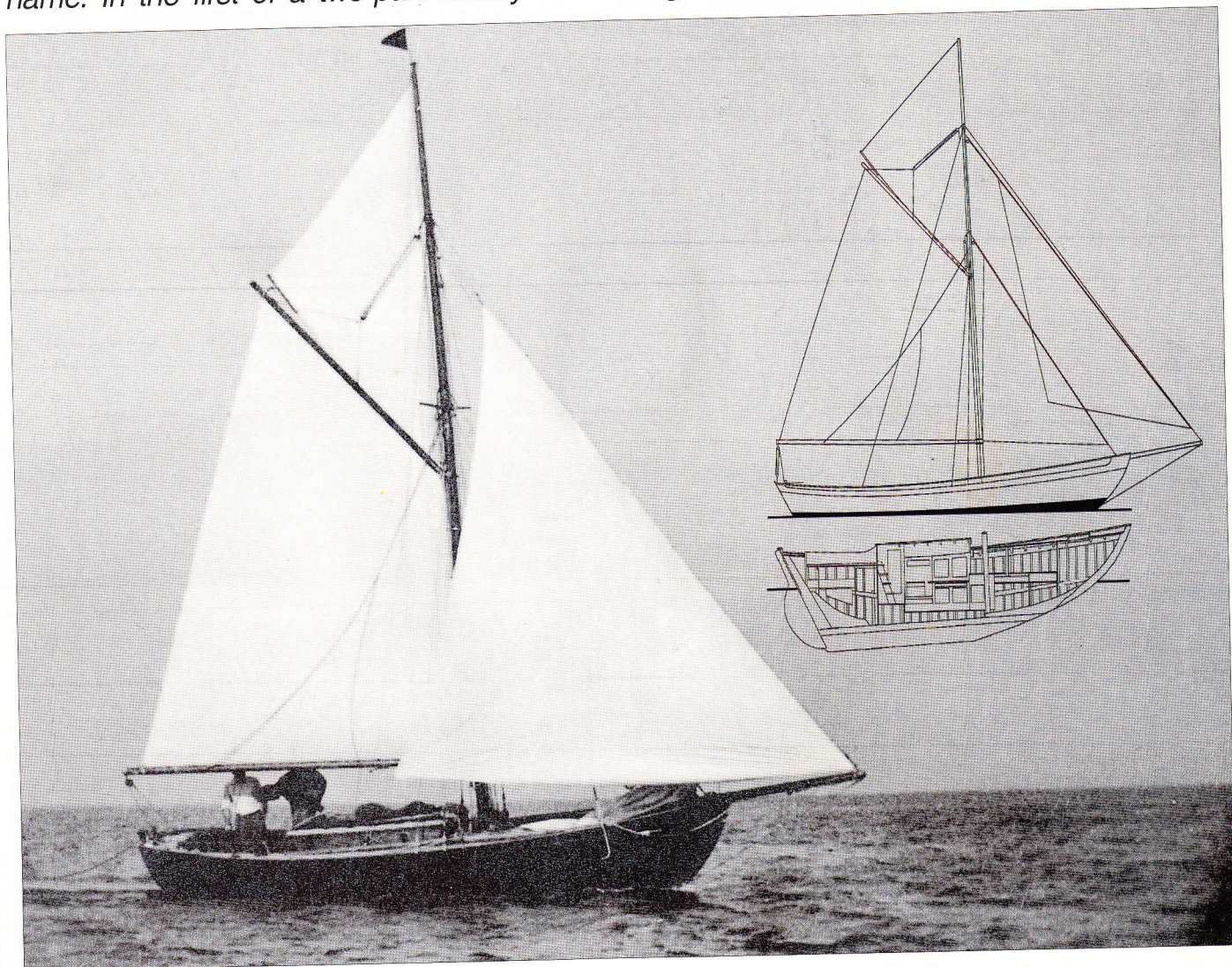


A PARADIGN

When Dick Kinnersly commissioned Laurent Giles to design a boat for him, he said he accommodate a couple, and had enough sail aloft not to need an engine. The resulting boat name. In the first of a two-part history celebrating the 60th birthday of the Vertue design



