

1925 2015



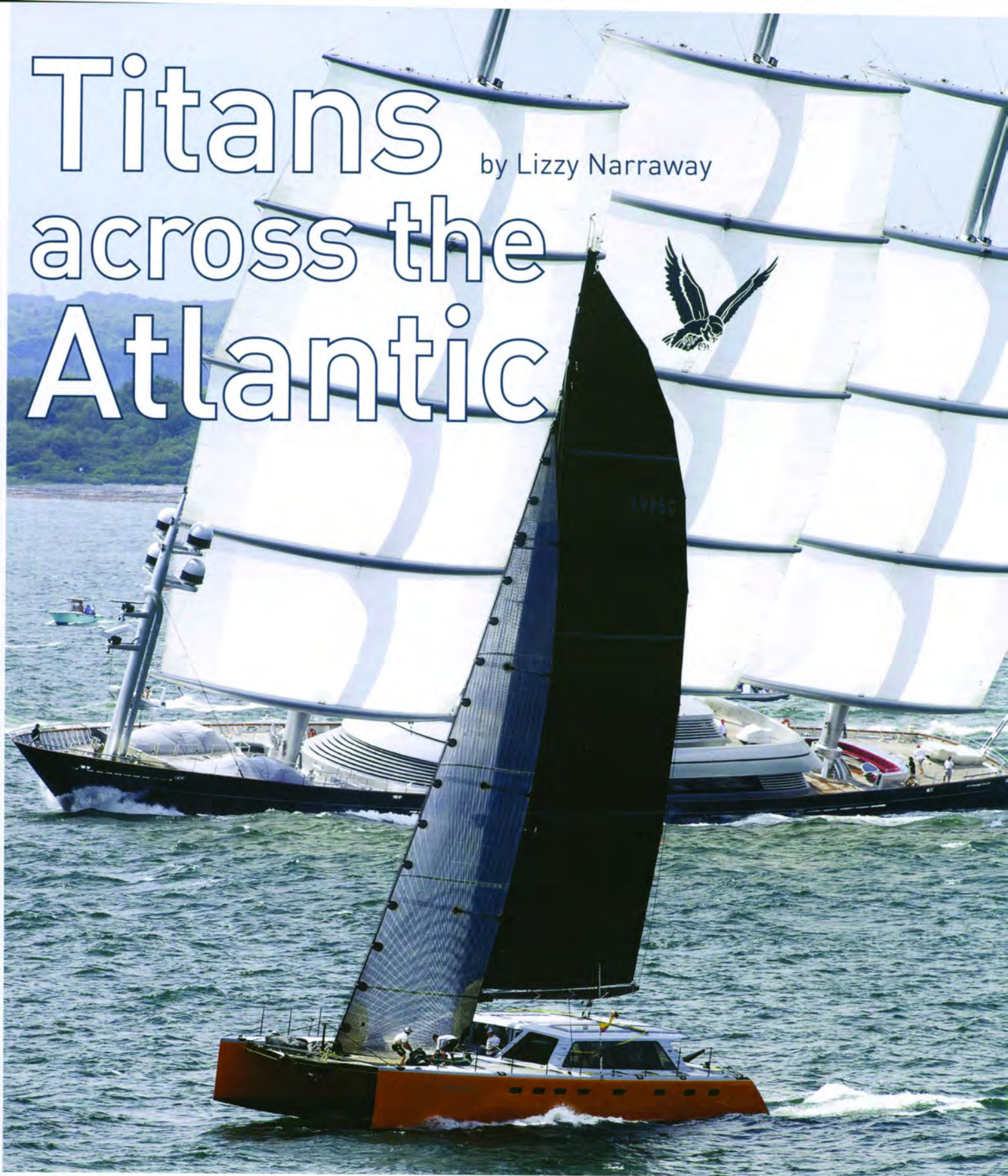
# Royal Ocean Racing Club



## Yearbook 2015

# Titans across the Atlantic

by Lizzy Narraway



*Maltese Falcon and Gunboat 66, Phaedo, at the start of the 2011 Transatlantic Race. Photo: Richard Langdon/Team Phaedo*

**C**onsider the months of preparation and training that go into competing in the Rolex Fastnet Race. Now consider doing that three times over nine months, in vastly different waters and with a 3,000nm race across the Atlantic thrown in for good measure. In 2015 there will be a small, but notable, band of competitors doing just this as they vie to win the Atlantic Ocean Racing Series.

Organised by a group of the top yacht clubs running offshore racing on both sides of the 'pond' - the New York Yacht Club, Royal Yacht Squadron, Royal Ocean Racing Club and Storm Trysail Club - the Atlantic Ocean Racing Series has a classic, the Transatlantic Race, at its heart.

