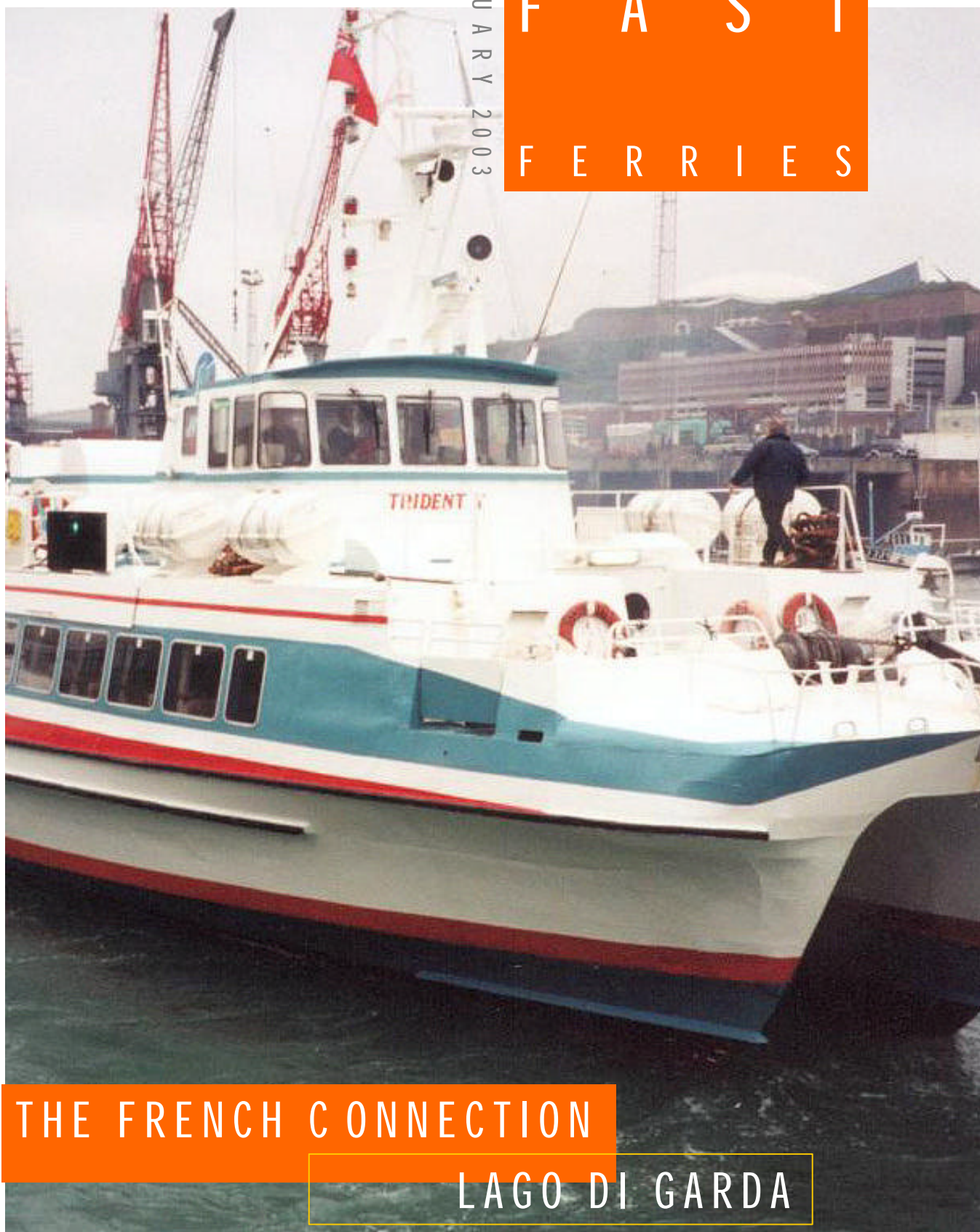


1  
JANUARY 2003

C L A S S I C

F A S T

F E R R I E S



THE FRENCH CONNECTION

LAGO DI GARDA

**N**ext year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of fast ferries operating between France and the Channel Islands off the Normandy coast.

First to provide a lasting, albeit for a number of years only seasonal, scheduled high speed service linking the two largest islands of Guernsey and Jersey and France was Guernsey based Condor Ltd. which introduced a single Rodriguez PT.50 in May 1964. As more craft were added the route network was extended to include also the smaller islands of Alderney and Sark and, in



## THE RED & GREEN FLEET

1987, Weymouth on the south coast of England, later to be replaced by Poole. The Channel Islands, of course, are part of the British Isles and not France. While having undergone structural and ownership changes over the years, the Condor brand, having become a household name in the area as well as the business on a whole, continues to exist to this day. In more recent years the company has phased out all of its former passenger-only vessels in favor of larger vehicle carrying fast ferry designs. The history of this pioneering company will be dealt with in more detail in a future issue of *CLASSIC*

*FAST FERRIES.*

Another successful operator in the British/French south portion of the English Channel is Emeraude Lines based in Saint Malo, France. Formed sixty years prior to Condor, in 1904, as Bateaux de la Côte d'Emeraude, the company originally transported passengers and cargo between towns along the Normandy and Brittany Emerald Coast, including Saint Malo, Dinard and Cap Fréhel, as well as on the River Rance. Two routes to the Channel Islands were first operated in 1970, but it was not until six years later that a fast ferry was introduced. Which is a qualified truth as at the time this was in fact not operated by Emeraude but another company, Vedettes Blanches, which would be absorbed by Emeraude in 1987. >>

**ABOVE :** Impressive fast ferry line-up at St. Helier, Jersey almost thirteen years ago, on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1990. All vessels in the picture are now gone from the area. From left (closest to the photographer) to right are: Westermoen Hydrofoil/Westamarin W95 catamarans *Trident 5*, *Trident 6* and *Trident 4* belonging to French operator Emeraude Lines, and Rodriguez RHS 160F hydrofoil *Condor 7* and Fairey Marinteknik 36 CPV catamaran *Condor 8* operated by Condor, based in Guernsey, the Channel Islands

[ EDWARD BRIAN DAVIS *photo* ]



1  
JANUARY 2003

THE ONLY PERIODICAL ABOUT THE HEYDAY OF PASSENGER HYDROFOILS, HOVERCRAFT & CATAMARANS – AS WELL AS RELEVANT NEWS ■ ISSUED IN PDF FORMAT. PLEASE CHECK OUR SITE ON THE WEB FOR NEXT ISSUE DETAILS:  
**HTTP://CLASSICFASTFERRIES.GO.TO** EDITOR/PUBLISHER: **TIM TIMOLEON** . ALL ARTICLES, ARTWORK & DESIGNS BY THE EDITOR, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED ■ SUBMITTALS OF MANUSCRIPTS AND PHOTOS, OLD AND NEW, AND RELEVANT NEWS ITEMS ARE ENCOURAGED! ■ EMAIL TO: **CFF @ EMAIL.DK**  
COPYRIGHT 2000/2003 CLASSIC FAST FERRIES  
**COVER PHOTO** : EMERAUDE LINES USED TO OPERATE SEVERAL WESTAMARAN CATAMARANS FROM FRANCE TO THE CHANNEL ISLANDS. STORY STARTS ON PAGE 2 [EMERAUDE LINES PHOTO]

## Now entering its 4<sup>th</sup> year of publishing . . .

. . . CLASSIC FAST FERRIES continues to be the only magazine focusing on commercially operated high-speed craft such as hydrofoils, hovercraft and catamarans from a historical-nostalgic perspective. However, brought into the present day by also presenting relevant news items each time.