COURTESY OF PETER STEVENSON

The Vertue Story

Part 1: Design No 15 Finds a Name

BACK IN 1936 gentlemen were supposed to cruise in yachts measuring a foot of waterline for every year of their age, with crews to match. They were not supposed to mess about on their own in little 5-ton cruisers. The arrival of a boat named *Andrillot*, however, helped change all that. Ever since Jack Laurent Giles put pencil to spline in late 1935 and drew the sheer of this famous 25-footer (7.7m), the vessel has attracted universal acclaim and been emulated in many other successful designs. The boat that started off as simply 'Design No 15' underwent several metamorphoses, however, before she became the boat so well-loved today — and it was nearly 15 years before it even acquired a name.

Dick Kinnersly, now in his eighties, was the man who commissioned the original Vertue and the man several generations of sailors

have to thank for the special pleasure of sailing these characterful vessels. Kinnersly was much influenced by the first *Dyarchy*, a 24-ton Bristol Channel pilot cutter owned by RCC vice-commodore Roger Pinckney's mother, in which he had sailed over 20,000 miles.

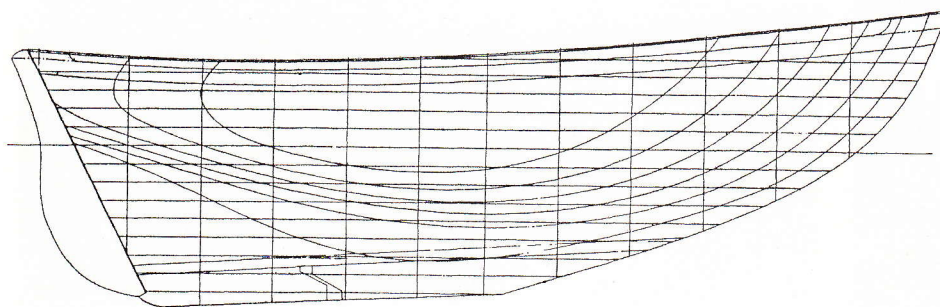
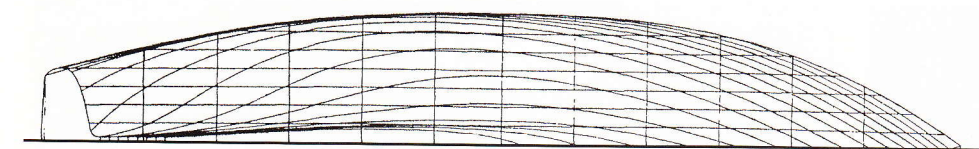
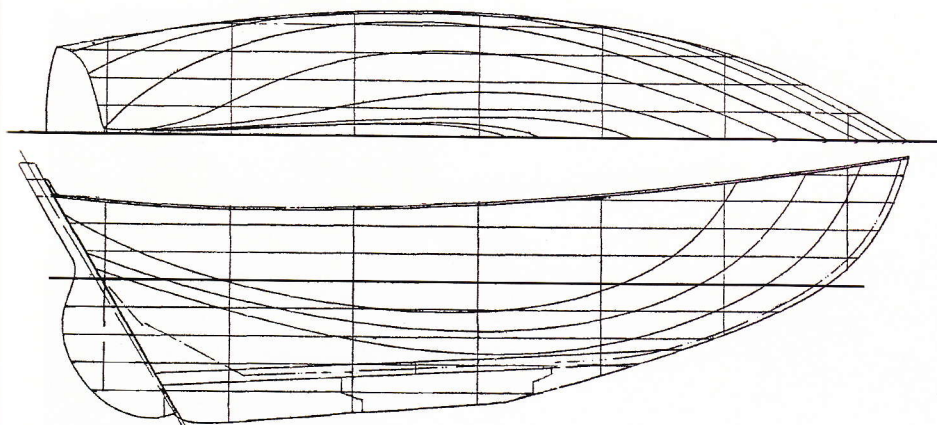
"Old Mrs P was a dragon," he recalls. "She was sick in a bucket on passage to Spain once and shouted: 'Dick, come and retrieve my false teeth'. After that I could do no wrong. She was a very autocratic old lady, and I got bored with all that, so decided to build my own boat. I was also impressed by an LOD in Lymington, and told Jack to draw the lines out a little."

