

Sinbad of Abersoch K1766

The technical story from 1984-1997

By Kathleen Kilbey I.Eng MRINA

How it all came about.....

In 1984 I had just returned from a long stint overseas and I was in the process of setting up my own Marine Survey practice. At the time I was boat-less and nothing that really appealed had shown up. One November day I was looking for BMW car spares in “Exchange & Mart” under the letter “B” and there, lo and behold was this unlikely ad;

Boat for Sail:

“Live on Board and see the World! Alan Buchanan 11 tonner, Lloyds+100A1classified; Built Priors of Burnham 1961. Honduras on Oak; Teak bright-work. 38ft x 27ft x 9ft 6” x 6ft draft; Bukh DV20 aux; Lying Clynder, Gareloch. £13,500 or near offer”.

Being a true romantic and a believer in synchronicity, the very next day I leapt into the afore-mentioned BMW and shot on up to Clynder.

There Sinbad was, on a mooring out on the Loch, with the setting sun shining on the hull.... Well, what recently returned expatriate wooden-boat sailor could resist that!! ...? So I didn't!!

Three weeks later, on November 25th, three friends and I set off down the Irish Sea headed for Swansea. And the rest.....is history.....!

“Sinbad of Abersoch”

Cruiser racer to RORC Class III (IOR Class II)

Official No: 301380 Sail No: K1766

Designed by Alan H Buchanan

for Mr and Mrs J A Clegg

Built: R.J. Prior of Burnham-on-Crouch, 1961

Mahogany on Oak to Lloyds+100A1 class

LOA: 37' 6" LWL: 27' 6" Beam: 9' 6" Dr: 6' 6"

Tm: 11 tons. Aux.engine: Albin Petrol

Ballast: 2.9 tons - Lead

Cost: Hull £5,750. Spars and rig; £2,350

Early 1985 - first time ashore following collection in November 1984 from the Gareloch



Sinbad was sailed down to Swansea during a very boisterous week in November 1984; a complete story in itself! With unscheduled visits to Kilkeel in Ireland with a clogged fuel line, Holyhead with a split mainsail and then Fishguard, with a fractured gearbox housing due to running over a fisherman's polyprop warp floating in the dark.

In all respects an auspicious start to my long and turbulent relationship with Sinbad.!

Lloyds +100A1

It was at this time (January 1985) that I got in touch with Lloyds register, having discovered that the boat's 100A1 classification had just lapsed, and that we needed a Lloyds "Special Survey"

I decided that it was desirable to keep the boat in class and accordingly the Swansea Area Lloyds Surveyor presented himself at the boat.

The Lloyds gentleman demanded that we remove the rudder, two keel-bolts, 4 bronze-floor bolts, the propeller shaft, two chain-plate bolts, four hood-end fastenings and that we lay out the 180ft of 3/8" calibrated bower chain, for his inspection.

However, after a scotch or three and a lot of history, a compromise was reached; the rudder, the shaft and one keel bolt were postponed to the next "Intermediate Survey" in two years time....

Sinbad - Put to the torch.....!



The first time the boat was lifted out it was obvious that the underwater paint needed stripping completely and a local “expert boat painter” was employed to burn the paint off – we almost lost the boat..... He has not been seen since and is probably still running!

And after we put the fire out.....



It was at this point, in 1984, that I first met George Rehorn, wooden boat surveyor Extraordinaire! One day at Swansea Marina, an old VW Beetle appeared and out jumped an excited Welshman.....What a beautiful boat, said he – “she’s like a queen amongst a bunch of Taarts”...! George became my survey practice’s long-term mentor and later joined our Fastnet team for the 1989 season.....

The River Arun at Littlehampton



In 1986 I moved Sinbad down from Wales to Littlehampton. The River Arun, like the Severn, runs out at 8 -10 knots on springs and in those days the river was an interesting little time-warp of rotting catwalks and pontoons belonging to a certain well-known Wooden Boatyard.

The Great Storm of '87.....

Sinbad was moored on the River Arun at Littlehampton when the great storm hit the Southeast. The yard's pontoons all came adrift and Sinbad became the "meat in the sandwich" as the pontoon and six heavy yachts were driven by force 10 winds across the river into the opposite wall.

The damage to Sinbad was relatively minor; however, the portside cabin coaming (1" thick teak 22 ft long) split from end to end and had to be replaced.

