

A LEADER WITH A DEFT TOUCH

October2020

A remarkable story of guts and grim determination with a silver lining.

The telephone rang and on the other end was a Royal Marine Colonel telling me about Gerald Tatton-Brown (1951-1988) #1946 on the web family tree and their participation in the Three Peaks Race in 1981. Tragically, Gerald died in an air accident only seven years later but he left a profound memory with Lt. Col. Brian Seage. The Trust is grateful for his account reproduced in full below.

Gerald Tatton-Brown

The Three Peaks Race 1981

In 1981 I was keen on marathon running and had run several in the Spring and all under 3 hours. A friend, Andrew Higginson, asked if I fancied running 3 marathons in 4 days. Andrew described the race as a sailing and running race and I was aware that the Royal Marines had put teams into the race in the past. He knew a skipper, a local farmer, who wanted to use the race to try out a new under 30-foot yacht he had designed and possibly gain some publicity for the revolutionary design which included a hydraulic lifting keel that enabled the vessel to operate in very shallow water. As I was not good enough to represent the Royal Marines I jumped at the chance to give the Three Peaks a go. And so I met the skipper; Gerald Tatton-Brown.

The Three Peaks race requires a yacht and a team of 5. Three to sail the yacht and two to do the running. The race starts at Barmouth in North Wales and sails to Caernavon where the runners run from the quayside to the top of Snowdon and back. It then proceeds by sea to Ravenglass and the runners run from the landing point to the summit of Scafell and return to the yacht for a passage to Fort William and a run to the peak of Ben Nevis and back to the yacht where the race ends. For the runners that amounts to 3 marathons in 4 days with the marathons taking in peaks that in total amount to over 11,000 feet of climbing.

I managed to persuade Colour Sergeant Danny Blatchford Royal Marines to be the other runner. Danny was an excellent road runner and I excelled off road as a sort of fell runner. We were driven to Barmouth in time for the race start and for the introduction to the crew Gerald had put together. The boat builder that had built Whisperer was one, Peter Williams (I think) and the other was a chum of Gerald's, Lord David Davies. So, on 27 June 1981, a farmer, a boat builder, a noble lord and two Royal Marines took Whisperer out of the harbour at Barmouth to the start line of the 1981 Three Peaks Race.

After around 17 hours of tacking and pushing a strong tide, Gerald and the sailing crew got us into Caernavon in fourth position and the running began. Danny led on the road and I led on the ascent and descent of Snowdon. We departed Caernavon retaining our fourth place and headed for Ravenglass. The timing of the tide was such that Gerald chose the Menai Straits route which also suited the shallow draft qualities of Whisperer and we sailed North with tide and wind behind us. Approaching the Britannia road / rail bridge we were headed by the wind and the tide took us backwards under the main arch. This worried the runners, but the sailors soon had the yacht back under control and we reached Ravenglass safely and still in fourth place. Having a retracting keel proved to be a boon for the runners. Other yachts were confined to deeper water and their runners had to wade or row ashore. Danny and I stepped ashore into inches of water and were soon on our way towards Scafell. This run has a long road route as the approach to the foot of Scafell and it was here that Danny had to

work hard to keep me going as I found the road work boring. But I enjoyed the run up Scafell and kept Danny going there and on the really tedious return route.

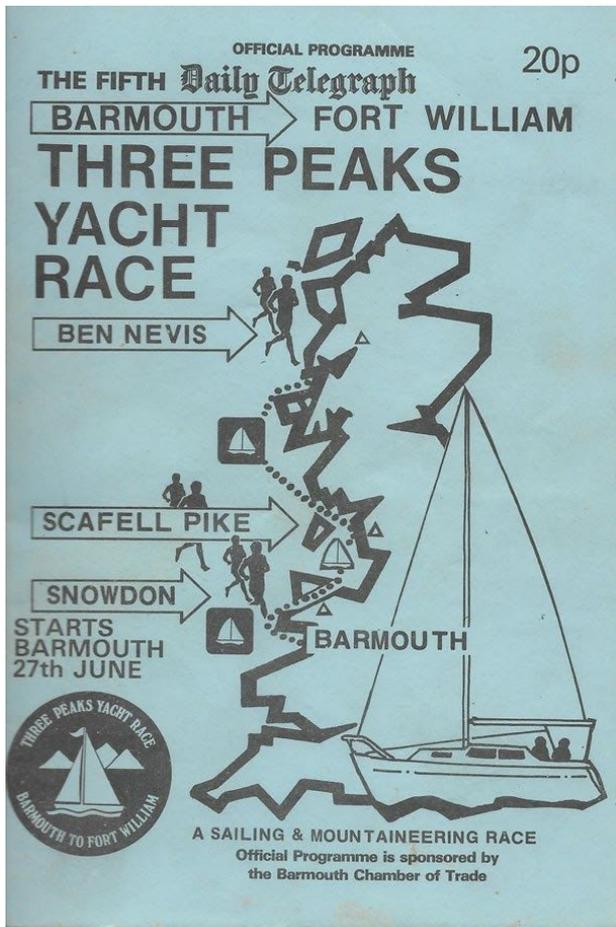
All of the yachts had to wait for the tide at Ravenglass to come in and float them off. On returning to the harbour I noticed a very smart car and an even smarter woman standing beside it. We were introduced to Lady Davies as the runners and she asked how it had gone and where we would shower and change. She was not impressed by my response that a sponge down on the yacht would suffice and directed her husband to get a room at the hotel so that we could bathe and rest until the tide returned. Danny and I enjoyed delightful hot baths and a change into our track suits and a snooze whilst the crew explored the delights of the bar downstairs.