Kinnersly was no designer, but he knew what he wanted. "She had to spin on a sixpence, and sail single-handed if need be. I wanted a boat in which a couple could go cruising, sleep and cook in some comfort. I told Jack I didn't mind a transom, which was a cheaper option, but I wanted a fine entry."

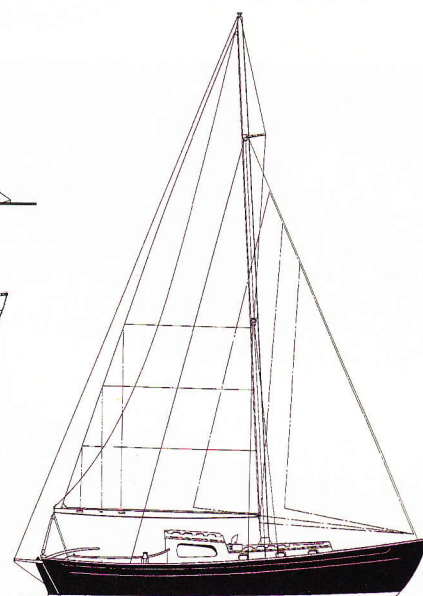
Naturally, after his experience of a pilot cutter, handled by two young men and a fierce old woman, he specified a gaff rig. "As I couldn't afford an engine, I wanted plenty of air aloft, hence the big topsail with a good, taught luff," he says. "And that's where the

M OF VERTUE

wanted something that could turn on a sixpence, could be sailed single-handed yet was to attract a world-wide following and become a cult classic — once it had been given a Adrian Morgan and Detlef Jens trace the early years of everyone's favourite little cruiser...



Opposite page: The legend starts here with *Andrillot* in 1936, Jack Laurent Giles' design which led to the Vertue class. *Left:* The lines of the designer's earlier 23ft Lymington One-Design (top) and the 25ft Vertue (bottom) compared. *Below:* This Vertue sail plan is for a fractional bermudan rig — note the parrot perches to support the top of the mast and the bumkin to enable the backstay to clear the boom.



Vertue came from." The yacht he commissioned proved to be one in a million, possessed of a magic that no metacentric shelf analysis could quantify. Kinnersly holds aloft a half model of a yacht he believes, quite simply, was a little faster, more balanced and seaworthy than she had any right to be. Whether by design or good fortune, it is now accepted that No 15 is Jack Giles' masterpiece.

In 1935, a *Yachting Monthly* reviewer concluded: "She looks a great little ship... fuller forward, with a finer run aft due to the influence of metacentric shelf." In fact Giles was a 'non-believer' in the theory that Harrison Butler espoused. The Cambridge engineering graduate, who served his apprenticeship at Vickers Armstrong, preferred an empirical scheme, devised by Maldon Heckstall-Smith, the model yacht designer. It involved studying a great many lines plans to achieve symmetrical master diagonals fore and aft for the same result: perfect balance.

Today the Vertue looks a trifle narrow — Giles drew her beam at around one third of her waterline length. "Jack's boats were always a bit narrow," recalls Peter Anstey, who worked with him from 1953. The stern sections also have difficulty supporting anything more than

a couple of people and a few fenders. A heavy engine soon has a Vertue pointing her shapely nose snootily into the sky.

Surprisingly, Alan Roy, who was a Laurent Giles director from 1968 to 1986, believes there was nothing especially magic about the vessel. "In general character she was like a Lymington One-Design," he says. "Certainly pretty, but similar to a number of boats Giles produced."

