

Fresh winds and a heaving swell greeted the 1,225 starters for this year's Round-the-Island Race. For the 57th Gold Roman Challenge Cup Robin Gates raced aboard...

# CETEWAYO



## THE YACHT

David Murrin not only grew up in an old wooden boat, *Minion*, he was conceived on board this old Harrison-Butler which his father Dennis still cruises. If the Lamarkian theory of evolution has any substance at all a man could have no greater affinity for a classic boat. Twenty-six years of dreaming culminated four years ago when David saw a 47ft long-keeled Laurent-Giles sloop advertised for sale in Wales at £2,500. He thought his prayers had been answered. But an enquiry in cheerful voice descended an octave as the vendor at the other end of the 'phone offered apologies. There had been a 'misunderstanding.' The real price was £25,000. Nonetheless, David's curiosity got the better of him and he went to see the boat anyway.

*Cetewayo* was poised on the quayside at Pembroke Dock like an old prima ballerina standing in the wings, stretching her overhangs in readiness for the exertions of performing centre stage, and cracking her make up. She worked her old magic. Seen from the quarter or the bow the fine lines drawn by Laurent-Giles were fatally seductive. This, however, was a different

kind of fatality, the kind which brings a new and exciting life after the initial death of the bank balance.

The yacht was built when the unwritten First Rule of Yacht Racing demanded panache. Originally she had been registered under the name of *Zulu* for Sir Henry Spurrier in 1957. She was subsequently owned by Brian Stewart who sailed her out of Gosport when he wasn't racing aboard the Class 1 ocean racer *Lutine* (CB32, Feb 1991). The original name lives on in a Zulu motif painted onto *Cetewayo's* red transom which finishes the counter in Laurent Giles' typical cardioid shape. Hull construction is 1½in (32mm) teak below the waterline and mahogany above, copper fastened on relatively light oak frames. Several frames in the counter had broken and were renewed, but there was a much greater job to be done on the interior. While the boat was up for sale she had been ruthlessly gutted. There was no interior.

David bought the yacht in mid-December 1988. Over the next few months the basic structure of the accommodation was rebuilt. The electrics were sorted by jovial giant Nick Nutt who came up from Plymouth and the spars restored so that she

could be sailed back to the Solent where the restoration was completed. Here, with the help of Dick Brocklesby, some innovations were incorporated into the boat including a tilting chart table and a saloon table large enough to seat a ravenous complement of crew. Keeping as much of the original fabric of the boat as possible new pieces were scarfed into the old, Dorade boxes replaced and the fo'c's'le rebuilt to work as an efficient sail store and cabin. Luckily the boat was acquired with a good wardrobe of Horizon sails ranging from storm jib to genoa, all performing well.

Without dwelling overlong on the boat's fit-out, the cockpit area is worthy of note. This is her nerve centre, from where she wins or loses. It is sensibly divided by a bridge deck to make separate areas for the winch men and the helmsman, the helmsman's cockpit having sloping sides to give a level foothold when the boat is heeling. A full range of Autohelm repeaters for depth, wind, speed, direction and position ranges across the bridge deck flanking the chromed compass binnacle, together with the engine instrumentation.

David's preference for up-to-date electronics stems from personal practical experience. Last year *Cetewayo* encountered heavy weather off the west coast of France and in the worst of it the main was reefed down to the second cross-tree when the hanks gave way and the sail blew out like an unruly burgee. During the boat's violent motion that followed a rogue wave found its way on board, turning the cockpit into a bath and sending solid water through the companionway to make papier-mâché out of the charts. "If only I could just press a few buttons and find out where I am," David thought to himself. At such times, when the crew is exhausted and the traditional tools of navigation are in disarray, electronic aids can cheer a man.

