



Brian's current boat – the motor cruiser *Safina*

BELOW Brian Ferguson's last sail boat – his beautifully restored Cornish Crabber



Brian Ferguson

We swapped sails for power

Peter Poland meets 10 seasoned sailors who bought motorboats to extend their time afloat after sailboats became too much like hard work

Many moons ago I had a premonition that Hunter Boats ought to build a classy little motorboat for customers who decide the time has come to move on from sail to power. So when the late, great David Thomas tempted me with a retro-looking weekend whizz-boat with a twin-tunnelled wash-free hull, I didn't scratch my head and ask 'why?' I surprised him by replying 'yes please'.

From the word go, we all loved the Landau 20. I even enjoyed being driven by David Thomas into a Force 8 gale as we rushed across a wave-tossed Solent to keep a Cowes appointment. "No point in going slowly; this hull should take these waves more comfortably on the plane," he said. And as usual, he was right.

Once again, David had come up with a brilliant design. The Landau 20 won an

award when it came out in the 1990s and remains popular with motor boat owners and retired sailors to this day.

Since launching the Landau I have always been fascinated to find out the types of motorboats – be they big and pricey or modest and economical – that appeal to the owners of Hunters and of bigger yachts alike, and why.

Oysters for a commodore

The first ex-Hunter owner I contacted was Colin Hall; a past commodore of the Royal Southern YC. He told me that after racing keel boats – Soling, J24, Dragon – in the 1970s and 80s, "a young family came along and I made my first switch to cruising with an Oyster 406 ... This was a splendid sea boat, comfortable, stylish and just the job for cruising to Brittany... But after a few years, the crew decided

that cruising was 'boring' and they wanted to go off dinghy racing, which they did."

Colin then reverted to racing a J/105, Laser 28 and finally a Hunter 707 over several years. Then he heard that his old Oyster 406 was in a sad state and up for sale. So he bought it back, sent it to the famous Elephant Boatyard for some TLC and she emerged looking 'as-new'.

He went on to say that "By this time the two boys were in their late teens and they announced that they would like to do the ARC. And so we did, just the three of us. And once there, you sail the Caribbean islands and do some Oyster and Antigua Weeks for a year or two before bringing the boat back across the Atlantic."

Colin then bought another Oyster and he and his crew did two Atlantic cruises followed by a non-stop voyage 'Round Britain and Ireland'. After which, he said,

Colin Hall



ABOVE Colin Hall's Beneteau Swift Trawler 35 on duty as a Committee Boat. A door beside the helmsman's seat and a gate in the bulwark simplify short-handed berthing

"sailing up and down the Solent seemed like a waste of time; and that's when the urge to change to a motor boat came. I researched six boats and put it to the family to choose one. They all chose the Oyster LD43. I would have chosen a Targa 37, but was over-ruled – they thought that it looked too commercial!"

This Oyster was a success in many respects and Colin found it "comfortable, relaxed, spacious and good for entertaining. It was also powerful, responsive and cut through the Solent chop effortlessly". But there was one problem that many converts from sail to power come to discover when motoring short-handed. Colin realised he "was trapped at the wheel when it came to mooring up; and that would be rectified in the choice of the next boat."

Easier mooring

This 'next boat' was a Beneteau Swift Trawler 35. It had an all-important sliding door from the helm station to the starboard side deck, coupled with a gate in the bulwark. Colin said "this means that you can moor up single- or short-handed securely with a single breast rope and sort the rest out later. It transforms what you can do when the tide is running. To get this perfect, I still need to re-position a cleat so that the boat lies parallel to the pontoon, but the effect is liberating."

Colin summed up the pluses and minuses of progressing from sail to power succinctly: "As you get older, a proper yacht progressively takes more and more effort, your balance deteriorates and so it becomes a treat to go along level. You don't get as wet or cold and rarely wear oilies. But, and it is a big but, you lose the joy of working the boat, trimming the sails and working the tides to best effect. Instead, you press your buttons and keep a good look out. There's less joy in the getting there and so there has to be more joy in the destination."