Launched on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2000, the only 8-page première issue of CFF featured, among other things and not by coincidence, the first hydrofoil and Westamaran catamaran built by Cantiere Navale Leopoldo Rodriguez and Westermoen Hydrofoil in 1956 and 1971 respectively. During the three years that have since passed, a total of 24 regular issues have been put out, including the one you are reading now. In addition a Sydney Special was issued in June last year.

So, if 4 is not normally a number you'd mark, 25 is.

A wide variety of vessels and operators in every corner of the world have featured in the 360 pages since the start three years ago. And still there are far more topics that haven't been covered than those which have. This is particularly true where air cushion craft are concerned, such as the various Hovermarine designs of the late 60s and early 70s and the attempt by the French to enter the world of large hovercraft also during those years.

This is a gap that obviously needs to be filled, and we shall welcome to be approached by readers who can assist in doing so.

### **Not one pot of gold but several**

If you feel you don't have the time to undertake the necessary research and produce an oven-ready article for CFF, tell us what you know or remember from the top off your head and we will take it from there. Much as a dish, an article is made up of various ingredients and you may be the one who adds just what it's missing.

And please don't underestimate the value of sending 'just' a picture or two. There doesn't even have to be a story attached to it/them as we may very well have the *story* but are lacking the photo documentation to go with it.

Contrary to what we believed at first, these past three years have indeed indicated that there is a big treasure out there as far as old (and new) fast ferry photos are concerned. Unfortunately, it is not all in one pot waiting to be discovered at the end of the rainbow, but rather it is scattered to the four winds, tucked away in drawers and shoeboxes. Please don't assume that we have seen it all before and probably are not interested – we haven't and we are!

Happy 2003!

TH YEAR OF PUBLISHING



T H E F R E N C H C O N N E C T I O N

CONT'D  
FROM  
PAGE 2

By that time the company was known as Vedettes Blanches et Vertes following a pooling of resources of the original associate operating companies Vedettes Blanches Saint Malo and Vedettes Vertes Granvillaises.

The vessel introduced between Saint Malo and St. Helier, Jersey in 1976, *Belle de Dinard*, was the second W86 catamaran completed by Westermoen Hydrofoil in Norway and originally entered service with a domestic operator as *Karmsund* in 1972.

Developed by the Norwegian yard, the first Westamarin 86 had appeared in 1971. The larger W95 followed three years later. The Westamarin differs from most catamaran designs in having asymmetrical hulls; basically it is one hull which is cut in two along the centreline and spaced apart creating a tunnel with parallel sides. In most Westamarans traditional propulsion was fitted, engines being either French SACM or German MTU diesels but gas turbines were also tested on a few units. While normally offering a cruising speed of only 27–30 knots as compared to the 33–36 knots of the hydrofoils, which they would replace in the 70s and onwards, the Westamarans soon became very popular with operators in Norway and have since seen service in almost all parts of the world. In their standard configurations the 26.6m W86 and 29m W95 are fitted out for 142–165 and 180–195 passengers respectively.

#### The Westamarin years

Between 1976 and the Emeraude take-over ten

ABOVE : W86 *Belle de Dinard* was renamed *Trident 1* in 1986. The charming looking vessel was the second Westamarin built by Westermoen and originally entered service with a Norwegian operator in 1972

[ DAVE HOCQUARD photo ]

years later, Vedettes Blanches et Vertes built up a competitive business to, mainly, Condor's hydrofoils and single catamaran, operating a fleet of three Westamarin catamarans of the W86 and W95 types on seasonal routes, normally from late March to early November, from Saint Malo, Granville and Carteret to St. Helier and Gorey in Jersey and to Guernsey and Sark. The 38 nautical mile Saint Malo–St. Helier route being the most important.

The first and, it would turn out, only newbuilding for the company entered service in April 1983. A W95, *Trident*, this however had been completed the year before having been built ahead of order by Westamarin, as the Westermoen yard was now known. As advertised by Vedettes Blanches, the new catamaran offering a 'large air-conditioned passenger saloon with a panoramic view and a bar' would make the trip between Saint Malo and St. Helier in 70 minutes. In 1983 an adult one way was FF 155, a day return FF 195 and a standard round trip FF 280. Twenty years later the corresponding fares are € 46.25, € 33.50 and € 87.50. The bargain on a day return as compared to the price of a one way ticket or long stay return reflects the type of traffic the service attracts.

# THE RED & GREEN FLEET

The next catamaran acquired was another W86, *Highland Seabird*, built in 1976 and originally operated in Scotland and between Scotland and Northern Ireland by Western Ferries. Having been put on the market already in 1981 and only used for short-lived trial services around Britain in addition to the seasonal services in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the vessel was as good as new when it entered service with the French operator in 1985 as *Trident 2*. The following year Trident Catamarans was adopted as marketing name for the high speed segment of the company's ferry services and to streamline the fleet name-wise the original W86 *Belle de Dinard* was renamed *Trident 1* and the W95 became *Trident 3*.

In early 1987 the oldest W86, *Trident 1*, was sold to another French company, temporarily reducing the Trident fleet to just two craft for that year's operating season.

Towards the end of the year the W86 and W95 were transferred from Vedettes Blanches et Vertes to Emeraude and the fleet was restored to three catamarans when a six-year old Westamaran 95, *Celestina*, was acquired from Alilauro in Italy.

Renamed *Trident 4* this entered service with Emeraude the following spring.

Before season's start in 1990 the remaining W86 was sold off and two more W95s were purchased from operators in Norway and the West Indies. Renamed *Trident 5* and *Trident 6* these had originally been delivered in 1974 and 1981 as *Vingtor* and *Alisur Amarillo* to Flaggruten in Norway and Alisur in Spain. *Vingtor* was the first of the W95 type to be completed by Westermoen.

Shopping for Westamarans culminated the following year when a fifth W95 was acquired in Denmark. Originally delivered to DSØ in 1979 as *Tumleren* it entered service with Emeraude Lines as *Trident 7*. A sixth W95 was even added in 1991. Leased, and subsequently purchased, from another French operator this, *Pegasus*, had been delivered to Service Maritime Carteret-Jersey in 1977. Contrary to what one would expect this was never renamed *Trident 8*.