In the cockpit area everything now falls easily to hand, and the latest addition owes its presence to a detail seen in CB54 Dec 1992 aboard the ocean racer *Bloodhound*. This is a semi-circular handrail concentric with the wheel, mounted on the bridge deck, adding significantly to the security of crew movements in



BEKEN OF COWES

the stern of the boat. With further regard to the efficient working of the yacht, the later stages of the project have included improvements to *Cetewayo's* rigging with new backstay levers and foot blocks for the headsail sheets. The original pattern Laurent Giles backstay levers, on the Highfield principle but with a sliding hook, are not easily found. David was lucky to find one at a jumble sale and from it he cast a second lever. The old levers had been sited alongside the companionway but the new have been placed alongside the steering cockpit so the cheeky helmsman can, by lodging the wheel with his backside, handle the backstays single-handed. Spectra tails have been spliced onto the backstays, a very low-stretch material which is more user-friendly than wire but which David only expects to last for two seasons. "We've also put check stays on the backstays, to stop the mast from panting," says David, and looking aloft under sail we see the rigging holding the mast as straight as the designer intended. The aft bend is only apparent, shaped into the leading edge by the spar maker working with his round-soled planes and templates. The boom is equipped with its original rigging devices including roller reefing and a worm-driven clew tensioner, both old Lewmar fittings which work with a positive action.

New footblocks, heavy-duty units with big Tufnol sheaves, were also a lucky find, turning up on different stalls at the same boat jumble. They are secured through teak pads and the beamshelves by 28in (711mm) bolts, and feed the headsail sheets on to the winches. Massively-drummed bronze winches which had been let into the cockpit coamings and which dominated the side decks were replaced by a quartet of Scandinavian Andersen winches of greater efficiency.

Leafing through a foolscap book of lists of jobs done on the boat David reflects on four years of labour and expense. With family, friends and passing enthusiasts drawn together in the shared appreciation of a restored classic yacht he says that "bringing this boat back to form has been the most exciting project in my life," proving a good boat is much more than a sum of her parts.

## THE RACE

Once during the night I awoke to hear wind howling in the rigging, rain drumming on deck. Now it is 4am, Saturday 12 June and the rain that was dripping through the deckhead onto my bunk has blown away leaving only a damp sleeping bag as evidence. Or was it Hugo? Hugo is David's eight-week old Labrador puppy on a roving commission below decks. He's been busily marking out his territory in the traditional way ever since he came aboard. I close my mind to the idea and contemplate a solid teak laid deck above, oak carlings and beams barely discernible in the half light. Skipper David Murrin has just breezed into the saloon far more cheerful than anyone has a right to be this early in the morning. "I'm really looking forward to this," beams David. He's holding out a weatherfax.

The forecast from the Met Office reads: "Wind: northwest F6, slowly decreasing to F4 or 5 by afternoon on Saturday, before increasing again to F5 or 6. Sea state: rough." It would be all of

that, with a gale warning thrown in for good measure as a low pressure area scooted off towards Belgium. "Just right for this boat," concludes David. His enthusiasm spreads through the waking dead. Richard Proctor stirs from the floor, Michael Pearson from the opposite settee berth and Tom Pearson from the pilot berth above. Peter Arnold is already handing out foul weather gear from the wet locker amidships. Dennis Murrin resumes his battle with technology which began the night before, pressing buttons at the chart table where a new Autohelm Navcentre is glowing green.

High water is at 05.05. The start for the Classic Racing Yachts Class is on a falling tide at 06.25 from the line of the Royal Yacht Squadron. At the turn of a key and the push of a button *Cetewayo's* four-cylinder Perkins warms to life. The warps are handed ashore. The sail cover is off and pushed into the fo'c's'le and the mainsail is rapidly filling the space between two varnished wooden spars, showing sail number 1034. The boat gathers



