



THE JOLIE BRISE

A TEIGNMOUTH STORY



By Clare McComb





Putting this little book together has been a pleasure because of the exciting way in which the project has unfolded and the warmth and generosity of those, in Teignmouth and beyond, who have helped to make it happen.

My thanks go, first, to J D Wetherspoon for its policy of researching local history and, in particular, to Tim Martin for his sponsorship. I am indebted to Lin Watson and the Teign Heritage Museum team for their wonderful, comprehensive advice and technical assistance, as well as to Viv Wilson MBE for allowing me to use her splendidly researched material.

My gratitude also goes to Sidney Briggs' relations who could not have done more to help, searching their attics and storage boxes to reveal documents and artefacts which had been unknown beforehand outside of the family circle. Toby Marris, skipper of *Jolie Brise*, and Sue Stone, from Dauntsey's School, have (as always) been constantly generous with their time, support and permission to use their beautiful images of the boat.

I am grateful to Jacques Taglang, Dauntsey's School and Rick Tomlinson, Syd Hook's daughters Jill and Sandra, the Mystic Seaport Museum USA (Rosenfeld Collection) and the Warneford, Martin and Morgan Giles families for allowing use of their photographs in the book.

My thanks go, lastly, to *Jolie Brise* herself. Since her launch in 1913, she has always been thought of as special and is now one of the great iconic classic boats. Her exploits helped to jump-start the sport of British Ocean Racing, and her achievement in winning the Fastnet Race three times has not yet been equalled.

With Dauntsey's School, she is still changing the life of young people, carrying them safely far beyond their geographical knowledge and proving that they can rise to meet amazing challenges. George Martin and Sidney Briggs would be very proud to see *Jolie Brise* today.

Clare McComb



Waiting for the tide

Around 1924, a quiet event took place in Teignmouth which was to shape the future of ocean racing across the globe. The well-known international yachtsman George Martin, aka Lieutenant Commander EG Martin OBE, was alongside a jetty, sitting peacefully in the companionway of the newly purchased boat he had just sailed to Teignmouth for a refit, having brought her over from her native France in a somewhat shabby condition. She was called *Jolie Brise*, and he was waiting for her to float with the incoming tide.

Then, *Jolie Brise* was relatively unknown; today, she is world famous as the inaugural winner of the mighty Fastnet Race in 1925, and, at the time of writing, is still the only boat to have won that coveted trophy three times. She has also been awarded two Blue Water Medals, which have been described as sailing's equivalent of an Oscar, while, within today's 'Tall Ships', she is feared as a determined competitor and frequent winner of their races and challenges.

In short, *Jolie Brise* is one of sailing's icons – but, in 1924, all of these adventures and achievements lay in the future.



Jolie Brise in London in modern times (Dauntsey's School)

A meeting which changed two lives

While George waited on the tide, a man who was walking by suddenly stopped at *Jolie Brise*'s bow and took several paces, until he was abreast of the mast, in order to run an expert eye over her rigging. After a while, he continued on, but turned back to take a last long hard look and suddenly blurted out: "Excuse me sir, do you want any hands?" He had fallen in love with the boat, as people still do today: love at first sight – and was asking her 6-foot-7-inch giant of an owner for a job!



Sid, Henrietta and baby George, c.1920 (Briggs family)

George answered with the truth – that he hadn't "any plans as yet", but the man's face as he turned away was so instantly despairing that he hadn't the heart to let him go; instead, he called him back, offering five shillings for assistance to "shift the yacht on to the buoys, once she had floated off". This decision was to change both their lives. The new hand's name was Sidney Briggs – and that afternoon's work turned into a day, then into a week in which he proved himself indispensable; eventually, he was formally shipped on as 'skipper', to become George's right-hand man. After that first meeting, the rest is history.

Sid Briggs' life story

Briggs had been at sea most of his life, but his home was now firmly in Teignmouth. Around 1912, while working the 'black and white run' between Teignmouth and Antwerp (carrying white clay out and coal back) on the schooner Betty Russell, he had lost his heart to dark-haired Henrietta, who came from one of the port's oldest families, the Paddons: they ran the Ship Inn, where sailors commonly gathered in those days. His sweetheart was actually born in the tavern. The war kept the pair apart, but they were married at the local Congregational church in 1918 at the end of hostilities, when Sid returned to claim his girl. It is known that Henrietta once worked in the steam laundry, where the *Jolie Brise* pub now stands, and the couple raised two children, George and Gwen, in their little house, number 16 Alexandra Terrace, where they shared over 60 years together; it was a stone's throw from the harbour and the River Teign, which leads out to the open sea.



