

# Fastnet Race 1989

Preparation and qualification of the 1961 wooden Class II Racing Yacht  
“Sinbad of Abersoch” and her crew, for the ultimate RORC event.



# 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”.**

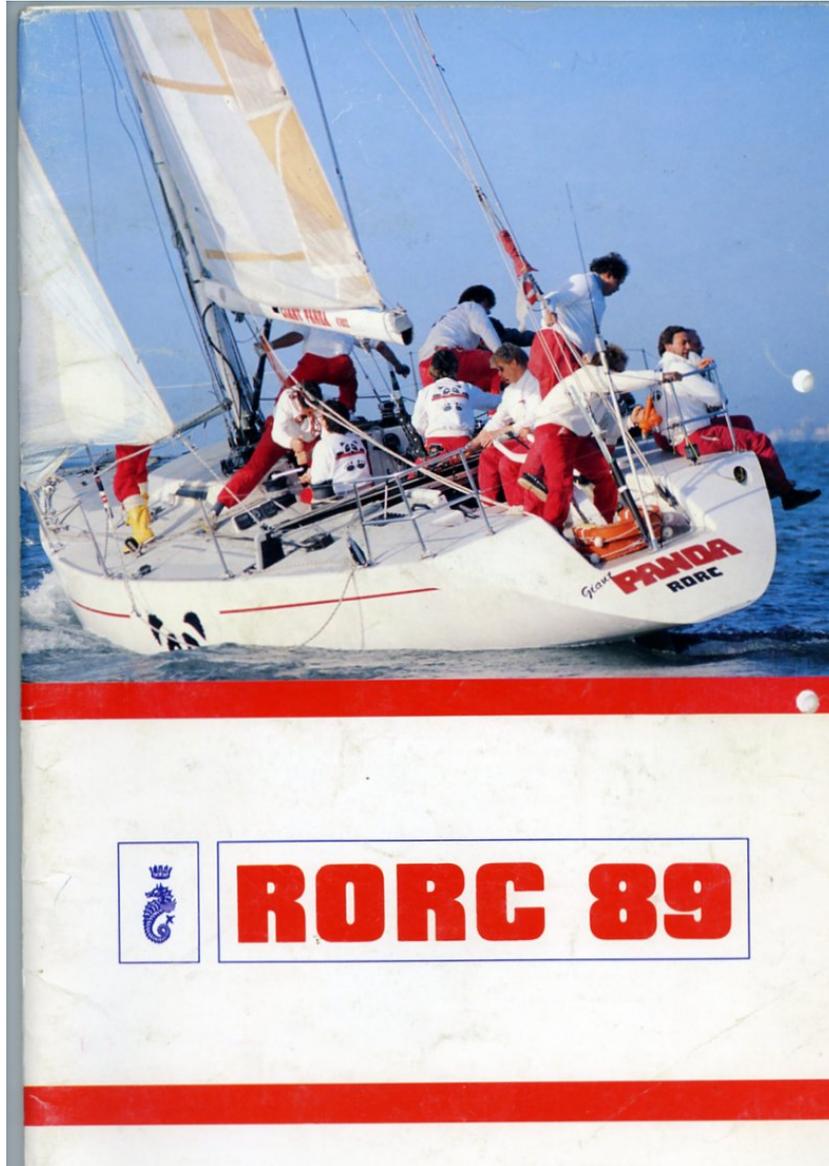
Being a true romantic and a believer in synchronicity, the very next day I leapt into the afore-mentioned BMW and shot up to Clynder.

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 25<sup>th</sup>, three friends and I set off down the Irish Sea headed for Swansea. And the rest.....is history....!

# The Royal Ocean Racing Club

## 1989 Fastnet Race Programme



**Race 14. FASTNET RACE**  
 Final race in the Champagne Mumm Admiral's Cup  
 Final race in the Champagne Mumm World Cup

Organised by the RORC with the Royal Yacht Squadron and the Royal Western Yacht Club of England  
*Crew Limitations - IOR only - RORC scale applies (see General Conditions)*  
**Incorporating class racing for the Lightwave 395, Sigma 38 and other OOD classes**  
*See next page for experience qualifications*