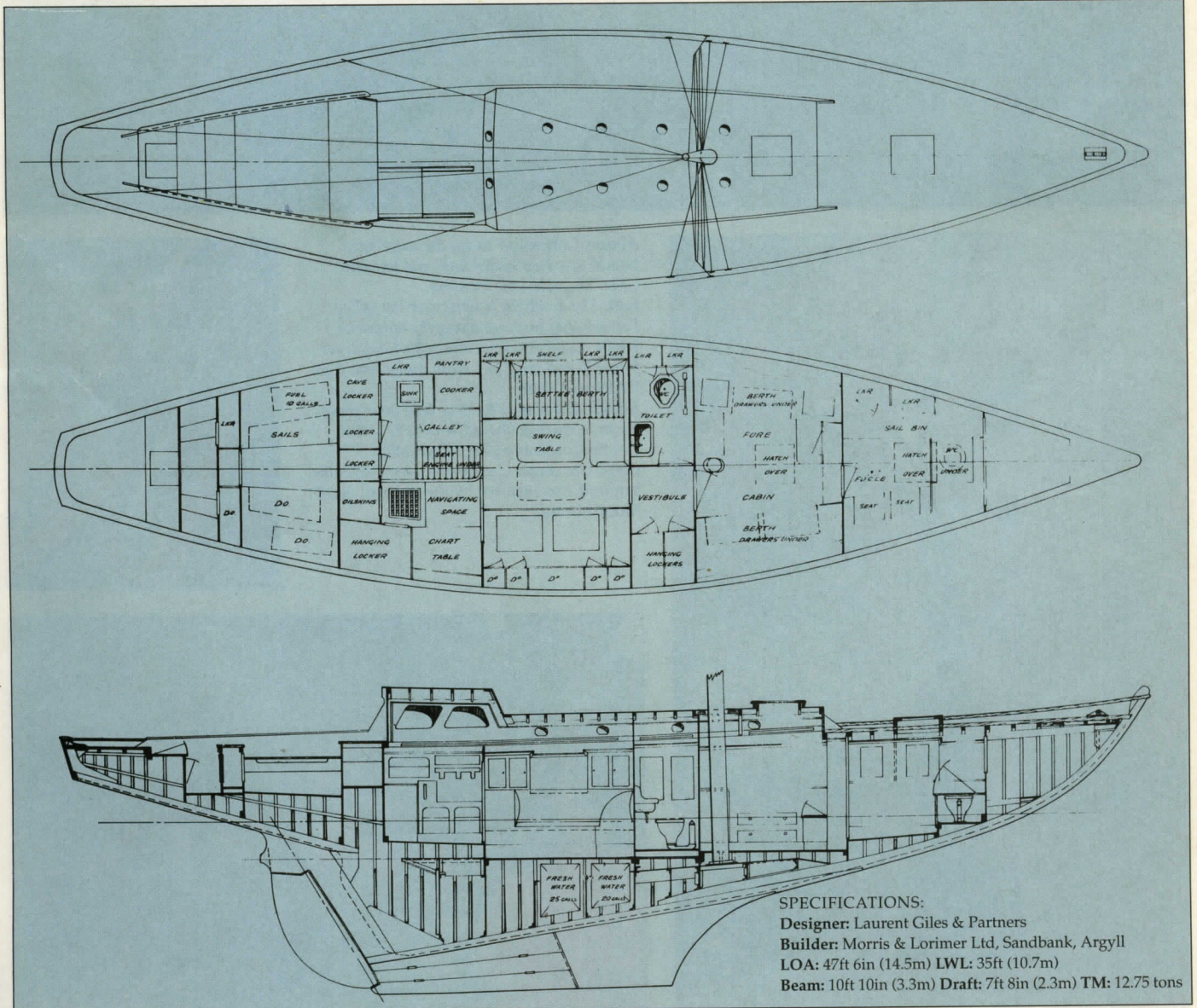
DAVID MURRIN

**Opening page:** The steering cockpit offers great security to a helmsman who wishes to concentrate on the job in hand. The companionway sprayhood protects the navigator. **Opposite page:** In 1962, as Zulu. A clinker tender was stored on the coachroof, while a radio finder was mounted on the doghouse.

