

SCEPTRE LAUNCHED

OUR CLYDE-BUILT
CHALLENGER

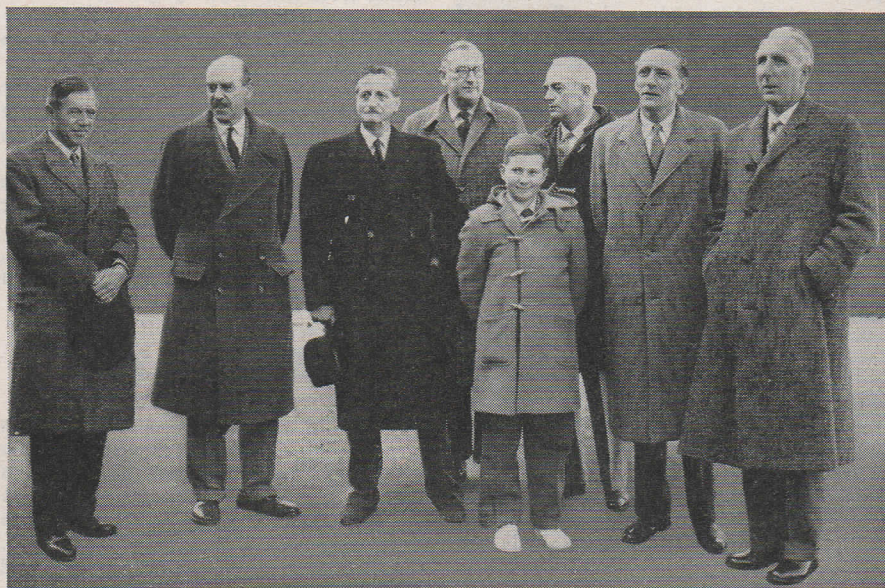
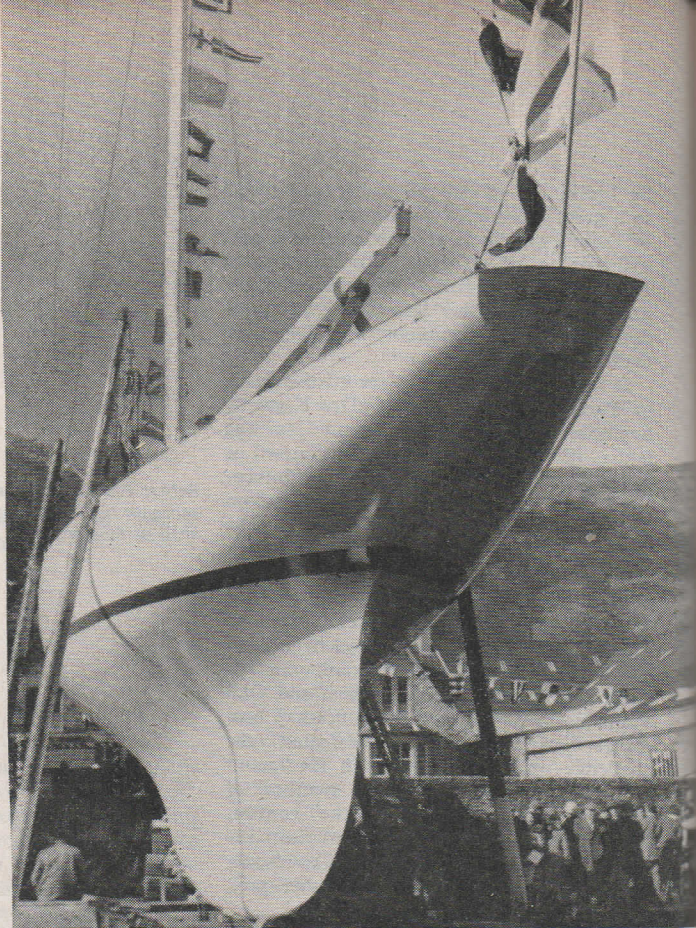
By "The Walrus"

AT Sandbank, on the morning of April 2, Britain's new America's Cup Challenger was launched by Lady Gore, wife of Sir Ralph Gore, Commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron, which had made the challenge on behalf of a syndicate of members of the Squadron. When, on the morning of that day, I walked into the yard of her builders, Alexander Robertson & Sons, Ltd., at Sandbank, there she stood, in her cradle, dressed overall and ready to go down the slip.

