

SAVING THE MALABARS

Saving an Alden-designed Malabar was no easy task for Alex Child... particularly when you consider he was starting with a sunken wreck

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY LUCY TULLOCH



In the winter of 1907, when Alden was 23, he made a voyage that would define his yacht designs. The schooner *Fame*, owned by the Eastern Fishing company, had to be returned to Boston when her crew of 23 men went down with smallpox and there was no one left to sail her. Alden put together a crew of four inexperienced young men and one old salt to undertake the journey. During the weeks that followed, they experienced extreme winter storms with over 50kt winds turning salt spray to ice. The boat and the crew completed the voyage and it's said that as a result of this, Alden learned what was important when a vessel was short-handed, and learned how to design a boat that would be resilient in heavy seas. His subsequent designs are admired not only for their grace and elegance but for their stability and safety.

At the peak of his career, he began a series of designs which he named the Malabars. Named after a vanished spit he found on an old chart of Cape Cod, the name incorporated local history as well as having exotic associations. During the 1920s he built a new one every year for himself and, as their popularity grew, he received attractive offers for his previous designs.

By 1932, the Alden Design Office was known around the world in the offshore racing scene, largely due to the success of these Malabars.

Built by the Hodgdon Brothers in Boothbay, Maine, in 1925, *Adventurer* is the sister ship to *Malabar VI* and was first owned by Arthur Whitney. According to *Lloyd's Register*, she was built with a Kermath four-cylinder, four-stroke petrol engine and may have later had a three-cylinder 85hp Cerlist diesel in the late 60s, but there is no recent evidence of this.

She passed through various owners' hands including Dean Emery, William Thornborough, Fred Greve, Ernest Crosby and Gerald Woods.

In the mid 1960s, John 'Jack' Savage, known as a classic old salt, bought her and lived onboard for many years with his family, spending winters in New Bedford and coastal cruising in the summers.

Mark Faulstick was a New York stockbroker and bought her to live onboard in the early 80s. Gradually he realised what he now owned and took her for an extensive refit at Gannon & Benjamin. It was possibly this refit that first saved *Adventurer*. It was at this famed boatyard that, as well as the job to replace both deckhouses, the main job was to reframe from the engine to forward of her foremast and while doing so, restore her sheerline as best they could.

Gannon & Benjamin took off her ballast and rolled it aside, which allowed them to replace her floors and their fastenings. Then removing every other frame,

Previous page:
Alex at the helm

Below: John Alden
on *Malabar VI*

Facing page:
Adventurer under sail



they steamed in new full-length frames, then the remaining alternate frames. Ross Gannon remembers with impressive clarity: "With the hull reframed and the sheerclamp unbolted from the new frames... imagine them running up past the deck, the edge of the deck gone... we hooked up a come-along through each mast partner to a keel bolt hole and pulled the whole deck down several inches in the middle of the boat, re-establishing a fair sheerline. Then bolted the clamp back to the frames."

Faulstick was known as a talented racing sailor and raced her with his friends on the East Coast, winning many races and collecting a myriad of trophies. Still, without an engine, her crew laughingly complained that they often missed the prizegiving and the parties as they returned to port under sail despite crossing the finish line first! He also lived onboard with his family and cruised and raced the East Coast for many years, barely falling below a second or third place. Sadly, Faulstick fell ill but he raced right up to the end, winning a first place even as the boat and her loving owner deteriorated. After he died she fell into disrepair and sank into the mud.

ADVENTURER SAVED AGAIN

From a naval family and a gypsy mother, the wayward son Alex Child is the next and current custodian of *Adventurer*. Very familiar with Alden's designs, he had just completed a restoration of the 126ft (38m) gaff schooner *Puritan*, having known the owner since he was a teenager.

Prior to that, Alex had bought a wrecked East Coast smack called *Daisy* in the UK, a typical smack, with the audacious measurements of an overall length of 48ft (14.6m) with a 27ft (8.2m) bowsprit. Back in her day, she had been the first engineless boat to sail to Lapland. More recently, Alex completed her rebuild in Maldon, Essex.

Much as he loved the gaff-rigged cutter and smack racing, Alex soon found he was dreaming of ocean sailing, so he decided he had to find a schooner.

Fifteen years earlier, Alex had raced the 134ft (41m) Fife *Altair* against *Adventurer* in Camden, Maine.

"She smoked us!" he tells me. "We were a professionally-run, 18-crew, multi-million-Dollar-budget schooner with a brand-new main. *Adventurer* on the other hand, did poor tacks, was under-crewed and still thrashed us. Made us look us like fools."

So, when in 2022 he heard that *Adventurer* was up for sale in the US, he sent his good friend Patsy Bowling (who'd owned *Puritan* in the 1960s) to go and take a look.



ADVENTURER

cooks on the original gas custom stove and, in colder climates, warms the cabin with the Luke soapstone fireplace.

Such was the success of her racing history that her bulkheads were covered in her winning plaques. “They were not my history,” Alex says, “the only race that was mine was the refit race,” he laughs. He gave them all to Mark’s wife, Lynn Faulstick.

Running out of fuel in Grand Bahama, Alex sailed solo to Haiti and the Dominican Republic where he enjoyed working with the local fishermen. He preferred the old-fashioned bartering ways in these islands and took his time before sailing south to Antigua.

After many days at sea with no sleep, he sailed into English Harbour at 0200 and was welcomed by an old friend from his childhood, who took care of him at his hotel. The next day his good friend arranged for *Adventurer* to be put away so that Alex could finally get some well-earned rest.

On calm days, *Adventurer* became a familiar sight sailing off the south coast of Antigua and later coming back in to English Harbour at sunset. She would then sail up to anchor off Galleon Beach with her splendid gaff sails and Alex’s leg hanging over the rail as he steered her in.

Then in April came Antigua’s Classic Yacht Regatta (see p12-13 in this issue). There were a few schooners in her class but one schooner in particular was of very special interest. She was Richard West’s Malabar V *Charm III* from Anguilla, a regular at Antigua Classics. She was hard to keep up with, what with her experienced racing crew and many years of winning regattas behind her. But Alex came away with four trophies for *Adventurer*, including third in schooner class and first in the coveted Concours D’Elegance in privately-maintained vintage class – a testament to the judge’s appreciation of all the original or antique elements on the boat. Furthermore, Richard has kindly promised to donate a pair of bronze Merriman winches and handles from c1945 as well as some other bronze fittings he has accumulated over the years. Alex is very appreciative of this support and welcomes all outside interest in the boat.

Alex entered the singlehanded race and, in the building breeze, with his faithful black dog Rum in the cockpit, he used his solo experience around the course, winning the large classics class. Indeed, on the return, his engine failed and he sailed through English Harbour under sail.

With the recent purchase of the Malabar X just complete in the US, and Richard’s *Charm III* racing against *Adventurer* this year, some Alden-lovers are dreaming that there could almost be enough to start a Malabar class in the regatta...



ADVENTURER	
DESIGNED	John G Alden
BUILT	Hodgdon Brothers, Maine, 1925
LOD	52ft 3in (15.9m)
LWL	38ft (11.6m)
LOA	65ft (19.8m)
BEAM	12ft (3.7m)
DRAUGHT	8ft 4in (2.5m)

