

# ME + MY OLD HAGG

Lindsay Phillips celebrates 30 years of fun, travel and friendship aboard his Hagg 36 Kyanos

Words Lindsay Phillips Pictures Lindsay Phillips & Ian Callen

One of my earliest memories of motor boats has never left me. It was 1942 and I was eight years old, living in Trinidad where my father was admiral in charge of the naval base during the war. I went to school in the morning but in the afternoon, I was free to do my own thing. One afternoon, much to my surprise, I was invited by my father to help drive the fleet of fast motor launches used to ferry supplies to and from the assembled ships waiting in the gulf for the next convoy to England.

Needless to say I never looked back and have had the boating bug ever since. As an adult I worked my way through a variety of boats both sail and power. By the mid-1980s, my Belgian wife and I were living in London. She was 12 years my senior and rather less keen than me on spending wet days in oilskins tacking against the tide. However, she understood me well and as we were both trying to get over the sudden death of our eldest son three years previously, she recognised that I needed a fresh focus to cheer me up. She sold a bit of land in Belgium and lent me the money to buy a boat on the understanding it was large enough to stay on and fast enough to get places quickly.





**ROYAL BLOOD**

I was a big fan of Nelson boats but even back then, they were too expensive. It was while looking for something similar that I stumbled across *Kyanos*. She was already 20 years old but she was in good nick and a little research revealed that she had an interesting pedigree. She was built in 1967 at the Dorset Lake Shipyard in Poole as one of a series of craft penned by the late aircraft designer Arthur Hagg.

Hagg had worked for De Havilland for most of his life and was the lead designer of the Mosquito twin-engined fighter bomber. After leaving De Havilland in the '50s, he began designing boats and moved to Poole. His aircraft background was evident in the smooth shapes above and below the waterline as well as the beautifully engineered hull (the Mosquito used a similar wood frame construction). One of his boats, a 42-footer called *Spirit of Ecstasy*, won the first Cowes to Torquay power boat race and another was used as the Queen's launch on the royal yacht *Britannia*.

*Kyanos* was 36ft long and one of the first Hagg's to feature a GRP hull. Her teak decking and cockpit had recently been replaced but there was some wicking on the GRP hull, so we agreed on a price of £23,000 to allow for a recoating of the undersides. The twin Perkins 6354s were original but ran well enough. All we needed to add were a few creature comforts like pressurised hot and cold water, a fridge and warm air heating. We found a berth at the then recently completed Ocean Village Marina in Southampton and used her as our weekend escape from London. She was a joy to use in any weather and proved to be exactly the tonic we were looking for.

Two years later in 1989, our plans changed again. My wife was suffering from back pains and had found someone in St Tropez who guaranteed a cure. I took three months unpaid leave from my job at IBM so I could be with her and looked into ways of taking *Kyanos* with us. Going down through the canals was possible but would eat into our three months. A chance meeting with a retired rear admiral called Sefton Sandford and his wife Sue led to an offer from them to take *Kyanos* down through the canals to Port Grimaud, if I could get it as far as Paris. We arranged a rendezvous



Some Go Provence guests enjoy *Kyanos*



Preparations begin for *Kyanos*'s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party

in the Marina de la Bastille and sure enough they were waiting for me on arrival. I helped take her through the first two locks to show them the ropes, then climbed ashore, wished them bon voyage and caught the next plane back to London.

In retrospect, it seemed rather reckless to trust my boat to two people I barely knew on a long passage through France's notoriously tight, shallow canals, but I needn't have worried. When we arrived two months later, we found *Kyanos* spotless with everything exactly as I had left it, even the bottle of whisky in the drinks locker!

It turns out they had been pushed through the Canal du Centre at record speed due to heavy rains on the downhill legs. Anxious to keep the water levels down, a lock keeper had escorted them the whole way on a motorbike, opening each lock prior to their arrival and ushering them on to the next one. They made it from Paris to Chalon sur Saone in just six days. I had allowed three weeks!

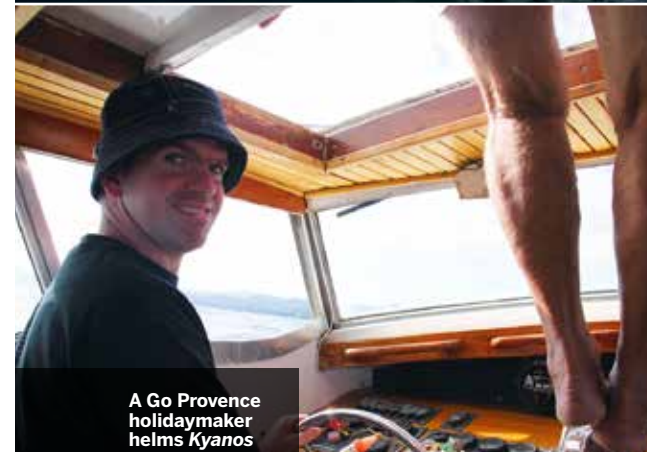
We kept her in Port Grimaud for the next two years, spending

as much time on board as possible, but as I was still working for IBM in Chiswick, I eventually decided to bring her back to London where I'd found a berth in a small marina near my office. So I called upon Sefton and Sue again to bring her back up through the canals. We shared the first leg to Port St Louis and up the Rhône to Mâcon. As it was a chilly evening in May, I proudly switched on the diesel heater and retired to my nice warm cabin. Next morning, I was horrified to find the starboard side covered in black soot. I had forgotten to remove the canvas side screens I had carefully rigged to protect the topsides from scratches. It proved impossible to shift, so I was obliged to find a kindly painter and leave him to it while we flew back to the UK.