**BELOW :** W95 *Trident 3* was completed ahead of order in 1982, as *Venture 84*, and entered service with Emeraude the following year originally named *Trident* [EDWARD BRIAN DAVIS photo]





**MAIN PHOTO :** W95 *Trident 7* originally operated between Sweden and Denmark for twelve years before acquired by Emeraude Lines in 1991 [EMERAUDE LINES photo]  
**INSET :** Marinteknik Verkstads 34 CCB *Emeraude Express* was leased by Emeraude for a few months in 1998 [MARINTEKNIK VERKSTADS photo]

With the increase in number of catamarans so did the route network from both Normandy and Brittany ports, including Carteret, Diélette, Granville and St.-Quay Portrieux.

**Switching to Swedes**

But a turn of events would occur some three years later. Slowly but steadily a phasing out of the immaculately kept red and green Emeraude Westa-

marans, due to newer and larger car carrying fast ferries being introduced, began in early 1994 when *Trident 6* was sold to Jadrolinija in Croatia. By 1997 the available W95 fleet was down to three, *Trident 3* having been sold in Turkey in mid 1996 and *Trident 5* being leased to a company in Guadeloupe. The latter was back with Emeraude from the West Indies by mid-1998, at what time *Trident 4* was sold and made the reverse journey.

Before the return to service in the Channel of *Trident 5*, Emeraude however leased another catamaran during March-June 1998. Delivered in 1986 by Marinteknik Verkstads in Sweden, the 34m waterjet-powered catamaran, *Emeraude Express*, originally was used as a crewboat by Compagnie des Moyens de Surface, SURF, between Douala in the Cameroun, western Africa and the offshore Elf Emeraude oil field.



## THE RED & GREEN FLEET



ABOVE : Seen alongside in Saint Malo are, from left, Westamaran 95s *Pegasus*, *Trident 3* (behind) and *Trident 6*

INSET : Marinteknik Verkstads 41m catamaran *Normandie Express* was introduced in 1999 and is being operated jointly by Emeraude Lines and Alizés Côte des Isles [EMERAUDE LINES photo, both]

Basically the vessel, designated 34CCB (Catamaran Crew Boat), is a standard Marinteknik 34CPV (Catamaran Passenger Vessel). Thus, as delivered *Emeraude Express* was laid out to carry 243 passengers, however, at a greater cruising speed, 40 knots, than that of the 34CPV (normally 32–34 knots).

There were two developments in 1999. Early in the year W95 *Pegasus* was sold in Guadeloupe, and in March another Marinteknik Verkstads design was added. Acquired from an operator in the Philippines, the 41m catamaran had originally been delivered to Hong Kong ten years earlier as *Öregrund*.

Following repainting and other adjustments required by Emeraude and renamed *Normandie Express* the 306-passenger 36-knot 41CPV entered service in the middle of June on summer-only routes from Granville and ports on the Cotentin peninsula to Jersey and, on certain crossings/days, Guernsey. The catamaran is being operated in partnership with another company, Alizés Côte des Isles. Also see separate story elsewhere in this issue.

The following year, in 2000, *Trident 5* was sold to

a small company in the Balearics and can now be found trading between Formentera and Ibiza.

### Going for the car people

In addition to *Normandie Express* the present day fast ferry fleet of Emeraude Lines comprises two catamarans, both of which are passenger/car designs.

The flagship is a 60m Fjellstrand JumboCat delivered in December 2000, *Solidor 5*, which carries 450 passengers and 60 cars at 36 knots. This has replaced another 60m Jumbo Cat, the first such built, *Solidor 3*, which the company took delivery of in 1996 and operated until 2001 when it was disposed of to German operator Förde Reederei and transferred to its Moroccan subsidiary and put into service in the Straits of Gibraltar.



**B E L O W** : Westamarin W 5000CF *Solidor 4* was originally built as a cargo catamaran for transportation of refrigerated produce and fish between the Netherlands and Iceland in 1987 and heavily rebuilt into a passenger/vehicle vessel five years later [JACQUES LEGANGNEUX photo]

## THE RED & GREEN FLEET



Emeraude's other vehicle fast ferry, W 5000CF *Solidor 4*, is also a Norwegian design. Launched in 1987 by Westamarin it is unique in that it was originally built as a W 5000L refrigerated cargo catamaran, *Anne Lise*, for carrying fish and fresh produce between Iceland and The Netherlands. The idea never really took off and after years of lay-up in Norway the catamaran was then extensively rebuilt during 1992–93 by Oskarshamns Varv, Sweden as a car carrying fast

ferry, including the adding of a third passenger deck, for an operator in the Caribbean. When acquired by Emeraude Lines in 1999 it had last operated in north-west Italy between Piombino and the island of Elba with Elba Ferries. In its Emeraude configuration *Solidor 4* now carries 302 passengers and 40 cars at a service speed of 30 knots.

Both car catamarans are being operated out of Saint Malo on year-round services to Jersey and Guernsey.

Prior to these two, Emeraude briefly operated another high speed car ferry, *Emeraude*, during June–September 1994. The first such to be ordered by the company, in 1993, this was the first (and only) Corsaire 6000 66m monohull completed by Leroux & Lotz. Various problems with the design resulted in it being returned to the builders in January 1995 for modifications, but the subsequent sea trials would prove that the monohull still did not live up to specifications and expectations and Emeraude decided on not accepting delivery of the craft.



**L E F T** : The flagship of Emeraude's fast ferry fleet, Jumbo Cat 60m *Solidor 5*, was delivered by Fjellstrand in December 2000 [EMERAUDE LINES photo]



# SAINT-TROPEZ NICE

## Airport service

Emeraude Lines has also done business elsewhere in France in recent years. Between June 21<sup>st</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup> 1999 W95 *Trident 5* was transferred to the Côte d'Azur to act, on a trial basis, as a waterborne airport shuttle for Air France between Saint-Tropez, Cannes and Nice Airport as an alternative to the overloaded roads and resulting long transit times along France's south coast. Three daily round trips were being operated, scheduled journey time being 90 minutes each way.

The service returned in 2000 and 2001, now operated by Emeraude Lines in partnership with Competitive Concepts and, later, Hydrocruiser/Fast Ferry Leasing, using a 22.5m foil assisted catamaran, *Sea Shuttle 1*, designed in New Zealand by Teknikraft Design and launched in South Africa by MK International in 1994. Operating from June to October, *Sea Shuttle 1* would make the 65-minute trip four or six times a day with some of the services calling en route at Cannes, adding about 25 minutes to the journey time. ■



ABOVE : Emeraude Lines' present route network during the peak season

[EMERAUDE LINES]

BELOW : W95 *Trident 5* leaving Cannes in 1999 sporting the special Air France livery it received for the Saint-Tropez–Cannes–Nice Airport service

[GILLES BARNICHON photo]





## UN CATAMARAN CLASSIQUE

**A B O V E :** Westamaran 86 *Côte des Isles* in Cherbourg's Bassin du Commerce in April 2001. The Bassin is protected by a lock door, which also serves as a bridge for cars and pedestrians, in order to maintain a constant water level regardless of the tidal changes so typical to the area

[JAQUES LEGANGNEUX photo]

**A**nother Westamaran 86 catamaran still in the area which has been around for a while is *Côte des Isles*. Delivered by Westermoen Hydrofoil in June 1976, this had operated in Norway for fifteen years with Det Stavangerske D/S and Rogaland Trafikkselskap as, first, *Fjorddrott* and later *Ternøy* before it arrived in France towards the end of 1991. Acquired by a subsidiary company of French state-owned ferry operator Sealink SNAT, Channiland, and renamed *Brittania*, it entered service on routes linking the ports of Granville and Saint Malo and Jersey and Guernsey in 1992.

