached

the ripe old age of 90. He rarely failed to greet a member who called, and in the year 2000 when in his 90th year entertained our Commodore. He wasn't feeling up to driving, so his wife Betsy drove them into town. She was 99. Ed died in 2003 at the age of 93, still a member.

Living in England it is easy to think of Port Officers as exclusively overseas, but there are plenty here waiting for the call. Whoever calls at Harwich? You might well ask, but if you had you would have found **Derrick Allan** anxious to give you a hand for almost 30 years. Derrick joined in 1954 with a transatlantic that year, and while not quite counting as a Founder he has been a faithful member ever since.

The list could go on, but the more folk that are mentioned the more offence one could cause by omission. There are currently 92 Port Officers so some 80 have gone unsung, but that does not lessen their contribution, even if like Jim Wales they had to wait 20 years for the call. It is a good exercise to read through the list shown in the Millennium edition of *Flying Fish*. It demonstrates the breadth of our Club and shows that one is rarely far from friendly help anywhere in the world. Both members and non-members offer their services, not out of any sense of philanthropy, but because they are genuinely interested in cruising and the folk who cruise. In many cases they have been in a position of need themselves and know how reassuring it is to have a friendly and knowledgeable voice on the end of a telephone in a strange and perhaps unfriendly environment. They serve us well, and it up to us to show our appreciation by making use of them. Not necessarily in the sense of using their services, but by calling on them to say hello and perhaps inviting them aboard for a drink.

XV – CONSOLIDATION

The appointment of an Admiral had been left in abeyance since the death of Sir Alec in 1991, but the end of Mary's reign in 1994 was a perfect opportunity to elevate her to that rank. At the ceremony of installation she was presented with a crystal rose bowl engraved with a depiction of *Rose Rambler* and the dates of her office, most appropriately accompanied by cavorting dolphins. In turn Mary presented the Club with a silver tankard to be awarded for the most ambitious or arduous qualifying voyage by a new member. It soon became known affectionately as 'Mary's Mug'.

One of her first and pleasant duties in 1994, not exactly as Admiral but with her Vertue connection through Hum, was to review the fleet of boats of that design that had gathered in the Solent. Mary took the salute as 12 Vertues sailed past the Royal Lymington YC some 44 years after Hum had made them so famous. That connection had surely contributed to their continued popularity, as five new ones had been completed the previous year and five more were in build. It was both pleasing and profitable to see a regular advertisement for them in *Flying Fish*.

The change of Commodore coincided with the expiration of Howard's term as Vice, to be replaced by Peter Aitchison who had been so strong in his support six years earlier. Anne Hammick had become one of the Rear Commodores the year before, and she was now joined by Geoff Pack as second junior flag officer. Thus it was a largely new team who had the daunting task of maintaining the previous impetus; fortunately the Club had attained such momentum that it would have been difficult to slow it down.

Subscriptions were raised in 1994 with a remarkably small drop in membership. It was an early but prudent move, as expenditure was daily creeping up while the country was experiencing relatively high inflation. This rise in subs kept the Club firmly on the road to financial stability so that it began to enjoy an upward spiral – so much more comfortable than the previous downward slope. For the next four years new members joined at a rate of more than 100 each year and less than half that number left. By 1995 membership was above 1200, a rise which has continued steadily so that today it is around 1800. This flush of new, mid-90s, members provided a most useful windfall of joining fees, and the periodic Long Term Cruising Symposia had also added a substantial injection of funds.

It would have been easy at that stage to relax the self-imposed financial strictures, but the Committee maintained a rigid discipline until it had accumulated

reserves equal to one year's normal income. Non-recurrent income and that derived from the extraordinary number of joining fees was a bonus. This ambition was achieved by 1995 largely due to the Membership Secretaries' tenacious chasing of backsliders. By then they had achieved a collection rate of 98%, and the numbers needing to be struck off were steadily decreasing. Nevertheless, the Treasurer and Membership Secretaries continued to maintain a very strict control, apprising the Committee of the detailed financial position at every meeting so that trends were spotted in ample time to apply a correction.

If Mary had largely healed the old wounds, her successor – the current writer (see photographs page 237) – was determined to bind the Club together. She had travelled widely to functions abroad, as had Howard Gosling, her Vice Commodore, so that the administration was no longer remote but now contained recognisable personalities. However, there was still some lingering suspicion in certain corners of the world. An early visit to Australia by **Jill** and myself found a membership of less than half of that of the heyday of the '80s, but with a very

**The perennial Australians – Kathryn Delaney,
Sid Yaffe, Carol Hocking, David Hocking,
Michael Delaney, Virginia Parsons and Nick Lowes**



strong spirit and an almost proprietorial attitude towards 'their OCC' that was thoroughly healthy. They had their own regalia and trophy, but the no-nonsense Australians didn't want any truck with club politics and had left in droves during the troubles. Also, it must be admitted, their early numbers were rather generously stated and included many non-payers who, over time, were weeded out. However the hard core remained, with many well-known names such as Wally Burke, Sid Yaffe, John Maddox, **Charles Davis, David Hocking, Mike Delaney, Pat Wall**, David Beard and most of those who had made it such a vibrant branch over the years.

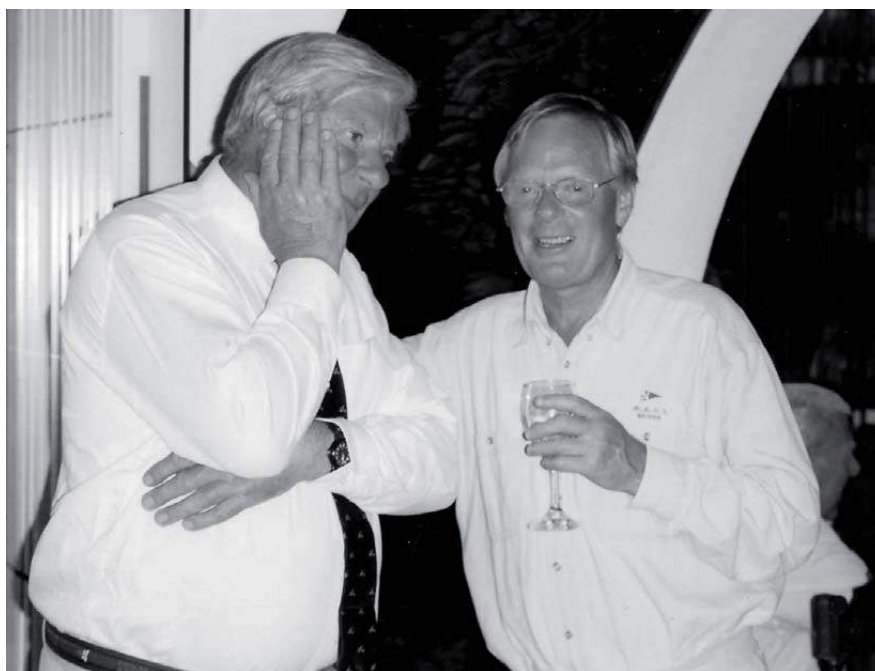
The East Coast of the States was humming, but the concentration of members had hitherto been north of New York. The 1994 Port Officers list shows 12 from New York and northwards, against only three to the south. One Rear Commodore had looked after the whole of the eastern seaboard, and rallies had always been on the North East coast. **Sally Henderson** (see photograph page 237), had ploughed a fairly lonely furrow at Gibson Island in north Chesapeake, and our two representatives in Florida had to rely on passing traffic. However, by the late '80s things began to stir further south. **Bill Caldwell** had joined in 1988 and the following year he and his wife **Alice** organised a rally at their lovely spot on the Piankatank River. With no authority other than enthusiasm (he wasn't even Port Officer), he went on to run an annual spring cruise-in-company and an autumn party that became the venue for many local members and itinerants who soon began to plan their movements around Bill's dates. His rallies gathered pace and began to rival northern activities, which until then had been largely shore-bound. It was a neat reversal of roles as previously the New Englanders had always shown the way. It soon became clear that a more formal arrangement was necessary, so in 1995 a new post was created and Bill was elected the first Rear Commodore USA South East. He came over to the AGM for his installation, bringing along his proposer and seconder, and he and Alice went on welcoming members to the Piankatank until he retired from office in 2002.

The 1984 census by nationality showed 75 Irish members, but this had halved by the time of the next stock-take in 1993. In my annual address in 1995 I analysed membership trends, and it came as no surprise that the highest rate of recruitment was in those areas where the Club was represented by a flag officer and, therefore, where things happened. There was always a healthy trickle of applicants from the ranks of those who had at last achieved their ambition to qualify, but the majority came from contact with existing members at Club events. So by 1996, when the Irish fraternity had regained such strength that they had become the fourth largest block of members after the UK, USA and

Australia, it was logical that they should have their own flag officer. There was a problem however – previously the Northern Irish members had been shown under the United Kingdom umbrella and the southerners as a separate country. Whilst strictly correct, sailors tend not to observe such political niceties and they made it quite clear that any representative from Ireland should speak for the whole island. In due course **Dermot Ryan** was proposed by John Gore-Grimes from Southern Ireland and seconded by Sir Dennis Faulkner from the North. In good Irish fashion Dermot immediately set in train OCC dinners at Dublin's magnificent Royal St George Yacht Club – yet another test of stamina for the UK flag officers who could not resist the invitation to join them.

A further initiative to bind the Club into a global family was to make all overseas flag officers members of the main committee so that they received agendas and

**Plenty of stamina here – Flor Long and
Rear Commodore Ireland Peter Haden enjoy a gam**



**Next page, above: *Assent* finds safe haven in Greenland
Next page, below: *Aratapu* catches a williwaw in Patagonia**



minutes and were thus kept abreast of the thinking and arguments behind decisions. They were, of course, always free to attend committee meetings, and some of them did, but by knowing in advance they were able to comment on proposals before they were cast in stone. They were also to be consulted on the appointments of Port Officers and Roving Rear Commodores on their patches, and made members of the Awards sub-committee, moves which ensured that they became much more a part of the active administration of the Club.

The Cruising Information Service (CIS) had had a chequered career, but a determined effort by Anne Hammick in the late 1980s had put some order into it, and when Pat Pocock took it on in 1996 and put it onto disc it became much more accessible. However, it was always grossly underused for the effort expended in its compilation, with only two enquires for information during the whole of 1994. Pat therefore concentrated on those areas not served by pilot books. In an attempt to expand its use the Royal Cruising Club was contacted with a view to arranging reciprocity with their Foreign Port Information (FPI), and an informal agreement was eventually made whereby cross-access would be given on a strictly non-attributable basis.

Along with the new look CIS, the stock of charts housed at the Royal Thames YC were at last brought to order by **Donald McGilivray**. These had been obtained by Colin Fergusson when BP were updating charts for their tankers, which apparently carry coverage of the whole world, and the Club was the beneficiary. They were housed at the RTYC but were never much used as they were difficult to access unless you were a Londoner. Donald produced catalogues which at least made members aware of what was available, but the uncorrected charts gradually became so dated that they were of little value other than for broad planning.

One spin-off from the arrangement with the Royal Cruising Club, this time in the guise of the RCC Pilotage Foundation, was the production of a joint publication on the Pacific. The Pococks had just returned from a seven year circumnavigation, almost half that time being spent in the Pacific, and had sent much useful information for the CIS. Based to a large extent on this knowledge, Mike produced a splendid tome entitled *The Pacific Crossing Guide* which was published under the joint logos of the two clubs. **Clive King**, Rear Commodore USA West, wrote a most evocative foreword which eloquently put that ocean in perspective for those who hadn't had the good fortune to sail it. Who could resist the enticement of these words:

'Hold the globe between your hands, placing Tahiti more or less in the middle, and the full immensity of the Pacific is brought into focus. Half the world faces you and most of it is water. For



**Mike Pocock, Commodore 1998–2002,
with Pat aboard *Blackjack***

Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians, this is home. They colonised the myriad coral atolls and volcanic islands with small sailing boats, humbling Western man with their navigation and seamanship long before the era of European exploration.

Unlike the Atlantic, this is an ocean scattered with small island nations, each spread over a vast area. Home is not bounded by the seam of land and sea, but rather by a confection of water and islands and reefs, and every Polynesian has family on the next island, and the next. Mostly the people remain – by temperament and by choice – immured from Western strivings, choosing a more peaceful way to live. The lands and waters have been kind to them, with tropical abundance, warm waters and protective reefs providing for most needs.'

Not only was Clive Rear Commodore USA West from 1992 to 1997 and Port Officer San Francisco from 1980 until leaving the States in 1999, but he also spent much of his time cruising the Pacific. He built his 53ft Bruce Roberts steel ketch *Sonoma of the Isles* in the early '80s, and we were soon enjoying yarns written in his lazy style through which you could almost hear the souging of the surf. For years he quartered the Pacific, changing crew and wives at regular intervals and returning to the office in Sausalito when he needed to top up the coffers. On one of his visits home he wandered down to the quay just in time to take the lines of Mike and Pat Pocock who were entering the dock entirely by coincidence. Not bad for such an itinerant PO. Clive clearly loves the islands and writes so enthusiastically of them:

'For the next three years, 1988 to 1991, *Sonoma of the Isles* took me through Polynesia and Melanesia. Each year a new crew and each year some months aboard and some in the office. Cook, Stevenson, Gauguin, London, how they all wrote, painted and told fine tales of the islands. And little has changed. So Tahiti now has an air-conditioned shopping mall, *Camembert-avion* arrives twice weekly fresh from Normandy, and the general French silliness of rushing around pervades. But stevedores still put a flower in their hair each morning, and that tells it all.'

Another year and another wife:

'In 1993 *Sonoma of the Isles* was again restless, so we closed up shop and sailed to Mexico and then back to French Polynesia. Again we climbed the tropic hills of the Marquesas, wandered the lagoons of the Tuamotus (home of the black pearls), dined and danced with men of thunderous girth and swam in the shadow of Moorea.'