He concluded that "over the years, I have raced and cruised, in little boats and bigger ones; all reflecting the changes in family life as kids come, grow older, then leave. Then you're back pulling your own ropes! I miss the competitive side of racing but Committee Boat work and a bit



ABOVE Tim Harrison has a lot of fun with his roomy Landau 20 Walkaround, it's ideal for Solent cruising at speed

INSET Tim's home-completed Hunter Impala 28 won many pots in the 1980s
RIGHT Tim also owns a 60ft narrowboat



of umpiring keep me in contact. So changing boats and activities is nothing new. It's the latest stage in something I've been doing for the last 50 years. The joy is that going motor keeps you out on the water, and there is no substitute for that."

Racing to narrow boating

Retired dentist, serial Hunter owner and long-term friend Tim Harrison has approached his transition from sail to power via a different route. He bought several kit Hunters (Sonata, Impala, HB31, 707 etc) that he completed at home and raced with considerable success in the Solent and on cross-Channel JOG races. After retiring from racing he bought a second-hand Hallberg-Rassy 45 that he cruised across the Atlantic, spent a few years trundling around the Caribbean then cruised it back again.

So when I asked which was his favourite sailing boat, he selected the HB31 (his most successful race boat) and the HR45 (his only cruiser). And when and why did he then change to power? He put this down to age, location (access to cruising

areas and moorings), medical status (diminishing strength and balance) and costs, adding "in my case it was our relocation to the Solent area at the age of 68; and two hip operations."

His motorboating activities take two very different forms. For use around the South Coast, he told me "we've had two boats, both launch types, with shallow draught and large cockpits. This type suits the Solent area with rivers, bridges, pubs and shallow waters, and our preference for day trips with friends." These boats were a Tamar 2000 – a 24ft Cornish fishing vessel type – followed by a Hunter Landau 20 Walkaround that proved far less prone to rolling. "The big plus for us is the ease of use, and that we can stay much warmer and drier. The big minus is missing the joy of sailing."

And the second motor boat? In the immortal words of Monty Python's Flying Circus – 'And Now for Something Completely Different' – it's a 60ft narrowboat based near Warwick. This sleeps four in comfort but often six. As Tim concluded "how times have changed!" ➔

Tim Harrison

Tim Harrison

Fairey fun

Peter Nicholson is a much-respected name in the sailing and yacht design world so I was fascinated to hear his opinions on changing from sail to power. He said: "Having been effectively 'born into' the sailing business I have owned a range of boats over the last 75 years.

"I have owned racing boats since I was a teenager, first racing a Hamble Star and then several National 12s.

"My last sailing boat was an X Boat that I sold a couple of years ago when the Hamble fleet virtually disappeared. It's difficult to say which racing boat I liked best because they were so different; and inevitably it's difficult not to think that the boats you like best are the ones in which you've been most successful!"

Back in 1958, Peter won the National 12 Burton Trophy during Burton Week in his 12 called *Intuition*.

"In 1964 I had a 44ft Ocean Racer called *Rocquette* in which we won the Gold Roman bowl in the Round the Island Race and every race in Cowes Week including the Britannia and New York Yacht Club cups. She was fabulous."

For several seasons up to 1990 he had a **Sigma 33**, *Sibilation*, "which was good fun because my crew were my wife and children and their friends. There was also a wonderful class of Sigmas with nearly 80 boats in the class for Cowes week and over 100 one year on Round the Island. We won the Sigma nationals one year and twice won the class around the Island."

And what about motorboats I asked? He told me "I had various motor boats from about 1970 onwards and have not been without one since then. The best fun was probably the **Fairey Spearfish**, which is a

marvellous sea boat and great for getting about the Solent.

"My first serious cruising motorboat was *Anonyma*, an **Aquastar 43** which was built in Guernsey. When I became Commodore of the RYS in 1990 I needed to have a boat big enough to lead Squadron Rallies to France or the West Country... We also cruised north and south Brittany extensively and realised that there was a lot to be said for cruising in a boat that was good for 20 knots-plus.

"Firstly it was very nice to be able to have breakfast in Yarmouth followed by lunch in Guernsey! And to be able to get from port to port in very tidal north Brittany without having to wait for the tide to be going in the right direction. One got a lot more time for seeing the surroundings of the places we were visiting and choosing the right restaurants!"