The tide rose and we set off for a longish trip around the Mull of Kintyre and on to Fort William. We had retained our fourth position. On board was a large hamper provided by Lady David Davies and it had Fortnum and Mason on the side. Amongst other delicious food it had two Dundee fruit cakes that the crew decided were for the runners. Well we did hint at such! The cakes disappeared inside Danny and me very quickly and then it was time for a well-earned sleep.

I woke up after about 6 hours and went to the cockpit to chat with Gerald. He then undertook to teach me a bit of sailing and so I took the helm and under the guidance of the Skipper sailed us up towards the South of Scotland. It was great fun and Gerald was an excellent teacher. Eventually we entered Loch Linnie and the approach to Fort William and a large yacht was making up ground on us. We landed at Fort William retaining our 4th place but with another team close behind us. Gerald shouted 'Make sure you keep 4th place', as Danny and I raced off towards the town and Ben Nevis beyond. It was a hard ascent in deteriorating visibility but Danny kept up well and urged us both on as the other team seemed at one stage to be closing on us. To ensure we did not lose our coveted 4th place we chose the almost vertical descent down a scree run back towards the harbour. This worked well though there were a couple of skinned knees on the way. Breathless, sweaty, tired and bruised, we retained our position and Whisperer, her crew and runners were 1st in Class of under 30- foot boats and 4th overall. A tremendous achievement for an original and unique yacht, its scratch crew and runners.

My impression of Gerald Tatton-Brown was of an extraordinary visionary with great ideas and the will to make them real. A leader with a deft touch and an ability to weld together a crew in short order and a man with the time to teach others so that they would benefit from his experience. Highly self-disciplined but with deep humour and obviously an adventurer. It is a memorable delight to have spent those few hectic days in 1981 with Gerald.

Lt Col Brian Seage OBE BA(Hons) Royal Marines



Race programme



Left Brian Seage with Danny Blatchford



Gerald on helm, John Williams back to camera and Lord David Davies about to hoist the mainsail.



Left Brian Seage, centre Gerald on the helm and right Danny Blatchford

LIST OF COMPETITORS

Name of Boat	Skipper	L.O.A. Class.	Military
1. Tortoise	Major D. M. P. Lowe	28ft. Hunter Impala	Royal Artillery
2. Graft 11	J. E. Cuthbertson	31ft. T.31	
3. Fair Envoy	John Mills	30ft. Halmatic 30	
4. Jimmy O'Goblin	Miss K. Philp	50ft. Luna 50	
5. Mushka	Howard Taylor	31ft. Catamaran	
6. Esta Amelia	D. J. Connor	32ft. Contessa	
7. Clair De Lune	P. B. Hughes	30ft. Starlight	
8. Presto	Lt. Cdr. A. J. Poole	54ft. Trimaran	Royal Marines
9. Pipas-B	Dr. R. A. Haworth	32ft. Sadler	
10. Dominion	D. A. Rice	40ft. Freedom 40	
11. Dawn Rose	D. Burnshall	30ft. Halmatic 30	
12. Black Arrow	Fl. Lt. I. Moffett		Royal Air Force
13. Misfit	J. S. Postlethwaite	26ft. Diamond Cat.	
14. Heatwave	M. J. Scowcroft	35ft. Carter Ragtime	
15. Cantata	Maj. N. G. W. Lang	32ft. Contesse	Royal Artillery
16. Galvinator	J. A. Turner	29ft. Elizabethan 29	Merseyside Police
17. Moody Kintyre	Brian Reid	33ft. Moody 33	
18.	Reay McKay		
19. Whisperer	G. D. Tatton-Brown	29ft. Seal 31	
20. Colonsay of Melford	Lt. Cdr. J. Morris R.N. Retd.	31ft. Nicholson	Infantry Junior Leaders
21. Cerdd-Yr-Awel	Geoff Metcalf	33ft. Sigma 33'	
22. White Knight 11	Capt. J. W. W. Bingham	32ft. Contessa 32	Royal Tank Regiment
23. Papageno	J. L. Flack	34ft. 101	
24. Red Kipper	Ian D. Platts	32ft. Contessa 32	
25. Clairella	Derick Nesbit	31ft. Delta 94	
26. Jan of Santa Cruz	Mike Whipp	31ft. Trimaran	
27. Halvic	Harold Beer	42ft. Nicholson	
28. Everthmic	Peter Mathias	30ft. Europa 3000	
29. Queen Charlotte	Maj. W. R. Waterhouse	30ft. Pioneer 30	Royal Lancers
30. Blue Royale	R. A. MacGregor	33ft. Sigma 33	

HELICOPTER DISPLAY BY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AT 2.30 pm.

The Race Committee wish to thank all the many Organisations who have supported their efforts so whole - heartedly.

BARMOUTH TO FORT WILLIAM

THREE PEAKS YACHT RACE

List of Individual Feats 1980 Race

Fastest Sailing Times *Hrs.Mins.*

Barmouth to Caernarfon	Damart Major B. Littlejohns R.E.	8.59
Caernarfon to Ravenglass	"E" Motion H. G. Jones	17.50
Ravenglass to Fort William	Black Arrow Ft. Lt. T. Chilvers RAF.	63.55

Fastest Mountain Times

Caernarfon - Snowdon	Lt. J. Rye RM. and	
Caernarfon Samphire of West Mersea	Cpt. M. Bowman RM.	3.45

Ravenglas - Scafell Pike		
Ravenglas	- do - - do -	4.47

Fort William - Ben Nevis- Damart	Sgt. Maj. T. Davies and	
Fort William	S/Sgt. S. Harrison RE.	2.45

Fastest Times Overall

First Leg; Dead Heat		
Samphire of West Mersea		13.14
Damart		13.14
Second Leg		
Booma (G. W. Emery)		28.32
Third Leg		
Black Arrow		67.19

Centre pages of Race Programme