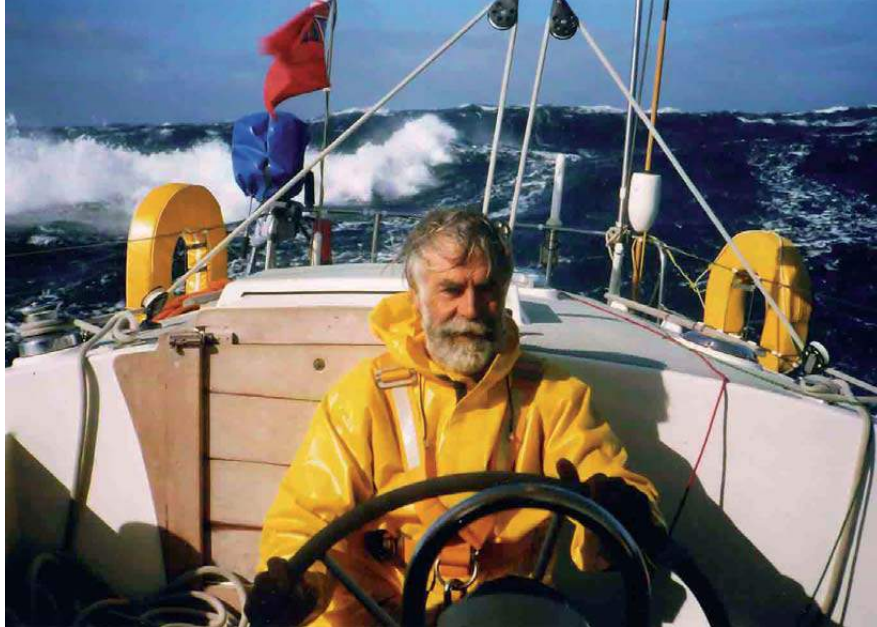
While Clive was visiting old haunts in the south Pacific, the **Engwirdas** from Southport, Australia were ploughing a lonely furrow across the north of that ocean. **Margaret** and **Andy** had taken 11 years to build *Bolero*, their beautiful 56ft John Alden wooden yawl, and they nearly always sailed with just the two of them. An exception was the shakedown which Andy did singlehanded to New Zealand and Norfolk Island, 2300 miles non-stop. There is an old cruising adage that you should not be seduced into calling at attractive ports on the way to your chosen cruising ground, which they observe to a ridiculous degree. They had long fancied Alaska as a change from palm-fringed islands, so in 1993 they sailed there, direct from Southport, 7600 miles non-stop, passing almost within hailing distance of Honolulu. After messing around in Alaska for a season they sailed home to prepare for their really long trip.

In December 1995 they left Australia to visit friends in Amsterdam, taking the clipper route south of the Great Capes. The Southern Ocean was frustrating with a preponderance of headwinds but they were rewarded with a relatively easy passage around the Horn:

'When we neared Cape Horn, one last violent 60 knotter with

***Bolero* makes her offing**





**Tony Vasey, Commodore 1994–1998, finds
a draughty corner mid-Atlantic**

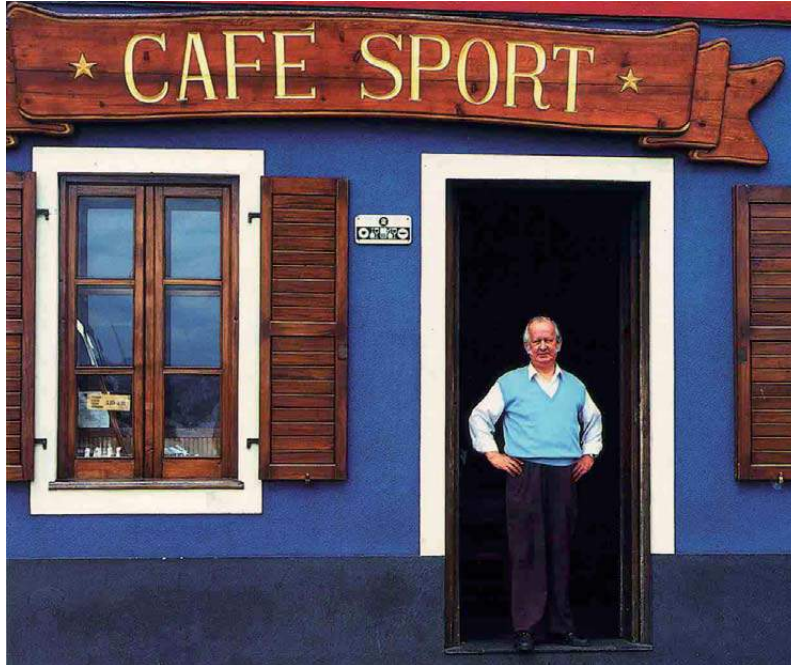
**Change of watch – Sally Henderson passes the baton to Erica Lowery,
congratulated by Commodore Tony Vasey**



30ft seas and fierce squalls left *Bolero* shaking and trembling, as were the skipper and his mate. By contrast the next day was beautiful with a blue sky – grey had been the predominant colour for weeks. On Days 51 and 52 we were totally becalmed between latitudes 53°S and 54°S. An eerie feeling followed the storm, and sitting in the screaming fifties with large swells and no wind left a tight feeling in our tummies. Eventually 10–20 knots of southwest wind came through, and we made the run for the Horn with only 300 miles to go. On Day 55 Ramirez Island was sighted and identified by a lighthouse, so our navigation was okay. The Southern Ocean had been continually overcast and threatening, yet here at the end the sky was crystal clear, the ocean an incredible jewel colour and a spectacular sunset ended the day. Swells from the southwest were whipped up by heavy squalls. The tail of the great Andes mountain range slides into the ocean on this tip of South America, making the sea quickly rise thousands of metres to form a shallow bank. A wild place in adverse wind and currents. In the early hours of Saturday 10 February, Day 56 of the voyage, *Bolero* rounded Cape Horn. We didn't see the 'Old Ogre' and decided not to wait around to take a photograph. The swells and squalls continued and we began to surf downhill at high speeds. Caution became the better part of valour and we kept going. From South West Cape, New Zealand to Cape Horn we had sailed 5568 miles in 42 days.'

On day 134 they arrived at Amsterdam, 17,100 miles without a stop. After a four month refit they allowed themselves the luxury of day-sailing to Plymouth so as to be able to pit themselves against the record of Francis Chichester, who started his famous voyage from that historical port. Less than five months from reaching Amsterdam they were off again for the non-stop passage home. They reached the equator on day 26, exactly the same as Francis, and again their times were the same when they rounded Good Hope on day 58. The Indian Ocean produced mixed weather:

'On day 75 we encountered the most serious storm of this leg, a south-westerly of 40–60 knots. Horrifying. The swells looked at least 40ft high, being conservative. The first front passed through at a speed of 50–60 knots, the wind velocity increased even further, gusting to 70 knots, and the waves mounted to 50ft and were cresting. The storm had started with a strong gale two days earlier, which gradually built up in strength and never abated, just steadily worsened. *Bolero* has seen some bad weather over the years but this would probably have to top everything. On several occasions we were airborne and came crashing down into the trough, and were repeatedly knocked sideways across the waves.



**The ever-welcoming Peter Azevedo outside his famous Café Sport
(see page 242)**

Admiral Mary applauds the ever-helpful João Fraga



St Paul's Rocks seemed to become a magnet, and despite all our efforts we missed them by only 10 miles – too close for comfort, and the nearest we had been to land since Plymouth.'

But it wasn't all bad:

'By contrast, after 'our storm' almost a week of lovely weather followed. The sun shone and the wind lightened to a gentle 8–10 knots, usually from the northeast. The lightweight reaching sail emerged out of the forecabin and could be raised once more.'

A reception committee had been arranged for their ETA, but strong southerlies meant they were three days early so had the frustration of wasting time in heavy seas so as not to cause embarrassment. The total voyage was 33,000 miles in 13 months. Discounting the potter in the English Channel, they had made only one stop and deservedly took both the Australian Trophy and the Barton Cup for this incredible endurance test.

The Club took some time to come to terms with the communications revolution of the 1990s, perhaps because of the conservative nature of the then hierarchy, but pressure from modernists such as **Dick Guckel**, **Neil Wilkie** and Andrew Bray forced a move towards the new electronic era. In 1996 Dick started his register of e-mail addresses, but even after a year the number listed was only 33. However it was a start, soon enhanced by the inclusion of other useful data on member's qualifications and expertise, allowing faster movement of information between members. **Brooke Davis** of New York was well ahead of the European thinking, preaching the merits of the internet with missionary zeal. A questionnaire was therefore circulated, eliciting a good response and showing that many members were keen and ready to embrace this advance in communications. It is difficult now to cast one's mind back to the era before e-mail and websites, but there were a surprising number of luddites. **Scotty Allen** replied, 'We go to sea to get away from complications', while Roger Fothergill expressed his usual light-hearted view, 'There are two computer buffs on this island. Both are harmless but weird'.

A sub-committee under Neil culminated in 1997 with the Club piggy-backing on the Conference of Cruising Yacht Clubs website and offering a page of Club details for general consumption. One of the concerns in those early and innocent days was the likely cost to the Club as so little was known about the functioning of this new media. Coincidentally, **Nickie Cooper**, widow of recently deceased member **Robin**, offered to fund a trophy in his memory. The Club already had an embarrassment of awards but Nickie was sufficiently broad-minded to accept the argument that the funds could be better applied to the creation and

maintenance of a website. The wheel had gone full circle since 1955 when Hum, with his aversion to competitive awards, had persuaded the first person to offer a prize to apply the money to reward ideas and inventions instead. To obviate any major design costs, Graham Johnson offered to set the design of a Club website as a project for his university students, with them being paid in the kind that most students enjoy – food and beer. Much of the resulting site is still in use today, ably run by **Mike Downing** as web-master.

Members were surprisingly conservative in their desire for colour in *Flying Fish*, at first regarding it as an unnecessary luxury, but one improvement which they did applaud was the production of much improved track charts. So often good articles were spoilt by the reader not knowing where the writer was when detailing his or her movements, so when, in 1996, Andrew Bray suggested they should be drawn by *Yachting World*'s professional cartographer the offer was enthusiastically endorsed.

During the course of my travels as Commodore I had noticed that the flying fish logo had developed many variants, from the slim-line, high-speed model depicted on the cover of the magazine to the rather jolly smiling fellow on the burgee. The Australian fish had mutated to a rather lethargic chap who seemed to be having difficulty getting airborne, and individual members had coined their own depending on their artistic abilities. So in 1996 Colin Mudie, who had designed the original logo some 40 years earlier, was asked to redraw the 'definitive fish'. The result was the much happier chap first seen cavorting on the cover of *Flying Fish* on the second issue of 1997 and who has since been adopted worldwide.

In 1997 a member of long-standing telephoned *Flying Fish* editor Anne Hammick saying how much he enjoyed the magazine and that he wished to help financially if the Club was in need of updating its production facilities. The result was a complete new package of hardware and software which enabled faster and more modern editing with an improvement in efficiency and quality. It should be known that this same anonymous donor has also largely paid for the production of this record of the Club, of which he is so proud to be associated.

During the 1990s there was a rash of clubs asking for a form of affiliation with the OCC. This may have been partly due to the higher profile which the Club had attained, and certainly some clubs enjoyed the international contact and hoped that association with such a thriving organisation would rub off on their members. The OCC has little to offer in reciprocation and this was made clear, but nevertheless an agreement was arranged whereby our members could enjoy

the use of several other clubs' premises, those clubs, in return, being allowed to show the affiliation in their publications.

Fred Brown became well-known throughout the Club for his promptness in responding to requests for regalia, usually posting the item within 24 hours, but in 1996 he became ill and died still in harness. How the genial Fred managed such efficiency will never be known, as he spent plenty of time on his boat and hardly ever missed an Azores rally or Azores and Back Race (AZAB). **Martin Thomas** stepped into the gap and his non-sailing secretary, Gladys, soon became as familiar with the terminology of nautical accoutrements as she was with her normal medical routine, but by 1998 she felt that the extra pressure was becoming too much and Jill Vasey was persuaded to take it on. Jill particularly enjoyed the wide contact within the Club, and after five years of exchanging chatty notes to applicants felt that she had made hundreds of friends across the world. Her most treasured request came from **Erling Lagerholm**, who had been one of the *Drumbeat* recruits in the 1950s. He wrote on birch bark as follows: 'This stationery comes to you through the courtesy of some damn beaver who gnawed down the last birch tree on our little island in the North Channel of Lake Huron. Please send me an 18 inch nylon burgee'.

Perhaps it was a sign of the maturity of members' cruising habits rather than of boredom, but after nearly 20 years the Azores rally began to lose its attraction. The first meet in 1977 had been a bit of a damp squib when only one boat reached the islands, but the 1981 gathering was a resounding success and every other year since then the Club had held its popular pursuit race. However in 1996 it was difficult to raise enough entries to make it worthwhile, so with regret it was suspended. The rallies had been made especially enjoyable by the welcome and assistance given by Peter Azevedo and João Fraga (see photograph page 239), and the citizens of Horta had taken the Club to their hearts, simply referring to it as 'The Club', the definition of 'Ocean Cruising' being considered superfluous.

It was in no way a substitute for the Azores, but in 1996 the Club held its first Falmouth rally. It quickly gained popularity so that it is now established as the annual end of season rally in the way the Beaulieu opens the sailing year for the UK members. It was gratifying to welcome four yachts returning from North America in 1997, and in 2000 it was the start of the most successful Millennium Rally when boats left for the Atlantic-wide celebrations.

Our heroines seem to come in small packages. The brief but spectacular exploits of the diminutive Clare Francis have already been described, and her prowess

was later rivalled by another dynamic figure, Mary Falk. Mention has already been made of her determination when wearing her lawyer's hat, but she has shown herself equally resolute when on the water. She is strictly a racer but this does not lessen the contribution that she has made to the Club as a whole. After two terms on the Committee she was promoted Rear Commodore and we have long benefited from her advice on legal matters. Furthermore she arranged for the Committee to use the boardroom at her solicitor's firm, which was a marked step up from some of the places previously used. Her first boat was a UFO 34, *Quixote*, in which she cut her singlehanded racing teeth first with an AZAB and then in OSTAR when she came fourth in class. This whetted her appetite, so in 1990 Mike Pocock designed her a one-off with the express purpose of campaigning the OSTAR, which she did with impressive success.

