



# En Route to Scotland

## Fife Rally

**A privileged stop-over on the Odet River**

**May 5 to 8, 2022**

Since the birth of yachting in France, the Odet River has been a remarkable center for nautical activity.

The bay of Bénodet and its islands, the charm, tranquility and security offered by the Odet attract the yachtsmen of the region and beyond. Founded in 1883, the Odet Yacht Club, initially known as the Nautical Club of Loctudy/ Ile Tudy, is 139 years old.

The appeal of the Odet River is well known and appreciated by British yachtsmen who consider Bénodet one of their favorite destinations in France. Each year, many sailboats cross the Channel calling at Bénodet, to the point where one of the moorings, near Sainte Marine harbour on the right bank of the Odet, is called the « anchorage of the English ».

The importance of Bénodet for British sailing was further developed by the RORC when it created the Plymouth -Bénodet cruising race in 1936 which was the first of its kind between England and Southern Brittany. It should be noted that this first offshore Anglo-French race was won by « Latifa » a, renowned Fife design sailboat. The same year the RORC also organized the first Falmouth – Clyde race.

For all of these historic and practical reasons, a stop-over on the Odet River for sailboats en route to Scotland is a must. The Yacht Club de l'Odet would be pleased to welcome them in May 2022!

# The Yacht Club de l'Odet

Founded in 1883, the Yacht Club de l'Odet (formerly the « Société des Régates de l'Île Tudy », then the « Société de Régates de Loctudy-Bénodet) has encouraged the development of all forms of yachting in Southern Brittany for more than a century. Over the years, it has asserted itself as the instigator of prestigious regattas making Bénodet, located at the mouth of the Odet River, an essential stop-over for cruise races and a privileged place for nautical gatherings. Guillaume Appolinaire referred to the Odet as « the most beautiful river in France ».

As early as 1900, its President, Maurice de Laubrière, founded the « Comité des Coupes de Bretagne » whose purpose was to regulate and coordinate regattas organized along the coast of Southern Brittany.



In 1906 he established the « Comité Breton » which was responsible for building and commissioning the yacht that would take back the prestigious Coupe de France won by the Germans. This was achieved the following year in Kiel thanks to « Armen », under the very eyes of William II. In 1928, one of the Club members, Carl de la Sablière, distinguished himself by winning the Olympic Games on board « Aile VI », Virginie Hériot's 8 m JI.

In 1930, Mr. de Saint Père, President of the « Union Nationale des Croiseurs », ancestor of « l'Union Nationale pour la Course au Large » (UNCL), organized the first cruising race in France, Bénodet – la Baule. Later, in 1935, M. de Saint Père created, the first Franco – English race, Plymouth-Belle Ile-Bénodet, according to the Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) regulations.

After the war, the Club established itself definitely in Bénodet. Its new President, M. Jacques de Kerallain, gave strong impetus to both heavy and light yachts regattas.

Having become a key stop-over in the RORC programme, Bénodet and the Yacht Club de l'Odet continued to actively organize many national and international races and championships for sailboats such as Snipes, Vauriens, Requins, Dragons, 5.5 m JI, 6 m JI...

In the 70's, the « Obélix Trophy » was created and became one of the major events for cabin cruisers in France.

For over a century, the Yacht Club de l'Odet has been a driving force in the world of yachting. In the spirit of this tradition, it started the « Rendez-vous de la Belle Plaisance » in 2001. This renowned yearly event gathers the classic yachts of the Atlantic Coast in Bénodet for a prestigious regatta.



Bénodet – in the 30's





Pen-Duick – Bénodet (*Jakez 2019*)



NAN and the banks of the Odet (*E. Quéméré – 2003*)

The increase in workload caused by the club's steady expansion led Maclean Buckley, who was in poor health, to resign in April 1936—he was soon persuaded to return—and his remark that 'he did not see how the club could hope to pay a secretary adequately or, in the ordinary way, to cover his expenses' showed that however successful it had been in establishing ocean racing, financially the club's future was still far from secure.

One way to help the finances was to increase the membership, and at the 1936 AGM, when membership stood at around 475, the introduction of provisional membership was approved. This allowed candidates to use the club house for a limited period while waiting to qualify. If they failed to qualify, their membership lapsed and they would then have to apply for an extension. Over the following years various forms of membership, including \*cadet and veteran memberships, were also introduced and there was a scheme to take 'unknown quantities' on weekend sailing trips and passage-making. This enabled owners to size up the capabilities of individuals, gave novices some chance of testing out their skills, and allowed dinghy sailors an opportunity to race in larger boats.