And what a wonderful day it was! The sun shone out of a cloudless, pale blue, early April sky. The yacht in her new paint was brilliant. The sceptres, at the end of her sheerline, beautifully moulded, gleamed like jewels. Her new aluminium mast glistened. Walking round her, it was possible to obtain a fair idea of her hull form—the next best thing to seeing a lines plan. Her designer, David Boyd, has, I should say, produced a yacht which it would be difficult to out-design. The result of the contest may, therefore, rest to a large extent upon factors other than hull form. The efficiency of mast, sails, rigging and gear; the ability and training of her crew; and the skill of helmsman and sailing master are among the most important of them.

Soon after ten o'clock the launching ceremony took place. As she started to move, cheering broke out. Not the usual organized Hip! Hip!! Hurrah!!! but spontaneous cheering from the whole of Sandbank assembled there to bid God-speed to the fruit of their labour born of the skill

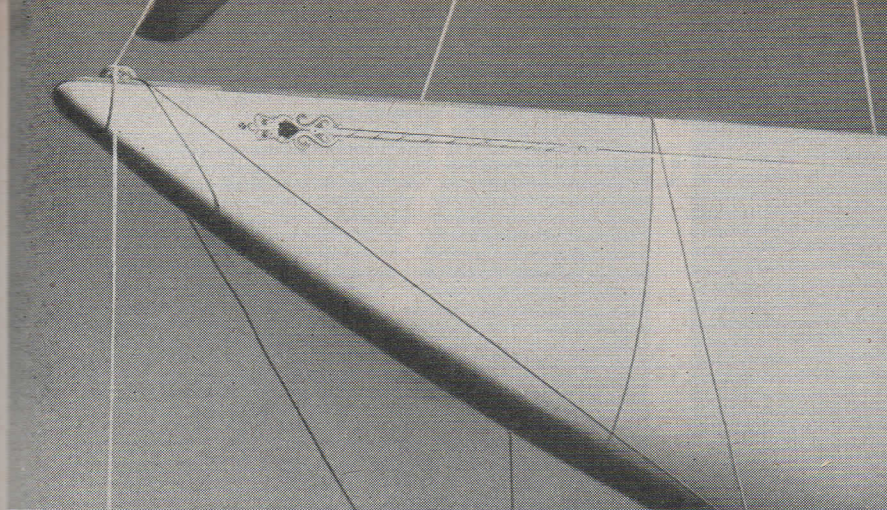
Sceptre: Bewitching stern



Some members of the syndicate: Sir Peter Hoare, Col. A.W. Acland, Bertram Currie, Hugh Goodson, Viscount Runciman and Charles Wainman and David Boyd, the designer. The boy is Hugh Goodson's son.



David Boyd, the designer (centre) with George Robertson, the builder and Viscount Runciman



The sceptre

and patience of Scottish craftsmen, and to the brain-child of a Scottish yacht architect.

Slowly and majestically *Sceptre*, in her cradle, went down the rails of Robertson's slip until gently she moved as if to show that she was afloat. The crew on board then cast off the legs of the cradle, and with a little curtsy she was towed astern by the launch to the end of the pier, where the towrope was transferred to the bow, when she moved gracefully over to her mooring.

As slowly she passed the spot upon which I stood, her designer, David Boyd, came along. To say the least, he was in a state of pleasurable excitement—who wouldn't be on watching one's own America's Cup challenger take the water? "She is floating light and by the head," he remarked with satisfaction, "couldn't be better."

As she passed, I noticed several innovations like streamlined rod rigging; the placing of the winches; the helmsman's cockpit with its large plain wheel, with no outer spokes, and right aft and out of the way with a chart table rather like a desk, the navigator's position.

After becoming accustomed during the last ten or twenty years to seeing so many snub-nosed chopped-off sterned rule-cheating ocean racers, it was indeed a pleasure to see once more the beautiful long ends of the thoroughbred racing yacht: a handsome bow matched by a bewitching counter stern.