QII is a 35ft water-ballasted sloop, not particularly extreme to look at but certainly extremely fast. There is a single wrap-around seat midships, facing the control console, with a full seat harness with which Mary tethers the boat to her person. She then drives it like the rally car for which the seat and harness were designed. In her first OSTAR with *QII* she came second in class, but in 1996 she was the first woman to win a class in the history of the race. But that was not all – she took more than a day off the class record, beat all the class above her, all but one in the 45ft class and all but two monos in the 50ft class. Unlike Clare Francis, Mary has continued racing hard with many more successes to her name. Not surprisingly she became known as the fastest single-hulled lady on the North Atlantic.

The Committee stuck to their principles and resisted awarding Mary a trophy, even the short-handed Rose Medal, since all the awards cite meritorious cruises. However, in 1992 they did find it in their hearts to recognise the great contribution she had made to sailing generally and in raising the profile of the Club with the presentation of the OCC Award.

While Mary was racing across the North Atlantic another of our female members, Fran Flutter, was ploughing a solo furrow around the world in her 35ft Cartright sloop *Prodigal*.

She left Falmouth in 1995 and reached New Zealand in 1996, for which she was awarded the Rose Medal. The following year she continued via Australia, where she sailed inside the Barrier Reef, before crossing the Indian Ocean to Cape Town. The final leg took her home via the Azores with a stop at St Helena – not an easy venue when singlehanded, but Fran found the usually boisterous anchorage relatively tranquil. She remarks, reflectively, 'St Helena is a fascinating island – I've never met anyone who didn't enjoy their visit. Historically, that opinion might have found a few dissenters! Napoleon Buonaparte's melancholic

decline is well known, the fact that 6000 prisoners of the Boer War were detained here much less so’.

On completing her circumnavigation Fran was awarded the Barton Cup.

In 1997 we read for the first time of a member visiting Japan and the Russian Far East. Noël Marshall had worked his way to that unlikely spot after a leisurely Pacific crossing aboard his Hallberg-Rassy 38 *Sadko*, having been joined by Ann Fraser in Guam. Leisurely is perhaps putting it too kindly, since he took 64 days for a very frustrating 4400 miles from the Galapagos to Hawaii, having been imprisoned by El Niño with a knot of current against them instead of the charted favourable knot. Noël made no secret of the fact that his only reason for visiting Japan was because it was the most convenient place to obtain a Russian visa, but he then stayed for four months. However it was something of a cultural shock, both on and off the water. When shopping he noted:

‘At first glance a Japanese supermarket looks very much like its European equivalent, but when you examine the shelves they contain rack after rack of strange-looking products, beautifully wrapped in user-friendly portions – if only you knew how to use them. There is much less tinned and packaged food. Conspicuously, there are no long racks of biscuits and breakfast foods.’

After getting visas in Osaka they sailed west through the inland sea:

‘Between Honshu and Awaji islands we passed below the construction work on the longest suspension bridge in the world, which will have a central span 2km long. Everywhere the density of shipping, combined with fishing boats, was heavier than in the Dover Straits on a bad day. Japanese captains have strong nerves, and the yacht skipper will get used to sailing at closer quarters than he would hope to meet in the English Channel. Supertankers negotiating sensitive points, such as the huge suspension bridges, are escorted by a pattern of ocean-going tugs. *Sadko* was nearly barged from the water a long way from the approaching tanker, by a tug proceeding to such duties which evidently claimed absolute right of way notwithstanding the Col Regs! It was easy to see why night sailing was not recommended.’

Noël is a retired diplomat who speaks fluent Russian, an almost essential attribute in overcoming Russian bureaucracy and its innate suspicion of foreigners. With some trepidation, but with the appropriate bits of paper, they entered the previously forbidden port of Vladivostok and were directed by port control to

anchor off to await clearance. This clever ploy to put off a difficult decision was neatly solved after a five hour wait by a passing motor boater who asked what they were doing. Noël explained that they were awaiting clearance, to which the local replied, loosely translated, 'Oh, stuff that, you'll be there all night. Follow us to the yacht club'.

Ann had a contact in Siberia and had been invited to visit if they succeeded in reaching Russia. They both flew to Lake Baikal, where the friend arranged for them to charter a boat in which they cruised the lake for several days. Hardly ocean cruising, but surely a first for the OCC if not for any Western sailors.

In that same year tragedy struck when Geoff Pack, UK Rear Commodore, died at only 39 years after a short but valiant fight against cancer, leaving Loulou with four children under eleven. Geoff was a great hairy bear of a man, always full of humour and a mine of information on sailing matters. He had edited *Yachting Monthly* for only four years but was so respected in the world of yachting journalism that IPC Magazines, his bosses, created a scholarship for embryo journalists in his name. They also funded an OCC trophy, the Geoff Pack Memorial Award, which it was decided to award annually to the person

**Loulou Pack presents Mike Richey
with the first Geoff Pack Memorial Award**





Sadko, a stranger in Japanese waters

who, by his or her writing, had done most to foster the ideals of the Club.

Although the award was to be open to all, the Committee had little difficulty in deciding the name of the first winner – Mike Richey, who had written so attractively for so long on sailing generally and on his many transatlantic passages in *Jester*. There was no doubt that many armchair sailors had been inspired by Mike's low-key but evocative writing and the fact that he had recently spent his 80th birthday at sea, singlehanded. Geoff's widow Loulou made the presentation at the London Boat Show, IPC being represented by **James Jermain** who had taken over from Geoff as editor of *Yachting Monthly* and who spoke movingly on Geoff's distinguished, but sadly curtailed, journalistic career. Andrew Bray, editor of *Yachting World*, subsequently took Geoff's place as one of the UK Rear Commodores, thus maintaining the Club's close link with the yachting press.

The British have made Shackleton their hero, but he was an Irishman and Paddy Barry planned to resurrect memories of the best-remembered event of his fellow countryman's life of glorious failure. In 1997 Paddy built a replica of Shackleton's *James Caird*, naming her *Tom Crean*, and shipped her to Elephant Island, the starting point of the explorer's epic voyage 81 years earlier. To have sailed at Easter, as did Shackleton, would have been to court unnecessary disaster, so they left in January, the Antarctic summer. But to attempt a 700 mile passage in a 23ft whaler in the Southern Ocean at any time of the year had to be hazardous in the extreme, and with five men in a boat of that size life was very cramped. Paddy describes the normally simple operation of changing watch:

'My back is stiff with the cold and damp. I took a couple of Bruefen, which help. God, has it been cold, wet and miserable, even in the good weather. The cabin is so confined. Watch change is a major hassle getting out of oilies, putting them somewhere, getting off gloves, hats and boots, putting them where you hope you will find them – best under your head for a pillow – contorting feet first into the bag inside its cover, all damp. I pull my socks (two pairs) and gloves into the bag with me. Then at the end of your off-watch, the opposite. Your feet would barely have warmed up in the bag but it's time to get out again – head first – onto your knees, sideways, turn around, sitting in your dry gear on someone else's wet gear. We try and get oily trousers on inside the cabin and then as quick as can in the cockpit get on jacket, gloves, harness and hood up. Handling the boat is the easy bit.'

After five days of relatively good progress conditions deteriorated:

'Wind and sea rose to a greater extent than the previous two gales, and kept on rising and rising. By nightfall the wind was



a replica of Shackleton's *James Caird* – on sea trials

lifting water, not just off wave-tops, off the seas. These grew first into regular big even crests of maybe 30ft, but then became steep walls of water, the crests tumbling down, being wind carried off in flying spume. We put the sea anchor out from the bow; it seemed to make no difference. To look directly into the wind wasn't possible as the flying spume would cut into your face and eyes.

The boat was lying beam-on, try as we did to keep her head to windward. With all other sail down and the tiller lashed to lee, we raised a triangular piece of mizzen which brought her head around about 20°, thus bringing the seas ahead of the beam. But the seas became irregular altogether and now were coming from all directions. We were pointing upwind, downwind, lying, running, we were tossed and battered about below like being inside a washing machine; wedged in, waves belting the boat, first on one side, then the other, then the deck.

About 0400 Saturday morning we were all below, battered, cold, eating the odd Mars bar with water, when a great hissing sound rose above the now familiar racket. I was in a sleeping bag and sort of stiffened at this new sound. Then I felt us being carried bodily sideways, swept, and then the silence. We were upside down.

Slowly forever, for there was nothing we could do, she lay upside down before rolling back, when we all scrambled to the side of the cabin to help her. Amazingly, all the spars and sails were in place, and no damage had been done except to burgees, antenna and so on.

Twice in the next twelve hours we were again rolled, same story. We radioed *Pelagic* (their mother ship) for any weather information. They had been registering wind speeds of 50–60 knots sustained and *Pelagic* had been knocked on her beam by a 'Shackleton wave'. Their wind was now southwest, 40–50 knots, the sea completely white. Air temperature 4°C. Three cyclonic depressions were on their way and if we did not get north of them we would be hit by all of them. They called a US specialist weather outfit and an hour later gave us the bad news – for the next ten days a deepening low, going down to 965mbs, would give northerlies all over the area, with another 60 knot session in about three days time.'

Very reluctantly they called in the 'mother ship' and scuttled *Tom Crean*. *Pelagic* then took them on to South Georgia and put them ashore in King Haakon Bay where Shackleton had landed, and from there they made the traverse to Stromness, no mean feat in itself. Thus Paddy and his crew achieved another magnificent failure in heroic Shackleton style, but a failure of such merit that it

will go down in the annals of this Club as a memorable success. To use another Paddy quote (borrowed from Addison): 'tis not in mortals to command success, but we'll do more Sempronios, we'll deserve it'.

Another outstanding exploit down in the Southern Ocean to be recognised by the Club that year was the truly heroic rescue of **Raphael Dinelli** by **Pete Goss**. It may be remembered that Raphael had capsized in the Around Alone race while out of range of shore-based rescue, the only hope of saving his life being Pete if he could get back to him. Against gale force winds he beat back and found Dinelli at dusk clinging to his upturned boat. Pete was given the OCC Award of Merit and the Club made a strong recommendation to the Prime Minister that he should receive a national bravery award. In the event he was given a sporting award that was certainly not adequate recognition of the heroism of his actions.

XVI – MODERN TIMES

By 1998 I had completed my promised one term as Commodore and it was time to invite nominations for a successor. Again there was no competition and Mike Pocock, the son-in-law of Humphrey Barton, was installed by acclamation having been proposed by John Maddox, Rear Commodore Australia, and seconded by Clive King, Rear Commodore USA West. Mike and Pat (see photograph page 234), had recently returned from their seven year circumnavigation and, it was hoped, would be ashore for a while. It was a vain hope – within weeks of taking over Mike announced his intention to lead a round-Atlantic series of Millennium rallies.

On my departure I presented a silver cup which, unable to resist the alliteration, I suggested should be known as 'The Vasey Vase'. It perhaps indicated a degree of unfulfilled ambition on my part as it was to be awarded for voyages of an 'unusual or exploratory nature' – the Club already had ample trophies, but there was a gap where, if a most meritorious voyage did not win the Barton Cup, it often did not fit the definition of any other award. A good example was Paddy Barry's outstanding adventure in the wake of Shackleton, which

Paddy Barry – first winner of the Vasey Vase



could not stand comparison with the Engwirdas' round the world marathon for the premier award. Not surprisingly, therefore, Paddy was the first recipient of the Vasey Vase.

There is no doubt that Hum had a valid point in avoiding competitive awards, and the Committee have always been at pains to judge cruises on their merits. Inevitably there have been some years when there are so many cruises of great merit that it is difficult to adjudicate except by comparison – on other occasions the Committee have rightly resisted the temptation to reward the 'most meritorious' when it is a year of little merit, resulting in several occasions on which particular trophies have not been awarded.

The Club's hardworking General Secretary, Jeremy Knox, had also decided that it was time for a change, and after interviewing two candidates **Anthea Cornell** (see photograph page 256), was appointed. After a career with Shell she had retired early to do more cruising so that now, after several ocean crossings, she was well qualified to understand the jargon, and took over from Jeremy in 1998. Jeremy had worked tirelessly to help put the Club back on its feet ten years earlier, and had gone on to establish a thoroughly systematic office, so it was a well-oiled machine that Anthea inherited. On departing as Secretary he agreed to become a Trustee, was made an Honorary Life Member, and received the OCC Award.

Following the 1998 trend Vice Commodore Peter Aitchison decided to retire from his city job and sail away, so he too tendered his resignation. Since he had not finished his allotted span the Committee were placed in the same position as they had been with the premature retirement of John Foot ten years previously. They therefore appointed **Erik Vischer** (see photograph page 258), one of the Rear Commodores, to take his place pending confirmation at the AGM. **Mike Grubb**, Port Officer Falmouth, was proposed and subsequently elected to the Rear Commodore vacancy. This time there was no revolution! Indeed, everything in the state of the Club was going swimmingly with solid finances, a stable subscription which had not risen for five years, and a new and dedicated team from the Secretary through to the Commodore.

One of the new Commodore's early problems was inadvertently handed him by his predecessor, and could have developed into a running sore had he not dealt with it so deftly. Brian Dalton, Rear Commodore USA North East, had noted that in 1988 the UK AGM and dinner had been subsidised from the general fund to cover the cost of room hire for the meeting and the burden of Club guests. Brian considered that regions should similarly enjoy a subsidy, despite an assurance that there was always a net annual surplus from UK social functions. To create absolute transparency, a separate 'Social Fund' was established with

its own bank account so that there could be no confusion with the 'General Fund' and any subsidies to social events would become immediately apparent in the accounts. Additionally, a one-off grant of £150 was made to all regions out of the profits from the recent Cruising Symposium to help with their millennium celebrations. The principle was then reiterated that all social functions must be self supporting, wherever they are.

On a much less contentious note, the Pardeys were awarded the 1998 Geoff Pack Memorial Award for their writings over the years about their adventurous life aboard a small, engineless boat. They had hoped to attend the awards ceremony but were, as usual, at the opposite end of the earth, so most generously offered the air fare saved by not travelling to offset entry fees for impecunious youngsters. They noted that the number of members under 25 years was perhaps less than 1% and they felt that the joining fee was a deterrent to the young. It was eventually agreed that the £500 would be applied to subsidise those under 25 years who joined during Millennium year, somewhat reflecting Toby Baker's suggestion made five years earlier.