**HOME AGAIN**

Two months later, we arrived back for the next leg from Macon to Paris where Sefton and Sue were on hand to pick up *Kyanos* for the final part of the journey back to London. I joined them for the last leg up the Thames, stopping at the fuel barge close to HMS *Belfast* where Sefton casually dropped into conversation that he'd been the last serving captain of the mighty battleship now towering over us. We almost got our fuel for free! We spent the next 18 months exploring the tidal Thames with the long summer evenings proving the perfect excuse to invite my work colleagues on board for a glass or three of wine in exchange for a little light sanding and painting.

*No other boat I have found matches the space, comfort and style that *Kyanos* offers*



A Go Provence holidaymaker helms *Kyanos*



The mural in the cabin was painted by a local friend



The curved wooden wheelhouse shares its design origins with the Mosquito fighter plane





**Kyanos** looks as good today as she did when Lindsay bought her 30 years ago

## BARDOT BECKONS

I had been hoping for a while that IBM might make me an early retirement offer and had already started looking for houses in France within 40 minutes' drive of a port where we could keep *Kyanos*. We started in the Vendée and slowly worked our way south. I wanted a farm. My wife wanted a château. At last, in 1994, we found our dream house in the centre of the Var in Lorgues: an old *bastide*, quite broken down but with great charm, and a small vineyard that would keep me too busy to spend my entire time on *Kyanos*. Again, Sefton rose to the call and brought *Kyanos* down to Fréjus but as I hadn't yet found a suitable berth, I reluctantly had *Kyanos* lifted out and moved to the garden of my son's house near Lorgues as the lane to our place was too narrow.

Finally, in 1998, I was lucky enough to find a berth in the port publique at Sainte-Maxime where she has been ever since. We use her all year round for trips along the coast, usually with friends or family on board to enjoy the ride. Because she doesn't draw much, we can sneak into some of the shallow bays the larger yachts can't get into. One of our favourite spots is directly beneath Brigitte Bardot's house in Canoubiers near St Tropez, where there is just enough depth for us to anchor in a perfectly calm pool protected from the wake of passing craft by a surrounding shoal. We'll wander into town, buy lunch at the market and retire to the boat for a long lunch afloat. I also host regular boat trips on board *Kyanos* for a friend of mine, Ian Callen, whose company Go Provence Supported Holidays runs wonderful activity breaks for people with learning disabilities. It gives me such pleasure to see his guests enjoy *Kyanos* as much as I do.



Anchored in front of Brigitte Bardot's house near St Tropez

Ten years ago, I did seriously look at buying a more modern boat but after attending countless boat shows in France and the UK, I came to the conclusion that there was nothing around that could match the space, comfort and style of *Kyanos* for anything like the budget I had, so I decided to spend the money keeping her in good shape instead. In 2011, I replaced the Perkins engines for a pair of naturally aspirated 150hp Iveco engines. They are built for commercial fishing boat applications and can run forever at a comfortable 15-knot cruising speed.

## DOUBLE ANNIVERSARY

Last spring, almost by chance, I was checking my old blue Part 1 ship's registration and noticed that my name first appeared as the owner on June 24, 1987. Then it struck me that she was also launched on April 27, 1967, so not only had she be mine for 30 years, but she was also about to turn 50. Given the joy she had given me over the years and the number of silly scrapes she'd got me out of, we couldn't let her birthday pass without a party.

She has become something of a local celebrity in Sainte-Maxime, so a chat with my friends in the *capitainerie* resulted in us booking the *salle d'honneur* for June 24. That left us just a few weeks to ensure she was looking the part. Careful inspection revealed quite a lot to be done, including repainting the cabin top and the decks that had been so well repaired 33 years previously. After talking to several different companies, I booked her in for a complete repaint in Awlgrip at a yard a little way up the coast.

Meanwhile, a wonderful friend of ours agreed to paint the interior while Michele rolled up her sleeves and did a major clean-up. We relaunched her on the morning of 23 June, just in time for me to motor her back to her berth in Sainte-Maxime.

We invited as many people as we could think of who had worked or been out on her over the last 30 years. Not everyone could make it and a fair few had passed away, but come 24 June, my friend Peter, our Anglican vicar, said a prayer while my granddaughter Virginia sprayed the foredeck with champagne. The rest of the day passed in a bit of a blur but I'm told it involved a fair few glasses of fizz and much happy reminiscing – the perfect way to toast the last 30 years and look forward to the next! **MBY**



Lindsay and partner Michele enjoy the anniversary