The first LODs appeared in 1933. Around 2ft (0.6m) shorter overall than the Vertue, they set 280sqft (26m²) of sail and cost £205. The body plan, described as "powerful and roomy", was drawn for simplicity and to enable Elkins to run the Oregon pine planks more easily "from stem to sternpost along the garboards or round the turn of the bilge with almost parallel seams, thereby saving much waste in the cutting of timber".

Another, more subliminal inspiration may have been the Helford-built 18-ton gaff cutter *Providence*, designed by Nigel Warrington Smyth OBE, a talented amateur — some say genius. He favoured the pilot and fishing boats of his native Cornwall. *Providence's* sheerline and hull, which her owner describes as a blend of Breton tunnyman and pilot cutter, echo Giles' own description of his design, "shaped to maintain the general outward character of the

pilot fishing boat, but having the benefit of the concentrated thought on the design of seagoing yachts that the activities of the Royal Ocean Racing Club had then fostered".

Moody's built *Andrillot* of Oregon pine — which was cheaper than pitch pine — on oak with an iron keel. "They said that if I didn't hit anything and found no rot in two years she'd be as good as pitch," Kinnersly says. "Moody's were good. Some yards were cheaper but not as reliable. The workmanship was beautiful. I didn't visit her once while she was being built." *Andrillot* cost £400 and was launched in early June 1936. The sails came from Essex "as they were cheaper than those Cowes people".

Kinnersly used to short tack her alone up the Beaulieu River to

wrinkle. We took two hours off him to Calshot and back. She was a dud." Hiscock tells a rather different story in an article written ten years later. And Giles, who was at her tiller for the race, swears *Wanderer* would have saved her time under the racing rule he knew so well as the RORC's technical officer.

In 1937 Kinnersly was approached by Humphrey Barton, Jack Giles's partner from 1937, to charter *Andrillot* on a cruise to Biscay with his first wife Jessie. "He paid me £15 or so," recalls Kinnersly. "Humphrey was ambitious to make a name and establish himself at Giles. Jack may have been a leading light, but he still had to sell boats." Engineless and with a 7ft (2.1m) pram stowed on her coachroof, *Andrillot* slipped her moorings and drifted down the Lymington River

Clockwise from right: Vertue No 2 *Sally* pictured in 1937; Laurent Giles' amended drawings for the 1949 Vertue sloop; No 3 *Monie* demonstrates the usefulness of sheer legs for hard standing in 'away' ports.

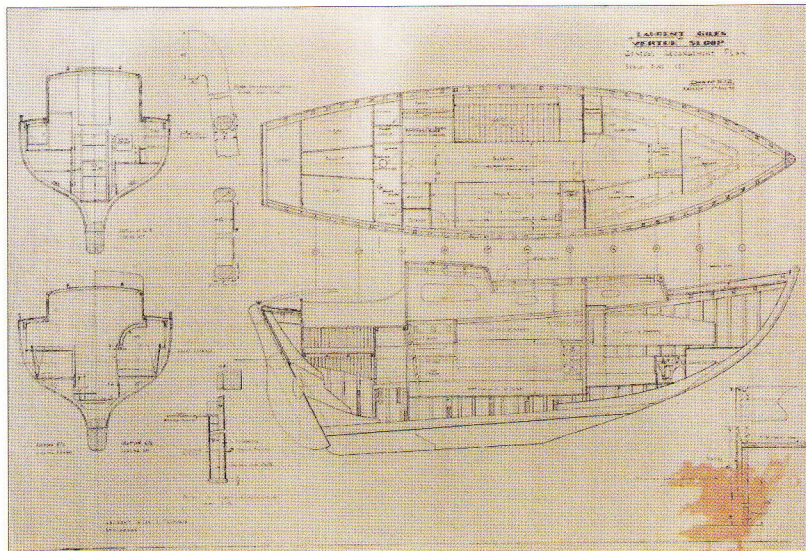
Opposite page. Top left: Dick Kinnersly aboard *Andrillot*, the boat that was to inspire the Vertue class. **Bottom left:** *Andrillot* as she is today, with an enlarged coachroof to give her standing headroom forward. **Right:** On the hard, with her new bowsprit.



