



MAIN PICTURE: TIM WRIGHT

*Frenesi* off the Needles at the America's Cup Jubilee, 2001



*Frenesi* at Lakes Yard, Poole, June 2005 – photo by new owner

THOMAS BOARD

# HEART OR HEAD

## A CLASSIC DILEMMA

Thomas Board wanted to own a classic but first had to overcome fears, doubts and the ‘chains of logic’. With wise advice he soon became confident enough to make a choice

Having sold our Bavaria 34, my wife Anisa and I were now considering a first classic yacht. I had always wanted a wooden yacht and over the years had accumulated some knowledge, reading about the post-war designs I had in mind, the surveying of wooden craft and the buying process. However, to go from contemplating a classic to actually buying one felt like a big step.

I started contacting lots of people connected with wooden boats. In one of my first conversations with David Orton at the British Classic Yacht Club, he asked: “Why

do you want to own a classic?” I described my appreciation of everything a classic had to offer, and we had a thoroughly enjoyable chat that scratched my classic itch.

Later, however, my excitement turned into discomfort as I continued thinking about this question. I was gathering more information, but was I honestly confronting my doubts?

My emotions swung between happy anticipation and fear of the unknown. The strongest fears comprised the constant threat of rot, the risks of buying a complete lemon, and forever being tied to



Far left: *Frenesi* ashore at Lathams, Poole, 2005; left: view forward from *Frenesi*'s helm

DAVID HART

BARNEY SANDEMAN



Barbecue at Barney Sandeman's, celebrating completion of the survey: Barney far left, Thomas in dark blue shirt



Frenesi's saloon: teak, oak and cream leather



HANS WIGART



BEKEN OF COWES

never-ending maintenance. I was living my own 'Groundhog Day' experience, re-evaluating, over and again, the merits of classic versus modern yachts.

Suddenly it dawned on me. A classic was never going to pop out as the logical choice from a list of pros and cons. The real choice was simple. My soul was stirred at the mere sight of beautiful classic wooden yachts. I admired and appreciated the skill, passion and pride that craftsmen invested to make every boat special. My values naturally drew me towards classic boats, and I imagined the enormous sense of joy and pride that would accompany ownership. I could choose to make a decision based on logical evaluation, or I could make the more inspired choice!

Feeling lighter, having freed myself from the chains of logic, I shared my revelation with Anisa. If I'd dared to notice, her face would probably have said it all. Anyway, we agreed that the real decision was whether we could live with a classic, and the only

way to tell was to look at some. Our main objective would be to refine our ideas and learn more. I found two boats on the internet that were great examples of their type: *Amokura* and *Frenesi of Clynder*.

I felt a child-like vulnerability from my lack of knowledge and experience of wooden boats. Some previous email exchanges with Peter Gregson at Wooden Ships and Peter Koenig at Baum & Koenig (Hamburg) had proved insightful. I did some further research.

One broker had posted *Amokura's* last full survey on the internet, and I digested every word. I contacted Fraser Noble at the McGruer yard that built *Frenesi*, and who had sold her to the current owner. I also obtained further advice from Dan Houston at *Classic Boat* and David Orton at the BCYC.

With viewing appointments set up, we set off from London to Hamble to see *Amokura*, a 50ft (15.2m), flush-decked, very handsome 1950s gentleman's yacht.

Advice from Peter Gregson was ringing in my ears. As a husband and wife team with a small child, we needed a boat that could be sailed single-handed. We decided *Amokura* was too powerful.

The next day we drove to meet Barney Sandeman at the Sandeman Yacht Company on Poole Harbour. *Frenesi* is a 43ft (13.27m) yawl, the third of four similar designs by James McGruer. She was completed at the McGruer yard in 1961, and voted best of show at the London Boat Show.

We motored out in Barney's rib towards *Frenesi's* swinging mooring. As she came into view, my brain disengaged and my heart soared: she was so much prettier than the photos. Aboard, and down below, *Frenesi* continued to cast a spell on me.

Back at home, Anisa told me she also liked *Frenesi*, but pointed out that the internal dimensions of the boat were smaller than we ideally wanted.

I half-reasoned something about compromise, and no boat being perfect. My head knew the smart thing to do was cool off and think.

The synchronicity of events seemed to be conspiring in my classic quest, as encouragement turned up at every step of the way. I had earlier written to Tom and Vicky Jackson, in their ninth year of circumnavigating. Their yacht *Sunstone* is an S&S-designed sloop built by McGruer in 1965. I had asked them for advice about buying a classic wooden yacht for long-term cruising, our ultimate goal. They were just back from a land trip in South Africa, and emailed us a wealth of practical experience and advice that confirmed *Frenesi* as an ideal choice.

Anisa tried reasoning with me, but I was too far gone. We made a good offer and it was accepted. David Orton recommended his surveyor Adrian Overbury to me. The survey passed without mishap and, after a windless test sail, we concluded the purchase – *Frenesi* was ours.

Now, I guess you're thinking that I was supposed to be only refining my ideas. How did I suddenly overcome my fears

*"The smart thing to do was to cool off"*

### Information and contacts we found useful

**Barney Sandeman** Sandeman Yacht Company – the broker who sold *Frenesi* to us. Ex-Olympic sailor, races his own X boat in Poole Harbour, mad about classic boats, very nice chap. [www.sandemanyachtcompany.co.uk](http://www.sandemanyachtcompany.co.uk) or Tel: +44 (0)1202 717779

**Peter Gregson** Wooden Ships (Devon, UK) – specialist classic yacht broker who had *Frenesi* listed; very knowledgeable and been in the industry for years; gave us excellent advice. [www.woodenships.co.uk](http://www.woodenships.co.uk) or Tel: +44 (0)1803 833899

**Peter Koenig** Baum & Koenig (Hamburg, Germany) – specialist classic yacht broker; fluent English speaker; very knowledgeable; exchanged endless numbers of emails with superb advice. [www.classic-yachts.de](http://www.classic-yachts.de) or Tel: +49 (0)40 36 67 02

**Tom & Vicky Jackson** Circumnavigators aboard their classic S&S sloop *Sunstone*; great website journal and an inspiration in their passion for long-distance classic cruising and racing. [www.sunstonesailing.com](http://www.sunstonesailing.com)

**Lin & Larry Pardey** I've read two of their books so far, and thoroughly recommend them as inspiration for long-term, adventurous cruising in wooden yachts. [www.landlpardey.com](http://www.landlpardey.com)

**The British Classic Yacht Club** I had lots of help from David Orton, secretary of the club. I was introduced to David Orton by *Frenesi's* previous owner David Hart, who was a member. [www.britishclassicyachtclub.org](http://www.britishclassicyachtclub.org)

**McGruer** Based at Clynder in Scotland, the original McGruer yard built *Frenesi*. Fraser Noble now runs the show, and was extremely helpful during our search. They have extensive records of all McGruer boats. [www.mcgruer-boats.co.uk](http://www.mcgruer-boats.co.uk)

**Sparkman & Stephens Association website** A great place to learn about this famous design house and see beautiful pictures. [www.s-and-s-association.org](http://www.s-and-s-association.org)