**This page.** Left: During restoration David Murrin used a combination of a blow torch and hot air gun to strip off the old paint. Below: The result was the smoothest of finishes. **Bottom:** Laurent Giles' original drawings reveal a yacht with remarkable concavity in the leading edge of the keel.



DAVID MURRIN





*Above: Cetewayo shows the wave form typical of a deep-keeled hull, and Laurent Giles' characteristic transom.*  
*Left: The decklight is sited over the galley. Foresail lead cars run along the bulwarks.*  
*Right: Laurent Giles pattern backstay lever freed off, and large foot block under load from the foresail sheet.*  
*Below: Eat now or for ever hold your peace. Room to spare as the entire crew is seated around Cetewayo's big saloon table.*  
*Opposite page: Cetewayo's semi-circular handrail was inspired by the ex-royal yacht Bloodhound.*



speed and the engine is killed. A new No 1 jib from Bruce Banks' loft is hoisted, the first new sail for the boat, and now we are cutting a profile on the Solent which is the stuff of good yacht paintings, reaching south at a healthy angle of heel.

The window in the aft bulkhead of the doghouse slides open and Ian is handing out plates of scrambled eggs and sausages. A thick slice of bread covering the plate stops the food from cooling faster than it can be eaten. For a while there is scrambled egg on the breeze as an unexpected tack takes priority.

By the time we are within striking distance of the start line we have practiced a few tacks, the noisy conditions have drawn the crew together quickly. "Robin, you're too slow with the backstay levers," whispers David in my ear. These backstays prevent the mast from going over the side. Next time, I get it right. Within five minutes we have made two headsail changes as David gets the feel of the wind on the boat. Too much heel is counter-productive, it's worth the effort of tuning the sails. We are ready. At 06.24 *Cetewayo* is powering down the eastern side of the starting line 'twixt the Royal Yacht Squadron and the West Bramble buoy, with the No 2 jib and a reef in the main. We can't hear the gun in this wind, but the transit lights of the starting line come into alignment on the sweep of a second hand across the top of the watch-face. Fifteen classic racing yachts and a dozen gaffers share this start, but there are hundreds more yachts crowding the water and for excitement the race to the Needles resembles a cavalry charge in which all the participants are representing a different army. Already boats are tacking to stand out from the shore, having started too close in. They cut through our wake, sometimes guided astern with a shout of "Starboard!" We're soaking up to windward at 8.2 knots. It's good to be here.

Off the Needles the swell is at its height, *Cetewayo* plunges into every third or fourth sea sending water rushing along the lee deck but staying out of the cockpit. Very little spray comes over the weather bow, a tribute to Laurent Giles' design. The water hangs against the bulwarks and I wonder if the scuppers need to be enlarged. Then we see a yacht way down by the bow and all her crew crowding aft. She's developed scuppers below the waterline in the most embarrassing of circumstances. A pump is being manhandled aboard. The yacht is *Barracuda* and she's hit the *Varvassi* wreck. Her skipper Bob Fisher hit Bembridge Ledge at the eastern end of the island a few years ago. This year we all read his warnings about the *Varvassi* in the *Observer*, sponsor of the race. Someone says Bob's going for the hat trick: "Next year he'll prang the boat on the wreck of the *Britannia*."

But now life's little ironies come home to roost. Suddenly I don't feel as cheerful as I did. The seas are rolling in on the quarter. There's a hitch with the spinnaker on the foredeck and I rush forward with a galley knife to help cut the problem down to size, but I can sense a more discomfiting problem less easily solved. The spinnaker pole is in its boot on the mast for a starboard hoist, and a preventer rigged to the mainsail boom to prevent an uncontrolled gybe, but I'm not as interested in life on deck as I could be. The spinnaker goes up and we're surfing along. "10.1 knots!" yells David. "She's never gone this fast!" I can just about raise a smile, but with the wind astern and the boat moving like a corkscrew on a slow pull I