Outstanding motorboats

More recently, Peter owned the original **Aquila 27** that went on to become the **Duchy 27** when Dave Cockwell took over the moulds. Peter said "I think the Duchy motorboats are outstanding. Dave Cockwell's Duchy 27 is a huge improvement on my Aquila 27 as far as the quality of the interior fixtures and fittings are concerned and I think that the

Duchy 35 is a most impressive boat."

Having tested a Duchy 27 for *Classic Boat* magazine, I can vouch for his comments. It was a delight to drive and the overall finish was exquisite. Cockwell now also builds the Hardy range and these attractive Andrew Wolstenholme designs can also appeal to sailors moving from sail to power.

Peter has now ordered a **Sargo 28**, saying "such is the demand for boats at present that delivery is April 2023."

Sargo boats hail from Finland and continue the tradition of sea-going excellence set up by Edy Sarin in 1967.

The range now comprises seven models from the Sargo 25 up to the 45. All have impressive wheelhouses that keep the elements at bay in bad weather but can open up on a sunny day thanks to a sliding sunroof, large aft window and two pilothouse doors opening onto the side decks. The 28 can be bought with single or twin Volvos, has twin berth cabins forward and aft, a spacious saloon and a sea-kindly hull design. The volume and comfort below are remarkable for a stylish 28 footer. The nine-model Targa range (from 25ft to 49ft) has similar characteristics, is also built in Finland and there are plenty available on the brokerage market.

RIGHT The Duchy 27's simple but beautifully finished galley
BELOW The Duchy 27 is Cockwell's upgrade on Peter Nicholson's Aquila 27 fast cruiser



Peter Poland





A boat for France

My next interviewee was a delightful retired Geordie fireman who'd upped sticks and crossed the Channel to live in Normandy. Like many sailors, Brian Ferguson has owned a wide variety of yachts. He told me: "Our first boat was a Leisure 27SL, very comfortable and a useful stopgap while we looked for something better.

"Next, and possibly best, was a **Rival 32**. Totally refitted, as is our wont, she was safe, seaworthy and with a classic 1970s/80s sail plan, easy to handle.

"Like many people we then thought we needed/wanted something bigger. We bought a Tayana 37, identical to a Hans Christian. In a marina she manoeuvred like a sub-post office; but with sea room and a stiff wind she went like a train. The problem was my wife Barbara was frightened of her. She thought, rightly, that if anything happened to me she would be unable to even drop the sails.

"Next up came *Cormoran*, a partially sunk old **Cornish Crabber** that was for sale for the value of her trailer. After a two year rebuild, she became a beautiful boat, admired and photographed by all, trailable to distant cruising areas, and kept and loved for 10 years."

Meanwhile Brian had bought and restored an Albin 25 "as an experiment; dipping a toe into motorboat ownership." He found her too small for his needs, adding "the concept was a boat which could be delivered as either a motor-sailer or purely motor version. But as a serious motor cruiser she was too light, too narrow and too slow. There just wasn't enough room for a decent engine ... so even though as a trial it was unsuccessful,

ABOVE Brian Ferguson made a great job of restoring this Albin 25
RIGHT Brian's Aquastar 27 sits on a beach on his home-made beaching legs

we learned a lot of valuable lessons." And he covered his costs in the process.

Fast forward a couple of years and Brian decided he needed something more comfortable, more capable of covering distances, but something he and Barbara could enjoy owning, adding, "We didn't know what we wanted ... but we had a pretty good idea of what we didn't want."

Love at first sight

Then Colin Sinclair, a successful yacht broker with an office in St Malo, came up with an **Aquastar 27** called *Safina*. It was love at first sight. Brian says "the Aquastar 27 is the perfect transition for someone who has owned a Rival/Nicholson/Contessa. It has 'style'; unlike 90% of motor cruisers in most marinas that are sharply pointed and have ridiculously high side decks."


The Aquastar 27 has worked a treat. Brian says "that every foot of her 27ft is usable. There's full standing headroom throughout and a comfortable toilet shower room. She's beautifully fitted out in solid teak, has a proper galley with oven, sink, fridge, hot water, work tops etc and a large covered cockpit. We have had a 10-week summer vacation on her with no issues at all."