The Steam Laundry where Henrietta worked – Henrietta is on the far left (Viv Wilson)



Later, George learned that, on the day they first met, Briggs had been heading for South America. His bag was already packed and he was intending to join a steamer at the Albert Dock next day. Sid was a proper seafarer and, in those years, was content to head off to any port in the world which might take his fancy, to find work and send his wage back to keep good food on the family table. Later, he used to say that, until he retired, he had spent more time at sea than on land. However, although, by the end of his life, he had sailed into just about every port in the world, Sid always loved getting home to Teignmouth. He always said that there was "something about the place" which made people want to come back; he'd be away for up to two years at a time, but always longed to return to the natural harbour and the estuary which had been there for centuries. Somehow, man-made harbours like Torquay had none of the same appeal.

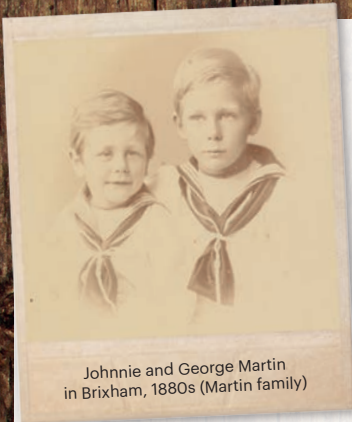


Sid and Henrietta on their golden wedding, 1968, with children George and Gwen (Briggs family)

Rejecting family expectations

Sid's new employer had a far-from-conventional background. George's father had been an army officer in India, in the 1880s, and had left his eldest son and his brother Johnnie (then just tiny children) in the care of their friends, the Hoggs, who owned Berry Head House, high up on the cliff top overlooking Brixham.

Mrs Hogg's father had been the Reverend Henry Lyte whose hymns 'Abide with Me' and 'Praise my Soul the King of Heaven' are world renowned today. The family was at the heart of the Brixham community and took both little boys to St Peter's, the fishermen's church, where kindly trawlermen took pity on them as they reached 9 or 10, shipping them out to sea on the sailing smacks alongside the other local boys; no doubt, this helped them to escape the mostly female household up at Berry Head.

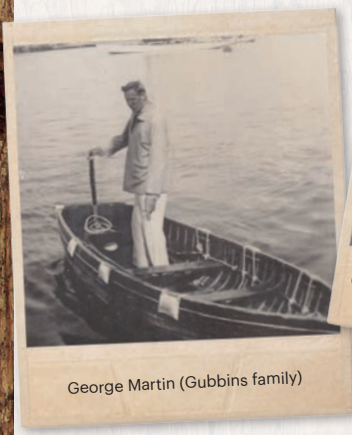


Johnnie and George Martin
in Brixham, 1880s (Martin family)

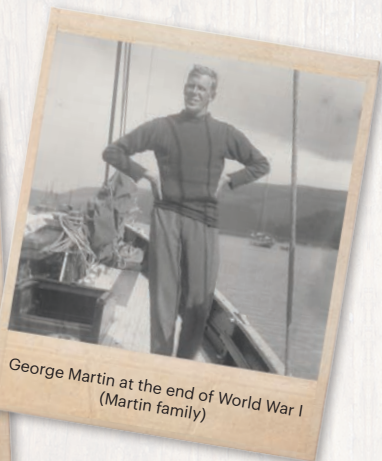
In the term times, George and Johnnie were sent away to prep school and eventually to Eton, for the Martin family was a banking family, and this was their expected path. However, neither George nor his brother wanted anything to do with that world; they preferred to be off with the trawlers. When he left Eton, George decided not to take

up a place at Oxford, heading straight back to the boatyards in Brixham, where he set about learning a shipwright's trade. At the same time, he went out with the smacks, both summer and winter, 'round the land' off Trevoise and on the Lundy ground, running the fish to market at Milford Haven. His mother must have been tearing out her elegantly coiffured hair!

In the end, he could handle a trawler as well as the fishermen and valued their praise more than any other. His passion was for working boats, and this is how he came first to find, and then to own, the pilot cutter *Jolie Brise*. The world of banking and a professional career were the last things he wanted: all that mattered was a life at sea with the wind in his sails.



George Martin (Gubbins family)



George Martin at the end of World War I
(Martin family)

Sid's life afloat

Sidney Briggs, *Jolie Brise's* new skipper, shared George's love of the sea, yet their life up to the moment they met had followed very different paths. Sid had run away to sea before he hit his teens and, according to later interviews, had endured many thrashings with a rope's end in those early days as a cabin boy, at everyone's beck and call. Later, he worked in 'spreetys' (spritsail barges), mostly 'stackies' carrying hay into London and returning with manure for the fields, and in 'boomy barges' (coasting barges which often went down the Channel as far as Falmouth or up the north coast to Newcastle). He had sailed with brigantines and schooners on the coast, steam trawlers, deepwater tramp steamers and many other vessels, before teaming up with George Martin, where his experience and seaman's instincts were to become vital to *Jolie Brise's* future success. What Sid Briggs didn't know about rigging, tides and wind probably wasn't worth knowing – and George respected this deeply.

