

Peter de Savary

– his boats past and present

BOATS HAVE ALWAYS FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN PETER DE SAVARY'S LIFE, AND WITH ONLY ONE OF THE 40 OR SO HE HAS OWNED A NEW BUILD, IT HAS BEEN A COLOURFUL COLLECTION. *GLORIA*, HIS LATEST, HE RANKS AS THE BEST BUT SHE IS FOR SALE AS HE SEEKS OUT THE NEXT ADVENTURE

words: David Pelly photography: Kos Pictures; Buggy Gedlek; courtesy of Peter de Savary



America's Cup challenger *Victory '83* (far left and at her naming ceremony top right) is just one of an extraordinary collection that has included the refloated *Vagrant* (above), the Fairey Swordsman *Charleston* (above right), former tug *St Eval* (right) and *Land's End* (left)





Peter de Savary in Victory team colours aboard the 12 metre America's Cup yacht (above), shot from the mast during training in 1982 (right). Flagship *Kalizma* (below) was visited by Prince Andrew during the campaign (left).



Peter de Savary admits to being a 'serial boat owner' and immediately adds that of the 40 or so boats he has owned, only one, *Taramber*, was new. Since the tumultuous period in the early 1980s when he leapt into public attention as a challenger for the America's Cup, he has become better known as an international entrepreneur in hotels, property, shipyards and almost anything else! One of his current preoccupations is Vanderbilt Hall, the magnificent mansion hotel and club in Newport, Rhode Island, with its fascinating and valuable collection of 'Illustration Art', but whatever else has been going on in his high-pressure life, there have always been boats – big or small, power or sail, old or new but always special in some way.

Sitting in the comfortable saloon of the 38.4 metre schooner *Gloria* and hearing de Savary award her nine out of 10 in all departments, I have to ask why on earth he is selling a boat that he obviously likes so much.

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I enjoy the search, the journeys to unfamiliar places to look at boats, the trial trips and the uncertainty of making one's mind up, the whole adventure of it. Then, having bought a boat, I enjoy deciding what to do with it. I never sell a boat in the same condition as I bought it so there is the whole business of deciding on the things that will improve the boat and make it nicer. And when all of this is done, the adventure level begins to sink and I want to do it all over again.'

Always a hands-on sailor, he made his first tacks, aged nine, in a 4.27 metre Jacqueline dinghy on Southampton water and almost immediately progressed to an International Cadet, appropriately named *Imp*, in which he got into trouble by sailing from Hill Head to Cowes and then having difficulty in getting home after the mainsheet broke. 'I was suspended from sailing for a week,' he says, looking suitably contrite at the memory.

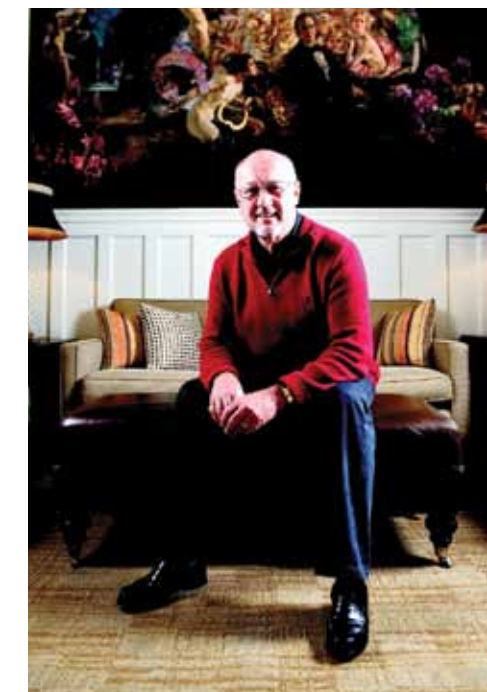
As the names of boats start to form up in line astern, each one provokes a memory or anecdote, none more extraordinary than the story of the schooner *Vagrant*, which had been lying sunk near the Antigua Slipway yard for three or four years when he first became aware of it. No-one at the yard seemed to know much about this vessel but de Savary discovered that she was a famous racing yacht designed by Nathanael Herreshoff especially for Harold S Vanderbilt as a 21st birthday present from his father. *Vagrant's* very first race was the Bermuda Race, which she won. Many years later she had been dismantled while working as a charter yacht and then abandoned. De Savary bought her 'as she lay' and ordered the Slipway to begin a full restoration, which eventually involved replacing 75 per cent of the steel framing and 40 per cent of the timber. Meanwhile Harry Spencer of Cowes built a



Peter de Savary's only new build, *Taramber* (above), was the first superyacht to be built by Pendennis in 1991. Designed by Ed Dubois for high speed sailing she had an interior by Terence Disdale. On the other hand, the 1906 classic *Kalizma* (left and below) was a yacht with a past, not least as the love boat of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton



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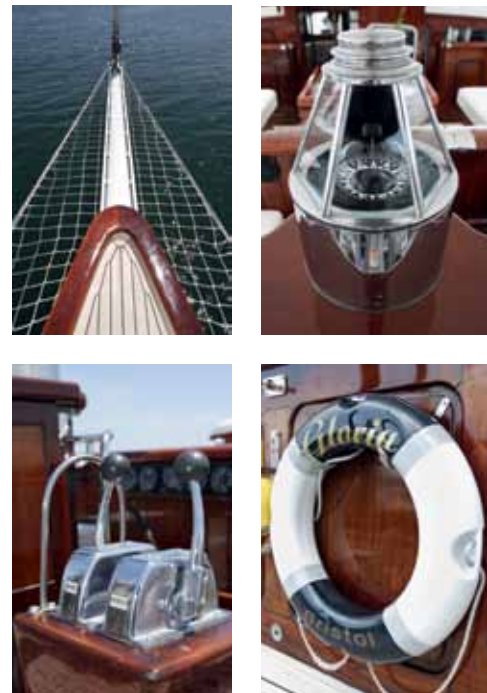
Peter de Savary (above), current owner of *Gloria* (left), sailing under the Claiborne Pell Bridge, Newport, Rhode Island, where she is based

completely authentic gaff schooner rig and in due course *Vagrant* sailed triumphantly to England.

‘We sailed her through Cowes Roads at 13 knots on one occasion,’ he relates with a twinkle. ‘She is 17.37 metres on the waterline while the sailplan from the tip of the bowsprit to the end of the mainboom is 32.92 metres so she is quite something to sail.’

Quite the opposite type of boat was the 10.06 metre Fairey Swordsman powerboat *Charleston* which de Savary bought in the early 1980s. ‘We gave it to Terry Disdale as one of his very first projects after he left the Bannenberg studio and asked him to turn it into the sleekest, sexiest Italian superyacht – in miniature. As soon as it was ready my wife and I jumped aboard at Lymington and hedge-hopped to Fowey at 30 knots. That little boat was more fun than almost anything I have owned.’

Wifely approval is obviously important – and not always forthcoming. ‘The ketch *Whitehawk* is one of the loveliest boats afloat,’ says de Savary. ‘If you sail into an anchorage and find her there, her beauty takes your breath away, but on the other hand, she is quite tender and has a low freeboard so the family never really felt at ease when we went sailing and I kept her for less than a year. The new owner reduced the mast height quite considerably so she is



A boat that has inspired nothing but superlatives from her various owners, *Gloria* was modelled on *Panda*, a 1938 Camper & Nicholson's schooner once owned by the King of Thailand

now safer but less attractive. We kept her dinghy *Sparrow* when I bought *Gloria* and had great fun in the gig-races at English Harbour.'

The former Norwegian rescue ship *Frederikstad* brought an even stronger reaction. 'When we first looked over it, my wife cried,' he says. 'We then asked Ken Freivokh to completely redesign her and after a year in the shipyard she came out as a lovely cruising yacht with lots of character.' This business of producing an attractive cruising yacht out of something that at first appears totally unsuitable seems to have a special appeal. The harbour tug *St Eval* seemed about as far from a cruising yacht as can be imagined but after Pendennis Shipyard, which de Savary had poured energy and money into reactivating, had finished with her, that is exactly what she became.

No additional charisma was needed in the case of the 42.67 metre motor yacht *Kalizma*, which was already famous as one of the oldest motor vessels in the world (built 1906) and somewhat notorious as the 'love boat' formerly owned by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor,



'Because she is such fun to sail and so reliable, I have had more sailing in one year than in three in any other boat'

aboard which he presented her with one of the world's largest diamonds. Never one to pass up some free publicity, de Savary purchased *Kalizma* as the flagship for his 1983 tilt at the America's Cup with *Victory '83*. Today he remembers *Kalizma* for her vast, old direct-reversing Mirlees engine which was 5.5 metres high and turned at 112 rpm. Fortunately, there were also two small Mercedes 'wing engines' for use when manoeuvring.

This useful extra was missing from *Land's End*, a motor yacht with a direct-reverse engine that was started with a gas-generating cartridge system which needed to be re-loaded after four shots. This was nearly her undoing when attempting a 'three-point turn' in the River Rhine in a six-knot current with a huge barge roaring downstream towards the yacht. Fortunately the engine caught on the fourth cartridge and *Land's End* just scooted out of the way in time. On the other hand, de Savary remembers her as 'a wonderful sea-boat' being based on a whaler hull.

None of his yachts seem to have been in the least bit ordinary and this certainly applies to *Gloria* which he praises as one of his best-ever purchases. 'She has always been owned by people in the shipping industry,' he points out, 'and none of them has stinted on maintenance.' Built for the Swedish ship owner Mikael Krafft, she passed to a German and then a Greek who were both in the shipping industry before de Savary bought her.

Gloria owes her existence the fact that Mikael Krafft fell in love with a pre-Second World War Camper & Nicholson's-built schooner named *Panda* which he tried to buy before finding that she was too far gone to be worth repairing. So instead he had Peter Beeldsnijder design and Jongert build what he described in the Foreword to *Refit* volume 7 as





Gloria's original interior, timelessly traditional and 'thoroughly comfortable', has been spruced up rather than replaced. Most of the renewal and improvements made were to systems and machinery



'more-or-less *Panda*', following Alfred Mylne's lines as closely as possible but with a modern staysail schooner rig with powered furling and sheeting for all the sails. Fitting out – to a very high standard – was by another Dutch yard, Lowland, using lots of solid mahogany. Krafft wrote: 'The pleasure and joy I got from building and sailing this ship are indescribable. She also inspired me to build the Star Clipper ships (two four-masted barquentines and one five-masted full-rigged ship).' Quite a recommendation!