We obtained a teak log salvaged in 1986 from a deck cargo on a ship torpedoed in 1916, in the Bristol Channel.



October 1987 – Littlehampton



I arrived at the yard at about 10 am on the morning after the great storm, to find the yard crane in this position. As I watched, the hatch on this little boat slid back and a young man appeared, looking somewhat touselled, to be quickly followed by a young lady.....

The couple gazed wide eyed at the destruction around them and then he said "has a bomb exploded or something?!" (mmmmm I thought!)
The crane jib was less than a metre from the boat.....

The Repairs to Sinbad- spring 1988

Being Lloyds +100A1 classified enabled Sinbad to jump the queue of hundreds of damaged boats awaiting survey after the worst storm in over a century.....

Sinbad was repaired by a retiring boat-builder at Burne's Shipyard Chichester, as his last job. Unfortunately, no better pics than this exist of these repairs.

The "new" piece of Teak, having spent 70 years at the bottom of the Bristol Channel, was well seasoned, one could safely say; I still have a piece of it now.!



Lloyds 100A1 Vandalism



For every Lloyds inspection, at 2-year intervals, plank fastenings, keel bolts, rudder stock, chain-plate bolts etc had to be removed in rotation. Had I not sold the yacht, I would have removed her from Lloyds class as the cost of the surveys plus the work involved became prohibitive and the destructive effect on the boat very noticeable.

Lloyds 100A1 - Vandalism!!



- Every 4 years we had to dismantle the Mahogany Rudder-Blade from the Phosphor-Bronze stock. Each time, the assembly became that bit more worn and required additional sealing and TLC.....

A very nasty piece of Work!



Despite Lloyds classification surveys every two years from new, many small bits of poor workmanship had crept in since 1961 and the first few years of my ownership were spent in upgrading and replacing some of the mahogany planks. These “graving pieces” had been fitted over the top of plank fastenings, concealing soft areas. Final solution; replace the planks....

Plank replacement

We were very lucky to have the services of an enthusiastic traditional boat-builder and his work was always perfect.

One could also sense the presence of the team of Priors craftsmen who had built Sinbad in 1961 - most of the hull timber having come from the same mahogany tree.

Priors now specialise in restoring their own boats



Sinbad's Plastic-Mac.....



An overall cover for a timber boat is an absolute essential. Even trakmark decks on a modern GRP hull benefit from being covered - it saves a lot of scrubbing.

3/8" Teak laid on 1/2" Marine Ply



Due to over-scrubbing in the past, the deck required regular attention. However we managed to keep it watertight up to 1997 and I believe it has only required rebuilding in the last year or so – see 2009 pics below....

Baby-Blake loo gets an overhaul!!



Sinbad's mast can be seen in the background. 47 feet from truck to keel, this original "Sparlite" alloy spar had always been white-painted, although the varnished boom (also original) was of Sitka Spruce.

“Taking-up” after launching



Here one of our junior crew members keeps an eye on the bilge levels immediately after launching. Usually we had to pump for an hour or so before the seams “took-up”

Anti-fouling at the “Jolly Sailor”