When I asked if Brian had a yen for a bigger motor boat, he replied: "The short

answer is No! The long answer is Noooooo! I can go to sea alone in *Safina* and bring her back in a wind and still put her on her berth without help. A bigger and almost certainly taller boat would rule out the canals. Costs would be higher – for everything. There are not many classic style boats that I would consider an improvement."

Fuel economy

When it comes to choice of engines, Brian has interesting opinions. He told me "there are many different considerations here. I have two Ford Mermaids; 130hp each. They are considered 'pedestrian' but bomb proof, given that they are basically a four-cylinder turbo developed from a Transit van unit. A replacement cylinder head for my friend's Yanmar was north of €3,700; one for my Mermaid would be around £400.

"Then there is fuel consumption. My boat uses three times as much diesel at 14 knots as it does at eight knots. Do I want to pay €80 extra to get to St Malo two or three hours earlier? This is possibly an important factor when you are talking about ex-sailors changing to motor. They are probably less concerned with out and out performance than with comfort and economy. After three years I still think 10 knots is unnaturally rapid." 

Debbie Moore



LEFT The Jersey 36 is a handsome motor boat, especially when on the move
BELOW William Renilson's Jersey 36 has easy access to and from a pontoon thanks to the stern platform

The right size

Brian also has firm views on the ideal size of motorboat for a retired couple to handle. He says those used to a sailboat up to around 36ft tend to have a standard routine for mooring alongside a pontoon: With one at the tiller and the other on the rail at the shrouds, the boat comes alongside bows first. The crew steps onto the pontoon and the skipper gives a burst astern and steps onto the coaming then the pontoon. Job done. "Try that with a 36ft motorcruiser!" he said.

Motorboats tend to have much more windage, more freeboard forward and amidships, no keel or deep rudders to grip the water, no standing rigging to hang onto and no easy route for the helmsman to jump ashore and give a helping hand. So there's a lot more to go wrong – even if you have bow and stern thrusters. Steering in close confines is one of the hardest skills to acquire, so the choice of the right boat, and practice (preferably before buying), is vital.

Like Brian's Guernsey-built Aquastar 27, another successful range of tough and seaworthy motor cruisers hails from the Channel Isles. **The Channel Island 22** and 32 are built in Jersey and the 22 is particularly popular with sailors turning to power. Both came from the pen of Alan Buchanan, who's more famous for his yacht designs.

Cross-Channel adventures

Channel Islander John Willis is a keen sailor who owned several capable yachts starting with a Drascombe Drifter, followed by a Hunter Horizon 27. John told me his Hunter "took me on my first adventurous Channel Island voyages including a memorable solo Easter trip up the Swinge in Force 6, with waves crashing over the breakwater! She also took me across the Channel, but I was becoming increasingly eager to expand my horizons so I bought

a Westery Discus – in which we roamed to Eire, the Isles of Scilly, England's south coast and of course France.

"Several years later I decided I wanted something faster and, as my family were not greatly interested, smaller. So we bought an almost new **Sadler 290** which we called *A-Jay* after my late sister-in-law. I really began to roam now, spending over four months aboard in 2015, getting as far north as Orkney, Fair Isle and Shetland. On the way back, I stopped in Arklow to shelter from gales where I met Pete Goss and my next boat; though I didn't know it at the time.

"Eighteen months later, I was the proud owner of Pete Goss's boat *Pippin*, a **Francis 34 Pilot House** and Pete and I remain firm friends. I had entered a Jester Challenge while owner of *A-Jay*, but then *Pippin* came, so I did the Baltimore Jester challenge in her. This was followed by many adventures including solo Biscay crossings and exploration of the Galician coast, before I set off on the Jester Azores Challenge last year.

"I liked all these yachts, but loved *A-Jay* and *Pippin* – mainly because of what they helped me to achieve but also because I



William Renilson

think they are special looking craft that punch above their weight at sea."

Then John added "I knew at some point I would get a motorboat before sailing became too hard to truly enjoy, so it was my next logical step as I never want to be without a boat. I also don't look back with regret; only forward to where the next adventure lies."

