

Life Aboard

Liveaboards and Cruisers Gather to Volunteer

Editor Robin Stout

Aboard Mermaid



While chatting with some other cruisers and liveaboards at a Brai (South African BBQ/Pot Luck) on a beach in Martinique, we were surprised to learn that many cruisers schedule their season around being in Antigua for the Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta. Why would cruisers and liveaboards be so interested in a race? We had to learn more. How would we find out more information? Volunteer of course, and that we did.

The Classic Regatta began in 1987 and was open to traditionally designed boats built of wood or steel with heavy to moderate displacement and full keels. Now, they also allow boats using modern materials built



using traditional designs. This attracts a wide variety of entrants, from huge schooners with acres of gleaming varnish work to Carriacou sloops, gaff-rigged sloops hand built by local craftsmen down island that were used for inter-island trade, and perhaps a bit of smuggling, before the age of steam.

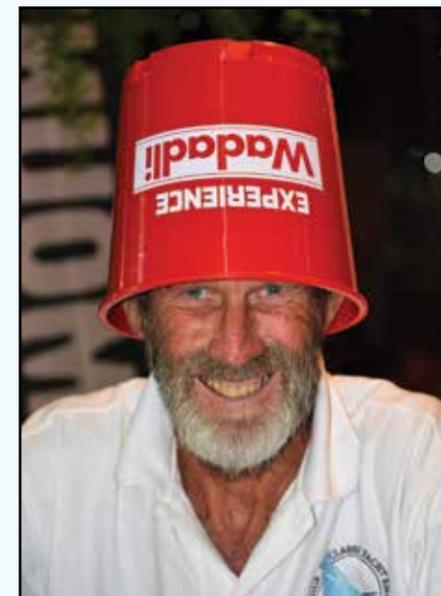
It turns out that the Antigua Classic Regatta is run by volunteers and most of them are on cruising yachts or live aboard their boats in or near Antigua. Cruisers come from all over the world, and many year after year, just to volunteer in this regatta. This year's group of volunteers came from six different countries. There were actually more volunteers than positions available.



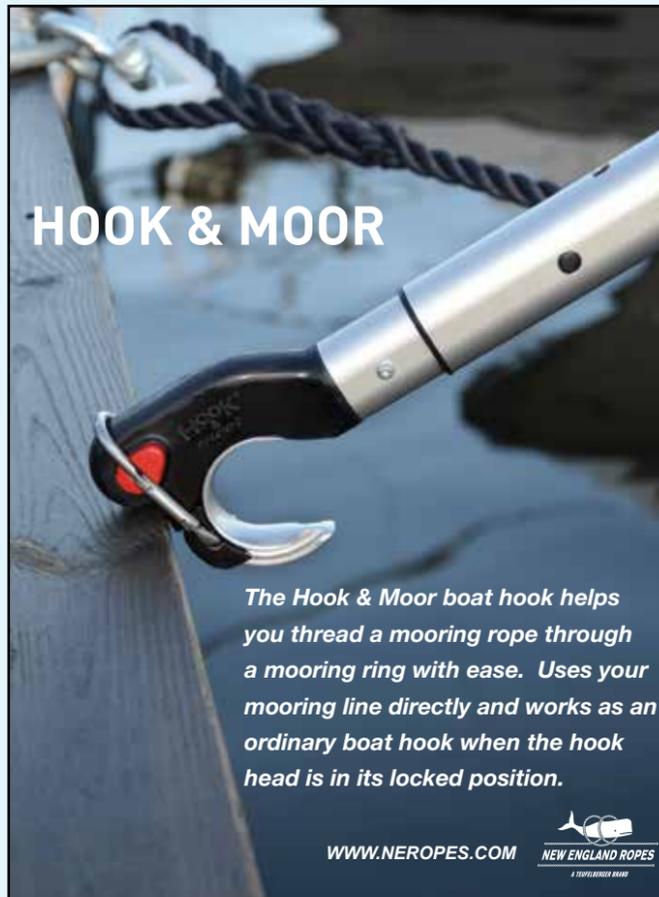
We spoke with Leslie Arnold of S/V *Farhaven* who is in charge of all the cruiser volunteers about getting involved. Leslie said, "I started participating in the Classics by first crewing on a boat and hanging out at the parties about 10 years ago. It has always been a very fun and welcoming event, and many cruisers come specifically to find a boat to race on. There is always need for pick-up crew. At first we got involved just for fun, then Kenny Coombs (the man

who founded the regatta) asked me to copy stuff for the race board. I knew how to use a balky copy machine and it just evolved from there; from helping out on a few tasks to working full time coordinating cruiser volunteers and running the hospitality center. I enjoy meeting people, answering questions and making the event flow well."

We asked Leslie why cruisers make their plans around volunteering at this regatta. "Cruisers come for many reasons. Antigua in April is a



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good stopping point for going north or south and Falmouth Harbor is an excellent place to hang out with friends. Many come to get on a boat. Racing on a big wooden schooner or a Carriacou Sloop is a one-of-a-kind experience. Cruisers love to help out and use the skills they have from a lifetime of experience. Mostly it is to appreciate the classic wooden boats and the enthusiastic people who keep them alive. It takes a lot of work to just keep the varnish glowing, let alone keep a 100-year-old boat afloat.”

Mike ended up as a “dinghy wrangler,” which it turns out is a very sought after position. Here’s what Mike had to say about the regatta: “Being a part of the Classic Regatta was an awesome experience. Dinghy wranglers were on the water to assist the classic boats into and out of the harbor. We got to interact with all the crews as they were leaving in the morning and hear a few tales from the day’s race as they came back in. These are old wooden boats that were being backed into their mooring onto a packed dock, but



the skippers were unbelievably competent in maneuvering them. There were two people in the dinghy. The bowman hangs onto the boat and communicates with the skipper. My bowman was Tony of S/V *Longbow*, an English cruiser who was on his second lap around the Atlantic. We made a great team, giving the classic boats a push when needed, helping with the lines and offering any assistance needed. I look forward to wrangling next year.”

The regatta has many sponsors, including Antigua Yacht Club, Mount Gay Rum and Wadalli Beer, the local brew. That meant that each evening after racing, there was lots of fun and celebrating... even games for the kiddos. There was something for everyone, even a day of English cream tea and dinghy racing. The yachts in the regatta ranged from multi-million-dollar classic yachts to the Carriacou Sloops, which meant the viewing was spectacular. It’s no wonder that cruisers and the liveaboards look forward to the Antigua Classic Regatta year after year. We will be back! 🚩



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