When Channiland closed down in 1997 the catamaran was purchased by a small company in Portbail on the west coast of the Cotentin peninsula, Alizés Côte des Isles, and introduced on two seasonal routes from Portbail and Carteret to Gorey, a port situated on the east coast of Jersey. Carteret is very popular with Parisians on weekends and holidays, and on a clear day you can see forever – or at least to Jersey, which is only about 30 minutes away by fast ferry.

**R I G H T :** The catamaran entered service with Channiland as *Brittania* in 1992

[DAVE HOCQUARD photo]





The demand for passenger-only services between the Normandy coast and the Channel Islands have been declining in recent years however. Reportedly, *Côte des Isles* was only briefly operated in 2001 and not at all last summer and it is uncertain whether the 170-seat Westamarian will be reintroduced this year. During the winter months the vessel is laid up in the inner harbor, Bassin du Commerce, at Cherbourg. It has recently undergone overhaul at a local shipyard.

Instead, Alizés and Emeraude Lines have allied to operate the Marinteknik Verkstads 41CPV, *Normandie Express*, acquired in 1999 from Granville to Jersey and

BELOW : W86 *Côte des Isles* idling in its home port of Cherbourg two years ago . . .  
CENTRE : . . . and being overhauled at a local ship yard over Christmas and New Year in 2001/2002 [JAQUES LEGANGNEUX photo, both]



Guernsey between April and October each year. Journey time for the 306-passenger 36-knot catamaran is one hour and on board amenities include video entertainment, a bar service and duty-free sales. ■

RIGHT : The catamaran was acquired by Alizés Côte des Isles from Channiland in 1997 and introduced on routes from the Cotentin peninsula to Jersey [EMERAUDE LINES photo]



45 YEARS WITH FOILS ON

LAGO  
DI  
GARDA



If the first of the three major lakes in northern Italy to see a scheduled hydrofoil service was indeed Lake Maggiore back in 1953, then Lake Garda was first to receive the first of what would prove a string of Rodriguez hydrofoils entering service with Italy's Ministry of Transport on the three lakes over a period of more than thirty years. Also a Supramar design like the early Maggiore PT.10 *Freccia d'Oro* five years before it, *Freccia del Garda* was the fifth of the PT.20 type completed by the Messina yard and delivered in 1958. It would be six years however before a second and third PT.20 entered service on Lake Maggiore and Lake Como, in 1964.

**ABOVE :** The last hydrofoil to be added to the Navigazione Lago di Garda fleet, Rodriguez RHS 150FL *Goethe*, entered service on the Lake fifteen years ago next July. The vessel in the background, likewise operated by Navigarda, had been around for a little while longer when this photo was taken at the Peschiera shipyard and maintenance base in June 1992

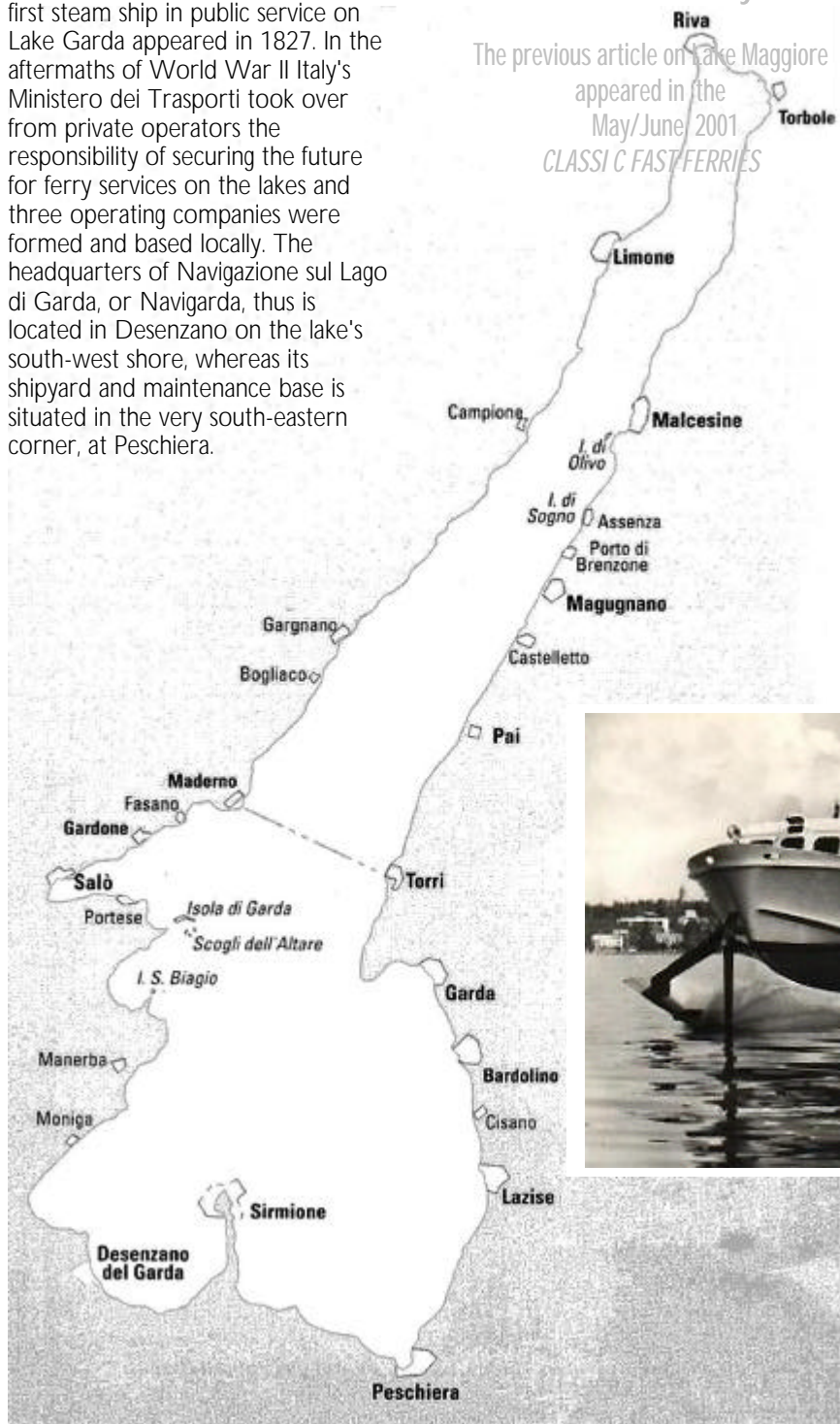
[TIM TIMOLEON *photo*]



Lago di Garda is the largest of Italy's alpine lakes. Stretching from Peschiera in the south to Riva in the north it measures 370 square kilometers in size, has a maximum length of 51,6 kilometers, width of 17,2 kilometers and depth of 346 meters. Like the Lakes of Como and Maggiore, Lake Garda offers great cultural value, breathtaking scenery and terrific climate, all of which make a perfect cocktail for a flourishing tourism. The first steam ship in public service on Lake Garda appeared in 1827. In the aftermaths of World War II Italy's Ministero dei Trasporti took over from private operators the responsibility of securing the future for ferry services on the lakes and three operating companies were formed and based locally. The headquarters of Navigazione sul Lago di Garda, or Navigarda, thus is located in Desenzano on the lake's south-west shore, whereas its shipyard and maintenance base is situated in the very south-eastern corner, at Peschiera.

