

ocean  
adventure  
WITH DON McINTYRE



**LEFT** April 22, 1969: Robin Knox-Johnston aboard his 32ft yacht *Suhaili* off Falmouth, England after becoming the first man to sail solo non-stop around the globe. He set out on June 14, 1968. (PPL photo). **TOP LEFT** Donald Crowhurst (at left) faked his positions and tried to fool the world that he won the Golden Globe Race. He ultimately committed suicide. The book *A Voyage for Madmen* and later a documentary in 2006, depicted

Crowhurst's sad story and now the Oscar-winning actor Colin Firth (at right) will set sail in a biopic of the doomed yachtsman. **ABOVE LEFT** Robin in the tiny cabin of *Suhaili* enjoying a beer after crossing the finish line. (PPL photo). **ABOVE RIGHT** March 2006. I find Eric in *Trade-a-Boat*; it could have been the perfect *Suhaili* replica and was certainly up for the solo voyage around the world with simple modifications.

# Another voyage for madmen

ARE YOU READY? DON ANNOUNCES THE 2018 GOLDEN GLOBE RACE, A CELEBRATORY 50TH ANNIVERSARY RE-ENACTMENT OF THE WORLD'S FIRST SOLO NON-STOP CIRCUMNAVIGATION

**I**n the dark depths of an Antarctic winter, living in a little box chained to rocks with my wife, isolated and alone, enduring constant blizzards, your mind tends to wander. That was my lot in July 1995. I dreamed of many other things during that year of isolation but one idea stuck

out above all others.

I wanted to build a replica of *Suhaili*, the 32-foot teak ketch Robin Knox-Johnston sailed solo and nonstop around the world, the first person ever to do so. He was the only finisher from nine starters in the 1968 *Sunday Times* Golden Globe Race. I wanted to recreate that

voyage in 1998 for the 30th anniversary of that feat.

Dreaming of "what next" is fundamental to my character. If I do decide on something, it is also natural to start planning that adventure while I am in the middle of the current one. Of course many factors come into play to pull these things

off but hey, if you're going to have a go, you gotta start with the dream, right!

## BACK BURNER

Returning from the big freeze seven months later, life got in the way and other adventures took over. But the *Suhaili* idea remained in the back of my mind as a grand

adventure. Ten years on, late in 2005 with the 40th anniversary of Robin's epic voyage looming, I couldn't stop thinking about it once again.

To build a *Suhaili* replica would cost about \$350,000, so I began looking for a William Atkin's Eric design already built. There were a few in the USA and one in Europe but none in good condition.

Unbelievably in *Trade-a-Boat* six months later, the perfect boat popped up in Adelaide. I was on a plane the next day. It was an absolute glamour; solidly built with real skill by a meticulous owner over half a lifetime. The asking price for Eric was \$65,000! Decisions were needed and choices had to be made?

At that time in March 2006, I was well into the construction of *Ice*, my 15.25m steel expedition motorsailer, in China. It still needed another 18 months of my close supervision and passion if it was to become the ship of my dreams. If this idea was to happen, the *Suhaili* re-enactment would need to start in June 2008, from Falmouth in the UK, right when *Ice* was due to sail away. First I would need to prepare my *Suhaili* in Australia, then ship her to the UK, recommission and make final preparation before setting out on a gruelling 10-month solo-circumnavigation.

*Ice* would be severely impacted by all this. I had decided a long time ago that I really wanted to do it but

based on the facts, I chose not to. I had to let it go. (A few months later I decided to "finally" have a crack at the Bounty Boat re-enactment; an idea that started in 1983!)

## CRUNCH TIME

Twenty years later and I'm currently entering year five of my treasure hunting expedition *Blue Treasure* in Tonga. This year should provide some exciting challenges. Time waits for no man and now the 50th anniversary of the Golden Globe Race and Robin's voyage is looming in 2018. It's now or never?

Last year, during a quiet moment in Tonga, an idea moved to action when I launched the now-cancelled *Voyage of Imagination*. It was an attempt by me to

sponsor two young sailors around the world over two years. I believe there are huge positive benefits that come from encouraging young people to seek out adventure and follow dreams. I did in 1990 when I competed in that year's BOC Challenge solo around-the-world yacht race, finishing second in my class.

Around-the-world yacht races have changed significantly since that first event in 1968. Robin carried no computers, no GPS, no satellite phones or watermakers, and certainly had no shore-side weather routers. He used a kerosene stove and a barograph to face the world alone and caught rainwater to survive. He was at one with the ocean, able to contemplate and absorb all

"Unbelievably in Trade-a-Boat six months later, *the perfect boat popped up in Adelaide*. I was on a plane the next day"



**LEFT** Too hard to capture the 360-degree full sensory moment on film, but we sat here in Zodiacs for an hour while minke whales and Adelie penguins dived under the ice just metres from us – a magic moment that went on and on. We left them to their world, sad to leave but on a high. **TOP RIGHT** Water temp -1.5°C and orcas cruised past within 10m just 10 minutes before hunting penguins! Not the time to be dressed as a penguin for a Polar Plunge but life is for living, so why not I say! **RIGHT** Midnight, deep in the Ross Sea, Mt Erebus in the background and *Spirit of Enderby* rammed into the fast ice for a game of soccer after dinner.



that voyage had to offer.