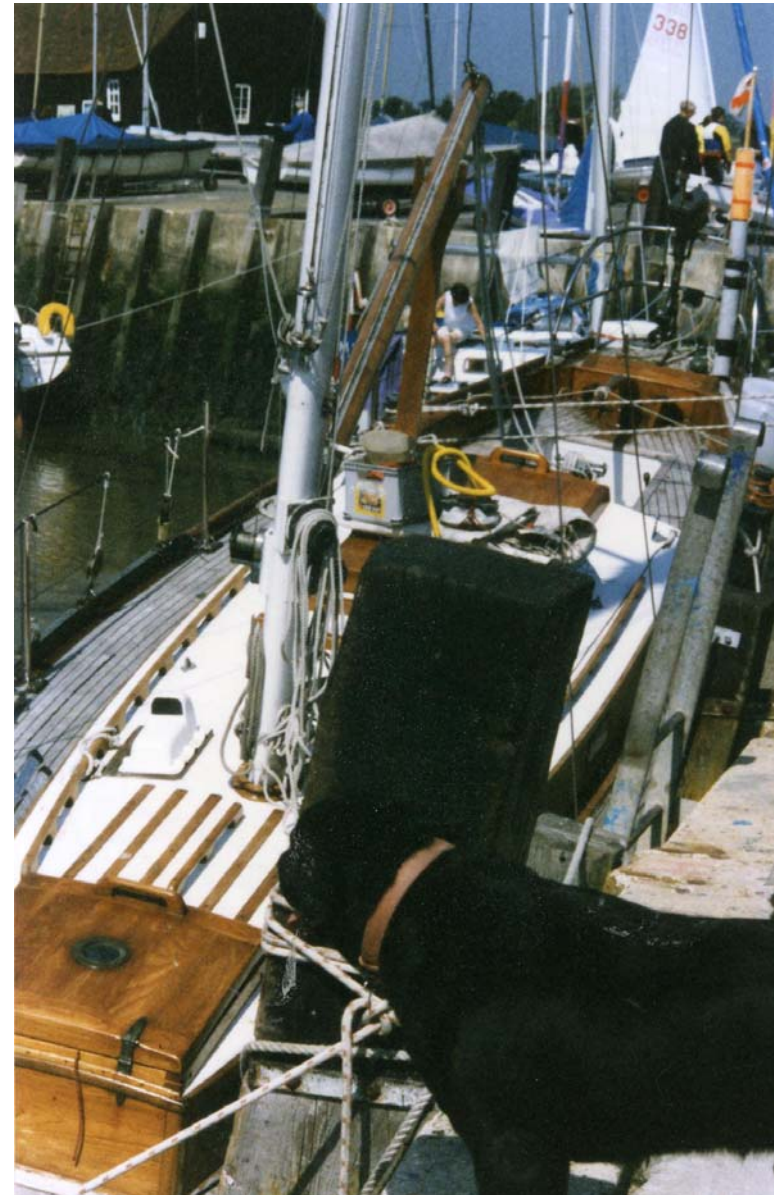
For a number of years we were moored on the Hamble and made frequent use of the piles outside the hostelry made famous in the 1980's, by the TV program “Howard’s Way”

The wall, at Bosham

The (now veteran) ship's Labrador Chocky oversees pressure-washing and antifouling at Bosham prior to the 1997 Round the Island race.

In latter years we made full use of our club's (RAFYC) facilities on the Hamble.

We were based on a swinging mooring in Chichester harbour for the last year or so of my ownership. Very much back to base, as this is where I first went sailing in the early 1950's.



Apres Sinbad

Sinbad and I parted company in late 1997 and I have since followed the boat's varied fortunes, having kept in touch with all of the owners over the years, commencing with Tony Clegg and including the present incumbent.

For a while Sinbad was back at her home port of Abersoch and acquired a huge heavy 3 cylinder 30hp Volvo-Penta engine (which somewhat unbalanced her) plus modern winches and roller reefing (perish the thought). The boat also dropped out of Lloyds Class.

I still wonder what happened to the original Bronze "Merriman" 3-speed main winches, and the Bukh DV20 Diesel which we had so carefully maintained....

In the last few years the boat has arrived back on the south coast and has briefly appeared in Classic Yacht Club Racing events, billed as "A New Yacht on the Classic Racing Scene"

All I can say to that is; **"HUH" - don't yachting journalists read their history books?!!!** Some pictures of recent work are below.

Sinbad - Work in 2009

Cockpit rebuild - reason for the work - obscure!



I visited Sinbad at Cowes in 2009, prior to her last season with her then owner. I can only imagine that the 12 years after my ownership had not dealt very kindly with the boat, probably due to lack of an overall winter cover and a dedicated shipwright. A ventilated cover is absolutely essential for a wooden boat in UK winters, and also in hot climates in the summer.

2009 Cockpit rebuild



O.M.G, what are they doing?!

A great lump of an Engine...!



In the 90's Sinbad acquired a Volvo 30 HP diesel, considerably heavier than the Bukh 20 which had proved perfectly adequate during my stewardship of the boat....

A varnished Chart table.....



Says it all, I guess.....

And lots of pretty new paint.....



Oh Well..... It is my belief that one does not “Own” a traditional wooden yacht. One is simply the trustee of a piece of maritime history... And we all have different ideas as to what is important in terms of boat maintenance.... Vive la difference!

“Sinbad of Abersoch”

Maintained to Lloyds +100A1 Classification
The Technical story, from 1984-1997

The End

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