There was further turnover the following year when Graham and Avril Johnson gave notice of their intention to retire and sail away (see photograph page 258), so they too required a replacement. The desire to move on seemed to become infectious, as Hon Treasurer Neil Wilkie also decided that he could no longer give the time required. It was testimony to their foresight that the new website, which all three had helped to create, was up and running before they left their posts. Neil's backing to do the sums combined with Graham's strict discipline had seen the Club over a difficult period from near insolvency to a most healthy financial state, while Avril's tenacity in chasing recalcitrant members had ensured a reliable cash flow – the Club's Achilles Heel since its inception. In the event the Membership Secretary's post was filled by long-standing member Colin Jarman and the appointment of Hon Treasurer by accountant **David Caukill**.

John Maddox has long been the conduit for Australian activities, rarely failing to keep us up to date on happenings in the Antipodes. On the other hand, the members down there seem rather shy to tell us of their activities, so it as well that we are served by John. Like fellow Australian Barton Cup winner Geoff Payne, we heard through John of **Roger Wallis's** sortie to the Horn in 1998, also rewarded with that coveted trophy. Roger wanted a fast passage so he bought the 47ft *Parmelia* which had been designed for the race of that name from England to Australia. He modestly dismisses the 44 day passage from New Zealand to the Horn in a paragraph, and was obviously pleased with his new boat:

'During our long and lonely 44 day passage we enjoyed wonderful sailing and became very aware of the vagaries of the weather.

We quickly fell into the rhythm and routine of life at sea. We were continually reminded that it is a big, big paddock out there – we saw plenty of winged wildlife, including albatrosses and petrels, but only the odd whale and one ship. We hove-to on four occasions under triple-reefed main only, and she was very comfortable.'

He had the same reaction to the beauty of the Antarctic as had Willy Ker:

'We crossed the Gerlache Strait to Dorian Cove in absolutely perfect conditions, the mountains white, the glaciers with a tinge of blue and the sky blue as blue.'

They forced their way south down the Peninsula, but only managed to beat Willy by a mile and a half, turning back at 65°17'S. After a stormy sail north across Drake Passage they had a run ashore on Cape Horn and even Roger allowed himself a little exuberance:

'After a day's R&R the weather moderated and we went to the anchorage at Cape Horn and landed! It was just great – the two navy radio operators-come-lookouts made us welcome and we visited their little wooden chapel, their lighthouse and the monument to seamen. We soaked up all the mystique and aura that goes with the Horn. It was an incredible day and very important to all of us. We sailed up to it from Australia, circumnavigated the whole island and finally landed on it!'

Roger doesn't mention anything about his refrigeration system, but he had a novel way of using nature by hanging two half sheep in the rigging. Judiciously placed they could also act as baggy-wrinkle. In addition to that year's Barton Cup, Roger was deservedly awarded the Australian Trophy for 1998.

A glance at the marinas in New Zealand suggests that they have more boats per head of population than almost anywhere in the world, and yet there were no Founders from that country and we still have only 18 NZ members. However, in 1956 **Neill Arrow** from Christchurch joined with the longest qualifying voyage to that date, having crossed the Pacific to Peru in 1952, a distance of 5760 miles. Shades of the Engwirdas! There is no doubt that New Zealand is one of the best cruising areas in the world, so perhaps the incentive to explore further afield is not as strong as it is in Europe where the main aim is generally to get somewhere warmer and less crowded. Yet it is perhaps the country where more members get together casually than anywhere else.

As the first port of entry, and a delightful place to boot, The Bay of Islands draws itinerants like a magnet and it is rare that **George Bateman** or **Nina Kiff** fails to report the arrival of some Club members. Indeed, George reported 250

visitors in 1991, many of them from the Club. He has been there for years and even very old *Journal* correspondents talk of how he looked after them – and more recently of how they enjoyed George and Dorothy's golden wedding party at the OCC (Opua Cruising Club). Nina, Hum's niece, entertained us back in 1993 with articles about their slow family cruise to New Zealand with four young children, illustrated by delightful photographs of school at sea. They too were greeted by George and Dorothy, and it wasn't long before Nina began to share Port Officer duties with them. Just recently we read in the *Newsletter* of a most novel OCC gathering which could easily develop into an annual affair, when Nina dragooned a not unwilling bunch of members and others to turn out at 0700 to help pick her friends' Chardonnay grape crop. There's no knowing the flexibility of a good sailor, especially when it is followed by a free lunch!

The only formal NZ gathering of members on record is that organised by ex-Vice Commodore, Peter Aitchison, who has adopted New Zealand as his semi-retirement home. Some years ago he gave a dinner at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron for local OCC members, but the idea did not catch on as there is no record of any further entertainment ashore. However, up north they seem to be falling into a pattern. In April 2003 twelve boats and 20 members gathered at the 'OCC' and they are anticipating a crowd for the party planned in November '04, but that is outside the scope of this history.

Further south, **Tim Thompson** can rival Neill Arrow for qualifying date with a passage from Sydney to New Caledonia in 1943, but unfortunately he didn't join until 1988. One is tempted to conjecture what he was doing ocean cruising in the middle of the war – perhaps it was so clandestine that he could not declare it for 45 years, depriving us of a faithful Port Officer Christchurch for all that time. Although Tim regularly reports on passing members, Christchurch does not enjoy the popularity of harbours further north.

Back in the northern hemisphere, during the summer of 1998 **John and Sally Melling** had what they described as a 'shakedown' aboard *Taraki*, their new (to them) Saltram 40, with 5000 miles in four months to Spitsbergen and back. They were blessed with warm weather but a lack of wind that at least enhanced the scenery:

'The thought of more motoring did not appeal to us. We explored the small fjords in Krossfjorden and then anchored in Mollerhamna, where Tilman anchored in 1974. The scenery was awe-inspiring, enhanced by the mirror-flat water and the reflection of the mountains – unlike our London anchorage there was a feeling of great space and solemnity. We rowed ashore to pay



**Admiral Mary with Club Secretary Anthea Cornell
at the Maine Millennium Rally**

homage to the boulder painted with '*Baroque 1974*', and again were delighted by the beautiful flowers growing out of the stony, barren-looking ground.'

It is amazing how many people were now following in Tilman's wake, but it is even more amazing that he did it at all. We may criticise him for losing so many boats, but by comparison with today his were heavy wooden, gaff-rigged vessels with unreliable engines, yet he showed the way and beyond. The Mellings follow Tilman in other ways, in that they use their boat to take them to remote places where they can explore, be it the pampas of South America or ashore in the Arctic. By Club standards this sortie counted as a 'short voyage' and it certainly was 'meritorious', earning them the Rambler Medal.

John and Sally Melling trekking in Patagonia





**A tranquil Chilean anchorage
for John and Sally Melling's sturdy Saltram 40, *Tariki***

The Club's Millennium Rally got off to a good start with a record attendance of 23 boats at the annual Falmouth gathering in August 1999. It was never meant to be a cruise in company, but the Commodore left in *Blackjack* together with **Alan Taylor** in *Bellamanda* and **Erik** and **Jocelyn Hellstom** in *Havsvind* at the beginning of an Atlantic circuit intended to take one year and to include as many members as possible. Regrettably someone had to mind the shop, so Vice Commodore Eric Vischer waited until Grenada before joining the fleet in a chartered boat. Mike wrote his thoughts after getting back to Falmouth a year later:

'The Millennium Cruise was an ambitious project and we were extremely lucky that, thanks to a high degree of reliability both from the boat and our own health, we were able to maintain our schedule and complete the cruise on programme. For the record we sailed from Falmouth after the August Bank Holiday party at the Royal Cornwall. We followed the traditional route to the Caribbean arriving in time to see in the New Year in Prickly Bay, Grenada along with 70 other members and friends. Our next major date was a week of celebrations, in April, in the British Virgin Islands which included an opening party at the Bitter End and a closing party at the Last Resort.

From the Virgins we sailed for the US East Coast, partly using the ICW despite our 7ft draft. We particularly enjoyed joining the Chesapeake Bay Cruise, lead so ably by Bill and Alice Caldwell. Numbers continued to rise and at the final major party in Smith's Cove, Maine, organised by Marji Bancroft and her team, there were 130 members and 38 boats. We sailed for home from St John's Newfoundland, taking in one more party, this time with the Irish at Kinsale, and finally made it to the annual OCC party in Falmouth, twelve months after leaving that same party. I have mentioned only the major parties. There were many smaller, sometimes impromptu occasions. In the course of the cruise 316 members became involved at one time or another, (one fifth of the club) of whom 28 were OCC Port Officers, not necessarily on their home patch, and 233 members came aboard *Blackjack*.'

It was a most fitting way for the Ocean Cruising Club to celebrate. As Mike said, it brought members together from all round the Atlantic littoral, at both the formal rallies and the many informal gatherings, and was a graphic demonstration of the Club's cohesion as an active international association. There were, of course, many other Club millennium functions around the world which were equally successful in cementing the bonds of membership.

Not far behind the Commodore, but on a far more ambitious Atlantic circuit, was **Ben Pester** in *Marelle*, his 36ft teak McGruer sloop. Ben had qualified in

time to be a Founder, but was not credited as such as his application was too late for the deadline (which gives an indication of his age – he was in fact 75). With a crew of one he was intending to make a leisurely four-stop cruise to Cape Horn for the Millennium, there to join the anticipated crowd of revellers. It didn't quite work out as planned as they were driven back to Mar del Plata under bare poles before a *pampero* having left three days earlier. And Ben does admit that the flesh was sufficiently weak for them to spend a couple of nights quietly at anchor on the Argentinean coast, but otherwise they had a brisk passage to the Magellan Straits. They didn't quite meet the horrors that greeted Denise Evans, but had a fair dusting penetrating through to Punta Arenas:

'The pilotage hurdles now facing us were the two *angosturas* (narrows) separating us from Punta Arenas. Each of these, *Primera* and *Segunda*, are up to 10 miles long and funnel the westerly winds, frequently of gale force, coupled with tidal streams running at 7 knots. A daunting prospect.

We had to anchor short of the *Primera Angostura* before we could get through, and then anchor for a further three days at the entrance to the *Segunda* to wait for a break. This was a period of considerable anxiety. We were anchored in 8–9m close inshore, but the land was low-lying and gave little shelter. Our wind speed indicator went off the clock at 48 knots. *Marelle* was dipping her bows into the chop, with solid water pouring down the decks and spray driving over us as though we were at sea. She did not drag – a remarkable tribute to the CQR design – but it was a nail-biting time. A French yacht in the vicinity at the time told us later they were recording 70 knots of wind. Thus it was that we saw in the Millennium.'

After Punta Arenas they worked their way south to Puerto Williams where:

'We topped up our fuel, water and stores whilst waiting for a window in the weather pattern to make our dash for the Horn a hundred miles away. When it came we headed out into the Beagle Channel for an overnight sail through the island groups to position ourselves to the west of Isla Homos, at the southern tip of which is the 'dreaded rock', the Horn itself.

We rounded this, the centrepiece of the whole trip, at 1150 on 5 February before a light nor' westerly breeze, accompanied by a long Southern Ocean swell and lowering skies (but alas no other revellers). We were close in to the headland, sheer and craggy, with its brooding menacing presence all-pervading, but it was in an uncharacteristically benign mood and even bathed in intermittent sunshine. It is possible to land at the eastern



Above: The fleet at the Millennium Rally in Prickly Bay, Grenada

Below: *Marelle* leaves Falmouth to start her epic voyage to Cape Horn

(leeward) end of the island, but we did not want to press our luck, particularly as the wind was working around to the east which would have made the anchorage insecure. We carried on; after all, we were now homeward bound!

They refuelled in the Falklands and planned to call at the Azores, but they were forced too far to the west so carried on. After 90 days they entered Falmouth harbour under sail as they only had enough fuel left to motor up to the mooring. 18,000 miles in nine months – an epic voyage and a well earned Barton Cup.

The Millennium was a good opportunity to take the next logical step in the development of our journal by including colour photographs. It had been resisted on the grounds of cost for several years, but by 2000 the magazine was beginning to look distinctly dated. Appropriately, the first front cover to have both a picture and colour showed the raft-up at the Prickly Bay rally and the first picture inside the covers was an excellent photograph of Pat and Mike aboard *Blackjack*. If she wanted to persuade readers to support colour in the forthcoming questionnaire Anne certainly succeeded, printing some excellent colour photographs of Willy Ker in *Assent* messing about in the ice alongside similar black-and-white pictures that looked positively drab by comparison.

Not to be outdone, the next year Anthea included colour in her *Newsletter* so that the Club's two publications were then properly dressed for the new Millennium. It was perhaps a measure of both the increasing activity of members and their increased interest in the Club, as the *Newsletter* had steadily developed from a few monochrome pages to a sixteen-page leaflet packed with news of members and Club activity. Latterly it even included commercial advertisements, which must surely confirm its popularity.

It is hardly surprising that the vast majority of articles in both *Flying Fish* and the *Newsletter* are from English-speaking members, so it was very refreshing to find contributions in three successive issues from two of our five German friends. In 2001 **Claus Jaeckel** wrote on a largely technical topic with hardly a trace of an accent, so to speak. Claus qualified in 1999 in his beautiful 41ft varnished cutter *Gullveig*, on an eventful Atlantic crossing dogged by electronic problems including the loss of both GPSs. One began to wonder when he triumphantly announced that his celestial navigation had improved to the point where, 'somewhere between Africa and America I had perfected my technique'.



**Vice Commodore Erik Vischer, wearing the
Club's 50th anniversary T-shirt, with the Admiral**

**A liberated Membership Secretary –
Graham Johnson relaxes on the Gambia River**



Our worst fears were ill-founded however – he was sufficiently confident on arrival in the West Indies to be saved the embarrassment of having to ask which island it was. Our most hospitable Port Officers, **Garry** and **Greta Naigle** in Norfolk, Virginia proposed Claus for the Club so that his return crossing was under our colours.