In those days, no one would comment if a photograph of a ship's crew were displayed with everyone named except the 'paid hand'. However, although Sid always addressed his new employer as 'Sir' or 'Commander Martin', he found himself being treated with unusual respect, having his advice listened to and literally taken on board. George's teachers and mentors had been sailing fishermen, so he had a natural admiration for any man with practical seafaring wisdom, whatever his class. Sid was full of strange sea lore and superstitions, which George also respected. Both men worked hard setting *Jolie Brise* to rights, with George giving serious consideration to all of Briggs' suggestions.



The Sailing Barge Vigilant, by George Martin (Martin family)



Sid in his *Jolie Brise* uniform (Briggs family)



Finding the dream boat

As for *Jolie Brise* herself, she had been launched at Le Havre, France, in December 1913. She was meticulously constructed by Monsieur Paumelle, an expert builder of pilot boats from that port, where she was thought to be the best vessel he'd ever made. She needed to be fast and able to withstand all weathers, for in the ultracompetitive world of the pilot boat, the first out to the client ship got the commission, and there were no second chances – winner took all. By the time George found her, the age of sail was fading, so she had been relegated to working as a 'tunny boat', catching the large mackerel-type fish (which ran from six to about 20 pounds in weight) by means of long lines and lures made of horsehair. He noted his great relief that the strong-smelling catch had never been stored below deck!

After travelling to France to help a friend to buy a boat, he had been shown *Jolie Brise's* 'half model' (a wooden model used in the construction of boats, showing only half the hull, with no rigging etc) and had fallen in love – hook, line and sinker. *Jolie Brise* is still having that effect on people, even today. In fact, George made firm enquiries to buy her before he ever saw her himself. When he finally did set eyes on her, she was a sorry sight, dirty and with much of her rigging rotten, but he never regretted his purchase. Beneath the grime of mud, smoke, tar, paint and oil, there was not a trace of bad wood anywhere. After a couple of days' violent scrubbing with soft soap and hot water, he had made her 'perfectly sweet and clean', ready to sail to England for her proper refit.



Launch of *Jolie Brise*, 1913
(Jacques Taglang Collection)

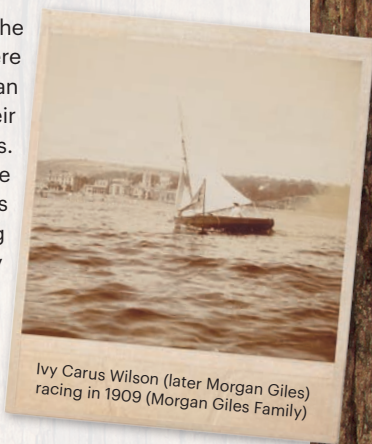


Jolie Brise after her launch, 1913
(Jacques Taglang Collection)



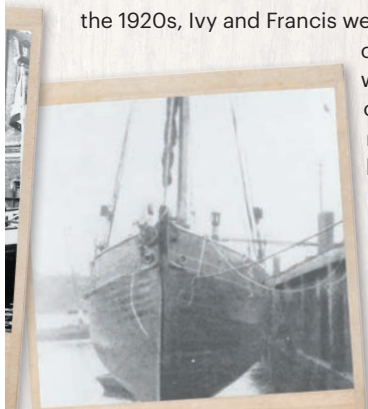
Jolie Brise in Teignmouth

George chose Teignmouth for the work because this was where his friends, the famous Morgan Giles family, had based their boat-building and design business. In the golden summers before World War I, George, Francis Morgan Giles and other pioneering yachtsmen like Algernon Maudslay and Captain RT Dixon had raced up the southwest coast from regatta to regatta, with their shiny new 'six metres', specially built to the design of the new 'International Rule' for racing yachts. It was great fun, both during the contests and afterwards, when they carried on the competition, with spontaneous races in little West of England dinghies, drawing lots for who should sail which. In the evenings, they celebrated their victories in the elegant yacht clubs, before racing one another towards the next regatta, onward, ever onward. Friendships forged then lasted a lifetime.



Ivy Carus Wilson (later Morgan Giles) racing in 1909 (Morgan Giles Family)

Meanwhile, Francis Morgan Giles was making his name as a designer and builder of racing yachts. His bride-to-be, Ivy Carus Wilson, from Shaldon, was every bit as much a competitor: her cut-and-thrust diary from these prewar years is full of tales of hard-fought victories in sailing dinghies and the repeated skulduggery of male competitors who couldn't bear a woman to beat them again and again. By the 1920s, Ivy and Francis were married, and the reputation of the Morgan Giles yard was well established. It was an obvious choice for George to refit *Jolie Brise* there, with the help of the newly enlisted Sid Briggs. The yard's job book, at this time, records only that 'scraping the bottom and painting' was carried out for 'Commander Martin,' showing how much George and Sid did themselves.



Jolie Brise (Martin family)



It is interesting to note that *Jolie Brise's* subsequent owners had an engine fitted at the yard in 1928, when Briggs had been kept on as skipper, continuing the Teignmouth connection. This must have dismayed Sid, for he never trusted motors and would prefer to cross the channel in an orange box with a handkerchief as a sail, rather than use an auxiliary engine. "It's sail every time for me," he told a newspaper in later years. "Even with the smallest piece of sail, it is usually possible to blow into safety, when trouble occurs, whereas a motorboat needs a mechanic if something goes wrong!"

