

APPENDIX 3

Members' Yachts and Their Use in the Second World War

(from Ian Dear, *The Royal Yacht Squadron 1815–1985*, pages 159-172)

The following details are taken from the 'Special Secret Branch Acquaint' and 'Special Military Branch Acquaint' files, and from the 'Pink Lists', retained by the Admiralty's Naval Historical Branch, as well as from the Admiralty's official War Diary and from various special reports compiled by the Naval Historical Branch on certain individual vessels. The records of some yachts are fairly comprehensive but in other cases they are patchy and, occasionally, nonexistent, beyond the fact that a certain vessel was acquired for war service. Although most club vessels were first of all chartered and then bought by the Ministry of War Transport, the word 'requisitioned' has been used for the sake of simplicity for all vessels taken over by the Admiralty.

Taken alphabetically the yachts acquired were as follows:

Alastor

Owned by Sir John Shelley-Rolls Bt, *Alastor* was a 340-ton diesel yacht built in 1926. She was requisitioned in March 1940 for the Fleet Air Arm and was commissioned the following month as a tender. In May 1941 she went to the Ayrshire Dockyard at Irvine where she was converted to anti-submarine duties. She was equipped with depthcharge chutes and a 6-pounder gun and in October 1941 was allocated to the 35th Anti-submarine Group at Larne where she remained for the rest of the war.

Alice Hawthorne

Owned by the Earl of Albermarle, *Alice Hawthorne* was a 18-ton con-

verted Admiralty pinnace built in 1934. She was requisitioned in June 1940 and was used initially as an Auxiliary Patrol boat before being converted for use as a balloon barrage boat.

Angela

Owned by Captain Alwyn Foster, *Angela* was a 17-ton converted Admiralty picket boat built in 1912, and was requisitioned in October 1941 and employed as a boom defence vessel, first by South Atlantic Command and then by West African Command. She was lost, not by enemy action, in March 1944 at Freetown.

Annabella

Owned by John Musker, *Annabella* was a 49-ton diesel yacht built in 1934. She was requisitioned in January 1941 and used as a Fire Service boat for some months before being reallocated as a fire float at Preston for the remainder of the war.

Atlantis

Owned by Loel Guinness MP, *Atlantis* was a 216-ton diesel yacht built in 1926. She was requisitioned in October 1939 for danlaying* and was renamed *Sargasso*. She later became a minelaying yacht and operated with the 9th Minesweeper Flotilla in the English Channel. In June 1943 she hit a mine while off St Alban's Head and was lost.

Beryl

Owned by Lord Inverclyde, *Beryl* was an 83-ton motorboat built in 1926. She was requisitioned in August 1940 and had her name changed to *Drusilla*. She was employed initially by the Port Minesweeping Officer at Ardrossan, but was later used by the RAF and then for miscellaneous purposes by the Royal Navy. She was resold to her owner at the end of the war.

Black Arrow

Owned by Colonel F. J. B. Wingfield Digby, *Black Arrow* was a 50-ton diesel yacht built in 1934. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and

* Dan buoys were laid to mark a minefield or an area which had been cleared of mines.

employed initially as a Harbour Defence Patrol vessel. In February 1940 she was commissioned as a tender to HMS *Defiance* and was used for harbour defence at Plymouth.

Blue Bird

Owned by Captain W. H. Schroder, *Blue Bird* was an 80-ton motor yacht built in 1911. The Naval Historical Branch have no records of her but *Ships of the Royal Navy: Book Two* by J. J. Colledge lists her as being requisitioned in September 1939 for danlaying, and that between 1941 and 1944 she worked as a harbour boat.

Cat II

Owned by Lord Iveagh, *Cat II* was an 86-ton motor yacht built in 1917. She was requisitioned in October 1939 for danlaying. In July 1942 it was decided to make her a salvage tender but she failed to pass the survey. It is not known what happened to her subsequently.

Ceto

Owned by the Earl Fitzwilliam, *Ceto* was a 130-ton diesel yacht built in 1935. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and was employed as a danlaying vessel. In December 1939 she was transferred to the Signal School at Portsmouth where she was used as a calibration ship. Some years later, in February 1943, she was similarly employed in the Western Approaches.