No sailing event grips the imagination of the general public like a challenge for the America's Cup. Perhaps it is because the contest is a truly international match between two single yachts. The fact that, in the past, races have been sailed in big yachts has led to an almost fabulous expenditure of money on challengers, and even more money still on defenders. While the challenger has usually built one yacht by which he stood or fell, the defender has, more often than not, been the best of several yachts. This time it will be the best of four: the existing 12-metre *Vim* and three other prospective defenders which are still under construction.

It behoves the challenger to be early in the water because time must be allowed for shipping her across the Atlantic, for unrigging, rerigging and for subsequent tuning. It is important, too, to ship the yacht early so that the crew have as much time as possible in which to become acclimatized to the weather and to become accustomed to the waters in which the match will be sailed.

It is perhaps only right and fitting that

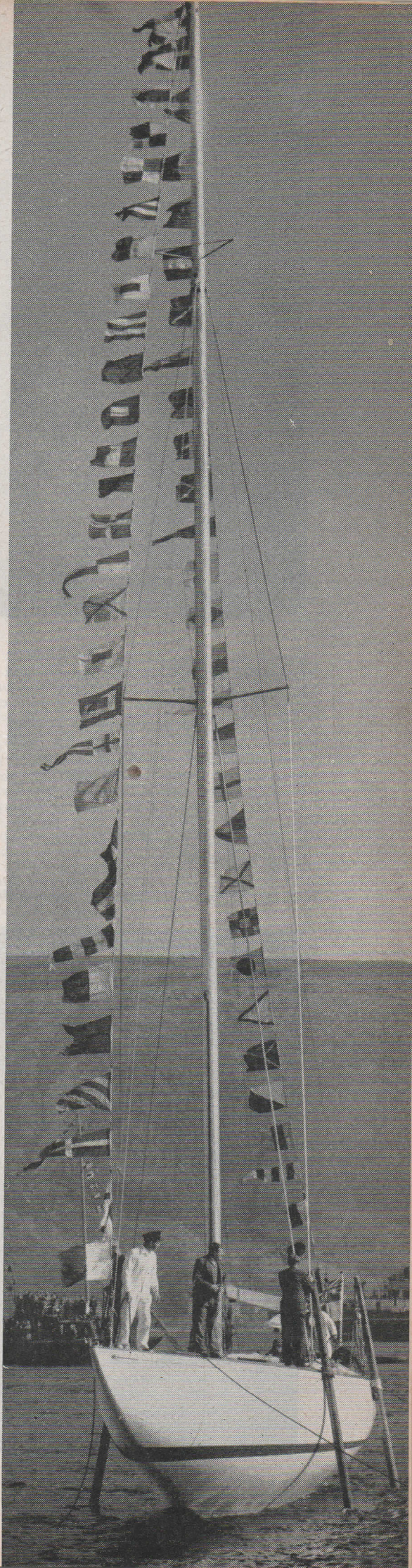
again we should go back to the Clyde for our challenger. Scottish association with the America's Cup contests began in 1887 with George Watson's *Thistle* built for Mr. James Bell when he challenged through the Royal Clyde Yacht Club. It continued in 1893 with the Royal Yacht Squadron's challenge with Lord Dunraven's *Valkyrie II* and *Valkyrie III* in 1895 for both were George Watson yachts. Then in 1899 came the first of three *Shamrocks*, all Fife designed and Clyde-built. The last of them raced in 1903 and it was not until 1913 that Sir Thomas Lipton challenged again. This time the new yacht *Shamrock IV*, was designed by Charles Nicholson and built at Gosport, and the connection with the Clyde was severed until the present time.