In reality this centrepiece, running from New York across the North Atlantic to The Lizard, is the NYYC's own. The club ran its first Transatlantic Race for three of its members in 1886, but its most

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memorable edition was in 1905 when the giant schooner, *Atlantic*, set the phenomenal record time for the crossing of 12 days, 4 hours 1 minute and 19 seconds (see sidebar).

Today, for yachts wishing to qualify for the series, the Transatlantic Race is mandatory along with any two of the following: RORC Caribbean 600, Rolex Fastnet Race and Rolex Middle Sea Race. As a result this series can take the best part of a year to complete, requiring determination, dedication and logistical flair.

Following the inaugural series in 2011, 2015 looks set to be bigger and better than ever. With months still to go before the closure of entries to the Transatlantic Race, there are almost 60 yachts ready to set sail from Newport, RI in June, double the number of starters in 2011. For the organisers of the race this boom in interest is pleasing but predictable; there is the natural interest for an event so deeply steeped in history and in the wake of publicity generated by the 2011 edition.

This year there is also an appealing neatness to the series: Each one is a classic worth competing in for its own right. In addition there is the Rolex Fastnet Race's 90th anniversary, plus the Royal Yacht Squadron's bicentennial celebrations. The RYS traditionally hosts the prizegiving for the Transatlantic Race and this year there will be the option to continue on racing up the south coast, from the Lizard to the RYS in Cowes, arriving just in time for the week-long RYS Bicentenary Regatta.

With many of the entry lists unopened for the races ahead, at this stage it is uncertain which yachts, or how many, will qualify for the Atlantic Ocean Racing Series as a whole. In 2011, out of the 26 who started the Transatlantic Race, 11 went on to get an



*Rambler 100 crew celebrate setting 2011 Transatlantic Race record.  
Photo: Mark Lloyd/www.lloydimages.com*

overall result, which bodes well for 2015. In anticipation of a good number wishing to compete in the series as a whole, the RORC is among the yacht clubs making allowances for the additional entries, by lifting the maximum monohull length limit in the Rolex Fastnet Race.

It is likely that NYYC member George David will wish to go for the full series, having won it overall in 2011. He has entered the Transatlantic Race with his brand new 88ft Juan Kouyoumdjian-designed maxi, *Rambler*. For David this is a special race: He played a prominent role in organising the 2011 edition and believes the race and larger series play a significant role in strengthening transatlantic relations. He also clearly relishes the challenge of a long oceanic race, citing the peace of it as part of the appeal: "long days away

*Comanche, Jim and Kirsty Clark's 100ft VPLP-Verdier designed maxi. Photo: Onne van der Wal*





The fleet sets sail from Newport in the 2011 race. Photo: Billy Black

from land and away even from shipping. Just birds and marine life...the rhythms of waves and watches."

But following his record-breaking run in 2011 he is sanguine about his chances of breaking any records with his new boat in 2015, commenting that while "any record can be broken...we had exceptional conditions for the first half of the TR2011, including a 584 mile day for Rambler 100 – just off the world record of 597 miles." Instead David rates the other new kid on the block, the 100ft Comanche, as the one to watch out for among the speedsters. The carbon fibre VPLP-Verdier designed yacht was recently launched for Jim and Kirsty Clark and it will mark a rematch between her skipper, Ken Read, and George David. In 2011 Read was the skipper of Puma Ocean Racing's Mar Mostro, the VO70 that beat Rambler 100 on IRC overall.

Despite what George David says, it is clear that Rambler and Comanche will be lining up to go head to head for line honours and all are looking forward to seeing how this heavyweight bout fares between the world's latest maxi boat line honours trophy hunters.

Diversity is at the core of the 2015 Transatlantic Race and the multiple divisions can include Classics, Multihulls, One-Design and Open to accommodate the sheer variety of competitors wishing to take part.

One particular class worth keeping an eye on will be the Classics: Mariette, the 1915 twin-masted schooner designed by Herreshoff, is the oldest yacht taking part and alongside her will be the 52ft yawl Dorade. Dorade is the poster-girl for competitive classic yachts. Acquired by Matt Brooks in 2010, the boat has an illustrious history and even won the Transatlantic Race in 1931. It was this performance that propelled the profile of her young, and at the time unknown, designer, Olin Stephens.

When Matt Brooks bought the boat he had a strong vision of what he hoped to achieve: "I told the broker 'I'm going to take this boat, get her ready, and repeat all her early races'. I was promptly told by many people that just wasn't possible. 'She's a fine piece of furniture, but you can't take her out - you'll ruin her.' But that made me just want to do it more. So we're on this endeavour to repeat all these races and it's looking good. Dorade loves being out on the ocean."