So guess what he bought next?

He said "my motorboat is a 40-year-old **Channel Island 22** that already sits being refurbished in the boatyard. She is a pugnacious little vessel with legendary sea keeping for her size. She's a bit of a squeeze, but I like her looks and reckon she will do us proud ... We've called her *Water Rat*, a Marmite sort of name, with special resonance for me as I was once a soldier in the 7th Armoured (Desert Rat) Brigade."

Easy boarding

Willie Renilson was wisely aware of potential parking problems when buying his very elegant **Jersey 36**. He previously owned a self-built Wharram-designed 46ft catamaran and a long keel 26ft Lemster design (similar to a Folkboat) before marrying and having a son then a grandson, so the boat became a new conservatory on the understanding that he would get a boat again on retirement.

That time duly arrived and Willie told me that having bought *Jersey Lass* they took a year to refit her. An autopilot connected to the chartplotter and radar allows for the wind and tide, ensuring that the boat stays



John Willis

John Willis moved over to power with this seaworthy Channel Island 22, to be renamed *Water Rat* after his former army brigade known as the Desert Rats

on its planned course. Remote controls for the bow and stern thrusters make short-handed mooring simple on the rare occasions that the thrusters are needed.

Willie says: "We can moor up without leaving the stern cockpit once a line is ashore and hold her on the engine; which is important since my wife cannot manage it safely to the bow in a hurry. We also have a gang plank that can be dropped from a pontoon to the stern platform so that we can easily get on board and also get 'less able' people on board so they can enjoy the boat.

"When coming alongside the river bank, the boat's stern platform plus a cut out and step at the side combined with fairly wide decks mean that my wife (who has arthritis in her knees) can board the boat when alongside a riverbank at any height ... we can either board at the stern or onto the side deck, whichever is at the better level. This is essential – our surveyor said that many people can't use their boats as they get older simply because they can't get on them!"

The Jersey 36 has a low air draught to get under most bridges on the river systems and a hull shape similar to a Brede class lifeboat so can confidently go to sea. Willie says "the single Vetus 250hp engine chugs us along at about 11 knots.

"Given the current cost of fuel this is a big reason for single engines as they are less costly to run than two... and less noisy with fewer vibrations.

"The large single propeller with a rope cutter is well protected in a cathedral hull tunnel and a big balanced rudder makes low speed turning easy even without using thrusters. We also have an

emergency 'kicker engine'... just in case."

William concluded his opinions on sail and power by saying: "I have had sailing boats on the Broads and at sea. It can be quite hard work on the rivers, and you must be careful. Likewise at sea; but you do have more room.

"Life is easier on a motorboat, and it is surprising how close marine life gets to you, even with the slight hum of an engine at low revs. You then have the time to enjoy watching the marine life... or the deer on the river banks!"

Drascombes to RIBs

Gilbert Park has owned a wide selection of boats; both sail and power. So he has extensive experience of both. He told me: "I owned just about every Drascombe that was made; from the Scaffie to the Coaster. I also owned a Sailfish 18; which was more comfortable and faster. But a Drascombe's ability to drop the mainsail and use the jib and mizzen gave me confidence to sail in strong winds."

He and his wife Maire then got hooked on the idea of a rigid inflatable boat (RIB). Like his Drascombes, this could be trailed to different areas. So they decided to 'try out RIBs seriously' with a two-day RYA Level II Powerboat Course at Anglia Sea Ventures in Ipswich. They learned in a 5.2m Ribcraft with a 60hp engine.


"We liked the boat and decided we'd

look for the slightly smaller **4.8m Ribcraft**," said Gilbert. "We saw *Cobalt* for sale online while driving home that evening and she was ours soon after."

Having enjoyed exploring every part of Chichester Harbour, trips to the Isle of Wight for lunch became common. Then a trip to the Isles of Scilly from Penzance became their next target, so Gilbert signed up for a Day Skipper course at the Emsworth School of Navigation and his insurer set the limits at Force 5 winds and 2m high waves – 'more than we would wish to be out in'.

Gilbert and Maire decided to do the RYA Intermediate Powerboat Course together on their own boat. Gilbert also did the Advanced Course.