## We continue here our series of reviews of the history of hydrofoil operation on the three major lakes in northern Italy

The previous article on Lake Maggiore appeared in the May/June 2001 CLASSIC FAST FERRIES



In addition to the hydrofoils, Navigarda today operates four fast catamarans of three different designs from as many builders plus eight conventional vessels of various sizes and build, the oldest of which dating back to 1900, and five two-way drive-through vehicle ferries.

Much as with the hydrofoils, all four catamarans were built domestically; two, *Catullo* and *Parini*, were delivered by Conavi in 1992 and 1993 with the third, *Virgilio*, being delivered by Clemna in 1998. These are 21m and just under 22m in length respectively and carry 150 (100 of which seated) and 140 passengers. The newest catamaran, a 28m 192-seat twin deck design built by Cantiere Navale di Pesaro, a shipyard known more for its tugs and chemical tankers than fast ferries, was named *Freccia del Garda* in honor of the first PT.20 on the Lake and entered service last June.

It is interesting to note how the service speed of the fast ferries has been allowed to significantly decrease and settle at around 26–28 knots with the introduction of catamarans in place of the hydrofoils. Or, to put it more bluntly, the new *Freccia del Garda* is



ABOVE : PT.20 *Freccia del Garda* was the first Rodriguez hydrofoil to be delivered to the Ministero dei Trasporti in 1958

LEFT : Points on Lake Garda that are served either by fast ferry or conventional vessel [NAVIGAZIONE LAGO DI GARDA]



some six knots slower than its namesake PT.20 from forty-four years ago. A fact reflecting a decision made by the administrative organization for the government owned Lake operations, Gestione Governativa Navigazione Laghi, and not necessarily the catamaran as such in comparison to the hydrofoil. Three more CNP catamarans were introduced during 2002 on Lake Como, leaving little doubt as to what bright future does not lie ahead for the hydrofoil as a means of transportation on the Lakes – or anywhere in Italy.

Fleetwise the development as far as the hydrofoils are concerned has been identical on all three lakes. Thus, over a period spanning 31 years, between 1958 and 1989, the operating companies each took delivery of seven Rodriguez built craft, comprising two 73-seat PT.20s, two 80-seat RHS 70s, two 196/198-seat RHS 150SLs and a single 200-seat RHS 150FL. Also, the frequency with which the vessels have been delivered has been very similar. With the one major exception being that it would be seven years between the first and second PT.20 to enter service on Lake Garda but only three years on the two other lakes. The reason of course being that *Freccia del Garda* entered service already in 1958, six years prior to the first PT.20s appearing on Lakes Como and Maggiore.

A second PT.20 for Garda, *Freccia degli Ulivi*,

**ABOVE :** *Freccia delle Riviere* is of the first generation RHS 150SL and entered service in 1981. The design combines features from the earlier RHS 140 and RHS 160 types into a special version developed for the Italian Lakes [INGA ARNVIG photo ]

entered service in 1965. This was transferred to the Lake Como fleet in 1982 keeping its name. The two PT.20s then ruled for the next nine years until the arrival of the first RHS 70 in 1974. An upgraded and restyled version of the Supramar PT.20 designed by Rodriguez, the prototype RHS 70 had been delivered two years earlier to Red Funnel in England. One RHS 70 was delivered to each of the three Lakes in 1974, the one for Garda being named *Freccia del Benaco*. A second RHS 70, *Freccia dei Gerani*, followed in 1976.

Passenger capacity was more than doubled and comfort further improved with the introduction, in 1981, of another new design, RHS 150SL *Freccia delle Riviere*. Basically this is a cross between the earlier RHS 140 and RHS 160 types from which emerged a special Lake version with the most visible differences from the standard craft being the panoramic windows throughout and large fenders protecting the bow foil and incorporating fixed access stairways.



INSET : PT.20 *Freccia del Benaco* coming off foil at Peschiera and . . .

MA IN PHOTO : . . . RHS 150SL *Galileo Galilei* preparing to take off, producing quite a bit of black smoke [TIM TIMOLEON photo, both ]

While appreciated by those enjoying the scenery from inside the hydrofoil and practical when docking at simple landing points, unfortunately this give the RHS 150SL a cluttered and ill-proportioned appearance.

A second RHS 150SL, *Galileo Galilei*, entered service the following year. This differs from *Freccia delle Riviere* in featuring a raised wheelhouse allowing for a bow passenger saloon on main deck with forward facing windows.

In their standard configurations the RHS 160 and RHS 140, with which the RHS 150SL shares its length, would have 160 and 125 seats respectively, but the Lake version is fitted out for as many as 198 seated passengers. This was accomplished by using special lightweight low-back seats placed at a closer pitch than on the standard RHS 160. In order to compensate for the excess weight of the thirty-five or so extra passengers when fully loaded, the liferafts normally carried but not required on Italian protected waterways such as the relatively narrow lakes have been omitted and also less fuel is carried than on hydrofoils operating on open sea routes.

The last hydrofoil to join the others on Lago di Garda, *Goethe*, entered service in June 1988. Designated RHS 150FL this, again, is a Lake variant of two other designs, the sole RHS 150 built, in 1980, and the RHS 150F/RHS 150M, the first of which appeared in 1984. Like the former but unlike the latter the RHS 150FL features a raised bridge. Also, on the RHS 150FL the unorthodox extra-large windows of the SL series were dropped in favor of standard craft such, blending so much better with the rest of the hydrofoil.