feel myself sweating like a cold tin of beer in sunlight, cold and hot at the same time. I'm suddenly tired. The cockpit banter goes over my head. I don't care if we're doing 10 knots or sinking. The weight of my foul weather gear, lifejacket and harness has reached the pit of my stomach. I go below and re-load a spray-soaked camera. The scrambled eggs and sausages that I had for breakfast now seem less of a good idea. I look up to see another crew member wobbling through the saloon to collapse on a bunk, but he's beyond green, he's white, shivering and out for the race. Meanwhile the yacht is short of crew at a critical

time for a gybe, the preventer takes the sting out of the mainsail boom as it comes inboard but the old red spinnaker blows out in shreds, costing *Cetewayo* perhaps a knot of speed on the rest of the downwind run. I make my way back out of the companionway with a bottle of water to pass around, and beyond St Catherine's Point our spirits are lifted by the appearance of Mr Beken, who is following the race all the way round with his cameras despite dramatic changes in conditions.

On the final leg from No Man's Land Fort to Cowes we are tacking in company with the ex-100 Square Metre *Marabu*, a 58ft (17.7m) 'windfall' yacht brought back from Germany after the 1945 armistice. She held on to us at the back of the Wight, setting a big staysail from her mizzen, but now she is slipping back and we are gaining on modern fin-keeled yachts which are slamming uncomfortably to the finish. Dennis is piloting the boat from the

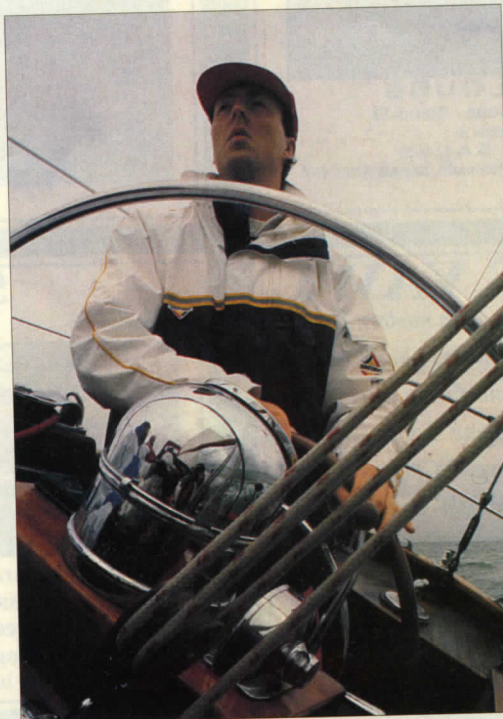
companionway spray hood working with David who is calling out depths as we near sand bars and banks. We see three yachts stuck on Ryde Sands, crew hanging onto booms and spinnaker poles in an effort to free the keels, kicking themselves for running aground so near the end of the race, but, as Bob Fisher said after the race, if you are trying to win you do have to take chances. Within the last hour three rain squalls appear as dense black sky in the distance and hit *Cetewayo* hard, but she is untroubled, she just sails her way windward. We cross the finishing line on a corrected time of 8h 43m 4s, third in class out of 15. At this stage unaware of the result we pick up a mooring buoy off Cowes and everyone slumps around the saloon table where beers are cracked open and the galley stove ignited. Down below the boat is in chaos. We watch the old gaffers trickling in to the finish. *Larry*, *Kelpie*, *Tern IV*, the spritely Luke cutter *Minnie* in her 100th year all gladden the eye.

Having been unable to use the new No 1 jib to good effect during the race David and Michael are keen to take a good look at the new cloth as we sail back to the Hamble river, and I'm shown the wheel. My hands feel the rudder, gauge the response of the bow to degrees of helm, and settle on the rim. We're soaking up the water ahead of us at 8 knots beating in less than 20 knots of wind, *Cetewayo* reveals a well-balanced personality as she acknowledges the seas with no more than a graceful curtsy. I feel safe in her company. Hands off, she looks after herself. ⚓

#### USEFUL ADDRESSES

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