COURTESY OF ADRIAN MORGAN



COURTESY OF ADRIAN MORGAN



COURTESY OF LAURENT GILES

show off to his future wife whose family lived at Buckler's Hard. "*Andrillot* was a beautiful boat for two. The first reef was a change of jibs and there was the safety factor of a topsail," he says. "She had a beautiful smooth run and sharp entry with a short keel. A seamanlike vessel, she was admired from the word go." And soon emulated.

During the winter of 1936-7 Captain Philip Bullock, another Old Sherbornian member of the first *Dyarchy* crew, had Giles design him the 12-ton *Valfrefya* — in effect a Vertue scaled up to 34ft (10.36m), built by Truedssons in Sweden of lightweight Polish oak. Unfortunately, she proved a little tender.

When Pinckney himself finally jumped his mother's ship he also turned to *Andrillot*. "For [the second] *Dyarchy* Roger deliberately asked Giles to enlarge *Andrillot*'s lines by four," recalls Kinnersly. Like her progenitor, the 27-ton cutter proved a joy to sail, especially short-handed, and is still today many yachtsmen's idea of perfection.

Eric Hiscock's slightly smaller *Wanderer II*, against which *Andrillot* sailed a famous race, from Jack in the Basket off Lymington to Calshot Spit, shares much with the Vertue design, though deeper and shorter. Kinnersly chuckles. "*Wanderer* had a straighter stem and lots of baggy-

in the early morning of Saturday 12 June. On Saturday 3 July she returned home and was sailed "straight into a mud berth near the Lymington Yacht Club" from where they "walked ashore from the bowsprit" on Saturday 3 July.

Despite a hairy moment in fog off Alderney and falling off a wave in a "nasty trough" off Dunnose — no water came aboard — Barton pronounced it "a most enjoyable cruise... The little boat certainly did go". *Andrillot*'s cruise from Lymington to Concarneau and back, 855 miles and 22 ports in 23 days, was a model for small yacht sailing.

"Barton's voyage was impressive. There was great excitement around Lymington, and Jack was pleased," recalls Kinnersly of the voyage that won the 1937 RCC Founder's Cup. "But then only professionals like Humphrey had the time to do long cruises." *Andrillot* was sold in the late 1930s for £500, spent the war in Lymington's muddy womb, was bombed but not damaged and survives to this day, cruising the Channel Islands and Brittany (see panel on p37).

Sally II, Laurent Giles design No 21 and the second official 'Vertue' — although the class didn't exist yet at the time — also engineless but bermudan cutter-rigged, was built by Elkins the following year for

Andrillot 60 Years on

The name *Andrillot* derives from one of the prickliest of the Tas de Pois d'Amont, or 'pea sticks', rocks off the southern end of Guernsey's St Martin's Point. Andriou, or Andrillot, was allegedly a Druid who converted to Christianity. "Le Bonhomme d'Andrillot, the middle one, looks at some angles like a hooded monk with an enormous phallus," says Dick Kinnersly, the boat's original owner. "The fishermen would take off their hats when passing it. It must have been fertile, as I explained at a Boat Show dinner on the occasion of the launching of the 100th Vertue."

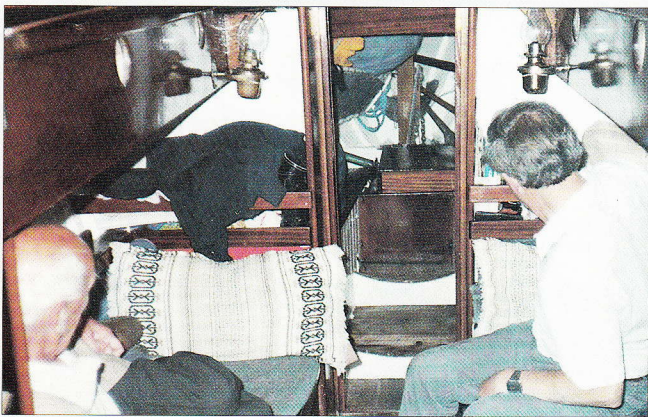
Andrillot still sails regularly past the Tas de Pois from which she



derives her name. Barton's views on the gaff rig are shared by her present owner, Peter Stevenson. Barton would approve of the changes to her rig and the enlarged coachroof which gives standing headroom forward. "There is a lot to be said for bermuda rig," he wrote. "In fact I see no excuse for a gaff rig at all in a modern yacht," adding that he had become "tired of setting and taking in that topsail."