The following year saw a contribution from **Wolfgang Quix**, no stranger in our magazines. He joined back in 1978 after an Atlantic crossing in a 21-footer, and in 1997 we read of his exciting new boat, *Wolfie's Toy*, a BOC 50 in which he had just raced his third OSTAR. While it is interesting to hear of members' racing exploits, it is with relief that we read of them acting normally on occasions, if you can call poking around in Hudson Bay normal. Wolfgang also has only a slight 'accent' in his writing, but one wonders when he says that '*Wolfie's Toy* was conquered by the kids of the Inuit settlement and we had

Wolfgang Quix prepares to defend his 'Toy' from marauding bears





Sea Bear in warmer climes

great difficulty in getting her back'. Presumably the little blighters hijacked her! They had picked a good year and got to Churchill before the summer buoys were out, being only the fourth yacht ever to visit that port. From there they penetrated north to Repulse Bay, of which Wolfgang writes:

'Repulse Bay, on the Arctic Circle, is another typical Inuit settlement with extraordinarily friendly people. We watched them hunting narwhals, of which they are allowed to kill up to 100 a year. That day they got three of them. The Inuit only like the skin and blubber – the meat is dog food. (When we were invited to taste some skin we behaved in a cowardly way!) They receive high prices for the tusks, especially in the Far East where it is supposed to strengthen men. Blessed are they who trust in this! We were told that only a French yacht had been up there previously.'

They had light winds and little ice – indeed, they hadn't had a blow since leaving Labrador – and thereafter it continued light throughout their northern cruise. Although they did not know it, at that very time Paddy Barry and **Jarlath Cunnane** were enjoying similar conditions just to the north of them on their way through the North West Passage. Wolfgang returned to Cuxhaven via Greenland and the Faeroes to be awarded the Vasey Vase for this outstanding and original cruise.

We had been unaware of his voyaging until he joined in 2001, but in **Peter Passano** the Club obviously recruited a member of very considerable experience, despite awarding him the Qualifier's Mug for his 1995 entry passage. After spending some time in the South Pacific in *Sea Bear*, his home-built 39ft steel cutter, he left Auckland heading east, undecided on Panama or the Horn. He clearly spent a lot of time thinking of home waters as he marked his progress across the southern ocean by their equivalent positions in the northern hemisphere. Ten days out he noted that he had arrived at the longitude of Honolulu, and by 19 December he had made Tahiti. On Christmas Day he calculated that in that desolate Southern Ocean he was as far from land as it is possible to get anywhere in the world – halfway between New Zealand and the Horn, and the same distance from Antarctica as from Pitcairn Island, the nearest land to the north.

On 30 December he decided to go south, but soon began to doubt the wisdom of his choice:

After dropping another 5mbs to 995 the barometer appeared to have bottomed out, but it was an illusion. Sometime in the late afternoon I felt we were carrying too much canvas and handed the trysail. I went below and looked at the barograph. I had changed the weekly chart at noon and my immediate reaction was that I must have broken something; the pen was hanging down so low. I checked the other barometer and it confirmed my fears. The pressure had dropped another 15mbs and stood



**The indomitable nonagenarian Helen Tew
shares the spotlight with the youthful Ellen MacArthur**

**Bill Caldwell, retiring Rear Commodore USA South East,
receives the OCC Award from the Admiral**





**Alan Taylor, who was
elected Commodore in
2002, aboard *Bellamanda*,
with *Blackjack* in the
background**



**The well-travelled
Blackjack in close-up**

at 980! I immediately went on deck and installed the storm shutters on the port lights in the trunk cabin. I also put double lashings on the furled main and tied the boom securely in the boom gallows.

An hour after getting the storm shutters in there was a tremendous BANG. I was sitting below on the leeward bench seat and was appalled to see the hardwood lining on the weather side of the trunk cabin coaming burst into the cabin. There was a framed photograph of *Sea Bear* in the ice off Tracy Arm in Alaska – it was blown right off the bulkhead. I expected to see the ocean come in next. There was no warning – no sound like an approaching train, that you read about when people talk about getting hit by a rogue wave. I went on deck to survey the damage. There was none! Apparently whatever hit us deflected the steel plate in sufficiently to break the interior lining, but the steel just popped back as if nothing had happened. The storm shutter nearest to where the wave hit was wedged into the frame of the porthole so tightly that I had to break it to get it out a few days later.

Despite the glass beginning to rise the blow hadn't finished with *Sea Bear*:

'The barometer had dropped 26mbs in 21 hours. Meteorologists say that a drop of this magnitude creates what they call a 'bomb'. It blew force 11–12 ('The air is filled with foam and spray; sea completely white with driving spray; visibility seriously affected') for the next 16 hours. Movement on deck was very difficult. I had to move about on all fours holding on with both hands. The flesh on my face was pulled and distorted by the wind, and I found it difficult to see as the wind seemed to get between my eyeball and eyelid – I had to squint until my eyes were tiny slits. Finally I put on a diving mask and snorkel when looking out or going on deck. This solved the problem although I found I had to hold the mask with one hand to keep it from blowing off.'

But then Peter had the chagrin of having to beat round the Horn against light easterlies before an easy reach to the Falklands arriving, singlehanded, on his 66th birthday.

At 72 Peter felt that he still had some gaps in his sailing experiences, so in 2001–2 he made an Atlantic circuit out of Maine via South Georgia, again mostly singlehanded. In 'iceberg alley' he usually hove-to at night but, having thought he had put the last berg behind him, after only ten minutes below in daylight and good visibility he restyled *Sea Bear*'s front end on the only growler in that part of the ocean. The chance must have been millions to one, but happily the only real damage was a 'pretzel' shaped pulpit and dented pride.



John Maddox with an all-OCC crew aboard *Holger Danske* – past Rear Commodore John, Erich Brosell, Peter Neaves and current Rear Commodore Charles Davis (see page 279)

***Hawk* in the Chilean Channels (see page 275)**



It is gratifying to note that there are still very experienced ocean cruising yachtsmen joining the Club, which must mean that it has attractions not only to the debutantes but those who have come to recognise it later in their sailing career. Like Peter, **Joe Cannon** qualified much earlier but it was not until 2000 that he saw the light, writing a rattling good yarn about his southern ocean circumnavigation the following year. Joe's boat is a tough Martzcraft 35 named *Avalon of Tasman* in which the ages of the crew of three averaged 70, so it seems that deep south cruising is becoming a middle-aged pastime. After reading of several Five Capes circuits one realises the blindingly obvious – that it is much shorter if you start from Australia without having the Atlantic to negotiate both ways. The disadvantage is that you do not get the breaking-in period that northerners enjoy, but instead are blooded by the Tasman and then thrown into the roaring forties with very little time to settle down. In Joe's case they were lucky:

'The Roaring Forties did not live up to their name during the 5000 mile leg to Chile, giving more wind from the east than we expected and mainly 12 to 15 knot breezes from the western sectors. We took 60 days to make our landfall at Bahia Corral at the mouth of the Río Valdivia. The most memorable part of this passage was a 48 hour calm, two days and nights without a breath of wind, and the albatrosses grounded (or rather surfaced) by lack of take-off wind speed.'

Despite the popularity of the Chilean Channels it is pleasing to note that the wildlife still retains its innocence:

'The first day we took a short cut through the colourful Canal Acwalisnan where we were visited by our first confident little black cinclodes, which perched on the dodger some inches from the helmsman's face and greedily accepted pieces of biscuit.'

If the Southern Ocean had been kind, the Indian Ocean made up for it. After several days of heavy headwinds with a very high glass it turned to blow from the southwest and really brewed up:

By sunset there was 35 knots, and by midnight 55 knots from southwest with the glass down to 991. The main had been furled but we were still carrying the storm jib. At 0410 on 12 June I had just come on watch, the wind was blowing 50–60 knots, the seas had obviously grown larger, and I was contemplating heaving-to. The next moment a giant sea destroyed the dodger about me and threw me violently forward onto the steering pedestal, breaking two of my ribs as it capsized the boat. As the leeward side hit the water, bending a stanchion in like putty, I was thrown

back onto a winch cracking some more ribs. Then suddenly I was dropping down out of the cockpit beneath the boat, everything was quiet and fairly still, and there was absolute darkness. My Stormy Seas safety harness checked my fall and the next moment the jacket inflated itself and floated me back up into the capsized cockpit. Just as I was nearing the end of my breath-holding capacity *Avalon of Tasman* began to right herself. She paused only momentarily with the mast at water level, then suddenly flicked upright, leaving me virtually standing on my head in the cockpit! We were about midway between Cape Town and Fremantle.

The complex intense stationary low that had taken us in its grip played with us like a cat with a mouse. Two days after the capsize the wind was 70 knots or more and the seas enormous, over 15m in our opinion, so we set the NZ parachute sea-anchor. It certainly seemed to help us during the 19 hours before the line chafed through. But the storm continued. The glass would rise a few points and the wind would ease, but only temporarily. Then it would fall again and the wind would be screaming at 70 knots and more. This process of raising our hopes and then dashing them repeated itself again and again. Sometimes the renewal was from the southwest, but at other times it came from the west-southwest, west, or northwest, howling for hours through the rigging. Through all this, and worsening as the days dragged by, we had enormous seas breaking near the boat with the noise of thunder. Some would break right over the boat, but worst of all they would sometimes crash into the hull like a motor car or a charging bull. The whole boat would shudder and ring like a large bell and be thrown sideways. The Martszcraft 35 is certainly built like a little fortress!

Like several others, Joe waxes lyrical on the beauties of the high southern latitudes, admonishing us, 'if you have ever thought of sailing in Chile, stop thinking and go. If you have never thought of it, do so!' He rounds off his article most appropriately with a quotation from *The Confessions of St Augustine*:

'They went forth to behold the high mountains and the mighty surge of the sea, and the broad stretches of the rivers and the inexhaustible ocean, and the paths of the stars ... and in so doing lost themselves in wonderment.'

Back in home waters the Commodore used the momentum generated by the successful Millennium Rally to revive the Azores meet in 2001, though no longer as a pursuit race, and it turned out to be the most successful ever. Some 30 boats attended from both sides of the Atlantic and a number of mini-meets were organised at various island venues. In Horta Peter Azevedo and João

Fraga were their usual helpful selves, the marina offered free berthing to members, and both the Harbour Authorities and the Chamber of Commerce entertained the entire gathering of over a hundred sailors. The Club reciprocated with a dinner for the great and the good of Horta, and it was clear from the speeches that we still hold a special place amongst the many sailors who pass through that welcoming island. There is little doubt that this popular venue will continue to feature in future calendars. To relax from their considerable efforts in organising the meet, Mike and Pat sailed on to Newfoundland to enjoy a longer visit after their brief taste during the Atlantic circuit the previous year.

It is the story of Mike Butterfield's life that his new boat is never ready in time for a Club meet. We read how he missed the first Azores rally in 1977, and again in 2001 his radical new 48ft catamaran *Dazzler* was not ready in time. Mike is addicted to catamarans, having owned a series, and when he gets there he does so in a hurry. He sold one of his cats to a Frenchman, who came over to England to clinch a deal which included a delivery cross-Channel by Mike. It was blowing a bit so the new owner took the ferry home – Mike beat him there in the cat. He did arrive at the Azores rally, a little late, having made a fast maiden passage, but that was to be her last landfall. On the way home, some 400 miles out, she flipped, leaving the crew with an agonising ten hour wait for rescue. All were saved, including our busy Club Secretary Anthea Cornell, but the boat had to be abandoned.

2001 was a year to be remembered by all sailors when **Ellen MacArthur** came second in the Vendee Globe. One did not have to be a racer to appreciate the tremendous feat by one so young and comparatively inexperienced. She had us all on the edge of our seats as she sailed north up the Atlantic, swapping the lead with **Michel Desjoyeaux**. The French press gave her as rapturous a welcome as did the British, as they had when Peter Goss rescued a French competitor in a previous Around Alone race. Also like Peter Goss, the Club honoured Ellen with the OCC Award of Merit.

While Ellen was averaging speeds in double figures **Helen Tew**, aged 89, was slogging across the Atlantic with her son in her 27ft gaff cutter *Mary Helen*, determined to make a crossing before she was too old. In Europe she was already well-known as one of '*Les Trois Grannies*', the trio of British ladies who regularly crossed the English Channel in a 24ft vessel by the name of *La Snook*, and whose exploits also had earned the adulation of the French press. The Club gave the Award of Merit to that indomitable lady.

Both attended the 2002 annual dinner (see photograph page 267), and Ellen again had the Club enthralled as she read excerpts from her forthcoming

autobiography, six months before it was published. And at that same dinner Bill Caldwell, our man from Chesapeake, came over to receive the OCC Award on the conclusion of his stint as Rear Commodore USA South East (see photograph page 267). In ten years Bill, with a great deal of help from Alice, had turned the Chesapeake from a Club backwater into a thriving centre of activities that has been continued by his successor **Fred Hallett**.

By 2002 it was again time for a new man at the top, since Mike had said from the outset that it would be time to find fresh blood after four years. In my final speech as Commodore I had said that whilst the Club was now on very firm ground, I felt that it was in need of innovation. My predecessor and I had bound the old wounds worldwide, but the Club now needed to move forward. Mike, very ably assisted by Pat, had certainly achieved that. They had led from the front and, in their faithful *Blackjack* (see photograph page 268), had been seen all round the north Atlantic and at virtually every sailing rally in European waters during their four years. In fact, when they got back home from Newfoundland Mike became the only Commodore to make four Atlantic crossings during his four year tour.

The Commodore's is not an easy slot to fill as it needs someone with sufficient time to give to the job, while still being young and energetic enough to take an active role. Alan Taylor (see photograph page 268) started his sailing rather late in life but he quickly caught up. Both he and Martin Thomas qualified when they sailed Alan's Sadler 32, *Jenny Wren*, in the 1986 two-handed transatlantic, racing alongside Mike and Pat in *Blackjack*. It was a good introduction to ocean sailing which clearly did not put him off, as he went on to make a couple more Atlantic circuits before taking over as Commodore only 16 years after joining the Club. While Alan had not previously served on the Committee, he was a businessman of considerable standing and was clearly capable of taking charge. None of the previous three Commodores had experience of running businesses and, although the Club was still an association, modern legislation was daily impinging on its running and liabilities. Thus it needed someone with Alan's skills at the helm.

Within his first year Alan brought forward proposals to change the form of association to company status which required, for the first time in almost half a century, a complete overhaul of the Rules. The spirit has not changed but the wording had, perforce, to be brought into line with modern business practice as required by the Articles of Association of a Registered Company. This change has not affected the running of the Club, but in this litigious age there was the danger of action against the club impinging on officers or members – all are now protected.