Cutty Sark

Owned by the Duke of Westminster, *Cutty Sark* was an ex-'S' Class destroyer of 828 tons built in 1920. After being converted to a private yacht, she was requisitioned in September 1939 and spent the war as a submarine chaser and escort ship.

In June 1940 she took part in Operation XD, which entailed the destruction of certain French harbour facilities. She took a party of Royal Engineers to Saint Nazaire for this purpose but was damaged in the Raz de Sein by bombs and had to be towed back to Plymouth. In March 1944 she developed boiler trouble and became an accommodation ship at King's Lynn. In February 1946 she was sold to the Jewish Marine League.

Elizabeth

Owned by Captain Alwyn Foster, *Elizabeth* was a 51-ton motorboat built in 1920. She was requisitioned in June 1940 but was returned to her owner in April 1941. It is not known how she was employed, if at all.

Esmeralda

Owned by J. R. Parsons, *Esmeralda* was a 78-ton motorboat built in 1936. She was requisitioned in January 1940 and was employed as a mine recovery vessel.

Firefly

Owned by Lieutenant-Colonel R. Vaughan Wynn, *Firefly* was a 44-ton diesel yacht built in 1900. She was requisitioned in December 1939 as a harbour defence patrol boat and was renamed *Wagtail*. Later, she was renamed *Ferret*, and then reverted to the name of *Wagtail*. No details of her war service are available.

Foinaven

Owned by Viscount Chaplin, *Foinaven* was a 670-ton steam yacht built in 1919. She was requisitioned in October 1939 and was employed as an examination vessel in the Mediterranean.

Freelance

Owned by Sir Spencer Portal, *Freelance* was a 106-ton motor yacht built in 1908. It is not known when exactly she was requisitioned but from September 1940 she was based at Newhaven as an examination vessel. In November 1940 she was reallocated as an accommodation ship at Ipswich and her name was changed to *Bunting*. Then in March 1944 she became an accommodation ship at Yarmouth and again had her name changed, this time to *Freewill*.

Golden Hind

Owned by Captain J. B. Kitson, *Golden Hind* was a 144-ton motor yacht built in 1931. She was requisitioned in September 1940 and was employed as a balloon barrage boat at Rosyth until November 1944 when she became an accommodation ship at Grangemouth.

Hiniesta

Owned by Sir Frederick Preston, *Hiniesta* was a 361-ton steam yacht built in 1902. She became an Anti-submarine Patrol vessel and on 13 July 1940 narrowly missed being sunk when she was bombed twelve miles south of Anvil Point while on escort duty. She was in the Irish Sea Escort Force until May 1942 when she was converted to D/F calibrating duties.

Kalan

Owned by Lord Strathcona, *Kalan* was a 44-ton motorboat built in 1938. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and employed as an anti-submarine vessel. In April 1940 she was sent to the Ayrshire Dockyard at Irvine for conversion to an anti-submarine instructional craft which included the fitting of the type 134 Asdic set. She served in this capacity for the rest of the war. In July 1944 she was allocated to Training Captain, Western Approaches, for training duties at Larne.

Kiloran

Owned by Lord Strathcona, *Kiloran* was a 277-ton diesel yacht built in 1930. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and employed as an examination vessel. In March 1940 the Admiralty War Diary noted that she was used as a patrol vessel off the Lizard with orders to escort all neutral vessels into a British port.

On 5 August 1940 the War Diary noted the following: 'Coastguard Teignmouth reports at 0900 watcher at Labrador Cove sighted sub which surfaced and showed periscope and part of conning tower one mile from shore and immediately submerged again. *Kiloran* is proceeding to investigate.' However, as there is no further note in the War Diary, it must be assumed that *Kiloran* did not find the submarine. In February 1942 she was allocated 'for special service' and given a civilian crew and in December 1944 was employed by the US Navy at Dartmouth. At the end of the war she was sold back to her owner.

Lahloo

Owned by Robert Steele, *Lahloo* was a 55-ton diesel yacht built in 1937. She was requisitioned in October 1939 as a patrol boat, but nothing more is known of her war service.