Stevenson, aged 74, still actively cruises her, mostly single-handed, equipped with Decca, autopilot, GPS and fridge. His favourite places are the Scilly Isles and the Ile de Molène, near Ushant. "As she is now I can easily manage her," he says. "I would not want to be caught out in a Force 7 off Ushant with a gaff-rigger."

During the restoration he replaced her missing 5ft (1.5m) bowsprit. "I bought a length of wood, looked at her and thought three and a half feet would be about right, so I cut it off there." Now, with both headsails fitted with roller-furling gear, he only has



Philip and Vivien Sharp. He was a Bournemouth solicitor who had owned an LOD called *Sally* and saw *Andrillot* laid up in the mud at Lymington that winter. Giles assured him that he could build a boat with no internal ballast, but when she was launched *Sally II* was found to be stern heavy. Sharp sued Giles and was awarded £100 damages. "Jack could sometimes put the decimal point in the wrong place," recalls a former colleague.

Sally II was followed in 1938 by *Monie*, *Charis* and *Epeneta*. With typical panache, Barton sailed *Monie* from her builders — Berthon's in Lymington — to her owner in Pwllheli anti-clockwise via the Caledonian Canal. "Left or right?" Barton is alleged to have said on leaving the river. She covered 104 miles from Ryde to Dover in 15½ hours at an average of nearly seven knots. Within four days she was in Filey Bay and in Scotland within a week. In total she covered 1,056 miles in 25 days and faced two gales on the NE coast and two on the west coast of Scotland.

By the time war was declared another five Vertues had been laid down. Eight of these ten 'pre-Vertues' are still afloat, but it was the fifth, *Epeneta*, owned by Colonel Lawrence Biddle which eventually earned the class its name. Biddle had been attracted to Giles by Wan-



to leave the cockpit to put some slabs in the main, quite important for a boat without lifelines. "This is the only way with a wooden boat," he says. "People will always grab at stanchions and pull the screws out of the deck."

Stevenson found *Andrillot* in the winter of 1981-2 in Yarmouth, in a sorry state. With his son Tim, who had left university and was unemployed at the time, they set to work for four months restoring her. "Then Tim found a job in London, and I was left to finish the project!" Peter says with a smile. "We gutted the interior and took it back to bare wood, inside and out, doubling up the cracked frames with laminated iroko, replacing bulwarks and fitting a 6mm plywood-epoxy Cascover deck. One of the things I really like is a nice dry berth."

She now has a full-size chart table and proper galley, while retaining the traditional brightwork and white paint. Keel bolts and hood-end screws were replaced and her originally black hull repainted in white. Relunched in 1984 with an 8hp Bukh mounted on a new elm floor, and with a new elm rudder and bumpkin, she cruises the Channel Islands and Brittany. In 1992 she attended the Brest '92 Festival and intends to be there again this year.

derer II. "I wanted a yacht between a Vertue and *Valfrefya*," he recalls. "But Barton dissuaded me."

The engineless *Epeneta* was ordered in October 1938 at the time of the Munich Crisis. She was built for £420 in the winter of 1938-9 by Elkins. Barton came from Lymington to draw the sheerline. "He had a length of rubber tubing, with a glass tube at each end and proceeded to carefully check off each frame," Biddle recalls. "He insisted on doing that for every Giles design."

Epeneta was delivered in Whitsun. "The name was not invented," says Biddle. "My great, great grandfather had 24 children and got a bit short of names so he opened his Bible at Romans chapter 16 verse 5 and called one girl Epenetus. I altered it to make it more female."