Fastnet Challenge Cup	BCT IOR	Inter-Regimental Cup - Best IOR yacht entered by a Regiment, Corps or Service;
Figaro Trophy	Second overall IOR	Culdreze Trophy - Best IOR Service-crewed yacht on Corrected
Clarke Cup	Third overall IOR	Time at the Fastnet Rock which also completes the course
Norlethe Cup - BCT IOR Restricted Division		(subject to own declaration),
Buckley Memorial Trophy	BCT CHS	Gesture Cup - Best IOR yacht from outside the United Kingdom;
Iolaire Cup	2nd overall CHS	Iolaire Block - Oldest yacht to complete the race;
Battler Beetle Quailch	3rd overall CHS	Seth-Smith Trophy - Best Club yacht in IOR Restricted Division,
The Fastnet Rock Trophy	BCT IMS	Bobby Lowein Wheel - First British yacht home;
Clarion Cup - First British yacht on Corrected Time.	IOR Class A	Swinburne Cup - Best Irish IOR yacht;
Quailo Cup	IOR Class A	All Loomis Trophy - Navigator of best IOR yacht;
Founder's Cup - IOR 1 other than Class A (i.e. below 49.96ft rating)	IOR 2	Whirlwind Trophy - Best Swan yacht in CHS;
Bloodhound Cup	IOR 2	Galley Slaves Trophy - for the galley slave of the yacht with the greatest elapsed time;
West Mersea Yacht Club Trophy	CHS 3	Royal Thames Spirit Cup - Best Class A yacht in the Seahorse Maxi Series, Channel and Fastnet Races combined - all races completed,
Foxhound Cup	CHS 4	RORC Bowl - for the best CHS Swan yacht in the Swan European Regatta combined with the St. Malo and Fastnet Races.
Favona Cup	CHS 5	Fastnet plaques to each yacht. RORC Tankards and Medallions.
Hong Kong Cup	IOR 1 Restricted	
Philip Whitehead Cup	IOR 2 Restricted	
Trophy - Best IOR yacht entered for the 1989 Whitbread Race;		
Catherine Green Trophy - First yacht round the Fastnet;		
Erroll Bruce Cup - First in IOR 2 round the Fastnet;		
Erivale Cup - First yacht home;		
Jolie Brise Cup - First yacht home IOR Restricted Division,		

*IMS (Apriori Trophy) Short Series Race 3*

<b>Classes:</b> IOR 1-2 (including Class A), CHS 3-5, IMS.	<b>Points factor:</b> 1.5
<b>Course Record:</b> 1985 NIRVANA 2d 12h 41m 15s (9.97 knots) (Marvin Green - USA)	<b>Start:</b> from RYS Cowes.
<b>Entries:</b> must reach the RORC not later than Monday 17th July	Saturday 5th August - first start 1245.
<b>Course:</b> Cowes - Fastnet Rock - Plymouth.	<b>Classes:</b> IOR 2, CHS 4 & 5.
<b>Finish:</b> at Plymouth Breakwater.	<b>High water:</b> Portsmouth 1446.
<b>Distance:</b> about 605 miles.	Sunday 6th August - first start 1320.
	<b>Classes:</b> IOR 1 (including Champagne Mumm Admiral's Cup); CHS 3.
	<b>High water:</b> Portsmouth 1521.

# Sinbad's Fastnet Race 1989

- In order to compete in the Fastnet Race in 1989, both boat and crew had to be qualified by having completed at least 650 miles of RORC racing, including at least one overnight and one cross-channel race, with the skipper and at least half of the same crew.
- In fact we completed almost 2,000 miles of Ocean Racing in Sinbad during the 1989 season, starting in April with the “Cervantes Trophy” from Cowes via The Owers to Le Havre and finishing with the last race of the season the “Cowes-Cherbourg” in late September.
- We also did various less serious stunts like the ISC “Round the Island Race”. In between RORC races quite a lot of cruising also took place, to the Channel Islands, South West Coast, French Channel Ports etc.
- During these visits we learned that our neighbours across the Channel had not really forgotten Nelson's exploits and patriotic sailors were still getting their own back, by annexing English fenders and warps wherever the opportunity offered!

# “Sinbad of Abersoch” K1766

## Alan Buchanan Designed class II ocean-racer



One of two identical-hulled Buchanan 38ft yachts built in 1961-62 by Priors of Burnham for RORC class II racing. Sinbad was built for Yorkshire industrialist Tony Clegg, whilst Taitsing was Alan Buchanan's own boat. The design was a development of "Vashti", designed by A.H. Buchanan and built for Sir Maurice Laing in 1958.