The Morgan Giles family would often row over from Shaldon to see how work was progressing, and the children could be coaxed down from *Jolie Brise's* rigging only by large chocolate cakes – which everyone enjoyed. George was such a good friend of the family that, apparently, a special extra-long bath was fitted into the Gileses' family home, so that he could soak the working grime from his 6-foot-7-inch frame.

As the pilot cutter was gradually transformed into a comfortable cruising yacht, it became clear that Briggs was going to stay on when the work was finished and that his plans for South America had been permanently replaced by something much more exciting and close to home. He had great skill in transforming a boat and, through both men's hard work, *Jolie Brise* reached her true potential. She was to need all her strength and manoeuvrability for the challenges which lay ahead.



George Martin (Martin family)

Organising the first Fastnet Race

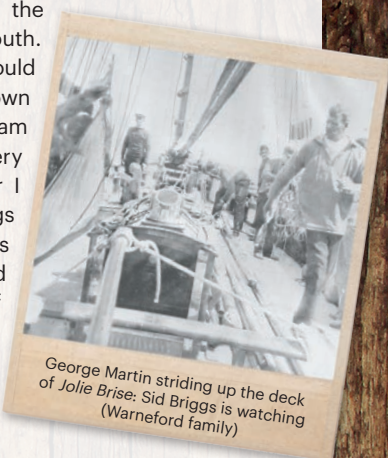
George was working as a journalist at the time, writing articles for both

Yachting Monthly and *Yachting World*, and had to leave for London entrusting his beloved *Jolie Brise* to Briggs' capable hands. A colleague and well-known journalist, Weston Martyr, had returned from America bursting with news of the exciting new sport of ocean racing, especially the Bermuda Race in which he had taken part.



George's enthusiasm was all fired up, so the pair began to organise their own 'ocean race' with a small group of colleagues and friends, much to the disgust of many in the sailing establishment who denounced the plan to race for days out of sight of land as dangerous. The idea was even condemned as a stunt!

Notwithstanding the opposition, this determined group, by now spearheaded by George, set about planning a course from the Isle of Wight, around the Fastnet Rock and back to Plymouth. His confidence that the race would be safe stemmed from his own experience out with the Brixham fishing smacks in those very waters and also his World War I service, working with rescue tugs in the 'western approaches'. As funds were short, he provided the silver Challenge Cup himself and invited the competitors to end the race at a dinner which he was laying on at the Royal Western Yacht Club, in Plymouth, where he was Rear Commodore. The scene was set for a fascinating contest, while the preceding public row in the yachting press had made for great publicity. Everyone's eyes were on the race as the starting gun sounded on 15 August 1925.



George Martin striding up the deck of Jolie Brise; Sid Briggs is watching (Warneford family)

Round the Fastnet rock and home

This first Fastnet Race had only seven starters, where they had been expecting up to 16 entrants. In particular, an American failed to turn up. However, the gallant seven battled it out, through stormy weather and desolate calms, broken gear and dangerous tidal currents. Even today, with all of our 21st-century technology, the race is considered to be one of THE classics of the sport, often compared with the Grand National as a supreme test of courage and endurance. In those days, meteorological information was scarce, and the risks much greater, but the seven crews knew that they were pioneers and trail-blazers: confidence and excitement were high from the start.

Despite it being a race, real comradeship and good humour were evident throughout, with yachts passing one another information or rowing out to visit or photograph fellow competitors when they were becalmed. One boat's log notes that they awoke to find all four yachts, which had been visible the evening before, in the same position the following morning – nothing had moved; another skipper wrote that he feared, at times, that they were sailing in circles. As the motley collection of cruising craft made its way through the fishing grounds and shipping lanes (such as they were in the 1920s) towards the Fastnet lighthouse, the sharp eyes of local trawlermen kept a note of which boat was where, and the information was passed on by word of mouth and reported in the press nationwide. No doubt, the Teignmouth pubs buzzed with news, together with all of the other pubs along the south coast.

Wildlife on the way

There was wonderful wildlife to be seen on the way: a huge creature, perhaps a small whale or grampus, came to see *Jolie Brise*. He broke surface, snorted and played around as they watched him, dark grey and ivory white, passing under their keel. Another time, a huge troop of little porpoises tore along beside them, in a series of beautiful leaps and dives, 'behaving for all the world like a pack of puppies let loose in a field – while their elders swam sedately beside'. Sometimes, the crew was puzzled by strange fan-shaped radiations of light which began perhaps 40 yards ahead of them and spread away on the water on either bow; these turned out to be huge shoals of fish, countless millions of them, which the boat had disturbed.