Currently the Navigarda operational hydrofoil fleet consists of the two RHS 150SLs and single RHS 150FL, the original *Freccia del Garda* having been withdrawn



**BELOW :** One of two operated by Navigarda, Conavi  
21m catamaran *Parini* entered service in 1993  
[TIM TIMOLEON photo ]

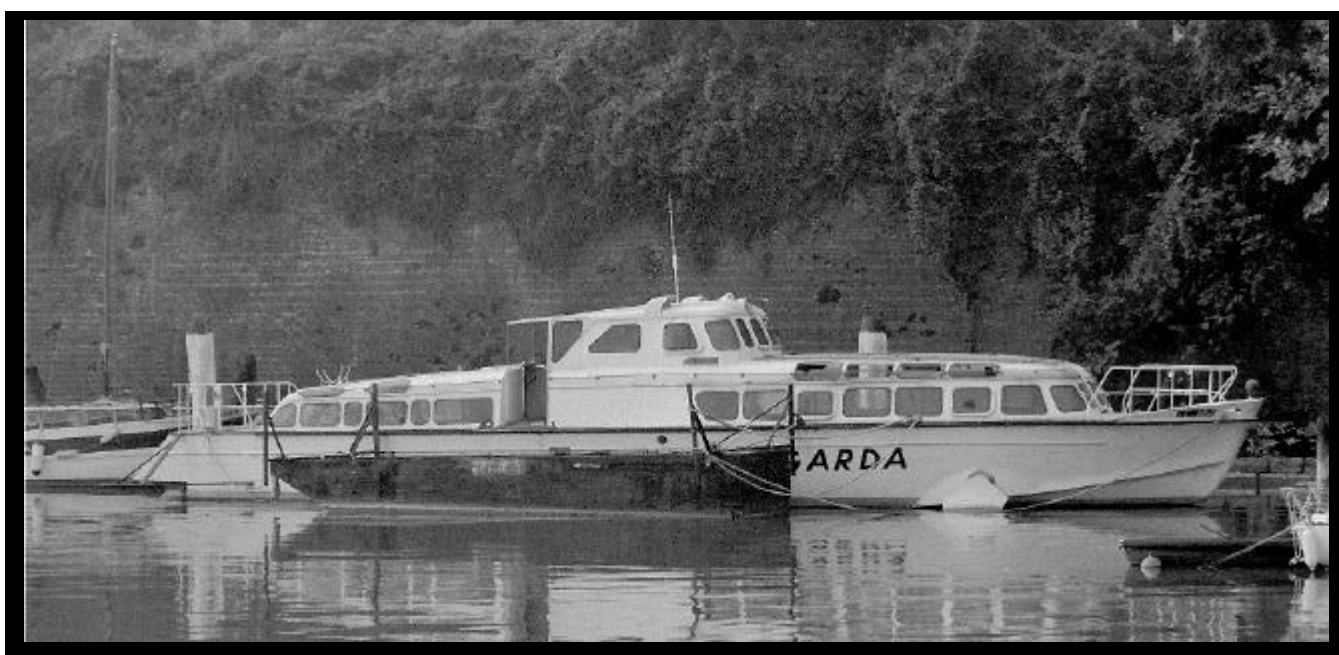


in the mid-80s, RHS 70 *Freccia del Benaco* being transferred to Lake Maggiore and renamed *Freccia delle Ortensie* in 1994 (since likewise withdrawn) and the other RHS 70 *Freccia dei Gerani* becoming surplus to requirement also around this time following the introduction of the Conavi catamarans.

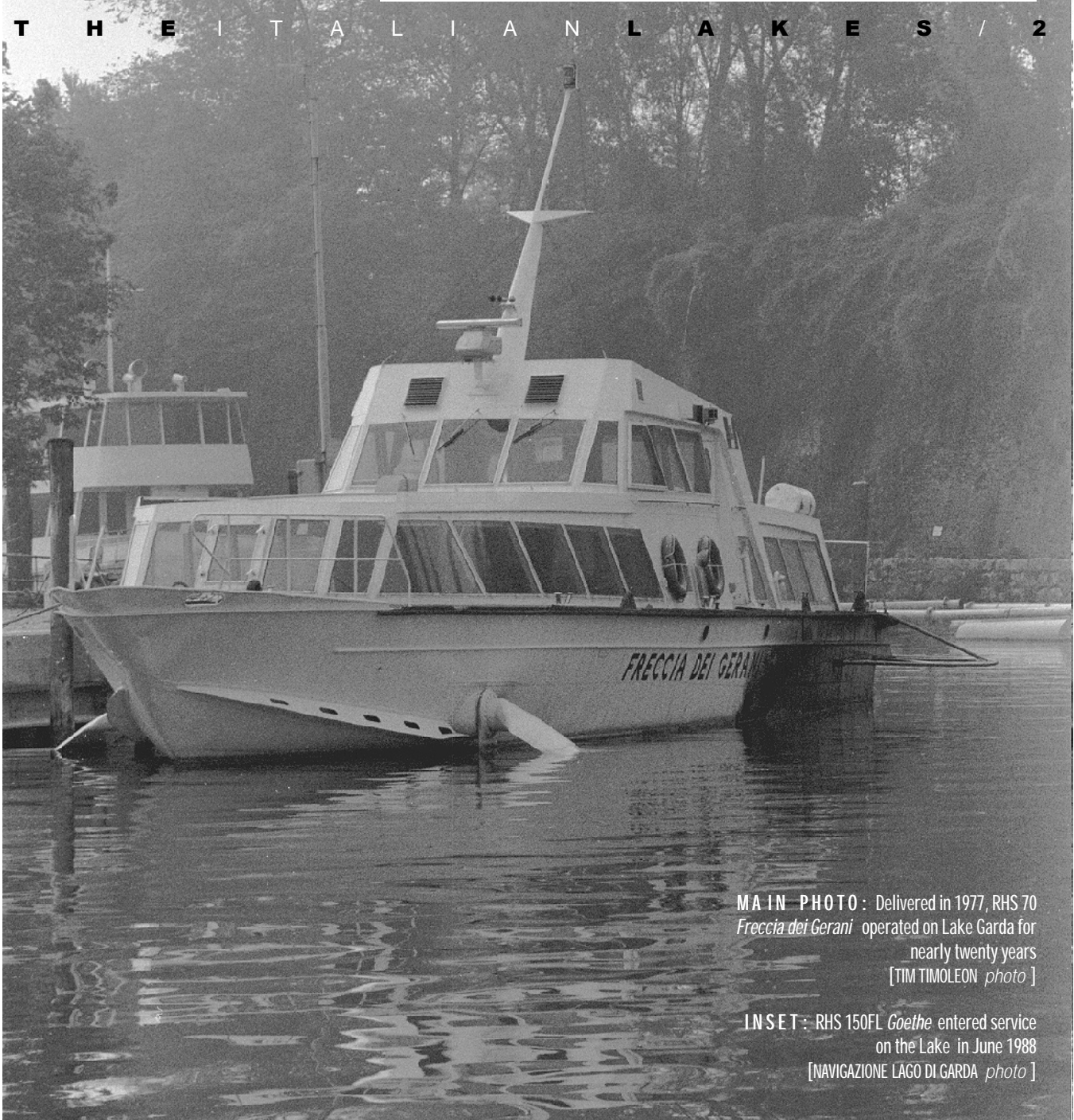
The fast ferries are operated from the middle of March to late October, the conventional vessels year-round. There are normally three daily multi-stop round trips along the entire length of the Lake between Riva and Desenzano during the shoulder seasons, increasing to five or six during May through September. All services but one operate to/from

Sirmione whereas only certain will do so to/from Peschiera. Depending on the number of calls made en route the trip time for the fast ferries is between 1 hour 40 minutes and 2 hours 30 minutes for the entire stretch. In addition local services are being operated in the southern portion of the Lake. ■

**BELOW :** The first PT.20 for the Italian Lakes, *Freccia del Garda*, was withdrawn and laid up in the backwaters of Peschiera in the mid-1980s  
[TIM TIMOLEON photo ]







T H E I T A L I A N L A K E S / 2

MA IN PHOTO : Delivered in 1977, RHS 70 *Freccia dei Gerani* operated on Lake Garda for nearly twenty years [TIMTIMOLEON photo]

INSET : RHS 150FL *Goethe* entered service on the Lake in June 1988 [NAVIGAZIONE LAGO DI GARDA photo]



## Griffon hovercraft reenters service in Canada

Vancouver Hovertours Inc. of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada has purchased the only remaining Griffon 2500TDX hovercraft and introduced it on tours on the Harrison River at the Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa, about one-and-a-half hours drive east of Vancouver, just before Christmas. Once a stopover on the legendary gold rush trails, the beautiful wooded shoreline of Harrison has become a renowned getaway in Canada's Pacific Northwest with 45 miles of glacial waters and 700 acres of woodlands and wildlife.

