

By Mark Sinclair



Coconut's topsides refreshed and below the waterline, burnished Coppercoat

COCONUT is planning to cast off from RSAYS at 1100 hrs on Sunday 5 December, bound for Les Sable d'Olonne in the Bay of Biscay, France. The passage is planned to be single-handed and non-stop, continuing the 2018 Golden Globe Race (GGR) in Chichester Class. On arrival in Europe, preparations will be made to compete in the 2022 GGR.

In 1967-68 Sir Frances Chichester sailed *Gypsy Moth IV* single-handed around the world with only a single stop in Sydney. Chichester was an adventurer in the fields of aviation and sailing. In 1929 he flew a de Havilland Gypsy Moth aircraft from UK to Australia in 41 days, in 1960 he won the inaugural Single-Handed Trans-Atlantic Race in *Gypsy Moth III* and in the 1964 race he came second to the Frenchman Eric Tabarly in *Pen Duick*. Chichester sailed from Plymouth and completed the round-the-world voyage via the clipper route in 226 days underway in an attempt to beat their sailing times.

In 1964 Sir Alec Rose participated in the second Single-Handed Trans-Atlantic Race in *Lively Lady*, and in 1966 attempted to race around-the-world against Chichester. He suffered a number of setbacks which delayed his departure and set off again in July 1967, arriving in Melbourne after 155 days at sea. He then continued, making an unscheduled stop to repair damage in Bluff, New Zealand and eventually returned to Portsmouth in July 1968, completing the voyage in 318 days.

These voyages inspired the question in a number of minds, "Would it be possible to circumnavigate the globe single-handed and non-stop?" This led to the 1968 GGR, with Sir Robin Knox-Johnston in yacht *Suhaili* being the only finisher in 313 days. This, in turn, later inspired other races including the BOC Challenge, the Whitbread Round-the-World race, the

Vendee Globe and Clipper races. And, of course, the 50th anniversary of Sir Robin's feat inspired the 2018 GGR.

The 2018 GGR consequently included a Chichester Class, allowing entrants a single stop. For those who were on the Quarterdeck at the time, *Coconut* pulled into the Squadron basin at 2000 hrs on 5 December 2018 after 157 days at sea, having run out of water and been bedevilled by barnacles. As the GGR has no time limit, and as *Coconut* has made only a single stop in Adelaide, albeit of an extended three years, she is continuing the race in Chichester Class, departing on the third anniversary of her arrival. This poses the possibility of *Coconut* being the sixth finisher of the 2018 GGR and winner of the Chichester Class, if the voyage can be completed as planned.

Coconut's departure has already been cleared by the Biosecurity Operations Division of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and will complete customs through Regional Command of Australian Border Force at RSAYS on 5 December. The plan is for *Coconut* to head out through Backstairs Passage, proceed to the Hobart Gate off Kingston Beach in the lower Derwent Estuary, continue across the Tasman Sea and on through Foveaux Strait at the bottom of South Island, New Zealand or south of Stewart Island, then across the South Pacific/Southern Ocean and around Cape Horn, up the South Atlantic sailing past Punta del Este in Uruguay, then across the equator and around the Azores and back into the Bay of Biscay.

Departing Adelaide on Sunday 5 December will nominally have *Coconut* at the Hobart Gate a week later on the night of Sunday 12 December, south of New Zealand on Tuesday 21 December, off Cape Horn in early February, crossing the equator in mid-late March and arriving in Les Sable d'Olonne late April/early May. Inshallah!



Bright new non-skid applied in the cockpit



Six months' supply of food delivered by Drakes supermarket



New control box fitted to Echomax active radar target enhancer to provide audible alarm of shipping

When exactly will *Coconut* finish? Well, Knox-Johnston completed his voyage in 313 days and the 2018 GGR sailors took between 212 (Jean-Luc Van Den Heede) and 322 days (Tapio Lehtinen). Targets would be to complete *Coconut's* remaining leg from Adelaide to France in 139 days by 22 April 2022 (a total 157 + 139 = 296 days) which would match the 2018 GGR Chichester Class trophy cut-off date of 22 April 2019 (albeit three years later); or in 155 days by 8 May 2022 (total 157 + 155 days = 312 days), which would closely match *Suhaili's* 1969 time. *Suhaili* sailed slightly further departing from Falmouth UK, whereas *Coconut* departed from Les Sable d'Olonne in France and diverted via Adelaide, so the voyages could be considered to be roughly comparable. *Coconut* does have the advantage of hindsight, and a clean hull from the extended stop in Adelaide. So when will she finish?