"The Scilly Isles trip was a roaring success – the outward bound leg was a bit rougher than we'd have liked, but the return leg was flat calm and we only used 25lt of fuel! After that we explored the Dorset coast going all the way along to Lyme Regis. But I think the writing on the wall for *Cobalt* came in Weymouth. It was a long walk uphill to our B&B, carrying a load of gear, and then another long walk to get petrol.

"We needed a boat we could stay on. In addition, my back had started playing up. With some regret, as we'd had a lot of adventures and never felt unsafe, *Cobalt* was sold." 

RIGHT Gilbert Park's former **Seaward 25 Sea Offer** at speed... **BELOW** ... and his current **Trusty T23** motorboat **Merlot**



Onward and Seaward

The next boat was a **Seaward 25**, and apart from Maire's dislike of the diesel cooker, they enjoyed cruising in it for several years. They covered Dorset, Devon, and spent a month on her exploring the Channel Islands and the Cotentin Peninsular.

The Seaward 25 was then replaced by a Merry Fisher 855, followed by a Romany 21 (a lockdown project) and then a **Trusty T23** with a diesel engine.

This bilge keel motorboat sits happily on a mooring. Its downside is that it only does 6 knots, but Gilbert says, "people moving from sail will be used to this and I quite enjoy it."

At the same time, Gilbert said "I was fortunate that I had a house with a mooring in the South of France where I had a Nimbus 365 (and still has it back in the UK in the Trafalgar Drystack in Portchester).

The Nimbus is an interesting choice because this range has long been very popular with people moving from sail to power. These Swedish-built fast cruisers are beautifully finished and have a discreet style that is very appealing to sailors. My test on the Nimbus 320C was published in the Summer 2021 issue of *PBO*.

Custom-built success

The remarkable Tom and Lorraine Owen are likely to be familiar to *PBO* readers. Tom designed a beautiful 35ft wooden yacht called *Selene* that they built themselves and sailed many miles over many years. But when they decided that it was time to move to power, they started all over again. Tom designed a 30ft wooden motorboat and – once again – they built her themselves.

In their book *Seawater & Sawdust* they devote one chapter to analysing whether their boat *Thea* does all they expected of it after all their hard work.

"In total *Thea* represents over 9,000 'person' hours of work," they say. "From our point of view, she was most definitely worth the effort. We have created a boat that is 'custom built' by us, for us. We could never have afforded a brand new boat off the shelf and, even if we could, Tom would have spent many, many hours altering it to suit what he wanted (if that was even possible!)."

"One of our primary objectives was all-round visibility from the wheelhouse – our 'lounge/diner'. It took many months to stop ourselves waking at the crack of dawn and rushing up to the dinette berth excited by the thought of taking our coffee

in the warmth and comfort of our saloon, wrapped in our fleecy blankets and able to watch the world go by. As things come to life on the water, there is so much to see... Whatever the weather, there is always something happening out there when you are afloat, and now we can be a part of it.

"We certainly don't miss being wet and cold underway, fighting with reluctant sails, trying to control wet sheets... We now travel from port to port in comfort, maybe with the heater on. Sea state allowing, we can travel regardless of other weather conditions. The direction of the wind no longer matters, neither does the rain or the cold."

Thea's dimensions are 30ft LOA, beam 11ft, draught 3ft (with 6ft x 10in bilge keels to dry out on). She weighs approx 4.75 tonnes, has a Beta 35 diesel, 47 gallon fuel tank, a top speed of 8.5 knots and cruises at an economical 6 -7 knots. Lorraine says "I'm pretty sure we've extended our cruising life by making the change now – before we were pushed! And it's certainly worth considering if you have a partner who is a nervous/unwilling sailor – they may well be willing to spend more time afloat..."

The only problem is that unless you build it yourself you're unlikely to find anything with the charm and versatility of *Thea*!