Epeneta's maiden voyage was to be the Poole-Cherbourg Race, with Michael Brown and Barton as crew. "She was new and unbelievably beautiful," says Biddle. At Poole Quay a man peered down at their preparations and asked who designed her. "Giles," floated up the reply. "But he can't design pretty boats," came the rejoinder. *Epeneta* finished first of the small class, but was handicapped down to third "which was aggravating, as we were also the smallest boat," says Biddle.

In July he and Tony Hills sailed from Christchurch for Brittany and the Bay of Biscay. *Epeneta* was to cover 745 miles in 16 days, visiting, among 12 ports, Sauzon in Belle Ile and Rosbras in the Pont Aven River and rescuing, on the way back, the owner of a motorboat which had caught fire off Start Point. The voyage won her the 1940 Vertue Cup, presented by the Little Ship Club annually for a log describing a cruise of at least one week's duration made under the club burgee and named after its honorary librarian Michael B Vertue. It wasn't until 1945 that, in a drive to create more business in the aftermath of the war, Laurent Giles finally adopted the name for the class.

Ironically, *Epeneta*, the quintessential Vertue, was in fact not a Vertue at all. In order to compete in the North Sea Race, Biddle

asked Giles to lengthen the waterline from 21ft 6in (6.56m) to the minimum allowed, 22ft (6.7m). "I had Humphrey Barton pull out the sections for me," he recalls. She survived the war in Birdham Pool, but was lost in September 1972, 100 miles off Cape St Vincent. The owner, it appears, was taken off during a gale by a merchant ship which then towed the vessel under.

Giles drew a second gaff-rigged cutter for a Herbert Ward Esq in 1938, but she was never built. Only *Sally II* was launched as a true bermudan cutter. From *Monie* onwards the inner forestay moved forward, a rig known as the 'slutter'.

The pre-war Vertues differ greatly from those built after the war. All but *Andrillot*, *Kawan* and *Caupona* were pitch pine on grown oak



VERTUE SPECIFICATIONS

Based on *Monie*, Vertue No 3

LOA 25ft 3in (7.7m)
LWL 21ft 6in (6.56m)
Beam 7ft 2in (2.18m)
Draught 4ft 5in (1.34m)
Sail area 380sq ft (35.35m²);
Andrillot 366sqft (34m²)
Disp't 4.28 tons (4.35 tonnes)

Clockwise from above: No 8 *Caupona*, still going strong in Chichester; the famed Vertue XXXV, which was sailed east-to-west across the Atlantic by Humphrey Barton; *Kawan*, No 7, lost in the Red Sea in 1973.

Opposite page. Main picture: Vertue No 4 *Charis* off English Harbor, Antigua. Bottom: Author Adrian Morgan in No 2 *Sally*.



The Early Vertues (& Friends)

No	Name	LG No	Year	Builder
1	<i>Andrillot</i>	15	1936	Moodys, Hamble
2	<i>Sally II</i>	21	1937	Elkins, Christchurch
	<i>Valfrefya</i>	33	1937	Truedssons, Karlskrona
3	<i>Monie</i>	30	1938	Berthons, Lymington
	<i>Dyarchy</i>	37	1939	Truedssons
4	<i>Charis</i>	40	1938	Elkins
5	<i>Epeneta</i>	51	1939	Elkins
6	<i>Francolin</i>	52	1939	Kimber, Highbridge
7	<i>Kawan</i>	49	1939	Woodnutts, IOW
8	<i>Caupona</i>	50	1939	Woodnutts
9	<i>Candy (Mary)</i>	52a	1939/45	Topham & Rooke/Yorkshire Yacht Building & Engineering Co Ltd,
10	<i>Almena</i>	52b	1939	Topham & Rooke

Where are they now?