One of the final names to be added to the members list of the first 50 years that of Beth Leonard, and she certainly proved her case to become a member. She quotes Puerto Williams to Fremantle, 9000 miles, as her qualifying passage, a distance only surpassed by Bill Tilman, who showed South America to starboard, 20,000 miles, but he did stop off to climb a few mountains on the way round. Beth had done a little sailing before this voyage and gives us a breathtaking summary at the beginning of her *Flying Fish* article:

'In 1995 my partner, Evans Starzinger, and I completed a three year, west-about tradewind circumnavigation aboard a 37ft traditional ketch. Following this we built and fitted out a 47ft aluminium Van de Stadt Samoa to cruise the Chilean channels (see photograph page 270). But when we left the Chesapeake Bay aboard *Hawk* in 1999 we weren't even sure we would like sailing in cold weather – nor did we feel we had the skills to venture to the far south so we spent the next two years sailing the northern high latitudes, wintering in Kinsale, Ireland, and sailing within the Arctic Circle north of Iceland. By then we had developed enough confidence in ourselves and our new boat to do what we had dreamed of doing. We left the Vestmann Islands in Iceland in July 2001 and sailed 8000 miles down the length of the Atlantic, reaching the Beagle Channel 50 miles north of Cape Horn on Christmas Day. After a double-traverse of the channels (south to north and then north to south) and rounding Cape Horn, the New Year's Eve festivities this year saw us back in Puerto Williams.'

Beth dismisses the Southern Ocean passage very lightly:

'On our circumnavigation, one place we had really wanted to spend more time was Australia. So we determined to head east from the Beagle Channel on a 9000 mile Southern Ocean voyage to Perth. In agreeing to this passage I had a secret agenda – more than anything else I wanted to see the giant wandering albatrosses swooping across the fronts of Southern Ocean greybeards. Evans has always said that for him the perfect passage is one so uneventful that I have nothing to write about, and this one came close. We encountered the usual breezy conditions often present in the Southern Ocean and we had the normal amount of gear breakage for a long passage, but all in all there were no dramas. None of the knock downs, wild broaches, survival storms, collisions with icebergs, dismastings or lost rudders that often spice up Southern Ocean sea stories.'

However she was not disappointed by the albatrosses:

'For me, the most lasting image from the passage will be the majestic wandering albatrosses soaring over our wake, wingtips just touching the crest of a wave as they arced up and over and into the trough behind. After hatching, these magnificent birds take to the sea, riding the westerly winds, often not returning to land until they breed at seven or eight years of age. We saw many first and second year birds, brown except for a white mask on their faces, as we sailed near the islands where they were born – South Georgia, Marion, Crozet and Kerguelen. Occasionally we saw an aged veteran with a 10 to 12 foot wingspan, almost entirely white except for a small amount of brown on the wingtips, appearing slightly hunch-backed as it soared and glided without moving a feather for as long as we would sit and watch. These were probably as old or older than us, and would have spent the vast majority of their lives at sea.'

The Committee could not in all conscience award Beth the Qualifier's Mug, but she had no difficulty in gaining the Vasey Vase for this magnificent passage.

Perhaps a good way to round off this record of the first 50 years of the Club is to glance through the last *Journal* of the half century, which illustrates far better than any statistics just where we have arrived.

We read of **Tony Gooch**'s outstanding circumnavigation, of which more later, and catch up with the world-girdling Pardeys who are in mid-Pacific, as are **Misty** and **Peter McIntosh** who have been wandering around that part of the globe for a decade. We find our erstwhile Membership Secretaries, Graham and Avril Johnson miles up the Gambia River before popping across to Brazil, and much farther south we read of the almost obligatory voyage to Antarctica by **Lawrence** and **Maxine Bailey** who are able to repay a little local kindness in the Falklands before going on to South Georgia. **Neill Carslaw** thinks that, at 80, he is too old for more crewing but nevertheless gives us some fun with his reminiscences (he later proved himself quite wrong), while **Bill Marden** at the same age is singlehanded for 3000 miles in his 52-footer and clearly doesn't think it is the end for him. He gives us sage advice in saying that he always prepares for the worst that can happen, and to date it never has.

Ashore, **David Baggaley** regrets the loss of innocence in Prickly Bay, while Ian Nicolson drools over his little bit of heaven at a delightfully old-fashioned yard near Stockholm, which he convinces us is nearly as attractive as the Clyde. Frequent contributors **Tom** and **Vicky Jackson** give us a taste of the north with some stunning pictures of the unspoilt nature that still abounds on the Alaskan shores – a fitting backdrop to their beautiful, varnished S&S 40 *Sunstone* (see photograph page 292) – and perhaps we can forgive the crowd



You're not too old at 80 – Bill Marden aboard his 52ft ketch *Fancy Free*

of members who charter *Northanger* to do the tourist bit in Antarctica.

The sun lovers abound in the Pacific, with **Steve** and **Julie Ferrero** island-hopping through the east archipelagos while **Mary Whibley** unashamedly oozes through the Marquesas. After eight years on their way around the world **Rosemarie** and **Alfred Alecio** feel sufficiently confident to

explore the Columbian coast and even help the locals do a bit of amateur archaeology. Poor **Tom Dujardin** is put to the test when he loses his mast while singlehanded to Bermuda, but it is good to hear again from Belgium, where members were once so numerous. As we have just read, new member **Beth Leonard** whets our appetite with a Southern Ocean passage, and to round off the Journal John Maddox for once tells us of his own sailing instead of his usual update on other members down-under when he recounts the tale of several middle-aged Australian members sailing the much-travelled *Holger Danske* to Tasmania (see photograph page 270).

Four Americans, one Australian, one Belgian, one Canadian, six English, four Scots and one anonymous, all writing for our enjoyment, covering five continents,

six oceans and seven seas. That is where the Club has arrived after 50 years. The Jubilee party at the Royal Thames YC in March 2004 was a signal occasion when seven nationalities attended including five venerable Founder Members – **Jack Clark**, Colin Mudie, Ian Nicolson, Bill Wise and the not-so-venerable Harvey Loomis, who is still younger than fellow countryman Sherman Hoyt was when he joined as a Founder. Two near misses, Ben Pester and Derrick Allen, who both joined in 1954, helped swell the numbers of those early enthusiasts who set the Club on the road to success so that we who follow can continue to enjoy this unique fraternity of the sea.

The awards presented that night also served to emphasise the Club's international nature, in this jubilee year reflecting the strength of North America membership. Tony Gooch was over from Canada to receive the premier award for his circumnavigation; also from Canada was **Ian Grant** to collect the Rambler Medal for a passage from Canada to Scotland to explore the Western Isles and, in absentia, Andy Copeland who won the Water Music Trophy for his copious notes on the Black Sea. A little further south, and Bill Marden, now aged 83, came from Texas to receive the Rose Medal.

For his writing the late **Des Sleightholme**, who entertained generations of seafarers with his light touch as editor of *Yachting Monthly* and was himself a member for several years, was posthumously honoured with the Geoff Pack Memorial Award, while Martin Thomas won the David Wallis Trophy for his contribution to *Flying Fish on Medical Emergencies at Sea*. Back to America for the Vasey Vase, awarded to new member Beth Leonard of whom we shall hear in the next chapter; and finally down to Australia where we salute another new member, Joe Cannon, for his magnificent Five Cape circumnavigation for which he received the Australian Trophy.

Finally, the whole Club were delighted to honour our Admiral with the OCC Award. Mary has been active in the life of the Club throughout her 34 years as a member, having had little option in joining when our founder, Humphrey Barton, secured her as permanent crew. When she came ashore after Hum died she became a committee member and served during the difficult '80s. When seeking a person of stature to take the Commodore's Flag in an emergency, the committee turned to Mary, and in six years she led the Club back onto firm ground before hoisting her Admiral's Flag in 1994. Throughout all this time she has put in as much sailing as most members and has never been known to refuse the offer of an ocean passage. It was but small recognition for Mary's efforts, but her great reward is in seeing the Club that her late husband founded grow in strength to become respected as the premier international deep-sea fraternity.

XVII – LEGENDS

If the late '80s had been dark days, by contrast the turn of the millennium certainly belonged to legendary figures. The Club had not lacked heroes over the previous 40 years and the efforts of Hum's Chums just to qualify were often outstanding by today's standards – it would be hard to match Ben Carlin's circumnavigation in an amphibious Jeep, or the Smith brothers with their Atlantic crossing in a half finished virtually open boat. It is doubtful if Rosemary Mudie's balloon/gondola epic will ever be repeated, and Bill Tilman's and David Lewis's Antarctic exploits have rarely been matched. It would be invidious to try and record all the truly outstanding voyages by members, as inevitably some went unrecorded in the Club's annals and others have today become commonplace when they were undoubtedly laudable in their day. Few would question the courage of Francis Chichester and Alec Rose, capped of course by Robin Knox-Johnson, and although Al Petersen's circuit did take him three years it was a most outstanding voyage in its day. But by any standards they came thick and fast over the late '90s to the present, giving the Awards sub-committee an abundance of choice for the various trophies.

We glanced at the *Flying Fish* which rounded off the jubilee years and that alone told of the diversity of both the members and their activities, but a closer look at a few recent extraordinary exploits serves to exemplify the advances in cruising over the half century of the Club's existence. And that the Club has played a significant role in this development is beyond doubt. As we have already argued, the exploits of the few spur on the rest, the swapping of yarns at rallies gives others the courage to go further, and the amazing records of the more intrepid tempt others to push their limits.

Paradoxically, one member whose extraordinary defiance of age has allowed him to sail singlehanded well into his eighties, Mike Richey, confounds the advance of technology by sailing his most uncomplicated boat at an age when many have long since hung up their sextant. Mike cannot qualify as one of our heroes by pushing through the ice, since he confines his sailing almost entirely to the mid-latitudes – indeed it is doubtful if he has ever encountered an iceberg. The recent change of rule had disbarred *Jester* from the Millennium OSTAR equivalent on the grounds of size – she is 25ft overall – but Mike was invited to enter as a special dispensation since the boat had not missed a race since its inception. It was a brave move on the part of the organisers as he was then 83 and *Jester* has no engine. Even Mike had begun to question the wisdom of continuing:

'I have sometimes wondered, as I sail merrily into my dotage,



The low-tech *Jester* shows her paces

whether the trouble is ultimately going to be not being able to hoist the sail, or just losing the thread, forgetting where one is going, and why. For the moment I will leave it at that but it does seem to me, as the years roll by, that it is now the mission that tends to be questioned rather than one's ability to fulfil it. That at any rate seems to have been one element in *Jester's* somewhat abortive singlehanded millennial transatlantic race last summer.'

But it was to be the very low-tech elements that were his undoing:

'Events from 15 June onwards bear all the marks of what the scientists call chaos theory. Pre-heating with meths the burners on the paraffin cooker, the boat took a lurch which spilt the meths and started a fairly familiar blaze, generally of no consequence since it can be put out with water. However, now the heat was such that the plastic pressure gauge on the fuel tank melted, releasing a jet of lighted paraffin. I was able to put the fire out but was from then on, until I could mend the gauge, reduced to a diet of uncooked food. After a day or so I contrived to patch the pipe up with heavy duty sail tape which seemed to work, but whether securely enough to last the passage seemed doubtful. Somebody seemed to be telling me something, for later that day I stepped into the control hatch from aft and trod on and broke the blow torch, the only alternative way of pre-heating the stove to meths. I measured the amount of meths left and estimated it would last about ten days. I decided to divert to Ponta Delgada in the Azores, then some 470 miles to windward. This effectively put paid to the idea of a trade wind passage, and probably of a fast passage of any kind.'

This stop did not infringe the rules, and Mike was able to carry on:

'Thus, on 7 July, having waited an extra day to celebrate my birthday with friends ashore, *Jester* headed west again, before a fine northeasterly breeze that was to last for almost two weeks.'

But then:

'The wind backed remorselessly and after several attempts to break out of the pattern on either tack, I decided to take stock once more. We were now about equidistant from Newport and Ponta Delgada, but so far as I could see only making up towards Nova Scotia would get us nearer America. It would be a long haul. Further, it was getting late in the year to arrive on the East Coast and would soon be getting late to leave the Azores for England if the September gales were to be avoided. On 24 July

at about noon in about 36.5°N 47.5°W I turned the boat around and headed downwind for São Miguel. I had no regrets at the time but I soon became troubled about whether I was doing the right thing, whether I was not simply accepting failure.'

On arriving back in Plymouth after three months away Mike said that he felt like the New England whaling captain who, returning after a year or so away remarked, 'No, we saw no whales but we had a damned fine cruise'.

Now, at the age 87, Mike has finally come ashore but that has not deterred further recognition of his place at the forefront of navigational development. He had already received just about every honour in the navigational world but last year they invented a new one, the International Association of Institutes of Navigation making him the first recipient of the Necho Award. The citation read:

'It would be quite unrealistic to ascribe the state, and standing, of navigation today, in comparison with that of fifty years ago, to any one individual or particular achievement; but it is certain that the name of Michael Richey would stand high in any list of those who made possible that advance.'

Although we don't often hear from John Gore-Grimes – he hardly has time to write between his Arctic exploits – what we do hear is guaranteed to thrill. John has become addicted to ice and is never happier than when pushing north in the pack. Now he does it in the relative comfort of his specially strengthened Najad 441 *Arctic Fern*, but his early ice sorties were in his Nicholson 31 *Shardana*.