Jolie Brise at the Fastnet Rock
in her centenary year
(Dauntsey's School and Rick Tomlinson)

Safety first

As the race went on, George began to relax, realising that *Jolie Brise* could cheerfully carry sail which he would have been afraid to set at the beginning. Besides this, the crew had become accustomed to the working of the ship and the handling of the gear, so everything

seemed to proceed more smoothly and swiftly as the days went by. There were occasions when George exercised discretion, delaying sending Briggs aloft to unlace a sail at night in the troubled waters around Land's End, erring on the side of caution, even though it could have lost them time in the hard-fought race. Sid, on the other hand, had never feared the sea, although he respected it; he refused to panic and conveyed his coolness under pressure to those around him. Alf Broom, his friend and Teignmouth pilot, once described him as 'the finest seaman the port has ever known': those talents and instincts were never more needed than in the storms and calms of that first Fastnet Race.

For George, safety was paramount, even if it cost them victory, for he had learned the hard way that the sea can be cruel. There was one moment when Briggs could have been swept overboard. *Jolie Brise* was running before a fair wind, so they had set their giant spinnaker (balloon sail), but, this time, the sail itself seemed to take charge. It had not been made fast by the time a fresh breeze hit, and Briggs was being dragged over the bow until his yells brought help, only just in time. For once, he raised his voice, which may have saved his life on that occasion.

The *Jolie Brise* crew in the Fastnet Race, 1925 – Sid Briggs (Skipper), Jimmy Green (Cook), Dick Maclean Buckley, George Martin and Weston Martyr (Warneford family)



Wonderful wildlife was seen during the first Fastnet Race (Ken Bushe)



Eventually, *Jolie Brise* rounded the Fastnet Rock in first place and found her wind; she romped home ahead of the field, with what George called the best sailing he had ever known. At the end-of-race dinner, he proposed, to his exhausted and exhilarated guests, the foundation of a new Ocean Racing Club – and was immediately elected its first Commodore to the sound of loud cheering. The club, which we know today as the Royal Ocean Racing Club, came into being because George Martin had the vision to see that the new British sport of off-shore racing needed an institution to run it, not just a series of individual races.

Even then, he had other plans afoot. The name of *Jolie Brise* was soon splashed all over the newspapers again, but, this time, for a very different voyage. As before, Sidney Briggs was to be a vital member of his team.

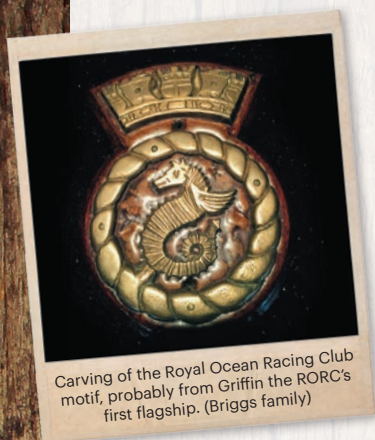
The letters tell the story

In 2013, some letters fell out from a dusty old book in a Martin family library corner. They had been tucked away, forgotten for decades, but told an exciting tale. In them,

George Martin was writing to his mother

about his new project: *Jolie Brise* was going to cross the Atlantic to take part in the very Bermuda Race about which Weston Martyr had been so excited. The idea, as explained to his extremely fretful mama, was to forge new links across the ocean and to invite some Americans to race little *Jolie Brise* back to England to take part in the forthcoming 1926 Fastnet.

George was using the same crew as in the Ocean Race. Weston Martyr was coming, and, of course, Sidney Briggs was the skipper. He was responsible



Carving of the Royal Ocean Racing Club motif, probably from Griffin the RORC's first flagship. (Briggs family)



Jolie Brise's rigging today (Dauntsey's School)

for the general running of the boat, the storage, maintenance and care of the sails and was on call at any moment of the day or night. George himself was also on call, as was Warneford, the navigator, who had to take sextant readings, but the rest alternated their watches with rest periods. There were two 'paid hands', the other being a young man called Jimmy Green who had been taken on as cook, but was prone to occasional seasickness. At those times, Briggs would fill in for him, producing excellent curries and rock buns in the compact galley.

Setting off across the Atlantic

Having filled *Jolie Brise* with provisions, the yacht set out for America. However, they didn't cast off on the first day of good weather: George wrote that he delayed, lest the adventure might have been spoiled for Briggs who had a 'sailor's horror' of setting out on a Friday. He said that it would have ruined the whole voyage for him.

George also made it very clear to everyone that the fact that someone was being paid did not matter – they were all equals, once the voyage was under way. A happy crew was the basis of a successful adventure, and George's ground rules certainly worked. Weston Martyr did become a bit tired and tetchy, retiring to his bunk to feed on the complete Edam cheese which he stored in his locker, whereupon George responded as a true leader by taking double watches, remaining at the helm all night, if need be, fortified by strong onion soup and Bovril.