At the time of writing we are conducting final preparations for the voyage. These include applying Coppercoat to better resist the barnacles, refreshing the orange topsides, reapplying non-skid to the decks, and provisioning. Interestingly, the shopping list at Drakes supermarket includes 538 cans of various contents (the most prolific being Heinz Beanz One-for-Two – 80 tins) and some 312 small cartons of long-life milk and juice.

There are many other preparations required prior to departure. These include visits to the doctor and the dentist for X-rays, blood tests, removal of solar keratosis and such-like to keep ahead of the effects of previous prolonged exposure to the sun, and shoulder surgery to alleviate tendon problems. The logistics of bill payments and domestic responsibilities all need to be handed over to other family members. It is quite hard to drop out!

Boat related preparations include setting up accounts for Iridium phones for safety messages, accounts for YB3i and YB3 tracking devices, EPIRB, PLB and MMSI



EPIRBs and PLB registered with AMSA and UK Beacon Registry respectively

registrations, public liability insurance to sail around-the-world, etc. There is also the liaising with customs, quarantine and Australian Border Force for departure in the ever-changing regulations of our COVID-19 world. All this while working full-time until the Friday before the weekend of departure!

It is possible that *Coconut* may be accompanied for part of the voyage. Rob Williams, another RSAYS Member in *Sylph VI*, is planning to depart nine days later for a single-handed, non-stop circumnavigation via the equator in the North Atlantic. With a waterline length some 20% longer, *Sylph VI* should catch up to *Coconut* somewhere in the South Pacific/Southern Ocean prior to Cape Horn. Squadron Member Matthew Wright, who is also participating in the 2022 GGR, has written of his qualifying sail from Vannes in France to the Canary Islands, Madeira and Portugal in a separate article. There is also Michael Davey, another GGR 2022 entrant from Adelaide, who sadly recently lost his Cape Dory 36 *Dream Catcher* in an accident in Tasman Bay, New Zealand; the boat was wrecked at night on a lee shore while completing his 2,000 nm qualifying sail.

A number of people have asked me why I am sailing to France to the start of the 2022 GGR, the implication being that it sounds a bit extreme! From my perspective there are a number of very good reasons behind this decision. The first is practical – I need to get to the starting line in France. Secondly, I have already sailed from France to Adelaide and continuing the voyage is the next logical step; being able to continue on in Chichester Class and finish the 2018 GGR is an added bonus. Also, I have not had the experience of sailing over this part of the course and it is a much more interesting proposition than starting back in Europe. Finally, international shipping is expensive and currently there are huge freight backlogs of containers around the world, so sending *Coconut* by sea as deck cargo is currently less straightforward than formerly.



YB3 unit tested for sending and receiving safety text messages

Regarding the objective of the sail, there are also a number of compelling factors. Firstly, I have the opportunity to be the sixth finisher of the 2018 GGR and the first in Chichester Class. Then it is all about PBs (personal bests). Having recently sailed single-handed from France to Adelaide, and having previously sailed single-handed to New Zealand and back, I will be sailing over new ground once past New Zealand. To cross the South Pacific/Southern Ocean and sail around Cape Horn is also something new, and when I cross my outbound track in the South Atlantic, I will have sailed around the world. I currently have a PB of 13,500 nm non-stop from France to Adelaide and the return voyage to France is about 15,000 nm, which will be another PB. And during the 2022 GGR, to get past Adelaide in less than 157 days will also be something to aim for.

There is also the great attraction of the Golden Globe Race, which once again provides an opportunity for the average sailor to compete in a single-handed round-the-world race. This is a return of the golden age of sailing, without the high levels of commercial sponsorship that subsequently removed this type of event from the reach of the average sailor. It is also a refreshing change to leave behind some of the trappings of modern life, including the invasive mobile phone and email, and return to nature and live much more in the here and now. I might even find out a few things about myself ...

Once I arrive in Les Sable d'Olonne my current plan is then to sail back across the English Channel to Falmouth and onto Plymouth to commence preparations for the 2022 GGR which is *Coconut's* next adventure. However one step at a time; even getting to the starting line will be a considerable achievement!

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