Lorna

Owned by Sir Walter Preston, *Lorna*, as has been noted, rendered distinguished service during the First World War. In 1939 she was again requisitioned by the Admiralty and first appears in the 'Pink List' on 12 November 1939 as an armed boarding vessel of the Contraband Control Service with a Chatham crew. At the end of the year she was based at Gibraltar with the same duties, though later she was used for miscellaneous duties, which apparently included being an officers' mess. The 'Pink List' does not list her after April 1944.

Majesta

Owned by the Earl of Arran, *Majesta* was a 170-ton steam yacht built in 1899. She was requisitioned in March 1940 and was converted for use as a Harbour Defence Patrol boat in the Nore Command with an armament of 12-pounders. In July 1941 she was reallocated for use as a Mobile Mark VI Balloon Base at Aultbea, but in March 1943 was converted for use as an accommodation ship for rescue-tug personnel at Campbeltown.

Maid Honor

Owned by Major William Bell, *Maid Honor* was a 67-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1924. She was requisitioned in March 1941 for special service, and spent, it seems, the rest of her service at Lagos under the Naval Intelligence Director there. In July 1944 she was purchased by the Sierre Leone Government from the Ministry of War Transport.

Mary Jane

Owned by Lieutenant-Colonel H. S. C. Richardson, *Mary Jane* was a 27-ton motor boat built in 1936. She was requisitioned in June 1940 as an Auxiliary Patrol boat, but was paid off in August 1942. In September 1945 she was returned to her owner.

Medusa

Owned by the Rt Hon. John Gretton MP, *Medusa* also saw service in the First World War when she had been owned by Alfred Farquhar. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and renamed *Mollusc*. She was used as an anti-submarine escort vessel off the northeast coast. On 17

March 1940 she was bombed off Blyth. Two near misses sank her, but there were no casualties.

Morning Star

Owned by Major M. N. Wright, *Morning Star* was a 49-ton motorboat built in 1923. She was requisitioned in August 1940 and renamed *Festival*. She was manned by a civilian crew and was employed on pilotage duties at Milford Haven. She was later reallocated to Freetown.

Muraena

Owned by the Rt Hon. Robert Hudson PC, MP, *Muraena* was a 330-ton steam yacht built in 1907. She was requisitioned in August 1940 and used as an accommodation vessel for the mine-sweeping and anti-submarine flotilla officers based at Portsmouth, and later at Poole. At the end of the war she was sold to the War Office.

Muriel Stephens

Owned by A. E. W. Mason, *Muriel Stephens* was a 97-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1925. She was requisitioned in April 1940 and used as a barrage balloon ship at Plymouth.

Narcissus

Owned by Captain C. O. Liddell, *Narcissus* had also served in the First World War when she had been owned by E. Miller Munday. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and renamed *Grive*. Initially, she served as a training vessel for the Fleet Air Arm and was later used for evacuating British troops from Dunkirk. Under the command of Captain the Hon. L. J. O. Lambert, DSO, RN, she helped rescue hundreds of troops before being destroyed by a mine with the loss of six officers and nineteen-ratings. Lambert, who was one of those killed, was awarded a posthumous Mention in Despatches, and one of his officers, Sub-Lieutenant J. K. B. Miles RNVR, was awarded the DSC. The official report on the heroic actions of the crew of *Grive* gives the following details:

30 May 1400 Left Dover for Dunkirk.

1900 Arrived Malo beach and embarked troops with the ship's 2 whalers and 2 M/Bs.

2130 proceeded with just under 300 troops on board.

31 May am Arrived Dover. Disembarked 325 troops.

1400 Sailed from Dover.

1830 Entered Dunkirk Harbour, and secured outside the drifter *Whitehall* which was alongside the drifter *Winchelsea*. Embarked about 400 troops from the jetty. Aircraft being sighted *Grive* left the harbour, on orders from the *Whitehall*. *Grive* and *Whitehall* collided outside the harbour but both able to proceed.

2030 When clear of harbour, an aircraft was believed to have been shot down by *Grive's* 12-pounder.

1 June 0100 Arrived Dover. Disembarked 374 troops.

0300 Sailed from Dover [with only 5 rounds of ammunition per gun].

0800 Approaching Dunkirk, at first proceeded to assistance of the drifter *Ivanhoe*; then went alongside the jetty. During heavy bombing, embarked troops and proceeded.