An even stronger one – if that is possible – comes from Peter de Savary who says of *Gloria*: 'I can honestly say that this boat scores the best of any that I have ever had. There are very few things I would change. She is big enough to be thoroughly comfortable. She sails nicely and goes better with more wind. She felt completely safe in a gale and is a fantastic all-round sea boat. She is ridiculously strong and all her gear is heavy, long-lasting stuff. Because she is such fun to sail and so reliable, I have had more sailing in one year than in three with any other boat.'

The interesting thing is that when you go aboard *Gloria* it is hard to see any evidence of a refit because virtually all of it is 'under the skin'. What you can see are new bathroom and locker fittings replacing ones that had lost their finish after 25 years. Some battered joinery has been tidied up and an organ has been removed from the saloon (yes, really!). The former library is now an additional double cabin, making her more suitable for charter use. Carpets and other soft furnishings have been renewed.

What you cannot see is that the bilges were opened up and the lead ballast lifted out, cleaned and coated with insulating material prior to replacement. Meanwhile the interior steelwork was needle-blasted and painted. The air-conditioning system, which was well gunged-up after

a quarter of a century, was pulled out and thoroughly overhauled rather than replaced because it is a good system with individual units rather than a general one. The main engine and generators were zero-timed and substantial improvements were made to the electrical system including fitting a new Atlas shore power converter that cost \$150,000. Improvements were made to the communications and entertainment outfit, including installation of a new satellite television system.

Most of the interior is original and is exceptionally comfortable and welcoming. The main saloon is unusual in having recessed 'lounges' on each side which make it easier to have different interest groups – watching television or not, for instance. The forward part of the saloon provides the dining room, with the galley opening from one side.

The master cabin is right aft, accessible via the deck saloon, and uses the full beam of the hull. In fact one wonders if Jongert got the idea of their famous 'pirate' cabins from it, although *Gloria* does not have galleon windows in the transom, thank heavens.

'Gloria looks sensational from out board as well as on board; a really romantic schooner from another era and a true yachtman's yacht'





Mahogany is a key feature of the pre-war style interior, hardly altered from the original

Two double en suite cabins open off the saloon plus two smaller en suite twin cabins. One of these is currently used by the captain as the crew quarters forward are cramped for a permanent crew of six (and would not be accepted on a new yacht under the ILO regulations). Therefore the guest list can be up to 10 but eight would be more sensible. With this number aboard, she is a thoroughly comfortable cruising yacht.

The deck saloon offers complete shelter from the weather and excellent outboard views though there could be more seating if the transistor-era switchboards were replaced with more modern miniature ones. The 'social cockpit' felt very safe and secure, with a nice folding table, whereas the area aft of the wheel is Indian Country with lots of

winches and loaded lines that are best left to the crew.

Perhaps the most important thing of all about *Gloria* is that she looks sensational from out board as well as on board; a really romantic schooner from another era and a true yachtsman's yacht.

And now that we know Peter de Savary is putting *Gloria* on the market, almost against his better judgement, the question has to be asked 'What next?'

The reply is pretty unexpected: 'I think I am ready for a real racing machine, before I lose the urge! I guess everyone wants to try a Ferrari once in his life.'

So, it's look out *Speedboat* and look out *Leopard!* There could be a real belter from Peter de Savary on the way!

GLORIA

LOA 38.41m	LWL 27.05m	BEAM 6.88m	DRAUGHT 4.19m	DISPLACEMENT 166 tonnes
RIG Staysail schooner	PROPELLER 4-blade, controllable pitch	FRESHWATER CAPACITY 6,000 litres	TENDERS 5.18m Boston Whaler, 4.27m Nova Marine RIB 14ft clinker sailing dinghy	INTERIOR DESIGNER Pieter Beeldsnijder
SAIL AREA 930 sq m	SPEED (MAX/CRUISE) 12/10 knots	GREY/BLACK WATER 750/1360 litres	TENDER-LAUNCHING SYSTEM Davits	BROKER Michael Nethersole, Northrop & Johnson, Fort Lauderdale Tel: +1 954 648 1250. Email: mnethersole@ njyachts.com
FURLING SYSTEMS Reckmann	FUEL CAPACITY 10,000 litre	AIR-CONDITIONING Marine Air	CONSTRUCTION Steel	BUILDER/YEAR Jongert/Lowland 1988
WINCHES Lewmar electric	BOW THRUSTERS 50 hp hydraulic	OWNER AND GUESTS 8/10	NAVAL ARCHITECT Pieter Beeldsnijder (following Alfred Mylne)	PRICE GUIDE \$7,900,000
ENGINE Caterpillar 3406DT, 425hp	GENERATORS Perkins G&M 30kW, MTU 60kW	CREW 5/6		