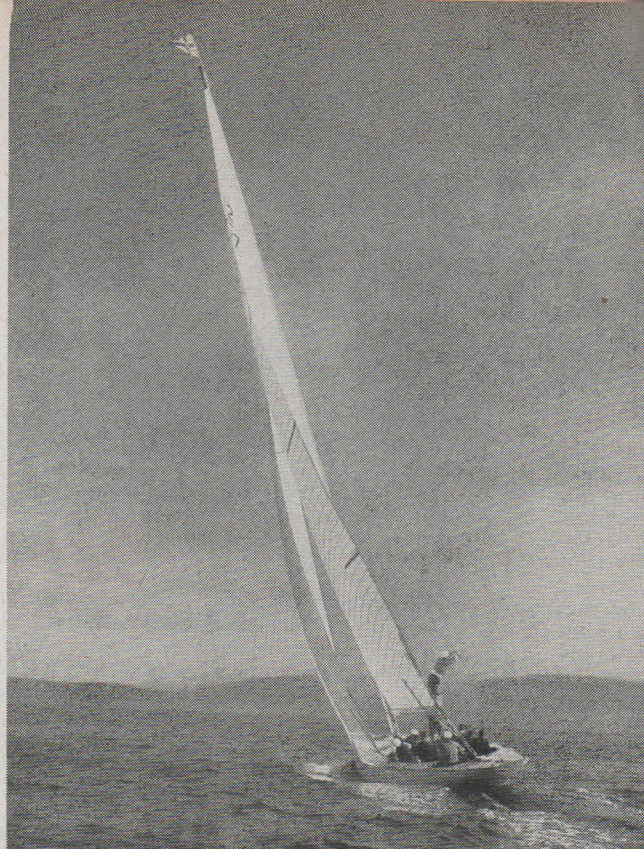
The launch of *Sceptre* was followed by a luncheon at Hunters Quay, and then the guests went their several ways. Robertson's yard, Hugh Goodson and *Sceptre's* crew set to work to get her ready for her trials. At the time of writing they are still in progress, after which she will be sailed to Gosport where she will be based for tuning and crew training until she is shipped by Cunard to the United States on or about July 12.

While at Gosport, *Sceptre* will sail against Owen Aisher's *Evaine* for tuning and crew training. Prospective crew members for the challenger will first be given a trial in *Evaine* under the eagle eye of Owen Aisher, and if they pass muster, they may be given a chance in *Sceptre*. The trials will not take place in the Solent but out beyond the Nab in the English Channel and possibly later in the West Country. The object is to get rough water and hard weather conditions—similar to those likely to be encountered during the actual competition.

Evaine's mast, gear and sails will be identical to those of the challenger and they will be sent to America as spares, leaving behind only the bare hull.

As technical adviser the Syndicate has Commander Sam Brooks but he will not necessarily be helmsman as reported in the United States. On her arrival in that country, about July 20, *Sceptre's* mast will be stepped by Luders and the tuning up will be done by the crew which should have in the meantime installed themselves in the house in Jamestown lent by Mrs. Sydney Wright for the crew and members of the organization. Cars have already been offered by generous hosts, in particular for





Builder's trials

making the journey between the house at Jamestown and Newport where *Sceptre* and *Ravahine* will be moored off the Ida Lewis Yacht Club.

By the time this article appears in print, *Sceptre* should have completed her initial trials on the Clyde and will, as likely as not, have reached Gosport. Her crew during the trial stage was: Cdr. S. S. Brooks, Lt. Cdr. J. Brooks, Cdr. Graham Mann, Mr. Hamish Connell, Lt. C. Seal, Lt. Cdr. S. Potter, the skipper Slorance, and the hands Musset and Jupe.

Hugh Goodson took charge during the trials which were done under the eye of *Sceptre's* designer, David Boyd. During trials, it is, of course, only possible to gather an idea of what the yacht looks like under sail and it is not until she comes up against *Evaine* that an evaluation of her performance can be made. At Gosport she will be moored right alongside her sailmakers and so it will be possible to try out new sails and to alter existing ones which, with the exception of the spinnaker, are all Terylene. Incidentally, the story published

about *Sceptre* splitting her £900 spinnaker to shreds is, perhaps, a little misleading. The spinnaker in question was one borrowed from *Evaine* for trial and not *Sceptre's* at all: it was made abroad and may, therefore, well have cost the sum mentioned. A spinnaker in this country would not, I should think, cost more than half that amount.

To paraphrase the words of Sir Winston Churchill:

"There is the tool, now it remains to finish the job."

The light alloy mast being made in Camper and Nicholson's shop at Gosport

Study in profile