So far, Dorade is proving him right. She won the Transpac Race in 2013, 77 years after she first won it in 1936. In 2014 alone she notched class wins in the RORC Caribbean 600, Newport-Bermuda Race and Les Voiles de St Tropez, among many other glittering results. Competing 84 years on in the race that forged his yacht's name, Matt Brooks will be

# History of the Transatlantic Race

The Transatlantic Race has a pedigree that makes it unmissable. At 3,000nm, not only is it one of the longer offshore races available to amateur crews racing their own boats, but there is also an appealing scarcity to the opportunity of racing in it. In fact there have only been 29 northern hemisphere west-east races (not including those as part of a larger event), compared to 45 editions of the Rolex Fastnet Race and 69 Rolex Sydney-Hobart Races.

It is also ancient. First held in 1886, it is one of the oldest on-going events and makes the 90 year old Fastnet Race look like a young whippersnapper in comparison.

The background to the race fully belongs to the New York Yacht Club, as the inaugural event was conjured up by three of its younger members to help settle a debate they had had as to the merits of their racing schooners. Then, to make things interesting, they placed a US\$60,000 first prize cheque at stake. Running the race in the depths of winter, the three yachts, James Gordon Bennett Jr's 107ft Henrietta, Franklin and George Osgood's 106ft Fleetwing and Pierre Lorillard's 105ft Vesta, inevitably faced turbulent snow storms and the most atrocious conditions. During one particularly violent storm Fleetwing lost six men overboard. However all three persevered and, surprisingly, finished within hours of each other on Christmas Day. The winning yacht, Henrietta, was the only one whose owner had braved the race onboard himself and James Gordon Bennett not only picked up his winnings and settled the debate, but was subsequently elected Vice Commodore of the NYYC at the tender age of 26.

Further races were held sporadically; a variety of club-organised events and private wagers. The seminal race after this was in 1905 when the 184ft schooner, Atlantic, with Charlie Barr, the Russell Coutts of his day, at the helm, set a record for the course of 12 days, 4 hours 1 minute and 19 seconds. The course record was only bettered 75 years later by Eric Tabarly on the tri-foiler Paul Ricard and has subsequently been lowered and lowered to the present time set in 2009 by the 131ft trimaran, Banque Populaire, standing at 3d 15h 25m 48s – ie faster than the Queen Mary's 1938 Blue Riband record.

However none of these record attempts were carried out under race conditions and Atlantic's race record remained technically unbroken until the NYYC organised the Rolex Transatlantic Challenge in 2005. In its centenary year the organisers sought to both honour the Atlantic's achievement and redress the balance, leaving it to Mari Cha IV, Robert Miller's state of the art 140ft racing schooner, to finally knock three days off Atlantic's time.





Top left: Princess Anne presents Charlie Enright with the trophy for winning Youth Division. Top right: George David and his crew at the prizegiving at the Royal Yacht Squadron. Photos: RORC/Paul Wyeth/www.pwpictures.com

hopeful his dedicated team will be able to pull it off again.”

It is one thing for a fully professional crew on a speed machine to complete this race, quite another for the mostly-Corinthian teams on board 40-50ft racer cruisers, for whom this race will prove to be one of the longest, toughest and most challenging they are ever likely to do.

Ross Applebey is no stranger to long offshores: He and his 48ft, Scarlet Oyster, have done multiple Rolex Fastnet Races, RORC Caribbean 600s and faced a particularly harsh Rolex Middle Sea Race in 2014. But this event presents a fresh challenge. “I have never raced west to east before. A challenge which is new makes it interesting,” commented Applebey. “I was approached by a syndicate looking for a boat and a skipper. The team has a great deal of experience and is doing this properly”.

Any transatlantic crossing requires a great deal of preparation, but to be pushing the boat as hard as possible as well means that competitors must have a belts and braces approach to planning.

Accidents and breakages that happen within an easy distance of land can escalate in the open ocean, hundreds of miles from safety.

Matt Brook's 52ft classic yawl, Dorade. Photo: RORC/Tim Wright/www.photoaction.com

As Applebey points out: “Many crews and boats rock up looking pretty tired at the end of a Fastnet; so clearly doing five Fastnets in a row is a very different prospect, and requires a very different and more prepared approach. If we lose the means to charge batteries for instance on a Fastnet, we would likely still be able to finish safely, albeit without a fridge or routing computers. But on a transatlantic that would create major issues with communications, weather info and other essential systems.”

Applebey hopes that Scarlet Oyster can make it around the entire series and has a strong chance of not only achieving this but getting a good result too. While Scarlet Oyster may not have raced west to east before, she finished second overall going the opposite way in the ARC's Racing Division in 2012 and went on to win class in both the RORC Caribbean 600 and the Rolex Fastnet Race that year, a comparable set of events to the series. Nevertheless, Applebey is pragmatic, particularly considering the Transatlantic Race: “This is a race where completing it is a great achievement in itself. Having said that, we have a great team and I am sure when the race starts we will be pushing as hard as always for the best result we can achieve!”