No1 See panel on p37. No 2, *Sally*, is now on the Hamble, and No 3, *Monie*, in Dartmouth — still with her original mast. No 4, *Charis*, built by Elkins and pictured in Hiscock's *Cruising Under Sail* (Oxford University Press 1950), is in San Francisco. No 5, *Epeneta*, as mentioned in the article, was lost off Cape St Vincent in September 1972. No 6, *Francolin* — which came third in the 1946 Round the Island Race — is in Falmouth. *Kawan*, No 7, after surviving being thrown across a reef in Tahiti finally succumbed in the Red Sea in 1973. *Caupona*, No 8, like *Kawan*, was built by Woodnutts in Bembridge of larch on oak with elm timbers to *Monie*'s plans for £800 in 1938/39. First in class in the 1939 Round the Island Race, she is immaculate still in Chichester. Her owner carries her home on a lorry and keeps her under cover during the winter. No 9, *Mary* (ex-*Candy*), which recently survived a Biscay storm, is owned by a solicitor, and berthed on the Hamble while *Almena*, No 10, is undergoing lengthy restoration in the Lake District. One of the earliest, *Wellow Maid*, was home built in the New Forest of local timber. Laid down in 1937 she was not finished until well after the war. She lies in Yarmouth.

frames and steamed timbers. Freeboard is lower by a strake, the sheer thus appears more extravagant and the coachroof is often just a low box, with three ports each side. "The older ones are faster, and they're lighter, perhaps" says Geoff Harvey, former owner of No 10, *Almena* and now of *Northam Vertue*, a beautiful teak example moored on the Hamble.

The mast was deck-stepped in 1946, which was thought very daring at the time. The austere little coachroof which stops abruptly abaft the mast, was carried forward in a series of major revisions by Giles after 1948. Steam-bent timbers took the place of sawn oak frames, a strake was added to the topsides, and a doghouse appeared whose height was softened in 1949 by a flattened sheer-

in the first OSTAR, and just last year Vertue No 25, *Melusine*, was awarded the prize for 'circumnavigating' Scotland.

At the height of their popularity in 1963, 11 Vertues were built in one year. By then the masthead was the most popular rig. Giles's "straightforward little boat with a modest forward overhang, full displacement, outside ballast, moderate beam, and a reasonably cut-away profile" was not only a success, but rapidly becoming a cult vessel. That the second owner had sued him for getting his sums wrong, and the boat which earned the name was not really a Vertue at all, was all forgotten. The Magdalene engineering graduate, born in Scarborough in 1901, could now look his mentor Charles Nicholson, under whom he once worked, in the eye. CB



line. Engines became accepted, and the accommodation rather less Edwardian. Laurent Giles were quoting around £1,200 for the vessel fully equipped, including a 4hp Stuart Turner.

The Vertue story really took off after the war. In the five years from 1945-50, 27 were built — and *Andrillot*, *Monie* and *Epeneta*'s home-spun voyages paled compared to Humphrey Barton's transatlantic in 1950. His standard Elkins Vertue carried 52 gallons of water, 3cwt of tinned food and settee berths "upholstered in red hide" with 18in canvas lee cloths. She braved a hurricane 200 miles north-west of Bermuda — described horrifyingly by Adlard Coles in *Heavy Weather Sailing* — to reach Sandy Hook after 47 days 11 hours at sea.

During the voyage Barton and his crew, the 60-year-old former Indian Army officer Kevin O'Riordan, faced 23 days of headwinds and sailed under bare poles on three occasions. The object of the voyage was to introduce the class to the American market, and earn much needed dollars in a ravaged post-war Britain. It also won Barton the Little Ship's Vertue Cup, ten years after Biddle and *Epeneta* made their name-making trip. Ten years later another Vertue, *Cardinal Vertue*, sailed by Dr David Lewis, was to win the cup again for finishing third



■ Next month, the Vertue class travels the world. And we have the step-by-step construction of a recent launch.

■ Adrian Morgan is a freelance yachting journalist and proud new owner of Vertue No 2, *Sally*. Detlef Jens, also a freelance journalist, is currently sailing his catamaran to the Med, having just survived a dismasting off the north coast of Spain.