A family Saga

To return to the world of GRP, I contacted George Lines, a long-standing fellow-member of the Royal Southern Yacht Club. In 1973 he and his brother-in-law bought *Superecume*, a 25ft Ecume de Mer

LEFT Tom and Lorraine Owen's home-designed and -built wooden cruiser *Selene* covered many thousands of miles
BELOW Their home-built 30ft *Thea* has a spacious deck saloon

Tom Owen





David Royall



George Lines

ABOVE George Lines' Marex 375 Leonis was a 'step-up' from his Saga 26 – his 'trial move' to power **LEFT** George sold his Contest 46 to switch to power from sails

quarter tonner and enjoyed racing in JOG cross channel events, Solent Points races and competed in the 1973 Quarter Ton Cup in Weymouth against two gifted and then unknown designers – David Thomas in *Quarto* and Ron Holland in *Eyghthere*.

Four years later George bought a Robber quarter tonner before his daughter joined the Optimist training circuit followed by the Olympic class Europe dinghy. This 10-year adventure of trailing dinghies around England and Europe put paid to yacht ownership until 1990 when they bought a Feeling 1040, giving the Lines family an enjoyable 15 years of club cruising mixed with racing in the Solent and offshore.

As is often the case, George and his wife Pat later realised that "If we were to continue sailing, a more comfortable yacht would be required. So *Wipeout* was sold and we purchased a 10-year-old Contest 46. Racing was now over, but sailing with a large aft ensuite cabin, electric powered hydraulic winches and mainsail in-mast furling meant that we could continue cruising safely and without the need to find, house and feed crew. The Contest has long and powerful legs, so we continued our sailing to nearly all the destinations between Fecamp in the east, the Isles of Scilly in the west and La Rochelle in the south.

"Then 2020 brought changes. Thinking ahead, we'd already purchased a **Saga 26** motorboat, as full retirement enabled mid-week cruises to Solent anchorages

and harbours; for which a 17-ton 46ft sailing yacht was no longer suitable. The Solent and northern France are now awash with 45-50ft sailing boats... finding space in anchorages and marinas has become a problem!"

But after a debilitating disease picked up in late 2019 that resulted in loss of strength and stamina George said: "The Contest had to go... The Saga 26 had demonstrated the advantages of 15-knot cruising speed and a shorter hull length and draught. We could anchor close inshore with a significantly reduced swinging circle. And it was easy to board via the stern platform; the only step being down to the forward cabin. What we needed was a larger Saga."

The only problem was that a Saga 38 was hard to find. But the Brokers who had supplied Sagas now offered the similar Norwegian **Marex 375** (nominee for Powerboat of the year in 2016 and big sister to the Marex 330; European Powerboat of the year winner in 2022).

The Lines family fell for the Marex 375's quality, sleek looks and comfortable interior, taking delivery of one in late 2020. George said: "The two-hour passage from Poole to the Solent demonstrated the contrast between handling a 17-ton yacht, fitted with a keel and large rudder, and a powerful 7-ton twin screw planing hull, fitted with no rudder at all.


"In 2021 we enjoyed our new toy between Covid alarms. As it planes at 15 knots and cruises at 25, passage times in

fair weather are extremely short. This means a 12-hour cross Channel voyage under sail is shortened to around three hours; safety is improved when crossing the shipping lanes as we have the ability to out-run any oil tankers, and we are able to set off knowing that we should arrive before the current weather system changes. We are looking forward to our first full season in 2022."

So, having owned four yachts and two motorboats, which do the Lines crew now prefer; and why?

George said "there's no substitute for handling a powerful yacht in a fresh breeze with the wind somewhere between a fetch and a reach. But my logs over 15 years show that such conditions do not seem to occur often. A normal, elderly husband and wife crew has limited endurance and tidal gates to overcome. So the average cruising yacht owner may spend many hours underway under motor. And a motor boat unable to exceed its hull speed provides comfortable passage making; but in much the same time as a sailboat and without the advantage of choosing between sailing or motoring.

"A planing motor boat provides rapid and short journey times, with the safety factors I have already mentioned, but with a fuel rate per mile about triple that of our Contest. In our case, it means we can still enjoy an extensive cruising range, even though we no longer possess the dexterity and strength of our former years."

Which about says it all. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter K Poland crossed the Atlantic in a 7.6m (25ft) *Wind Elf* in 1968 and later spent 30 years as co-owner of Hunter Boats. He is now a freelance journalist and PR consultant.