In many ways now, a significant part of the adventure in current around-the-world yacht racing has gone, swallowed up by high tech, while the budgets to compete have become astronomical. Any young sailors aspiring to pitch themselves at the ultimate challenge now have little or no opportunity whatsoever.

### JOIN THE GOLDEN GLOBE RACE

So in the weeks ahead, I will be announcing my final shot at bringing the *Suhaili* re-enactment to fruition, with the seeds going back to 1995 in Antarctica. Like all good ideas this one has evolved. I am hoping that young sailors will also pick up this ultimate challenge. A press release will soon advise

2400 global media outlets that a 2018 Golden Globe Race, another "voyage for madmen", is set to take place. It will not be like any other current race around the world and will be accessible to all who have that dream.

This anniversary edition of the Golden Globe Race is a celebration of the original winner, the man, his boat and that significant voyage. For the sailors entering this race, using only basic equipment and sailing simple boats will guarantee a satisfying and personal experience. This challenge will be pure, real and very raw, placing the adventure ahead of winning at all costs.

Details will be announced in the press release and on the [goldenglobrace.com](http://goldenglobrace.com) website when it opens, but if you have ever dreamt of

stepping back in time, pitting yourself against the world's oceans in a simple, safe boat you can afford, your day is coming. Let the adventure begin!

### A GLORIOUS DAY!

Sometimes it gets so good you just want to scream! A moment in time and space where life itself can seem overwhelming and you're challenged to absorb more sensational experiences. You are in sensory overload, stunned at things happening around you and when you finally must pull yourself away, you are brought to tears as the emotion and magnitude of that moment wells up inside you. The release from that high is soft, dramatic and involuntary. It is impossible and not natural to contain it.

For most of the people in my Zodiac, that day under the shadow of a smoking Mount Erebus, deep in the Ross Sea of Antarctica, was a truly glorious one. For me it will remain one of the best Antarctic experiences I've had in the past 23 summers there. I doubt I will ever reach that peak or witness anything like it again.

The previous few days had been awesome enough, with landings at Inexpressible Island and the Italian, German and South Korean bases at Terra Nova Bay. We had visited Scott's and Shackleton's huts on Ross Island and the huge Adelie penguin rookery at Franklin Island.

The day before was simply fantastic as we cruised the edge of the fast ice in stunning weather, watching

orcas hunting Adelie penguins and minke whales. Then to top that, the captain rammed our ship *Spirit of Enderby* into the fast ice, so that after dinner we could all get off onto the ice for a walk and dessert under the midnight sun followed by a game of soccer. Packs of orcas continued to cruise the ice edge hunting right beside us and just a few minutes later, some brave souls went for a polar plunge, one even dressed as a penguin! It was hard to sleep that night.

The day began after breakfast with a second relaxed visit to Scott's hut for those who were up for it. Some interesting icebergs had grounded nearby and I had noticed a few thousand penguins lining the edge of the fast ice behind Cape Evans and the hut. I

wondered why?

After lunch we set out in five Zodiacs for a simple, relaxing cruise. It was a stunning blue-sky day with no wind, so it was just great to be out and about. What happened next caught us all by surprise.

Many Adelie penguins were resting on the edge of the ice but in the distance we saw a few minke whales. Slowly cruising in that direction, we began to come into contact with waves of Adelies swarming out from under the ice for a quick breath and waddle, then straight back down again under the ice. They were feeding on swarms of krill and small fish below the ice. As we moved farther toward the whales, we realised they too were doing the same, a continual process of diving

under the ice, feeding, returning for air and a short swim around, then straight back to the swarms below.

We stopped and held the Zodiacs beside the ice in awe, trying to keep our distance, but the action moved our way to envelope us. We were breathing the exhaled breath of the whales and had swarms of oozing Adelies surge forth from under the ice all around us, whales just three metres away. They did not care about us. This was a major feeding event by anyone's standard and they were all making the most of it. The whales and penguins had real purpose in their flowing unrushed movements. You could sense their excitement and joy. Truly Antarctica at its best.

We all sat in stunned silence. Everywhere we

looked there was action, while all around us the grand 360-degree vista that is Antarctica defied to be photographed with any real meaning. Many just put their cameras down. It went on and on. This was their world and we were privileged to be in the middle of it. I can't really do the moment justice here, but it was special.

Eventually we had to go, leaving them to their routine. All on our Zodiac knew that from here we could go no farther south, which meant we were heading north and they would most likely never return. In silence, with happy tears and high emotions, we filled our boat, each contemplating what they had just experienced.

Sometimes people wonder why I keep coming back. I don't. ■