At the same time as introducing provisional members the rules were tightened so that an owner had to satisfy the committee that a candidate for full membership was a competent member of the amateur crew. High spirits, rowdiness, call it what you will, after races, particularly after the Fastnet, was also raised in committee and it was felt that unless 'the tendency to make an excessive uproar after races was checked the club might find itself unwelcome at clubs around the coast', though it was agreed that only public opinion would be the sole effective restraint.

The Plymouth-Benodet and the Falmouth-Clyde Races were added to the fixture list in 1936. It was a year which produced the largest-ever entry for any RORC event with 37 yachts taking part in the Channel Race, 21 in the Small Class and 16 in the Large. 1937 saw the introduction of yet more fixtures—the Southsea-Brixham, Ijmuiden-Solent, Plymouth-La Baule, and St Nazaire-Benodet Races were all held for the first time—and there were a healthy number of starters in the established ones. The Fastnet had 29, by far the largest the race had so far attracted, and was the showcase for the revolution in design that was taking place.



courtesy Christopher Nicholson

Charles E. Nicholson, one of the greatest yacht designers of his age and a long-time supporter of the club

## The Royal Ocean Racing Club - The First 75 Years – IAN DEAR

Among the starters were many types. It was also a truly international field, with entries from Germany, Holland, France, and the United States, and these brought out the punters. The most fancied, at 8-1, were *Bloodhound*, *Maid of Malham*, and *Ortac*; 10-1 was offered on the American entry \**Elizabeth McCaw* and on Michael Mason's 53ft LWL Fife-designed yawl, *Latifa*; while *Zeearend*—which had been designed to the RORC Rule by Olin Stephens for Kees Bruynzeel—and *Stiarna* were quoted at 12-1.

*Bloodhound* and *Latifa* had both been built the previous year and had already proved themselves. Sherman Hoyt, no mean judge of a boat, thought *Latifa*, which had won the Plymouth-Benodet Race in 1936, the finest all round ship he had ever sailed in ocean passages or races, while *Bloodhound* became perhaps the best known ocean racer of all time. She replaced Isaac Bell's *Foxhound* after Bell had decided he wanted the rating advantage of a yawl. Instead of having *Foxhound's* rig altered he sold her and Nicholson built him the slightly larger *Bloodhound*. She had immediately showed her speed by winning the Large Class in the 1936 Channel Race in which high winds and seas, combined with heavy rain, had caused 17 retirements out of the 37 yachts which had taken part.

Both *Bloodhound* and *Latifa* had been built, as Phillips-Birt later observed, with 'offshore racing and the RORC rule as the principal consideration, and they make, apart from their subsequent records which placed them amongst the greatest names in the RORC fleet, one of the highest tributes to the rating rule. They were that ideal combination of beauty, speed, seaworthiness, and habitability that rating rules have always sought to encourage but so rarely have achieved. To these two names should be added the earlier *Trenchemer*, and *Bloodhound's* near sister *Foxhound*. These were the type of yacht that had been dreamed of when the RORC rule was founded.'

Nevertheless, it was the 35ft sloop, *Ortac*, which Phillips-Birt believed was unquestionably the boat of the year in 1937. Designed for the rear commodore, C.F. King, by the comparatively unknown Robert \*Clark—who gave her the first pulpit to be fitted to a yacht—she won the Plymouth-La Baule Race and over the season accumulated enough points to win the *Trenchemer* Cup for the Class I individual points championship.

However, from today's perspective it was perhaps the appearance of Illingworth's \**Maid of Malham* which was to prove more important. Not having played polo for some years, by 1936 Illingworth had saved up enough money—and plucked up sufficient courage—to build a 'flat out' 35ft ocean racer which had encouraged several other members, including King, to do the same. He discussed his ideas with both Fife and Mylne before opting for Jack Laurent Giles, who, with Robert Clark, represented the new generation of young<sup>1</sup> designers. He left the hull lines to Giles but laid out the yacht's interior

<sup>1</sup> after one meeting of the technical sub-committee Charles E. Nicholson was heard to say: 'The trouble with these young men is that they think they know everything; the trouble with us old ones is that we know we do'