

# Nixon at Large

• with W. M. Nixon



## A perfect match

*Seldom has there been such a great romance as between Paul Adamthwaite and his Stormy Weather, one of the most important yachts ever built*

THERE'D been rain in the night, but by the time the approach was being made to the estuary, the sun had broken through. As we glided in under sail, the gentle green hills on either side glowed in that special way the countryside has as it begins to warm up after a damp spell.

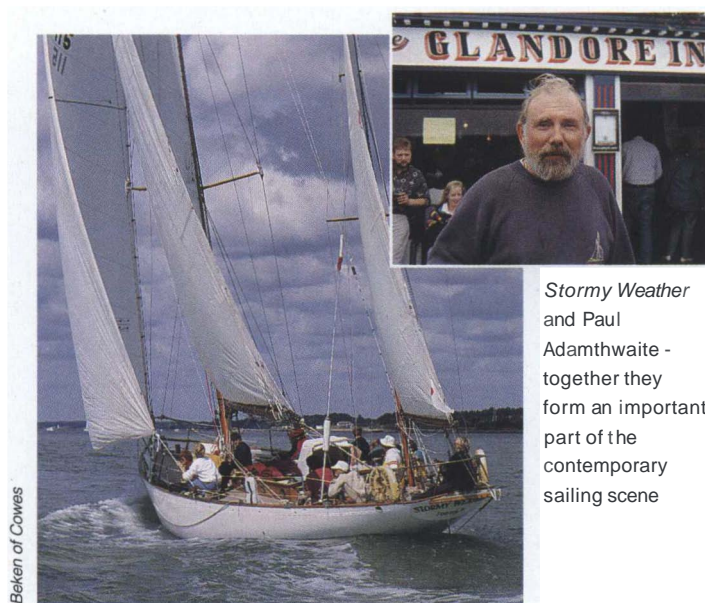
We sailed quietly across sheltered blue water and came slowly past *Solway Maid* to deliver a parcel which had arrived for her crew at a port further up the coast. Letting draw, we dropped down past *Madcap* to wish them good morning as they emerged tousle-headed into this beautiful new day.

And then we went past the still-sleeping *St Patrick*, and came to and dropped our hook beside *Stormy Weather*.

The term 'came to' may well indicate rounding up in order to anchor. But any enthusiast for classic and traditional craft could be forgiven for thinking that the foregoing is a dream sequence from which we came to only with great reluctance.

For the four boats involved are among the *crème de la crème* of the classics, and finding them together in one of the most attractive anchorages in the world on a summer's morning surely brought a lump to the throat.

*Solway Maid* is the 20-tonner of 1938 vintage which William Fife told everyone he was building as a pot-boiler, but in fact he was using the excuse of a quiet time in the



Beken of Cowes

W. M. Nixon

*Stormy Weather* and Paul Adamthwaite - together they form an important part of the contemporary sailing scene

yard at Fairlie to create his personal dreamship. She's a beauty, lovingly maintained by Iain McAllister for owner Rodger Sandiford.

*Madcap* is the ultimate golden oldie, as she's a 43ft Bristol Channel Pilot cutter built - incredibly - in 1875. In her determined owner, Adrian Spence, she has someone of the cussed disposition necessary to keep her going for many years.

*St Patrick*, of 1909 vintage, is a fine example of a 40ft Galway hooker, but with a shellback deck put on amidships to provide some accommodation, she has enabled Paddy Barry to sail far from her original home in rocky Connemara, to America and Svalbard and north-west Greenland, collecting the Blue Water Medal and the Tilman Medal on the way.

In this distinguished company, gathered in Glandore in West Cork for the Classic Boat Regatta and Maritime Summer School in July, it says everything for *Stormy Weather* that she should be the most thought-provoking of all. Not only is she one of the most important yachts ever built, but she also has an owner who matches her mystique. Together, they are the very spirit of sailing.

*Stormy Weather* is quintessentially American, yet she achieved her greatest successes in Europe. Designed by Olin Stephens, her name was inspired by the song, heard in a night club, which reinforces a feeling that the early years of the Cruising Club of America is just another yarn by Damon Runyon.

Skipped by Rod Stephens,

the 54ft LOA yawl *Stormy* won the 1935 Transatlantic Race to Norway, and the Fastnet Race of that year as well. And then she departed Plymouth on 16 August and simply sailed straight home by the northern route, taking some memorable September gales in her stride.

Paul Adamthwaite originally hailed from Aberdeen, but these days he's a Canadian citizen. He was in the Fleet Air Arm, flying Phantoms. When pressed, he'll admit that yes, it can be an interesting business finding a little aircraft carrier in the middle of a big blue ocean, and then setting a heavy jet fighter down on it. Nevertheless, he managed it 1,198 times.

And then, to celebrate 'retirement', he bought one of the early Arpèges, and sailed her clean round the world single-handed in just 11 months, going south of the Great Capes.

It may be that this is still the smallest boat ever to have taken the ultimate route, but Paul can't be too sure. What he is sure of is that, in the 1980s, he found *Stormy Weather* with an owner who was contemplating altering her accommodation. Result was that Paul Adamthwaite was very soon the owner, and the Great Romance began.

The affair has been thriving to such an extent that, somewhere north of the Azores early this season, he found they'd logged a quarter of a million miles together.

So *Stormy Weather* today is more than just a yacht of historical significance. With Paul Adamthwaite, she is an important part of the contemporary sailing scene, whether they are ranging his beloved Caribbean, or sweeping into Douarnenez.

Seldom can a boat and owner have been so perfectly matched.