The boats were built with slightly different rigs for comparison, but never did actually race together, as Taitsing remained on the East Coast and Clegg sailed Sinbad round to the West Coast soon after her launching.

The yachts were of top quality Teak and Mahogany on Oak, to Lloyds 100A1. Both boats were very successful in 1960's EORA, and RORC events, including the Fastnet Race.

# SINBAD of ABERSOCH

## Maiden Voyage 1962

Pictured on her first serious voyage, on delivery from Burnham on Crouch to her home port, Abersoch.

Just passing Ryde I.O.W in the days when the submarine-barrier was still in place.

Sinbad actually came 10<sup>th</sup> overall in the Round the Island Race during that trip, even before her new owner had worked out how to get the kite up!!

In the stern sheets, the proud new owner, Tony Clegg; in the cockpit, the M.D. of Spencer Rigging; one of the Buchanan team and one of the Prior's team.

Sometime on this voyage, when going about, the starboard capshroud jumped off the spreader and the new-fangled "Sparlite" alloy mast bent just above the lower spreaders, necessitating an external sleeve - which is there to this day.



# A true “wineglass” shape

Stability was certainly not a problem, with almost three tons of lead at the bottom of the keel.

The yacht was quite frequently described by new crew members in lurid terms such as: “this b..... wooden submarine - it soaked me again - just going over Chichester bar this time!”

Sinbad did indeed have a singular liking for sticking her nose into a good big wave and then chucking it over the crew – especially a new and inexperienced one.....

On one occasion, we arrived in France after a RORC race, and a well known and somewhat cantankerous retired yachting journalist who had sailed across with us, was asked by one of his cronies how he had arrived. ....

I sailed, said he, shortly, succinctly, and very audibly, in a wooden Hell-ship, called Sinbad!



# Oops.... Got it wrong!!

A rather unexpected but quite pleasant few hours in Newtown Creek I.O.W (Careening the ship maybe?!!)

Sinbad would very happily sit on her side on the odd occasion when a 6ft 6in draft proved too much for the circumstances!

We usually “forgot” to tell the Lloyds surveyor after we had parked on the putty, as Lloyds would have withdrawn our 100A1 classification pending an expensive special by their surveyors .....



What on earth do I do with this bone thing?!



# Chocky: Ship's Labrador

Labrador "Chocky" joined the ship in April 1988 as a 6 week old puppy. He remained an integral part of our crew throughout Sinbad's many adventures.

On this occasion we were attempting to make him feel at home on his own lawn – with a total lack of success it has to be said!

Chocky finally went to the great kennel in the sky in October 2001



When the boat comes in.....



# Running Goose-winged

We frequently used two large and ancient (very soft) genoas for fast downwind passages, each of approx 450 sq feet and with the 375 sq ft main boomed right out.

With a preventer-stay from the outboard boom end to the (foredeck) king-post, Sinbad would average 8-9 or occasionally 10 knots. We would often dump the mainsail as the boat seemed to go almost as well without it. This configuration was almost as fast as with the Kite, but much safer and less hassle.

We had a 1200 sq ft radial-head spinnaker which provided excitement on many occasions - we invariably got back from cross-channel races considerably faster than on the outward voyage! (I've still got the head of that kite – the only bit left after our last RORC season in the mid 1990's!!

Sinbad's fastest point of sailing was definitely a  $\frac{1}{4}$  reach, when due to her 38ft loa and 27 ft waterline, she would have almost the entire 38ft in the water and would clock 9 knots +.



# Sunset over the Plateau des Minquiers on the way home from St Malo



# Relaxing in the Channel Islands after the St. Malo Race

There always seemed to be a marked reluctance to re-cross the Channel after a race to France! (I Wonder why!!)

The usual sequence was; frantic flap on Friday to get to the Cowes start line; overnight race; apres race party; then a belt back over the Channel to the Beaulieu-River mooring in time for work on Monday.

That was usually followed by 2 days cleaning the boat, repairing or replacing broken and missing gear, torn sails etc – and then repeat the entire procedure the following weekend, to yet another French port...



# The Beautiful Beaulieu River

For several years we had a lovely mooring on the Beaulieu, based at Ginns Farm, courtesy of the Royal Southampton Yacht Club.

A truly idyllic setting and one very much enjoyed by owner, crew, the ship's dog and ship's teenagers alike – as can be seen from the next pics.....