The 32-seat twin-engine hovercraft, *Raindance*, was the sole 2500TD built by Griffon Hovercraft of Southampton, England with a second unit being built under license in the United States by Hover Systems. Launched in December 1985, *Raindance* made its first appearance in North America the following May at the Expo '86 World's Fair in Vancouver during which it operated daily tours in and around Vancouver Harbor carrying visitors between the two exhibition

**ABOVE:** Griffon Hovercraft 2500TD *Raindance* reentered service in western Canada with Vancouver Hovertours last month  
[VANCOUVER HOVERTOURS photo]

sites at Burrard Inlet and False Creek.

After Expo '86 Hover Systems, a division of F. W. Hake, acquired the craft and transported it to Pennsylvania, USA where some substantial modifications were carried out which enhanced its performance. On completion of this work it saw intermittent action as a hovercraft pilot training unit, but for most part of the next seven years was without any duties.

In early 1993 a Canadian company, Badlands Hovertours, purchased the craft from Hover Systems and transferred it to Drumheller, Alberta to operate it on tourist trips on the Red Deer River. Following some craft mechanical and other difficulties, investor funding was retracted and the craft was sold to another company, Canadian Hovertours, which then

began rebuilding and enhancing the entire mechanical drive system on *Raindance*. The overhaul was completed in August 1994 at which time the hovercraft was reintroduced into service for regularly scheduled tours throughout the remainder of the season.

Reports present owner of *Raindance*, George Slade, Vancouver Hovertours, "During the short season the craft worked very well, only logging 6.25 hours of down time while operating over 200 hours. Canadian Hovertours continued daily operations, typically from the last part of May for operator training, craft testing and certification and then into full operation from mid June to the beginning of September, with seldom any unscheduled down time. While working hard to eliminate the chance of major component failure with the mechanical drive rebuild, only minor mechanical problems would occur."

*Raindance* continued to operate in Drumheller until 1999, when a flood on the Red Deer River resulted in Infrastructure Alberta enhancing the



dike system to control flooding. The new dikes did not allow the hovercraft access to the river so it was put up for sale.

Vancouver Hovertours Inc. purchased the hovercraft in 2002 and brought it to Vancouver. The new owner has performed an extensive refit and upgrade program to bring the 17-year old *Raindance* up to a better than new operational and close to new passenger conditions, including the fitting of brand new Deutz 913 air-cooled diesels and new electronics. The 2500TDX is the second largest commercial passenger hovercraft operating in North America and the largest operating exclusively at a resort.

It was returned to service on December 21<sup>st</sup> running multiple 45-minute tours a day from the Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa to Harrison Mills, about eight miles down the Harrison River, and back. The HHSR was recently acquired by Delaware North Park Services and also is undergoing extensive upgrades and modernizing.



TOP : During Expo '86 in Vancouver, B.C. the hovercraft carried visitors between the two exhibition sites

RIGHT : Vancouver Hovertours has performed an extensive refit on *Raindance* prior to the new service at Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa  
[VANCOUVER HOVERTOURS photo, both]



As we go to press we received this shot of *Raindance* taken on December 30<sup>th</sup>. During the tour the hovercraft lands on a sandbar in the Harrison River to let the passengers out to have a look around at the mountains and spectacular scenery. The mountains come right down to the river and at this time of year the snow is getting lower and in a few days will also be right down to it. At this and other spots along the river *Raindance* goes where there is no other access.

[GEORGE SLADE photo]





## Top Line prepares for new season

Top Line, the Slovenian company that introduced a pair of former Canadian Katran hydrofoils on an international route in the Adriatic last summer linking Portoroz, Slovenia and Venice, Italy, ended its 2002 season in September. The vessels, *Seafight III* and *Seafight IV*, have been renamed *Venice Carnival* and *Adriatic Joy* and are registered in Split, Croatia and are Croatian flagged.

This year the company expects to resume service on March 1<sup>st</sup> and operate through October. One of the hydrofoils, probably *Venice Carnival*, will operate a day excursion from either Slovenia or Croatia to Venice, departing Slovenia/Croatia at 0800 and returning from Venice at 1800.

The journey time totals 2 hours and includes 30 minutes of operating at reduced speed through the lagoon at Venice. The famous namesake event, the Venice Carnival, takes place this year between February 21<sup>st</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup>.

*Adriatic Joy* is expected to be transferred further down the Adriatic coast to operate chartered tours in the Dalmatia archipelago.

Originally delivered for operation in the U.S. Virgin Islands as *Katran 2* and *Katran 3* in 1995 and 1996 the

hydrofoils were acquired by Hydrofoil Lake Jet Lines and transferred to Lake Ontario, Canada towards the end of 1998.

Built by the Volga Shipbuilding, the *Katran* is a slightly modified version of the well-known *Kolkhida* hydrofoil, the prototype of which was launched in 1981. It has a length overall of 34.5m, beam of 10.3m and is powered by a pair of MTU 12V 396TE74 diesels delivering 2,500 kW giving the design a max speed of 36 knots. Normal service speed is 34 knots. Air conditioned throughout, in the Top Line configuration the hydrofoils carry 148 passengers in a forward and mid-ship saloon plus a smaller lounge/bar aft.

**ABOVE + BELOW :** Top Line operates two Katrans, *Adriatic Joy* and *Venice Carnival*, on seasonal services in the Adriatic

[TOP LINE photo, both]





# No song and dance

Catherine Deneuve was nowhere to be seen, and, unusually, there was no need for umbrellas in Cherbourg when this photo was taken only recently, on December 26<sup>th</sup>. Laid up for the winter at Quai Alexandre III was this twenty-six year old Westamaran 86, Côte des Isles. Read about this and other French catamarans elsewhere in this issue! [JAQUES LEGANGNEUX photo ]



# RHS 70s arrive in Thailand after three months

After a little over three months, having covered 8,500 nautical miles, the pair of Rodriguez RHS 70 hydrofoils that departed Southampton, England in early September under their own power arrived in Phuket, Thailand on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

The unusual transfer, the longest ever journey undertaken by a hydrofoil on its own bottom, was described in detail in the November *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES*.