Briggs had sailed the trade winds before, and was a tower of strength, whether up the rigging or in the galley. Their new big 'Yankee topsail' was his favourite, for he had been a bargeman and truly loved big sails, so the crew decided to call it



Edith Martin, George's worried mother!
(Martin family)



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George Martin at the helm, 1926
(Warneford family)



Jolie Brise from the rigging
(Dauntsey's School)

'Briggs' pet': George said that his skipper's face positively beamed when the sail first came on board and he carried it away to his sleeping quarters to sew hanks on it until two in the morning. During the voyage, Sid kept everyone's spirits up, cracking jokes and composing a special '*Jolie Brise*' song as he worked.

The days were both uneventful and full of events. There were weeks running before the trade winds. Later, memories of that time lost their detail, blending into one in George's mind. He felt that it would have made no difference whether they had sailed for years or months or days. Rainclouds swept like cataracts across the sea, roaring as they came, but were soon gone – and the winds blew as steadily as ever. Sometimes, the

yacht was carried bodily astern, when a big sea broke on the weather bow, but *Jolie Brise* seemed to look after herself in a curious way, dodging the heaviest breaking seas to come through unhurt.



The *Jolie Brise* crew
at the Bermuda Race
(Mystic Seaport, Rosenfeld Collection, USA)

Briggs the right-hand man

Throughout it all, Sidney Briggs was at Martin's right hand, advising, checking, noticing potential problems with the sails and keeping *Jolie Brise* shipshape. As skipper, his job was to know exactly where everything was stowed – not only the sails, but also spare shackles, spikes, marlines, chafing gear, sail twine, canvas and all necessary odds and ends; hence, he could never truly be 'off shift', for he had to be on hand to answer questions and solve difficulties. He both identified problems and proposed solutions: George wrote that he had the greatest respect for Briggs' opinion on everything connected with the yacht's rigging and gear. He said that much time and considerable expense could have been saved, in some instances, had Briggs' experience and advice been followed from the start!

Very often, there were real dangers. Once, George came on deck in the Horse Latitudes, where the weather is very unpredictable; Briggs gave him the tiller and went forward to get the topsail down. This proved too difficult, so he returned to double lash and secure the helm. The boat suddenly gave a great swoop and, for the next quarter of an hour, she ran away with them, dead before the wind, sailing at a frantic speed, far faster than she ever had before.

George wrote that it remained the one moment when *Jolie Brise* was threatened with disaster; had they tried to slow her, she could have been dismasted or knocked flat and swept by a high wave as she came broadside onto it. The sails could simply have blown away, but Briggs' professionalism in handling a dangerous situation saved the day. In later life, he commented that he felt he had 'an instinct for trouble' and could sense when something was wrong. It was an instinct which had saved him before, when danger threatened, and it saved *Jolie Brise* and her crew, on this occasion.



Sid Briggs in the rigging



The Bermuda Race and the Blue Water Medal

In the Bermuda Race itself, *Jolie Brise* surprised everyone. She was up against far swifter yachts, much more suited to the local conditions, and was not expected to do well. In fact, she led for many hours, flying ahead of the rest, to the amazement of all. Only a patch of fluky winds and the resultant broken rigging slowed her. George later wrote that she might win two out of three such races, if they had the chance to compete on future occasions. Once again, Briggs' deft hand with a needle kept them in the chase, for he mended a torn spinnaker with the saloon tablecloth, and the repair held up well enough for them to come first in their class. It was a popular result, as many Americans had half hoped to see this strange little British yacht from across the pond win, despite the odds. *Jolie Brise* and her crew returned to England



Sid Briggs' repaired spinnaker (Martin family)

to public acclaim and were awarded the famous Blue Water Medal for their exploits.

Disaster and new owners

Then, after racing in the 1926 Fastnet Race, George advertised *Jolie Brise* for sale. No one knows why. It is possible that he was ill or also that he had run out of money. It took ages for her to sell. Eventually, potential buyers were directed to Morgan Giles, at Teignmouth, as agent for the purchase. Briggs stayed with *Jolie Brise*, employed as skipper by her new owners, although this may not always have been a comfortable arrangement.

She had many more adventures and owners, not least of whom was Bobby Somerset, who took her back across the Atlantic to try again in the Bermuda Race. This time, she won admiration for different reasons, returning in her tracks to help *Adriana*, a fellow competitor, which had caught fire and was setting off distress beacons. Dangerous as it was,



Somerset sailed close to the burning yacht and saved all but one of her crew. Of course, the race was lost, but *Jolie Brise* was awarded a second Blue Water Medal for her courage. Briggs had not been there to help with the rescue; the yacht was now manned by a new team of 'paid hands', and Sidney and the *Jolie Brise* had parted company for ever.

Perhaps it is as well that Sid was not part of that crew, for apparently Somerset's instructions were that 'hands' had to use a bucket, whereas 'gentlemen' could avail themselves of the lavatory which George had thoughtfully installed. It would have been hard to work within a system so different from the equality insisted on by George Martin. However, *Jolie Brise* won back-to-back Fastnets with Bobby Somerset in 1929 and 30. She is the only yacht to have won the race three times, and her place is assured, as both a great winner and a great pioneer, in the history of ocean racing.