By now the *Ivanhoe* was in tow of the tug *Persia*, and the drifter *Havant* (with *Ivanhoe's* troops and survivors on board), hit by a bomb, was listing heavily and on fire (she later sank). The *Grive* went alongside the *Havant* (which was taken in tow by the *M/S Saltash*), transferred her troops and survivors and proceeded to Dover with about 700 on board.

1300 Arrived Dover. Disembarked 785 troops. Captain Lambert now insisted on Lt. West going ashore for a rest; he himself remained on board.

1800 Sailed from Dover.

2230 About 1 mile outside Dunkirk the *Grive* was blown to pieces by a mine and sank immediately. The drifter *Gula*, which was about 100 yards distant, lowered a boat and picked up 11 survivors who were clinging to the wreckage. The drifter *Renasant* picked up 4, and 4 others were picked up by a M/B. A later source says that *Grive* was not mined but bombed.

Nigella

Owned by Lionel de Rothschild, *Nigella* was a 25-ton motorboat built in 1929. She was requisitioned in June 1940 for use by the RAF, but was later reallocated to the Flag Officer-in-Charge at Milford Haven.

Noressian

Owned by Captain James Buller RN, *Noressian* was a motorboat, but

there are no details of her in *Lloyds Register of Yachts*. She was requisitioned in July 1941 and renamed *Trelawney*, and was used as a depot ship at Loch Alsh. She was returned to her owner in January 1945.

Ocean Rover

Owned by James Napier, *Ocean Rover* was a 300-ton steam yacht built in 1919. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and was converted at Lamont's, Port Glasgow, for use as a torpedo recovery vessel with the Fleet Air Arm. She was later requisitioned as a calibration vessel, and was employed in this capacity on the Clyde and later at Portsmouth.

Ombra

Owned by Sir FitzRoy H. Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe, *Ombra* had also been employed during the First World War when she had been owned by Baron W. von Schroder. She was requisitioned in October 1939 for use as a danlayer, but apart from the fact that in November 1941 she was reduced to the status of a harbour vessel nothing more is known of her war record.

Panope

Owned by Brigadier G. J. W. Clark, *Panope* was a 122-ton auxiliary schooner built in 1928. She was requisitioned in September 1940. Between that date and the end of the war she was employed as a barrage balloon boat at Belfast, Methil and Rosyth. She was lost in August 1945.

Pendragon

Owned by Colonel Edward Treffrey, *Pendragon* was a 7-ton motorboat built in 1926. She was requisitioned in June 1941 and in November of that year was allocated to the Royal Navy, Scillies, and manned by a civilian crew.

Philante

Owned by T. O. M. Sopwith, the 1620-ton *Philante* was one of the few club yachts that saw a lot of active service. She was requisitioned in September 1939 for use with the Fleet Air Arm as a training vessel. But after refitting at Southampton in the summer of 1940 she was transferred to Western Approaches Command and was based at Londonderry. As an anti-submarine escort vessel she escorted a large number of convoys

to various destinations. In this role she made a number of transatlantic crossings and also sailed to the West African ports of Bathurst and Freetown.

In the winter of 1941–42 she was converted to a sloop and then joined the 44th Escort Group at Londonderry and resumed her duties as a convoy escort. In October 1942 she escorted convoy KMS1, the first of the convoys for the build-up to Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. At the end of 1942 she became the Escort Group training ship and stayed in that role until the end of the war. She was paid off in September 1945 and in June 1946 was sold back to her original owner. However, soon afterwards she was purchased by the Norwegian people and presented to King Haakon, and she is still the Norwegian royal yacht.

When *Philante* first joined the Royal Navy she brought her peacetime crew with her. They were mainly Shetland Islanders, and her fo'c'sle boasted eight McLeods and five Macdonalds.

Donald McKillop, who had been T. O. M. Sopwith's professional skipper before the war, was commissioned as a lieutenant RNVR and became *Philante*'s first lieutenant, and the ship's chief engineer stayed with her as well. It was her commanding officer, Captain M. J. Evans CBE, DSC, RN, Training Captain to C.-in-C. Western Approaches, who personally accepted the surrender of the first two German U-boats to give themselves up off the northern coast of Scotland when Germany capitulated.