John gradually became increasingly ambitious and in 1988 got as far as 77°44'N in an attempt to reach Franz Joseph Land. A repeat attempt the following year took him to 77°51'N, and ten years later to 78° 22'N, but after five days trapped in the ice he still did not reach his goal. When they left again in 2000 the ice was favourable but the diplomatic situation was distinctly frosty. In response to John's e-mails the HQ of the Russian Armed Forces replied, 'Due to regime regulations foreigners are not allowed to enter the archipelago'. Nevertheless they sailed, hoping the news would be better when they reached North Cape. It wasn't – in fact it was worse, as the local fishermen advised that if they proceeded without permission they risked confiscation of the boat, imprisonment awaiting trial and a likely \$50,000 fine. But it was a good ice year and John could not resist the lure. He takes up the story:

'11 August was a day of thick fog and slack winds. We were still headed for Cape Flora when suddenly a smart fishing vessel appeared out of the fog beside us. A smooth-talking, polite Russian called us on VHF, he said in a Russian/American accent. 'Hello,

my friends. Where are you coming from?' The answer that he wanted and probably knew already was 'Ireland' but I replied, 'the North Cape'. 'Oh, I see', he said. 'How many persons onboard and where are you going to?' 'Six', I replied, 'and we are bound for Nordaustland in Svalbard'. 'Ah! I do not think you will get there. There is too much ice'. ... 'I wish you a good watch and good sailing but please do not enter Russian Territorial Waters'. ... I wished him a good watch and good fishing but we believed that the only 'fishing' done on that vessel was 'fishing for information'; it was bristling with aerials and had a very large radar scanner.

During the afternoon we altered course for 81°N 40°E to keep clear of the territorial waters of Franz Josef Land. As I looked at the chart I spotted a small dot. It said Victoria Island beside it. On checking the Arctic pilot we learned that the flag of the USSR had been hoisted on Ostrov Viktoriya in 1933. I had an aeronautical chart showing the world above 80° and the island appeared clearly on it at 80°09'N 36°4'E. No one on board had ever heard of this island before.

The fog rolled in and the wind disappeared. Visibility was down to one cable but we could still see the fulmars swooping out of the fog as they circled the boat. There were puffins about and, for the first time, we sighted little auks. The presence of these little birds is usually a sign that ice is not too far away. The sea temperature at 79°04'N was +2°C. All of the ice signs were there but as we were to learn later, the ice front was still about 38 miles to the north of us.

We turned off the sat-phone and the VHF as we entered Russian Territorial Waters. All transmitters and receivers were turned off with the exception of the occasional use of the hand-held GPS, for fear that they would betray our position. There was a quiet anxiety aboard. At 0240 on Monday 14 August we sighted Ostrov Viktoriya. It looked like a large berg with snow and ice cliffs falling down to the sea. The water temperature was -0.2°C. As we got closer we could see the summit of the island which is 344 metres high. At the top there was a building with a round casagran dish on it. As we came to within four miles we scanned every bit to see if there was any sign of human habitation. The depth suddenly dropped and we moved away to round a low point at its west end. If the place was occupied we knew that we were in deep trouble but using the binoculars we could only see signs of wreckage and dereliction. Robert carefully looked at a hut which seemed to have windows and a door and as we got closer he could make out that the windows and doors had been forced open by ice. He trained the binoculars carefully on this hut to see if there was any sign of smoke or perhaps the shimmer



Pause for ice – *Arctic Fern* near Svalbard

of diesel fumes from the chimney. There was none.

Our hand-held GPS gave a position of 80°09'N 36°43'E and the walrus played around us with amused curiosity. Our difficulty was to row ashore in a rubber dinghy without getting a playful puncture from one or more of the walrus tusks. Reggie, Robert and I rowed ashore when the walrus departed to play their games in another part of the ocean. We were armed with a .375 rifle and a shotgun with cartridges fitted with heavy stainless steel shot in case of polar bear attack. A young polar bear jumped out of the snow and dashed over the brow of the hill.

This station had been one of many which were set up to spy on the West and, later, on NATO activities along the Norwegian border. After the collapse of the Soviet Union both money and motivation ran out. This extraordinary place was a frozen museum of the cold war. In among the Nissen hut dormitories we came upon the dead body of a full grown polar bear. It cannot have been dead for long because the skuas had not started to feed on it. In fact the poor bear would have made a bad meal for the skuas because there was hardly a pick of flesh on it. It looked as if it had died from starvation. To reach 80°09'N without ice is an unusual experience. Apart from the remote chance of picking out a young walrus there was nothing else to eat on the island. The seals had gone north to the ice edge. The prospects of survival for the young bear looked bleak.

After a quick swim, we set off from Ostrov Viktoriya and steered 090° true E.'

John has been back again since this sortie of course, but 2003 was just a routine run around the northern islands. After calling in at Akureyri on the north coast of Iceland he made two stops in east Greenland before continuing to Spitsbergen. On the way home he called at North Cape and the Faeroes and then headed back to Dublin. In seven weeks they had made almost the equivalent of a north Atlantic circuit, much of it in ice, but that is the way John likes it.

And now a legend of whom we have heard before, but whose latest exploits certainly qualify Denise Evans for our pantheon of latter day heroes. Denise is the widow of Sir Charles of Himalayan fame, having been the deputy to Hunt on the 1953 Everest expedition for which he was knighted. Charles and Denise were both sailors and climbers until illness forced his retirement, first from the mountains and later the sea, but he backed Denise in her ambition to explore further and further under sail right up to his death in 1995. Her Barton Cup cruise in 1991 to the Magellan Straits was described in Chapter 13.

Her next cruise, shortly after Charles died, when she sailed to and climbed a mountain in Greenland which he had always wanted to climb, was only marginally

less arduous. In 2001 she went the other way and sailed to Spitsbergen, with the express intention of making a passage through the Hinlopen Strait. Again she had a cargo of hairy young whose brawn made up for their lack of experience, though space aboard *Dunlin of Wessex*, her trusty Tradewind 33, must have been at a premium.

The passage to the archipelago was without incident and they worked their way clockwise to the entrance to the Strait only encountering small amounts of ice but plenty of fog. A weather window opened with the Strait flat calm and ice free, but a gale was in the offing so they had to go or fly for shelter. They went, and had to use the engine for most of the 120 mile passage to the next good shelter in the Freemansundet, but before they reached it they encountered broken ice and fog. Denise describes the next three days:

'The entrance to Freemansundet was only about twenty miles away and we needed to decide whether to go on into the sound in nil visibility, trusting we could get past any ice that might be there, or head southeast in the hope of finding open water. Speaking to the weather station in Tromsø on the MF we were disturbed, though not surprised, to get a gale warning of NE force 8–9 by midnight. Our barometer was still reading 1010 millibars. There were no new ice reports, the state of Freemansundet was still unknown and with a gale coming on my reaction was to head for open water, if it could be found.

During the afternoon and evening the NE wind picked up steadily. Reefing down in good time, we were able to keep on an easterly course through very open drift. Visibility improved for a while, allowing us to see a couple of hundred yards ahead, and it was a great thrill to spot three polar bears, probably a mother and two cubs, huddled together on a small floe, looking thoroughly dejected. We were none too happy ourselves as the space between floes diminished. Jeremy climbed to the crosstrees to look for a way through the pack to the south, but the ice was thicker there. Taking in a third reef as the wind reached gale force, we went about. The best thing to do, it seemed to us, was to tack to and fro until the gale abated or visibility improved. In that way we could explore the limits of our confinement but keep in relatively open water in the middle of the strait. *Dunlin* will beat into force 8 but no more, and it was fortunate the gale never reached force 9. After about two hours on the port tack we would come up against a barrage of ice, looming white through the fog, and go about. It was like a sinister game of blind man's buff and we covered many extra miles.

Taking two-hour spells at the helm, we kept up our tacking strategy for the rest of that night and the whole of the next day,

snatching what sleep we could, fully dressed. It was miserably cold on deck in the sleet and snow, which quickly clung to the rigging and formed slabs on the mainsail, only to be shaken down over the helmsman at every gust. Handling wet, icy sheets made our fingers numb and useless in a matter of moments. I could imagine what it must have been like for the early navigators, having to over-winter in some frozen fastness, hemmed in by the pack.

By the evening of 1st August we were once more about 20 miles northeast of Freemansundet when the wind dropped briefly and the fog lifted, so we laid a course for the entrance to the sound. We had been on the go for about five days, the last three without proper food or sleep, and I was determined to anchor if it was at all possible.'

It would be wrong to leave Willy Ker, out of our roll call, although his 2003 cruise was modest by his standards. One of his boyhood heroes was Gino Watkins, who had explored Greenland's east coast in open boats some 70 years earlier, eventually being lost while hunting seal alone in a kayak. There had been a wooden memorial cross above the fjord where he was drowned and Willy wished to pay respects to his legendary predecessor. He had tried on three previous occasions to reach Ammassalik, where the cross was said to stand, but had always been forced back by either ice or pressure of time. Having reached the age of 79 Willy deemed it prudent to ship a young hand instead of his usual solo cruising, so took his youngest grandson as far as Iceland, there swapping him for his older brother. Willy's confidence in *Assent*, his well-travelled Contessa 32, is impressive:

'After a day's shakedown, we were away at noon on 31st July. With Kap Dan 330 miles to the west and bearing 263°, the forecast northeast gale would give us a fast passage. It was soon blowing very freshly, with an awkward quartering sea, but with three reefs in the main and the jib rolled down to a pocket-handkerchief, we were making excellent progress. The log for 1st August read, '24hr run, 155 miles – just about a record for *Assent*'. We were keeping our fingers crossed that the gale would blow itself out before we had to dodge icebergs!'

But even Willy has to give in occasionally:

'We were away early and went out into shallow fog, meeting increasing ice as we approached Ailsa O. The fjord was full of bergs and bergy bits. However the sun came through and we threaded our way to the head where we anchored behind a line of grounded bergs near Gino's base camp. It is a lovely spot with

a first class Arctic char stream, and we had hoped to be able to stay long enough to search for traces of the expedition, as well as the memorial cross, but we then picked up a Navtex gale warning for our area. Perhaps a steel yacht with a lifting keel could have run up onto the sandy beach and been safe from wind and ice. Regretfully we had to cut and run.'

Willy had fulfilled his ambition of at least visiting the site of Watkins' demise, even if he hadn't found the memorial cross, so happily shaped a course for home. On the way to Kulusuk to drop off his grandson at the airport they found a cosy anchorage for the night:

'When we got there we found a barrier of very big icebergs, which I thought were aground, and we happily wriggled our way into the fjord. There were some largish floes that gave us a restless night, but the real concern in the morning was that the bergs were on the move and the gaps had closed. I rowed the dinghy down to do a recce and could see a way out; however by the time we had got the anchor and were on the move, those gaps had closed. Stuart doing lookout on the bow was not a bit ruffled – "OK, grandpop, this way" etc – but I could see the rams jutting out below and was mightily relieved when we were finally clear.

It was grand having Stuart with me and I was sorry to lose him; now I would make my way home, by easy stages, via my friends in Iceland and Ireland.'

Interestingly, ten years earlier most of the icemen were messing about round Cape Horn and the Peninsula, but in the early 2000s they all went north. John Gore-Grimes for his 'milk run' into the ice, Willy to his beloved Greenland, Bob Shepton to shin up a few icy mountains, Denise to cross off the Hinlopen and, to complete the quartet, Paddy Barry and Jarlath Cunnane fulfilled another dream. Paddy gives the excuse:

'Jarlath, myself, and climber Frank Nugent, with our Antarctic Shackleton re-run now three years behind us, considered that it was time for another worthwhile outing, the North West Passage, which only twelve vessels have completed since Roald Amundsen did it first in 1903–6. Jarlath's boat *Lir*, at 34ft being too small, and my gaff-rigged Galway Hooker *Saint Patrick* being unsuitable, we decided to build an aluminium vessel, purpose designed for polar expeditions.'

It was a particularly good ice year, allowing them to get beyond Thule on the North West coast of Greenland with relative ease while waiting for the ice to clear at the start of the passage proper. Modern communications make it an



The tuneful Irishmen

**The one that got away – or is Willy Ker describing
a tight lead through the ice?**



altogether different game to that of the early explorers, whose only recourse was to keep trying until they found a way. Paddy and Jarlath were able to interrogate the various shore stations which keep satellite watch and even spoke a passing icebreaker. Thus they were able to pick their time, but this does not lessen the achievement:

‘On Tuesday 7 August at 0400 UT we rounded Cape Sherard and entered Lancaster Sound. The North West Passage proper was begun. Conditions were perfect – clear visibility, bergs only, flat sea and light northerly breeze, cold. Our spirits were high. We stood southwesterly to clear the pack-ice reported heavy on the northern side of the Sound. Sure enough its hard white edge could be seen, with the mountains of Devon Island behind.

Beechey Island, with its Franklin remains, was unfortunately inaccessible to us because of ice, as was Resolute. Peel Sound awaited, largely ice-free – marvellous. Peel Sound is a great icy door on the North West Passage, normally closed until the end of August, if it opens at all. Joyous, with all sail set, a ‘one-hat-day’ we ran towards it and then turned southwards.

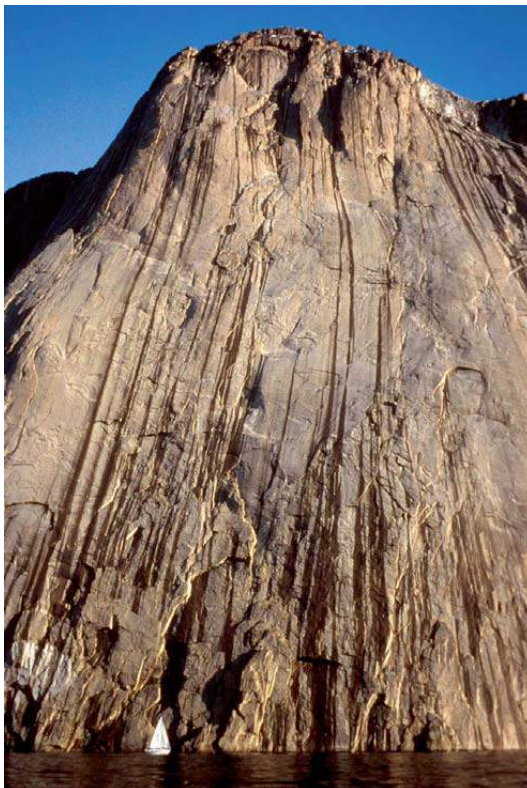
James Ross Strait is shallow and narrow. We wound our way through in near perfect conditions, but were surprised not to find an island shown as ‘PA’ on our chart. It sure was approximate, about half a mile out of place and just abeam when we spotted it, a bunch of rocky fangs barely peeping over the water. With relief we continued and next day approached Gjoa Haven.’

