

ARTHUR ROBB · 1959 · ADMIRAL'S CUP WINNER

THE FLYING HERITAGE OF HAMBLE

*How the legendary Ramrod (1959) conquered the world and is now
preparing for a new chapter*



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DESIGNER

Arthur C. Robb

SHIPYARD

Port Hamble Ltd, 1959

HOME PORT

Ostend, Belgium

REGISTER

Varend Erfgoed
Vlaanderen

I. THE BIRTH OF A CHAMPION

In the early spring of 1959, a yacht slid down the ways at the renowned Port Hamble Ltd yard on England's south coast that immediately captured the imagination of Cowes. Her owners were Selwyn Slater and R. McLoughlin. Slater was a heavyweight of the sailing world; two years earlier, in 1957, he had been one of the founders and co-creators of the Admiral's Cup. Slater knew exactly what it took to win on the turbulent waters of the Solent and the Celtic Sea. With his previous successful wooden cutter, Uomie, he had brought the very first Admiral's Cup home for Great Britain in 1957 after a nail-biting battle against the Americans — in which Uomie narrowly had to concede individually to neighbour Carina II, but did win the legendary Round the Island Race.

For his new vessel, Slater once again turned to the New Zealand-born naval architect Arthur C. Robb. Slater wanted a name that radiated authority and an absolute winning mentality on the start line. Where Uomie still had a playful ring to it, he now chose Ramrod — the English term for the perfectly straight, unyielding loading rod of a cannon. It was also a direct reference to the RAF's offensive Operation Ramrod missions from the Second World War.

In marina circles, a persistent legend later arose that the name was a rebellious pun. The archives, however, are clear: the name stood purely for the unwavering, military discipline of the crew and the rigidity of the construction.

II. THE MAGICAL SUMMER OF 1959

Ramrod's debut year was immediately her golden year. The 1959 Admiral's Cup was historic: for the first time, the competition was opened up to official international teams. It became a titanic battle between Great Britain and a formidably strong Dutch team featuring the iconic Zwerfer. Ramrod was selected to defend British honour alongside Myth of Malham and Griffin II. That season the yacht performed with frightening consistency: she won the Channel Race, the Cowes-Dinard, the Southsea-Harwich and the Morgan Cup. Britain won the Cup 135 points to 123, and Ramrod was statistically the standout performer of the winning team.

"Selwyn, your ramrod is bent!" — "Yes, but it just fired us into first place!"

QUARTERDECK EXCHANGE DURING A STORMY ORC RACE, SUMMER 1959

III.

FROM OCEAN RACER TO EXCLUSIVE CRUISING YACHT

After her triumphs in 1959, the vessel continued to compete at the very highest level well into the 1960s, later under the command of the renowned British sailor George Pattinson. That Ramrod was a true ocean racer was proven, among other things, during a transatlantic crossing: the demanding route from Bermuda via the Azores back to Hamble was completed in an impressive 21 sailing days. Her early racing career came to a close in 1966 with a win in the Nab Tower Race at Cowes.

What followed was a fascinating new chapter in which the vessel proved her versatility. After an honourable period serving as a training ship for the British Sea Scouts — during which generations of young people learned to navigate aboard a genuine championship yacht — Ramrod gradually transformed into a very fast and comfortable cruising yacht. Because Robb had originally designed the vessel for long offshore passages, her interior offers surprisingly generous headroom, living space and six permanent berths. The spartan character of the racer gave way to the warm, intimate atmosphere of a classic maritime gentlemen's club.

IV.

TECHNICAL PERFECTION: CUSTODIAN SOUGHT

In 2007, Ramrod passed into the hands of her current Belgian owner, who has lovingly maintained her with boundless passion and an eye for detail at her home port of Ostend. Owing to her great historical value, the vessel was officially entered into the Varend Erfgoed register in Flanders.

During an extensive restoration in 2013, the hull was stripped back completely. The construction is a tour de force of maritime craftsmanship: double-planked in high-quality Makoré (a tropical hardwood) over heavy oak frames. Those who study the original blueprints — which are still held today in the Arthur Robb archive at the Mystic Seaport Museum in the United States — will find a unique innovation: the coachroof is deliberately interrupted at the mast to give the mast step on the keel extra structural stiffness.

Today, Ramrod combines that historic soul with modern reliability. She is fitted with a renewed aluminium Proctor mast, an extensive and competitive sail wardrobe, and a highly reliable Nanni diesel engine from 2004. The vessel is in exceptionally sound, sail-away-ready condition. As her current owner wishes to pass on the torch after years of faithful stewardship, Ramrod is currently in transition to a new custodian.

THE YACHT AT A GLANCE

DESIGNER**Arthur C. Robb****SHIPYARD****Port Hamble Ltd, 1959****OWNERS (ORIGINAL)****Selwyn Slater & R. McLoughlin****PALMARÈS****Admiral's Cup 1959 (winner)****HULL CONSTRUCTION****Double-planked Makoré on oak frames****PERMANENT BERTHS****Six****MAST****Aluminium Proctor (renewed)****ENGINE****Nanni diesel, built 2004****MAJOR RESTORATION****2013 — hull stripped back completely****STATUS****Varend Erfgoed Vlaanderen****HOME PORT****Ostend, Belgium****OWNER SINCE****2007**

This yacht is not merely a possession; it is an exclusive ticket of entry to the absolute pinnacle of classic sailing. Whether the future holds the start line at Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez, retaking the Solent during British Classic Week, or simply making memories along Europe's coastlines — with Ramrod, you command deep respect in every harbour.

"History is at the helm.

It is up to the next generation to set the course."

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