Princess

Owned by Lord Kemsley, *Princess* was a 751-ton diesel yacht built in 1924. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and allocated to the Western Approaches Command, based at Swansea. She was fitted with depthcharge equipment at Camper and Nicholson, Southampton, and then commissioned as an anti-submarine escort ship on 2 October 1939. She had early contact with the enemy when she sighted a submarine off Bull Point in the Bristol Channel. She attacked with depthcharges, but without result. Her war service was short, for on 11 January 1940 she was in collision with SS *Blairmore* near Elwell Bay in the Bristol Channel and sank soon afterwards, without any loss of life.

Radiant

Owned by Lord Iliffe, *Radiant* was a 550-ton diesel yacht built in 1927. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and after being used for kite development duties she was converted by Thornycroft's at Southampton into an anti-submarine escort vessel and was armed with a 4-inch gun. She was then employed in escort duties around the east and south coasts, and in May 1942 took *Hiniesta's* place in the Irish Sea Escort Force when the latter was converted for D/F calibrating duties. In November 1942 she was reallocated as a training vessel to the Anti-Submarine Training Flotilla at Campbeltown.

Reindeer

Owned by Lord Glentanar, *Reindeer* was a 26-ton motorboat built in 1933. She was requisitioned in March 1940 for use of the Flag Officer at Greenock and was later used for convoy servicing with a civilian crew.

Revive

Owned by Norman Field, *Revive* was a 95-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1922. She was requisitioned in July 1940 and was employed at Plymouth as a barrage balloon boat. In March 1945 she became an accommodation ship at Fowey.

Rhodora

Owned by Lionel de Rothschild, *Rhodora* was a 709-ton motor yacht built in 1929. She was requisitioned in September 1939 for employment in an anti-submarine role, and in March 1940 took part in an unsuccessful attack on a U-boat which was sighted nine miles off Bull Point. In September 1940 she was sunk in a collision with another vessel off Cardiff. However, the motor launch was salvaged and was used by the base maintenance staff at Swansea.

Rosaura

Owned by Lord Moyne, *Rosaura* was a 1538-ton converted Cross-Channel ferry built in 1905. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and was used as an escort vessel in Home Command. She later sailed for the Mediterranean and became an armed boarding vessel. In February 1941 she was involved in the evacuation of the Cyprus garrison. On 18

August 1941 she was sunk by a mine when leaving Mersa Tobruk. Eleven of her crew were killed and thirteen wounded.

St Modwen

Owned by the Rt Hon. John Gretton MP, *St Modwen* was 1023-ton steam yacht built in 1911. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and was converted by the Thorneycroft shipyard at Northam for employment as an anti-submarine vessel. After her conversion, in November 1939, she joined A/S Group 89 based at Portland. This group served as seagoing tenders to the Anti-submarine School and *St Modwen* was employed training Asdic operators and depthcharge-release crews. In May 1941 she was reallocated to the 84th A/S Group based at Campbeltown where she was employed for the rest of the war on local escort duties and on anti U-boat patrols at the entrance to the Clyde.

Sanspareil

Owned by John Prior, *Sanspareil* was a 62-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1912. She was requisitioned in July 1940 as a barrage balloon boat, but nothing more is known about her war service.

Sans Peur III

Owned by the Duke of Sutherland, *Sans Peur III* was an 821-ton diesel yacht built in 1933. She was requisitioned in October 1939 for Canadian service as an anti-submarine vessel and she served in this capacity throughout the war. Her name was given to *Trenora*, a 28-foot motor-boat owned by The Royal Yacht Squadron, when this latter vessel was requisitioned in February 1942 and allocated to Freetown as a patrol boat.

Sapphire

Owned by Lord Fairhaven, *Sapphire* had served in the First World War. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and was renamed *Breda*. She was initially part of the 7th Submarine Flotilla based at Rothesay and was used as a submarine tender. She then became a convoy leader and was the first vessel to be so used. She came under several air attacks while escorting convoys from Kirkwall and on 27 April 1940 attacked a U-boat she had sighted with depthcharges, but without success. She escorted various convoys across the North Sea to and from Norway, but

was not wholly suited to the task. While escorting her first convoy, ON.22, she had to heave to in heavy weather although the rest of the convoy was able to proceed. In March 1941, therefore, she was reallocated to Portland to be used as a submarine escort ship, and spent the rest of the war on escort duties in the Irish Sea. In June 1941 she escaped an attack by enemy aircraft off Land's End without damage, but in February 1944 she was accidentally beached in Campbeltown Loch and later sank.