It's a dogs life really.....!



George gets on with the work,  
whilst Chocky looks for fish !



# Gorillas in the Mist?

no... Gorillas up the mast!!



Our Yachting press charter ads in the 1980's ran something like "Oiled Teak and Flying Spray...come and get wet cold and uncomfortable on our Classic ocean - greyhound. You won't get seasick – you'll be too bloody terrified!!!"  
..... Two of our 1989 Fastnet crew discussing their chances .....

# Post-race rig-maintenance!!

In the latter part of the 1980's "classic" wooden yacht racing had not yet caught on and Sinbad, together with Sunstone and Clarionet were about the last of the wooden IOR class II boats still racing.

Mostly we competed against such things as Sigma 38's and other (then modern) "tupperware" boats.

To qualify for the Fastnet Race we had to cover over 650 miles of RORC racing with most of the crew who would be competing in the actual race.

**Edward Heath** once said that ocean racing was like "Tearing up ten pound notes under a cold shower"... **Like all politicians, HE LIED! - It was £100 notes even in those far off days!!**



A former Sinbad-owner  
having fun with the big kite



Yet more practice.....



# Nearly Ready for the Off.....



# Finally.....We Did it!!



# A Blast from the Past!

- For some unknown reason Yachting Monthly decided to publish in 1998 (well after I sold the boat) a “Beken” picture of us practising in the Solent for the 1989 Fastnet Race.
- Sinbad has a strange history, in that three people very closely associated with the boat over the years, voluntarily ended their careers with shotguns – one actually on the boat, some years prior to my ownership.
- This picture is in memory of all of Sinbad’s friends who are no longer with us. Also in celebration of the many who are still sailing around. and frequently appear out of the blue having googled Sinbad and found us at my website [www.classicboatsurveys.com](http://www.classicboatsurveys.com)
- I salute you all – wherever you are now.....



# We won a Pot !!

Sinbad was a regular competitor in the I.S.C Round the Island Race in the 1980's and 90's, more for relaxation than anything else - although trying to keep out of the way of 1500-plus lightweight and far more manoeuvrable GRP yachts was anything but relaxing.....

This wooden blob rejoiced in the name of "The Renaissance Trophy" and I seem to remember we acquired it in 1993 (ish). Fortunately the ISC wanted it back after 12 months and a Kim Holman "Twister" won the class the next year!

That particular Round-the Island Race was the first such event to have an official "Classic Racing Yacht" class I believe. It is an indication of how things have changed in the last few years - there is now a "Classic Round the Island Race", run by the relatively recently formed British Classic Yacht Club



# Dedication

This story is dedicated to all of those who helped us achieve our dream of competing in one of the world's major Ocean Races in an "old wooden yacht", at a time when "classic ocean-racing" had not yet been invented.

## Sinbad's 1989 Fastnet-Race Crew

KJK. – Owner and Skipper - Helm 1.

Gill Palmer – Navigator and Administrator

David Olley (known as Dolly) – Foredeck & Kite

George Reohorn – After-guard & Helm 2

Gordon Hughes (Gorilla 1) Helm 3

Alistair Morley (Gorilla 2) Helm 4

Also numerous sailing friends who nobly assisted in moving the yacht from A to B when necessary

Mike Cartwright, our long-suffering shipwright

And of course, our Canine supporter, Chocky...

# Epilogue

It had long been one of my ambitions to skipper my own yacht in the Fastnet Race and this finally came to be, in 1989 after two years of preparation and practice.

However, the enormous cost of maintaining a vintage timber Class II ocean-racing yacht in racing trim became personally unsustainable over the next few years and I reluctantly sold Sinbad in the late 1990's.

Sinbad is now living in retirement – and is on the Beaulieu River once again - where a ghostly Black Labrador trots the deck still, looking for his fish.....

As for yours truly, you can find out what I am up to these days by visiting; [www.classicboatsurveys.com](http://www.classicboatsurveys.com)

# Sinbad's Fastnet 1989

**THE END**

**Written & Photographed by**

**Kathleen J Kilbey** I.Eng MRINA

**Naval Architect and Marine Surveyor**

(Rear Commodore – Lydney Yacht Club)

© Copyright 1984-2012 Kathleen Kilbey [www.classicboatsurveys.com](http://www.classicboatsurveys.com)

**Click keyboard escape-button to end presentation**