Jolie Brise (Dauntsey's School)

Several owners

Over the following years, *Jolie Brise* had a succession of owners. She flew the American flag in the Mediterranean, sailing to Algiers, Ibiza, Sardinia, Monte Carlo and Venice. In World War II, she was requisitioned by the Admiralty, but laid up at Shoreham in a mud berth; post war, her name was translated to Pleasant Breeze by some brave, but inexperienced, folk who planned to sail her to a new life in New Zealand. They had underestimated the task

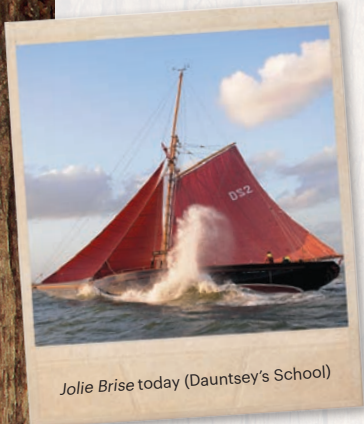
and were forced to give up the attempt, leaving her in Portugal. Next, in this stream of owners, was a small group of engineers from that country who knew her history and had great fun with her.



Jolie Brise's barometer (by kind permission of Viv Wilson, and Jill and Sandra, Syd Hook's daughters)



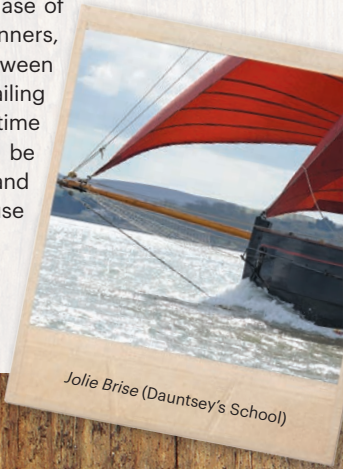
Eventually, one of them, Luis Lobato, bought the others out, and *Jolie Brise* became his family boat, cruising down to the Algarve and Gibraltar and the French Mediterranean coast, catching swordfish and partying on board, when the occasion presented. However, life in post-war Europe was not always stable: although Lobato was a highly respected member of society, co-founder of a new university, Trustee of the Gulbenkian Foundation and honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects, he was also politically conservative and there was a revolution looming. From her humble beginnings as a working boat, *Jolie Brise* could now be seen as a symbol of wealth. In the new political climate, there were no longer proper facilities for keeping such a grand old lady in peak condition, and Lobato eventually decided to sell her. He brought her back to England in 1975, where a new life beckoned.



Jolie Brise today (Dauntsey's School)

Her new life in England

At this time, classic boats were highly fashionable, so there was now huge interest from enthusiasts wishing to purchase perhaps the most famous vintage ocean-racer in the world. The final outcome has proven to be *Jolie Brise's* salvation. In 1977, Bill Parish, master at Dauntsey's School and Commodore of the Sailing Club there, had the vision to negotiate a part-purchase of this most famous of Fastnet winners, in a tripartite arrangement between the School, the International Sailing Craft Association and the Maritime Museum in Exeter. She was to be shared between the museum and the school, whose pupils could use her for much of the year.



Jolie Brise (Dauntsey's School)



Into the future with Dauntsey's

In 2003, Dauntsey's bought her outright; she is now available for charter in term time, while the pupils sail her in the holidays – and what adventures they have had: circumnavigating the British Isles five times; sailing across the Atlantic or up above the Arctic Circle or whale-watching in the Azores. *Jolie Brise* also competes in Tall Ships races, coming in the top three most years and winning outright five times. Over 175,000

nautical miles have been sailed and over 140,000 meals cooked on board; in addition, the pupils have carried out more than 15,000 hours' maintenance work themselves – and famous visitors have included Prince Philip, Princess Anne, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, Ellen MacArthur and the pilot cutter expert Tom Cunliffe. She has taken part in the Round the Island Race on many occasions and is still going strong.

In 2013, her centenary year, a Blue Plaque to *Jolie Brise* and George Martin, the man who brought her to Teignmouth, was put up on Berry Head House, Brixham, now a hotel. That summer, she took part in a very special Fastnet Race, at the end of which she was given a round of applause by all of the crews and members of the RORC who had attended the prize-giving. According to one of the lucky Dauntsey pupils, they crossed the finish line just as the award ceremony was drawing to a close, while the Aerostars provided a dazzling show right overhead.

In the capable hands of Toby Maris, her skipper, she continues to sail, not into the sunset, but out into a new dawn, and all who know her or have the privilege to be involved with her wish her well for all of her adventures and voyages still to come.



Blue Plaque on Berry Head House (now hotel), Brixham, where George spent much of his childhood (Clare McComb)



Briggs and Martin reunited

And what of George and Sidney? Their paths were destined to cross again. During the mid 1930s, George had bought a half share (32/64th in 'barge speak') in *Memory*, which went on to become one of the most famous racing Thames barges after the war. Once again, he had used his Brixham shipwright's eye to pick out the most beautiful of her kind; as with *Jolie Brise*, he had restored her to full potential and worked her out of Ipswich into London, until around 1938. In

that year, he had a new yacht built at King's boatyard in Pin Mill, with a similar rig to that of *Jolie Brise* and wrote to Sid Briggs, asking him to consider taking the job of skipper once more.