Since our last report, the hydrofoils, *Shearwater 5* and *Shearwater 6*, departed Galle in Sri Lanka in the evening of December 5<sup>th</sup>. Contrary to the original itinerary, and based on the positive experience with the 1,050 nautical mile non-stop crossing of the Indian Ocean from Salalah, Oman to Bombay, India, it was decided to head straight for Phuket from Sri Lanka across the Bay of Bengal, a distance of some 1,090

nautical miles, rather than travel via Indonesia. Prior to embarking on this last stretch, however, on entering the harbor in Galle, *Shearwater 6* experienced a damaged propeller which had to be replaced. While obviously an inconvenience, this did not present a real big problem as with the purchase from Red Funnel of the hydrofoils came a range of parts and spares, and also several of the crew were trained divers.

The Nicobar Islands, off the northern tip of Indonesia, were reached on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Taking into account the distance covered and the age and size of the hydrofoils – they were delivered in 1980 and 1982 and designed for short to medium range routes in protected waters – the entire journey went remarkably well and only minor problems with the vessels were

experienced reports the new owners, Kon-Tiki Diving.

There has been a slight alteration to the initial plans as to how the hydrofoils will be used once they have been overhauled. Marketed as Phuket Flying Boats, both will now be operated purely as fast ferries carrying day trip passengers and scuba divers/snorkellers on packaged tours from Patong and Tap Lamu to the Similan Islands, situated approximately 35 nautical miles off Phuket. From here a conventional dive boat with all the diving equipment on board will take divers to interesting diving sites.

The peak season in Phuket is from November to May and the hydrofoils will operate six days a week. Renamed *Colona 7* and *Colona 8*, they are expected to reenter service during the first half of February.

One of the crew getting breakfast ready somewhere between Southampton and Phuket  
[JONAS STIERNSTRÖM photo]







**TOP :** Due to the only 600 liter fuel capacity of the RHS 70s, extra diesel of course had to be carried on board in drums and jerry cans. For all the obvious reasons, having enough fuel was of particular importance on the long open-sea stretches across the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal during which there seemed to be 200-liter diesel drums all over the place. Prior to departure from England quite a few seats were removed and put on top of one another to make room for the extra fuel as well as various parts and spares, etc. which came with the deal.

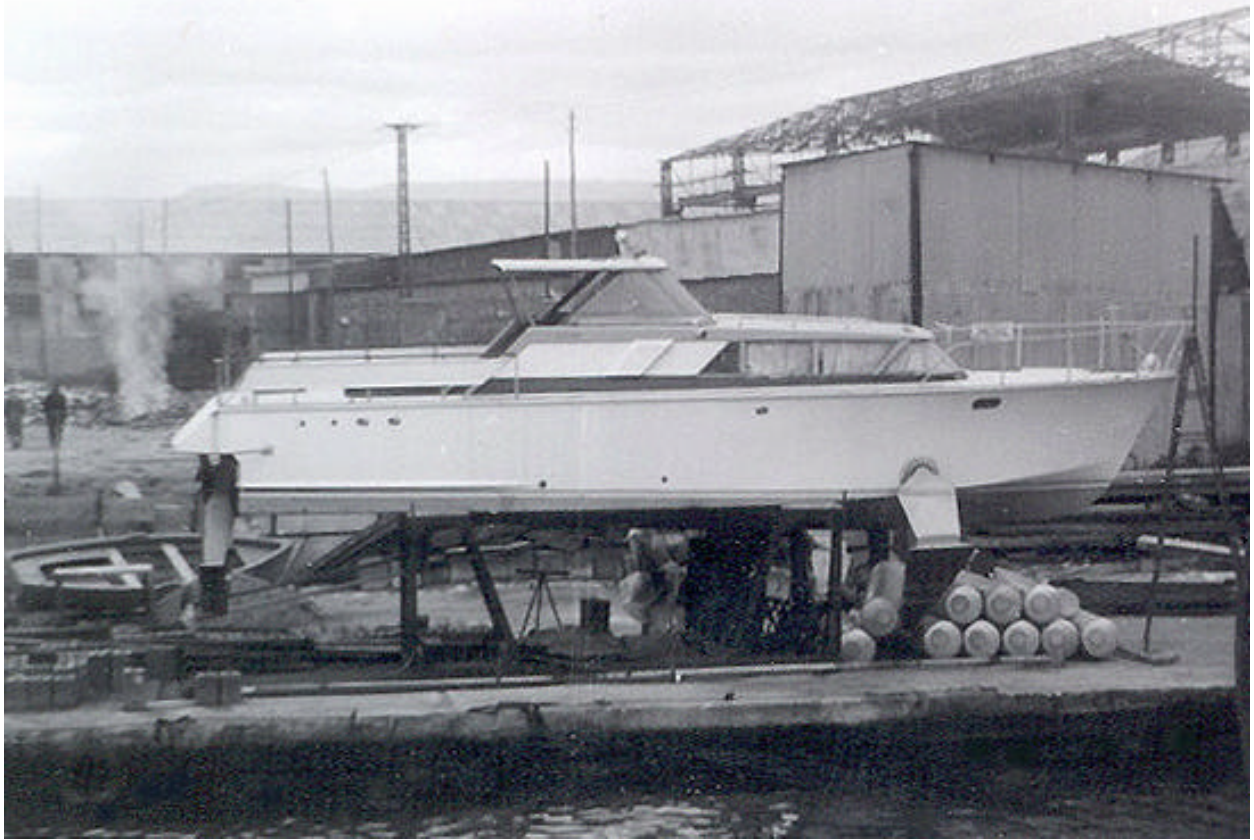
**ABOVE :** Carrying all this extra weight also meant the vessels could only occasionally be operated at full speed as they were too heavy to become foilborne

[JONAS STIERNSTRÖM *photo, both*]

**BELOW :** The former Red Funnel RHS 70s will continue to be operated as fast ferries in Thailand by Phuket Flying Boats. To be renamed *Colona 7* and *Colona 8* they are expected to reenter service next month on two routes from Patong and Tap Lamu to the Similan Islands

[TIM TIMOLEON *photo*]





One of the ROL 700s built by Rodriguez seen at the yard's premises in Messina in January 1968  
[LORENZO BONASERA photo]

# A Yacht for the Yacht ?

In his book *Flying Boats and Amphibians since 1945*, David Oliver makes a reference, in passing, to a hydrofoil which was to have been owned by Aristotle Onassis and carried on the deck of his mega yacht *Christina*.

Martin Grimm, who is a member of the International Hydrofoil Society and a loyal contributor to *CLASSIC FAST FERRIES*, is speculating whether this yet undisclosed hydrofoil might have been of the type pictured above; a Rodriguez ROL 700.

The 12m ROL 700 was fabricated of fibreglass (except of course for the foils) and exhibited at the International Boat Fair at Milan in 1965. It was intended for the private yacht market but could also be equipped as a small commuter hydrofoil for 18-20 passengers.

If you can help clear this up, please send an email to the editor at: [cff@email.dk](mailto:cff@email.dk)