Scotia II

Owned by James Bryce Allan, *Scotia II* was a 43-ton steam pinnacle built in 1909. There are no records of her in the Naval Historical Branch, but *Ships of the Royal Navy: Book Two* by J. J. Colledge lists her as having been requisitioned as a boom tender in November 1939.

Silver Cloud

Owned by Captain Arnold Wills, *Silver Cloud* was an 88-ton motor yacht built in 1930. She was requisitioned in August 1940 as an auxiliary patrol boat. After conversion to this role by Scott and Sons, Bowling, and fitted with depthcharge chutes, a 6-pounder gun and a Hotchkiss gun, she became a defence patrol craft at Tobermory. In December 1941 she was reallocated to Aultbea, and in January 1945 reallocated again for use by C.-in-C. Western Approaches as a local patrol craft.

Sona

Owned by Lord Camrose, *Sona* was a 555-ton motor yacht built in 1922. She was requisitioned in September 1939 as an anti-submarine patrol vessel but in August 1940 became an accommodation ship in Poole Harbour. On 4 June 1942 she was attacked by an enemy aircraft and hit by a bomb which later detonated and broke her back.

Sou'wester

Owned by Major Charles Prestcott-Westcar, *Sou'wester* was a 95-ton motor yacht built in 1891. She was requisitioned in June 1943, renamed *Epping*, and employed as an accommodation ship for the Captain, Minesweepers, Harwich.

Star of India

Owned by Lord Portal, *Star of India* was a 735-ton steam yacht built in 1888. She was requisitioned just before the war broke out as an examination vessel. However, she initially acted as an escort vessel, mostly in the English Channel, but in July 1942 was allocated for service at Kilindini where she was converted for examination service. In March 1943 she was found unsuitable for service abroad and reallocated to Ardrishaig as an accommodation ship for HMS *Seahawk*.

Tamahine

Owned by Major Harold Hall, *Tamahine* was a 43-ton motor yacht built in 1934. She was requisitioned in October 1939 and after serving for a short time as a patrol boat she became a boom defence boat in Portsmouth Harbour. She served in this capacity until May 1944 when she was damaged by fire.

Thendara

Owned by Arthur Young, *Thendara* was a 147-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1937. She was requisitioned in September 1940 as a barrage balloon boat, but nothing more is known about her war service.

Thoma II

Owned by Sir Thomas Thompson, *Thoma II* was a 134-ton auxiliary ketch built in 1909. She was requisitioned in July 1942 and was employed as an accommodation ship by the Port of London Authority in this capacity during salvage operations.

Three-Three-Three

Owned by James Allan, *Three-Three-Three* was a 69-ton motor yacht built in 1936. She was requisitioned in November 1939 as a Harbour Defence Patrol boat. She served in this capacity on the Clyde until the end of the war. In November 1941 her name was changed to *Trefoil*.

Virginia

Owned by S. L. Courtauld, *Virginia* was a 712-ton diesel yacht built in 1930. She was requisitioned in September 1939 and converted for use as an Anti-Submarine Patrol vessel. In May 1940 she attacked a U-boat while on patrol, but without success. In March 1941 she joined the Irish

Sea Escort Force based at Belfast and the following month was employed as an additional AA escort in the Irish Sea because of the increased air threat to convoys. In 1943 she escorted convoys to South Africa and remained at Kilindini for a few months for escort duties. At the end of 1943 she sailed for the Seychelles, India and Ceylon. In January 1946 she arrived back in Britain and was then returned to her owner.

Yarta

Owned by the Marquis Camden, *Yarta* had served during the First World War. She was requisitioned in November 1939 and was then commissioned as a danlaying vessel. In September 1942 she was converted for use as an Anti-submarine Patrol boat by Harland and Wolff and served in this capacity for the remainder of the war.