Sid in old age, with a model of *Jolie Brise*: he never forgot her (Teign Heritage Museum)

The arrangement worked wonderfully: the two men settled down to sailing Griffin, as she was known, as if 12 years had not passed since their last adventure. Griffin was the flagship of the Royal

Ocean Racing Club, for George was Admiral of that now-world-famous organisation. Only the intervention of war broke up their arrangement and, unfortunately, George died in April 1945, worn out by the task of setting up the Deep Sea Rescue Tug Base in Campbeltown where he had been Commander. He had retired on ill health in late 1944. The medics had advised him to retire earlier, but the family was told later that he could not be spared before D-Day. The extra stress took its toll and, in the end, his heart simply gave out.

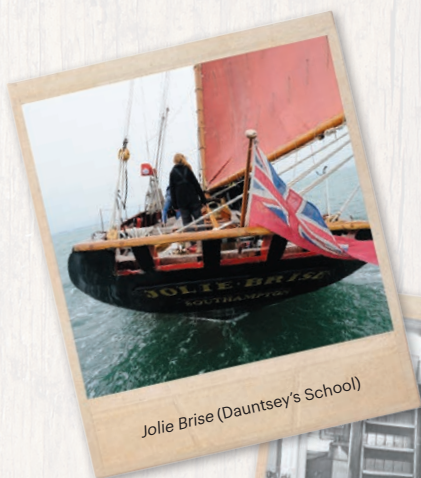


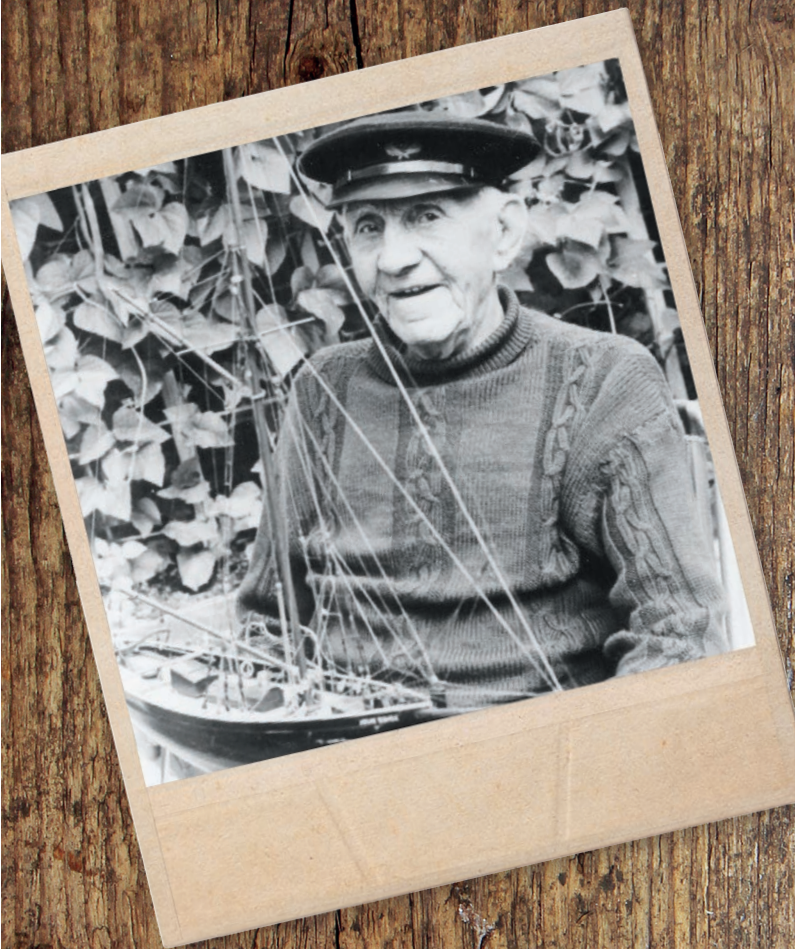
George Martin, Commander of the Rescue Tug Base Campbeltown Scotland (Martin family)



Among George's papers was found a letter from Sidney Briggs, talking about the prospect of his coming to help with Windmill Cottage, in Hadleigh, Suffolk, where George had planned to base himself in his last years. We do not know whether that letter ever had a reply, but it stands as evidence that the 'paid hand' and the owner, who fixed up and sailed *Jolie Brise* out of Teignmouth into Fastnet and transatlantic glory, were planning to work together at the end of their days.

Sid Briggs said later that his years with Commander Martin were 'the most exciting of his life'. *Jolie Brise*, still revered and racing among the elite of her kind, remains a fitting memorial to two fine sailors who, between them, created a legend and a story of achievement and adventure which shows no sign of ending.





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