With very few setbacks they worked their way through until eventually:

‘We rounded Point Barrow at 0600 on Thursday 30 August. The village of Barrow was ten miles on – we had hoped to anchor off and have breakfast there. However there was too much wind and surf on the shore to safely land in the dinghy. We shook hands, drank a celebratory tot, raised twin headsails and were on our way. The wind backed northerly and blew 30 knots (most surely bringing in the pack to close the Alaska coast we had passed only the previous day).’

They had been lucky with the weather, but it was a magnificent achievement which rightly earned the Barton Cup.

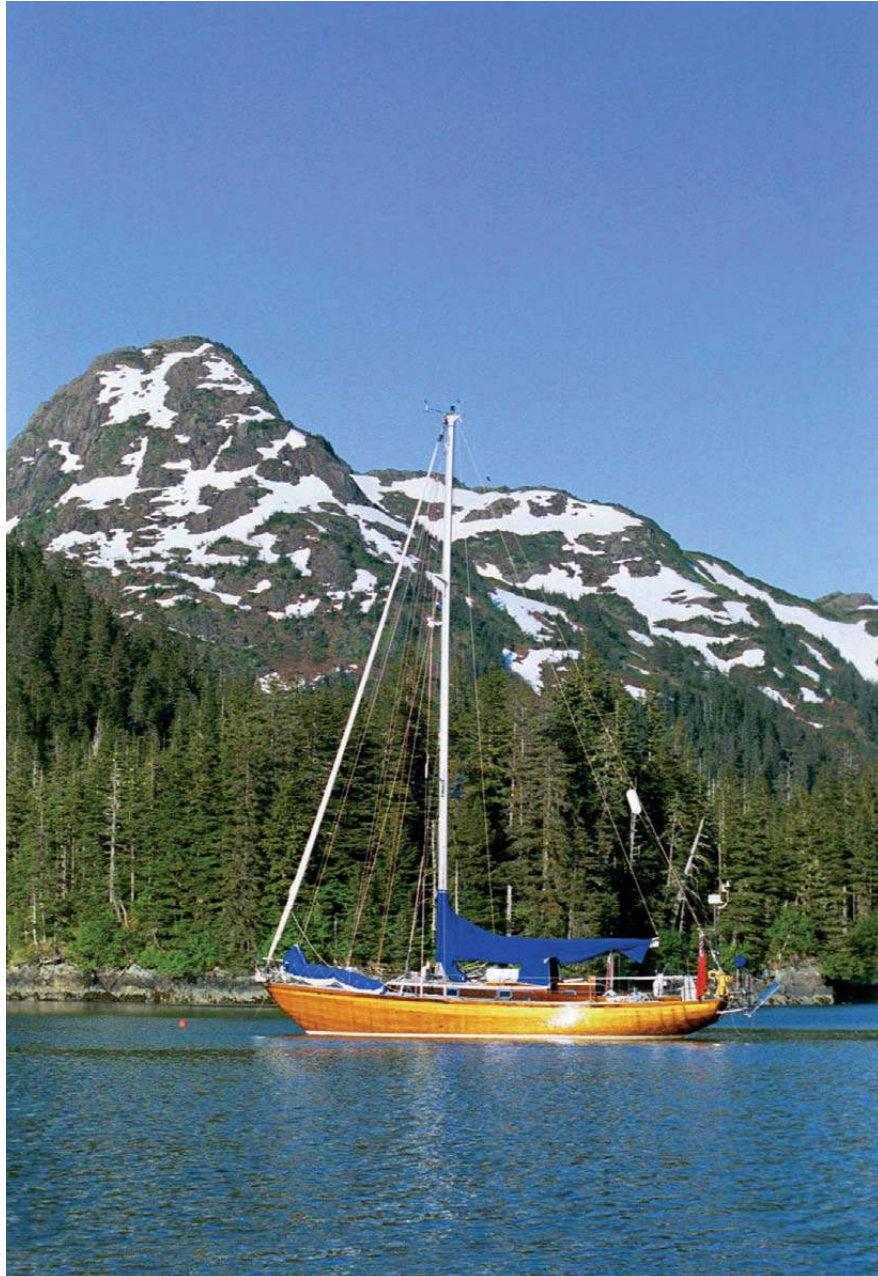
The ice quorum is completed by the Reverend Bob Shepton, who pushes his connections to the limits both at sea and on the mountain. Bob combines his love of both these in the way that Bill Tilman did, by sailing to remote mountains for the challenge of the climb as much as for the passage. His modest boat, somewhat irreverently named *Dodo’s Delight*, is a Westerly Discus, more suited



Above left: Bob Shepton fishes for supper while the youngsters do the climbing

Above right: In Tilman's wake – Bob on a Greenland glacier

Left: Sandersons Hope – which took fourteen days to conquer – dwarfs *Dodo's Delight*



The immaculate *Sunstone* in Alaska (see page 276)

to the Solent than the high latitudes. However Bob has taken her to both the Arctic and the Antarctic, and fitted in a circumnavigation with a changing crew of disadvantaged youngsters.

To most ordinary sailors a transatlantic passage is quite an achievement, and to the slightly less ordinary a direct crossing on the northern rhumb line and thence into the ice on the west coast of Greenland would be somewhat more testing. But to Bob, this has become an almost annual commute as it takes him to the challenging, unclimbed mountains and rarely-crossed glaciers that abound along that littoral. In Tilman fashion he has often mounted climbs of otherwise inaccessible rock faces direct from the deck of the boat and thus has achieved many 'firsts'.

Perhaps his most spectacular assault was on the North Wall of Sandersons Hope, an unclimbed granite face of 1045m at 72°43'N. On this occasion Bob decided that ship-watching was a greater priority and left the mountaineering to the professional climbers whom he carried aboard. However, the seamanship involved in getting the party ashore and then holding off for two weeks was of no small order. The rock wall rose near vertically out of the sea and Bob had to get the boat close enough, in the constant swell, to allow a climber to leap onto the rock face and, while clinging like a limpet, to hammer in pitons and attach the first ropes. After several such 'dockings' they were able to hang a pallet from the ropes and throw an immense amount of climbing gear 'ashore'. The climbers then set off up the face. They daily fixed ropes and returned to the boat at night until, after six days of climbing spread over a total of 14 days, they

'Base Camp' at the foot of Sanderson's Hope





Tony Gooch

Taonui completes the circle



reached the summit. Tilman would have been proud of them!

This was only one of the many spectacular climbs and traverses made from *Dodo*, but having finished for the season there was then the question of a North Atlantic crossing in autumn, a daunting prospect for most. Bob dismisses it:

‘Initially we worked south and a little west to keep well away from Tropical Storm *Gabrielle* by Cape Farewell, before we could finally turn east. Suffice it to say, it was the usual stormy passage across the Atlantic: in the first gale we ran before under bare poles through the night in the right direction, and lay a-hull through the second as the wind was in the wrong direction’.

It is interesting that all four of our ‘icemen’ have been awarded the CCA Blue Water Medal, which underscores their right to be included in our list of outstanding members. But a fifth, and the latest to be awarded that coveted accolade, was Tony Gooch. While a lot of his long passages have been alone, **Coryn** is not to be denied her share of the ice and has accompanied him on several high latitude exploits. Their boat, *Taonui*, is a one-off 42ft aluminium cutter which exudes efficiency. In the way that 50 years ago Al Petersen’s *Stornaway* smacked of infinite care and attention to detail in her delightful simplicity, so *Taonui* gives the same confidence in her thoroughly modern high-tech style.

Tony only joined the OCC in 1996 and Coryn not until 2000, and neither of them are youngsters, but in those few years since becoming members they have quartered the globe. In 1997 their sojourn in Antarctica was abruptly ended by a severe knockdown which necessitated shipping the boat to the UK for repairs. The following year they were determined to complete that cruise, but first made a circuit of Iceland as a shake-down for the new rig. Tony then sailed alone to the Falklands where he picked up Coryn for their sortie to South Georgia, so as to take up where they left off the previous year.

Tony could well qualify for our hall of fame on these grounds alone, but his latest exploit, and doubtless the clincher for the Blue Water Medal, was his 2002–3 non-stop, singlehanded Five Capes circumnavigation, from Victoria BC back to Victoria BC. One is tempted to ask, in the way that a Sunday sailor once asked me when I boasted that I’d just tacked my 41-footer the whole length of a particularly narrow and torturous pass, ‘Why?’. There is no good answer, except that he and Coryn have made so many spectacular cruises that it was one of the last real challenges, and he met it in immaculate style. Tony’s answer as to why is more convincing:

‘We prefer sailing in the high latitudes and the wilderness of the Southern Ocean holds a special attraction. I wanted to get down

there one last time while I was still fit and healthy enough to handle hard sailing and enjoy it all. Such a trip had never been done from the west coast of North America (nor, I think, from the east coast), so I decided to make the attempt from our homeport of Victoria, British Columbia.'

It is quite a different proposition starting out from the western seaboard of America than from an Atlantic harbour. Tony explains why:

'A non-stop circumnavigation from the west coast of North America poses a different set of navigational problems from those encountered on a similar trip starting from Europe. The best time to leave Victoria is the end of September, in order to avoid the hurricane season off Central America and arrive at Cape Horn at the start of the southern summer, then to spend the months from December to February circuiting the Southern Ocean. Unfortunately this means returning north up the South Pacific during the cyclone season. A trip starting from Europe does not have this problem, as there are no cyclones in the South Atlantic. Starting from Europe allows for a gradual introduction to the Southern Ocean after sailing south of Africa, with the final hurdle of Cape Horn at the end of the circuit of the Southern Ocean. At the end of the first leg I would be sailing directly to Cape Horn, with the dangerous south coast of Chile as a rapidly approaching lee shore. A further consideration is that the last leg up the Pacific involves threading a course through the various island chains and dealing with strong ocean currents, neither of which are a factor in the return to Europe up the South and North Atlantic.'

Coryn maintained a website which she updated frequently so that the whole world could follow Tony's progress, and naturally his arrival home was no secret:

'That night the wind died, so I took down the sails and waited until dawn. Over 30 boats from the Royal Victoria Yacht Club had come out to welcome me home, which was very heart-warming after such a long time at sea. The last ten miles were a real struggle, ending as a beat against a pale southeast wind and an ebbing tide, and I finally crossed the finish line off Trial Island at 1100. Coryn jumped aboard and the local Coast Guard Auxiliary towed Taonui *around* to the Yacht Club. The voyage had taken 177 days, and we had covered 24,340 miles at an average of 137 miles a day.'

This is an interesting note on which to close our pantheon of legendary figures as it neatly completes the half century of the Club's existence and the fifty

years' development of relatively small, purposeful, cruising boats. Hum started our journey in *Vertue XXXV*, perhaps the acme of muscular little boats of her day and a type still to be seen shouldering their way determinedly through the seas, and Tony closed the circle with his state-of-the-art cruiser of such efficiency that one can envisage *Taonui* still circling the globe at the centenary of the Club. In between, the whole essence of cruising in small boats is captured by Mike Richey's last voyage in *Jester*. A boat the same size as Hum's, and hardly more sophisticated, sailing over the same bit of ocean as Hum did all those years before, and being confounded by the same sort of basic problems that have dogged sailors throughout history.

Hum closed the shore to communicate with a hoist of flags, and when at sea his whereabouts were known only if he happened to be within visual range of an obliging ship. Even then it took several days for this intelligence to be passed on. Tony e-mailed Coryn almost daily, and this was displayed on his website so that we all knew his position to within feet throughout his voyage.

Whose was the most meritorious voyage and whose was the most satisfactory? There is of course no answer, or if there were it would be entirely subjective. Both pushed out the frontiers of their time, and one can only marvel at the developments which allowed Tony to circumnavigate with such apparent ease and efficiency only fifty short years after Hum became an international hero for crossing a mere pond by today's measurement.

What of the future? Can the pace of development go on unabated? If one stays within the bounds of the Aims and Objects of the Ocean Cruising Club, development is constrained by what the individual wants to achieve, not the absolute achievement. Willy and John will go on pushing through the ice because that is what they enjoy most. Bob will use his boat to convey him to unconquered mountains and glaciers because it is the very fact of being the first, or instrumental in bringing about a 'first', that gives him joy. While Tony's feat can hardly be called ocean cruising, it is his pleasure to complete a hitherto unaccomplished passage with expedience and efficiency. And beside these endeavours, but in no way subordinate to them, are the crowd of members who gain their cruising satisfaction in a myriad of other ways. Whether it is Weston Martyr's *Two Hundred Pound Millionaire* or the owner of the one million pound yacht, the spur is still encapsulated by the timeless words of RL Stevenson:

'I have been after an adventure. I have been after an adventure all my life, a pure dispassionate adventure such as befell the early and heroic voyagers.'

XVIII – EPILOGUE : THE CLUB

The Club is an anonymous term in the same way that the word Church is used. Most often it is taken to mean a building, a material thing that can be altered, refined, used or not. But again, like the Church, this would be to misinterpret its real meaning. In the case of the Ocean Cruising Club it has no home, no building, no premises or moorings. The Club is the members, on land or at sea, where two or more are gathered together. The Club is what the members make it. This is at once its strength and its weakness. To be congenial takes an effort. It is not possible just to pop in for a drink and a yarn. One must plan a meeting and often sail to that rendezvous with considerable effort. But when there the Club comes alive. Old acquaintances are renewed, new ones are made, yarns are spun and lies are told. And above all brave new plans are laid.

The OCC, whilst having its foundations firmly laid by its founders, has since developed empirically. It is now a loose fraternity of some 1800 members spread across almost 50 countries. It has some ten land-based flag officers and numerous peripatetic members carrying their flags across the oceans. It has 90-odd Port Officers spread across 29 countries which embrace the seven seas and the five continents. The Club has robustness simply because of the qualifying requirements. To be a member is not just to be a keen sailor, one must have made a tough ocean passage, and those who contribute the most are those who go on crossing the oceans. It is also strong because of the international mix, and the opportunities which that affords to sail almost anywhere in the world and still find a welcome from fellow members poking about in their cruising boats.

The Club is not a dead building, it is a living entity that grows and matures, prospers or declines, but is never static. It is real yet it is a 'will o' the wisp'. It is in the mind yet it is palpable. It is what you want it to be and what you make it.

